**Santa Clara County will host the first graduation ceremony for fostering teenagers**

*2018-06-18 18:45 Source: US China Press*

*[Reporter of the Overseas Chinese Journalist Wang Biaotian, Bay Area, June 15]*

On the evening of June 20, the Santa Clara County will hold its first graduation ceremony to celebrate the academic achievements of the foster youth of the county. More than 110 foster care adolescents will receive high school and higher education diplomas at this special graduation ceremony.

The graduation ceremony was organized by the County of Santa Clara Department of Family and Children's Services, the Child Advocates of Silicon Valley, the Bill Wilson Center, and Silicon Valley Children. The Silicon Valley Children's Fund is co-sponsored. The county's foster teens will enjoy a special evening at Silver Creek Country Club in San Jose, where dinner and award ceremonies will be held.

Cindy Chavez, chairman of the County, Seniors and Families Committee representing the Central, Eastern and Southern Regions of San Jose, said: “This graduation ceremony is of special significance in Santa Clara County. We are family members and these foster children are the children of all of us.We are working hard to build a strong network dedicated to fostering children's education, so that caring adults can pay attention to the group of foster children and enable them to have a better living space. Success".

Francesca Le Rúe, director of the Department of Family and Child Services, said, “The survival of foster children is difficult, but this is not their fault. Many of them have found that they have the ability and determination to overcome difficulties and move smoothly from high school and higher education institutions. Graduation. We fully support their desire for life and education and celebrate their achievements in their studies.”

Karen Scussel, executive director of the Silicon Valley Children’s Supporters Organization, said: “We are very happy to have the opportunity to celebrate the amazing achievements of fostering youth.” She pointed out, “Over the past five years, Santa Clara County has fostered more than adolescents. 80% have completed high school and most of them have or plan to continue their education after graduating from high school."

The graduation ceremony will be held each year in the future and will be funded by the Independent Living Program.

Young foster children face unique challenges that differ from ordinary children. Half of the nation's foster teenagers have never received a high school diploma. This figure is disturbing. For those young people who do not have a stable family, it is not easy to go to school and concentrate on their studies. It is more difficult to achieve university graduation. In spite of the difficulties, foster teens still express their strong desire to accept higher education. It is this desire that has prompted the Department of Family and Child Services to work with professionals and community organizations to join hands with local foster youth to celebrate their academic achievements.

According to the County Family and Children's Services Department, as of May this year, there were 1206 foster teens in Santa Clara County. In June this year, 64 foster teens will graduate from the county's high school; 48 foster teens will graduate from the county's higher education institutions and receive a BA or AA degree. This year, a total of 150 foster young people participated in the County Intern & Earn program.

From a nationwide perspective, only 71% of foster teens can obtain a high school diploma before the age of 19, and only 55% of foster adolescents choose to attend college, and only 8% of them can graduate. The number of foster-adolescents who have undergone multiple placements is 15% lower than their peers.