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Project Belong President and CEO Brandon Hoffman, left, presents June and Bill Andersen a certificate Wednesday honoring the couple as Kansas Foster Care Family of the Year. The Andersens first began foster care in 1968 have continued the rest of their lives. Courtesy photo

- Special to the Leader & Times

In celebration of National Foster Care Month (May 2013), the statewide Christian foster care and adoption ministry, Project Belong, recognized Bill and June Andersen of Liberal as the Project Belong Foster Family of the Year.

Project Belong received a thoughtful nomination of the couple and the nearly 45-year history in providing foster care for children and youth in Kansas from their current worker, Alice Gregory of St. Francis Community Services.

Gregory shared the Andersens began their foster care experience in November 1968 and have continued to care for children in their home and youth of all ages throughout that time.

Gregory said, "Most of the children have been teen girls." June has a "strong connection to them and has always communicated very well."

The Andersens also went on to adopt one of their foster children about five years into their foster care journey.

Gregory went on to share that many of the youth continue to maintain connections and strong relationships with Bill and June throughout their lifetimes into adulthood.

June said it is "the beauty of the program" to have "lifelong connections with the children."

She went on to say when youth come into foster care, they often have very little self-worth, but in a loving, nurturing Christian environment in their home, they develop a positive self-concept.

Project Belong is a Christian non-profit ministry organization whose mission is to work in partnership with church, families and the community to awaken the church to the call of James 1:27 and to recruit, train and support foster care and adoptive families.

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