

SD Union Tribune

Letters to the editor

Nonprofits respond to Union-Tribune series

Regarding “Difficult decisions, deficiencies – and death” (A1, Oct. 28):

The Union-Tribune's special report series exposing children's deaths while in foster care and earlier companion articles regarding death by starvation of young Brandon McClure highlight the inherent difficulties facing the foster care and child welfare system. The system does the best it can with limited resources, and there are certainly compassionate and hard-working social workers, advocates, parents and lawyers. But our community must do better, not only to prevent deaths, but to prevent the lasting effects of child neglect.

Nearly 80 percent of those incarcerated in state prison were in the foster care system; 25 percent of foster children will be homeless later in life; nearly 40 percent of foster children will use welfare-funded services later in life. Did the foster care system cause the problems reflected in these statistics? Absolutely not. A life of instability, abuse, neglect and multiple placements did.

Our community can do better, and many of us are doing better. I serve as a board member of La Cuna Inc., a nonprofit foster family agency that partners with the county to place children, newborn to age 5, in loving, stable homes. La Cuna selects parents who pass rigorous background checks that include psychological testing, and they receive training geared toward the developmental issues facing young children.

La Cuna recently launched a parent-child interactive therapy program in which a certified therapist coaches a biological parent as he or she plays with the child. This therapy helps biological parents gain the parenting skills they need if they earn child custody back. The end result is increased stability while the child is in foster care and a brighter future if the child returns to the biological parent or is adopted.

If we are going to do better by our children and our community, we must take a look at both the positive and negative aspects of the system, propose solutions and take action.

MELISSA DIAZ

San Diego