

# Features



[TOP](#)

## Trout Speaks at Puxico Schools Retired Employees Meeting

FEBRUARY 13TH 2023 BY DEE LOFLIN

### Trout Speaks at Puxico Schools Retired Employees Meeting

The Puxico School District Retired Employees group met on Thursday, January 12, 2023 at 11 a.m. at the Puxico Nutrition Center with about a dozen people in attendance. Mr. Ira Tucker, who is spearheading the group, introduced Mrs. Renee Trout, Assistant Program Director for the Stoddard County Children's Home.

Tucker did open the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance followed by a prayer by Pam Parsley.

Trout, who has been employees with the Children's Home about a year and half is excited to see a new facility, that will look just a like a home, built in Dexter.

"This may be the only opportunity for a very long time to make such a change, and we hope it will last us a long time as well." commented Trout.

The home currently located in Bloomfield served over 150 children in Stoddard County in 2022.

"These children have been through the court system. as we are an emergency placement center," stated Trout. "Some children stay over night and others stay a few months just depends on their situation and placing them with a relative or possibly back home."

"The entire county is represented and we have a good relationship with our area schools," commented Trout. "Keeping them in their school and their classroom may be the only familiar place or stability these students have. Even if a student lives in Puxico and is staying at the home in our care they will get them to their school."

"We are licensed by the state to house 10 children at any one time. The facility is open 24/7/365 and we must have two staff 24 hours per day," continued Trout. "They do receive some funding from the state depending on the number of students."

There is a healthy child exam with 24 hours to make sure they aren't suffering abuse or have any issues that need to be taken care of immediately. Some of these children only go to the doctor when they are really sick, but they may not be given good care at home.

A history on the Stoddard County Children's Home states that In 1970 Circuit Court Judge Flake McHaney commissioned a volunteer group to determine the needs of a temporary shelter to care for these children. The group, spearheaded by County Juvenile Officer Melvin "Churn" Williams and Verna Godwin, incorporated a not-for-profit agency for the purpose of establishing and operating a children's home.

Many volunteered time, money, and materials, and the home opened for operation in October 1980.

“We are so thankful to be in this community and the support we receive is just wonderful,” stated Trout. “Currently our home is over 120 years, we honestly don’t know the age of the home. We currently have 15 part time and/or full time employees and there are always two on staff 24/7/365.”

With a gift of land from the Regional Healthcare Foundation and a substantial bequest from the Norman B. Harty Trust, they are expanding operations to further meet the needs of abused and neglected children in Stoddard County.

“We are trying to raise another \$500,000 to continue what our vision is for the children,” continued Trout. “We want to put in a walking track in our fenced in area for the kids to walk and ride their bikes. That’s big thing, these young ones love to ride bikes.”

Mrs. Trout asked if there were any questions from the group.

Question? - When will this facility be up and running?

“September of 2023 the building should be built, but the transition of moving will be sometime after that.”

Question? - Can you keep the children more than 30 days?

“Yes, our licensure is for 30 days for an emergency placement. We can have children longer. Sometimes It’s just a matter of where they go next and waiting for them to get placed. Our goal is to serve the children of Stoddard County.”

Question? - How old can you take children?

“We can take from birth to 18 years old.”

Question? - So it’s my understanding that if the student is from Puxico and they are staying at Dexter, you will still get them to their school? They don’t have to change schools?

“They are with us and our staff and they will continue to go their school. We drop them off and pick them up. They do not ride a bus. They need that sense of comfort to have the same teacher and friends at their school and I think it makes a big difference in their well being.”

Everyone clapped and was very pleased with her presentation and explanation of the Stoddard County Children's Home.

LAST UPDATED ON FEBRUARY 13TH 2023 BY DEE LOFLIN

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