

# All Eyes On: Sheila Jones

Mom's energetic dedication to foster children inspires, provides

BY BETHANY COURY  
Assistant Features Editor

Jason Jones was diagnosed with autism at 2 years old. At 3 years old, the Jones, his foster family, adopted him — a rarity for autistic children. When he was 4 years old, his adoptive sister Teresa Jones, 38, moved from Phoenix, Ariz. to Kirksville, to become better acquainted with Jason. When their parents pass away, she'll become his legal guardian. She said it would be very difficult for an autistic child to live with someone with whom he had not grown up.

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**Sheila Jones**  
president of Foster Families of Adair County, Inc.

Teresa's incredible commitment to creating the best life possible for Jason has an inspiration: her mother, Sheila Jones, president of Foster Families of Adair County, Inc.

Sheila has fostered 27 children since she first started in 2003. Despite the many children she's welcomed into her home, she doesn't take the responsibility lightly: She keeps a "Welcome Home" book for the children, which details what the children can expect in their house. She gets a list of their favorite foods to provide comfort meals. She includes them in family decisions, such as vacation

destination or buying puppies. She asks their favorite color and incorporates it into their rooms, even painting the walls.

Sheila said she makes it her priority to provide comfort and care in such an insecure time of the child's life.

"Just to make them feel loved and wanted, and to let them know they'll be OK as long as they're with us,

and then they'll be OK after, too," she said.

She said that often a child will be wakened in the middle of the night by the sound of sirens, and be taken away from upset parents by a stranger. The child, still in pajamas,

will have had time to grab a toy and maybe some clothes.

"It'd be hard as an adult to face that kind of uncertainty, but then you have a little kid," she said. "It really tears at your heart strings."

Sheila asks: What if there wasn't anybody at the other end to receive those children?

Sheila, a biological mother of two, was working as a full-time sixth grade teacher at Kirksville Archery when one student's need for a place to stay motivated her and her husband's fostering journey. It was then that they began to see the need to look after other people's

children for a while.

Missouri currently has more than 9,200 children in foster care, 55 of who are in Adair County, according to the Foster Families of Adair County Inc. office.

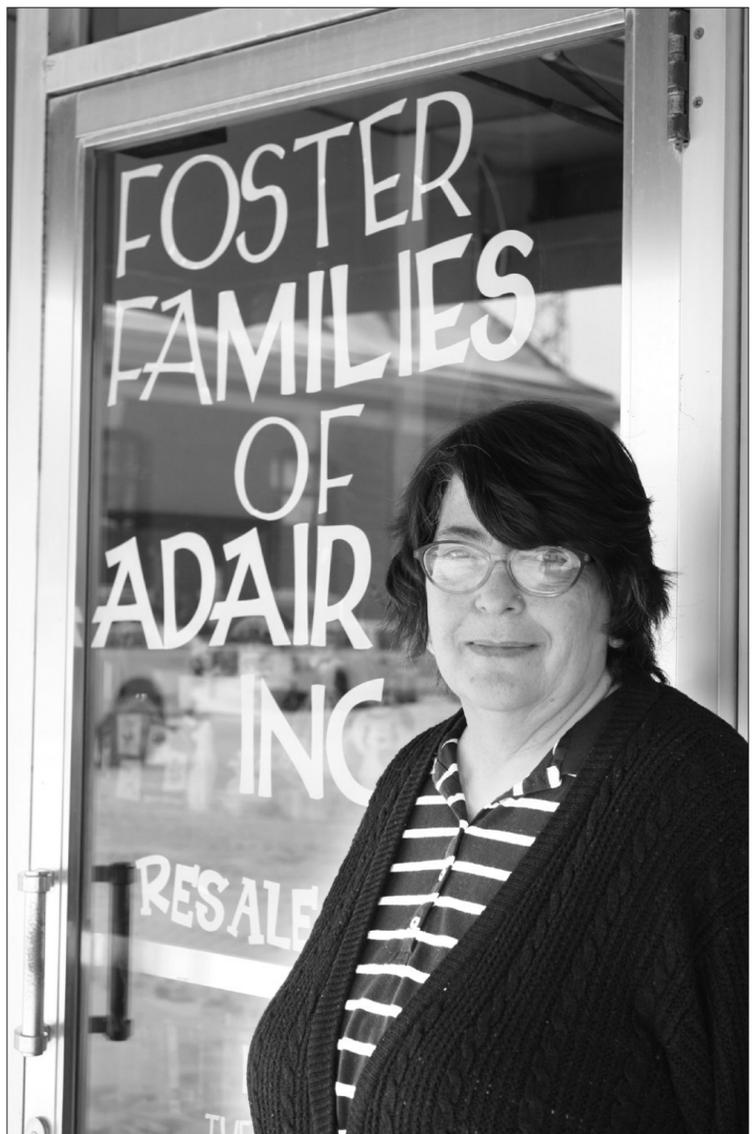
Foster parents participate in an initial 27 hours of unpaid training — including CPR, behavioral management and sexual education — and repeat 15 hours of training annually, she said. They're given a \$100 stipend each month, but sometimes this isn't enough. Sheila said that in the winter the children need sturdy coats, and cheap ones don't always cut it. Foster parents put out their own money — something that isn't begrudged, but does add up.

However, it wasn't only the bare necessities the stipend didn't always cover; it was camps, YMCA passes and extracurricular fees. It was the little things that ensured these children have as close to a "normal" life as possible.

"My husband and I knew we needed to do something — we can't be a part of the problem anymore, complaining we don't have money for this, we don't have money for that," Sheila said.

She went to work and got approval from the Foster Families of Adair County Inc. Board in March to open Foster Families of Adair County Inc. Resale Shop. The store opened July 20 with a donation from the board, and her own money, on the line.

Located on South Franklin Street, this non-profit resale shop, which sends all proceeds to foster children, has become an asset to Foster Families. It provides the foster children of Adair County — 10 so far — with seven outfits and coats and



Amy Vicars/Index

Sheila Jones owns Foster Families of Adair County Inc. Resale Shop, located at 116 Franklin St. Jones and her husband have fostered 27 children since 2003.

shoes as soon as they come into foster care. It also helps provide things not immediately thought of, like retainers for children who have lost theirs.

Most recently, it helped pay for a passport for a child's trip to Costa Rica.

"We want to have these children have the opportunities that we can give our own children," Sheila said.

She said she keeps the costs low: The shop is run by volunteers so there's no

employee cost — she turns the lights off frequently and keeps the heat as low as possible. With much gratitude toward the community that has abundantly donated items to the store and is faithful in shopping there, she said the store has reached self-sufficiency, enabling better provision for the children.

Teresa said her mother's dedication to others runs 24/7. Since the discovery of their son's autism, Sheila and her husband have traveled to

several conventions to learn about autism. They also are heavily involved in church, and are helping Teresa to develop her house.

"They live a very full life," Teresa said. "My mother's always been the type of person to want to help and children are — I know it sounds really cliché — children are the key to the future, and with more guidance for children that would not have had guidance, we might just have a better future."

# Tech Center offers hands-on learning

BY ALEX CARLSON  
Staff Reporter

Not all jobs are created equal. Each career has its own requirements and skills to learn, causing some stress when deciding what to do during and after high school. It's a challenge. In fact, some students require a different kind of education, an involved and hands-on learning method that can't be satisfied in a lecture hall or classroom.

That's where the Kirksville Area Technical Center comes in.

Established in 1970, the Kirksville Area Technical Center is an alternative to traditional college, focusing more on hands-on experience than classroom learning. Those who plan on working in fields like agriculture, practical nursing or automotive maintenance can enroll in classes at the tech center, where they can become involved in hands-on classes to earn experience in such fields. As opposed to traditional college courses,

the tech center allows students to be directly involved in their craft, beyond a lecture hall or classroom and into the actual working world.

"It's a program that provides services to students that are in the area of technical skills," Lois Powell, tech center GED Instructor said. "For example, we have graphic design, automotive, construction trade, agriculture. There are technical skills for those students who are looking towards a more hands-on skill, instead of a college skill."

The classes also are available for high school students who wish to participate in technical skills both in Kirksville and the surrounding school districts. Because the classes function as part of their high school curriculum, these students in the Kirksville area enroll for free.

However, high school students aren't the only demographic at the tech center. Some people enroll in the technical classes if they're looking for skills needed in other fields like construction or if they need experience to get a new job.

"The clients range from a variety of ages and backgrounds," Powell said. "High school students have the option of taking a technical skills course along with high school subjects like math, English or government. They may take block classes like construction trades, automotive or auto collision. Adults can enroll through visiting the technical center, calling the center or visiting our web page."

Enrolled students are taught by certified instructors in their respective fields.

"Students actually build a house in construction trade," Tech Center Director Terri Jones said. "Students have built homes in the Weatherstone subdivision that are up for sale."

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**Terri Jones**  
tech center director

"I would check workbooks for students to improve reading skills," Perry said. "I would help them in answering questions as a tutor."

She said that when she volunteered at the tech center, she was surprised by the older men in their 30s or 40s enrolled who were working on their reading comprehension skills. There was also an older woman who was learning about writing letters, which contrasted the younger women working to get their GEDs. Some didn't even live in Kirksville, so there was a noteworthy variety, she said.

"We are interested in students that are interested in assisting in the GED program or as one-on-one tutors," Jones said. "We have had volunteers from Truman and from outside of the University. We also have a group of Truman students that come and work once a month with our English-as-second-language students."

The tech center can be contacted at (660) 665-2865 or on their web page on the Kirksville R-III school district website, [http://www.kirksville.k12.mo.us/tech\\_center/index.html](http://www.kirksville.k12.mo.us/tech_center/index.html).

## Looking for Family Planning services in the Kirksville Area?

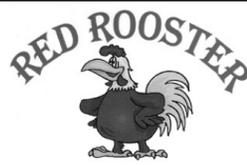
The Adair County Health Department has expanded its family planning services. We provide physical exams; women's health services; men's health services; birth control supplies; pregnancy testing; emergency contraception; testing for sexually transmitted disease; HIV/AIDs testing; immunizations; as well as counseling, education, and referral.



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- Wednesday Two Center Cut Pork Chops
- Thursday All-You-Can-Eat Catfish Filets
- Friday Half Rotisserie Chicken
- Sunday Three-Piece Pressure-Fried Chicken

All meals include one side, salad & croissant.

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