

IF YOU ARE AT LEAST 20 YEARS OLD, financially self-supporting, and have some free time and the room to accommodate an extra person, you may become an "instant parent" for a few months.

Unlike adopting a child, you don't have to be married. And unlike being a natural parent, you don't have to see the child through infancy and childhood.

A long list of Lincoln teenagers, from 13 to 18 years old who have stolen cars, skipped school, run away from home or run into some other trouble is on file in Nancy Bare's office. And the UNL student may be just the person to shorten it, she says.

Bare is coordinator of the adolescent foster care project, a program funded by the Nebraska Crime Commission. She is in

ever, according to a juvenile court law. Two males or females living together are eligible.

"Single foster parenthood is an area of great potential," Bare said. "Yet, whether married or single, lots of people have the ability to help children. It (foster parenthood) is not a lifelong commitment."

Foster parenthood may have an added attraction for the student generation. Married couples who are concerned about population control, or who both have full-time careers may still experience parenthood this way.

Bare said married couples have their choice of a boy or girl child, while the single foster parent must take a child of the same sex. In any case, each child must have his own bed.

away, sexual promiscuity, drinking, drugs and problems at school. If the child comes home with a problem you can't handle, Bare suggested taking the child to the Child Guidance Center, the Mental Health Center of Lincoln-Lancaster County or the UNL Psychological Center for counseling.

Foster parents aren't exactly thrown into the role cold. Each takes a 7-week training course at Southeast Technical Community College, 3101 C St. for 2½ hours a week. The course covers the juvenile justice system, psychology of adolescent development and how to communicate with adolescents.

TO APPLY FOR A FOSTER CHILD, request a form from the county welfare office at 2200 S. St. Marys. Usually, Bare's staff checks the listed character references carefully before approving a new parent, but because of the long waiting list it is possible a student could get a child the day after completing the form, she said.

A welfare employee makes a check of

each home for safety, cleanliness and social background. The judge in each youth's case has final say on placement, but Bare's office tries to honor preferences of sex, age and type of problems the parent is willing to deal with.

During the stay, either a welfare case worker or probation officer will make periodic checks on the child. The goal is to send the child back home. A lot of times the child is placed in another foster home or a group home, Bare said.

The average length of stay in a foster home is seven months.

If you are ambitious, you may apply for more than one child. For this you need a state license and approval of your home from the state fire marshall.

Bare said a few older and graduate students at UNL are foster parents now.

For information, call either Nancy Bare (472-2113) or Marge Ludden, resource developer for the county welfare department, at 475-6221.

'Instant parenthood,' with pay, but what a challenge

By Nancy J. Stohs and Terri Willson

charge of recruiting foster parents for the youth who are referred to her by the county welfare department.

Her job is not easy.

"Since they (adolescents) are harder to handle, it's hard to find people to take them in," she said, adding: "Sometimes a college student can relate to an adolescent."

She stressed the student should be older, mature, responsible and able to take care of himself first.

Her or she may be single, and it is conceivable a student could bring a foster child into a campus residence hall as a roommate, Bare said.

A man and a woman living together are ineligible to become foster parents, how-

If you're worried your bills would suddenly multiply, you needn't. The welfare department allots \$165 a month for the care of each child in a home, to be used for food, rent, transportation and the child's pocket money. Medical and dental care are also provided for by welfare.

What are the main duties of a foster parent?

Just supervise and "be a friend," Bare said, adding that it would be a challenge.

"A lot have had so many negative experiences before that they test the new parents to see if they're serious about having them there."

Problems the parent could expect to encounter from the child include running

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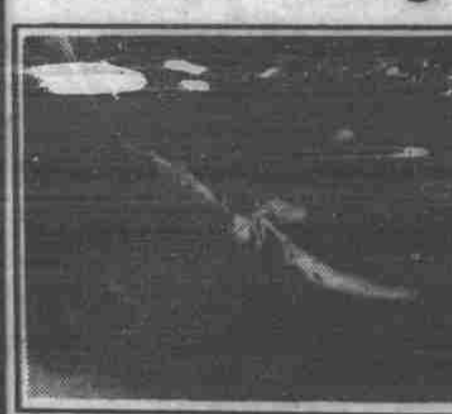
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