

**ADOPTION EXCELLENCE AWARD RECOMMENDATIONS
FOR THE YEAR 2008**

**CATEGORY #1 DECREASE IN THE LENGTH OF TIME THAT CHILDREN IN
FOSTER CARE WAIT FOR ADOPTION**

AWARDEE: **Family Support Services of North Florida, Inc.**

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Family Support Services of North Florida (FSS) is a 5-year old agency for community-based care in Duval and Nassau counties in northeast Florida. Noted for being one of the lead community-based care agencies in Florida, FSS has finalized the adoption of more than 500 children in Duval and Nassau counties. The median length of stay for children adopted in FSS's Judicial Circuit dropped from over 24 months in July 2007 to 20 months in March 2008. The reason for these results is due, in large part, to a number of progressive and deliberate efforts developed by the FSS Adoption Services division to achieve permanency. A strong collaboration among FSS, four subcontracts that provide adoption case management, Guardian ad Litem, and the judicial system have resulted in successful strategies to remove barriers to expediting the adoption process. Judges in the dependency court divisions have established strategies to eliminate barriers that have traditionally slowed the adoption process. For example, if a case is ready, it is added to the judges' dockets so families do not have to wait another month, expediting the process to terminate parental rights, if appropriate. One judge finalized over 60 adoptions in one year and went so far as performing one adoption in a local hospital when the adoptive mother could not make it to court because she had been hospitalized. Other services provided and initiatives to recruit and retain prospective adoptive parents include:

- Jacksonville's Children: A weekly news feature, interviewing children awaiting adoption.
- Let's Talk Adoption: An open-house event held several times annually, inviting the general public to learn about adoption from judges, attorneys, and community agencies.
- Lunch & Learns: Prospective adoptive parents have lunch at FSS monthly and learn about children available for adoption.
- Match Staffings: Staffings to assure legally available children are placed with the most appropriate adoptive families.
- FSS Staff Attorneys: The agency employs 2 attorneys to provide support to legal matters related to placement and risk management.
- Finalization Events: Throughout the year, special finalization events are planned, including National Adoption Day, Home for the Holidays and Mother's and Father's Day celebrations.

CATEGORY #5 SUPPORT FOR ADOPTIVE FAMILIES

AWARDEE: **San Diego County Adoptions**

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San Diego County Adoptions (SDCA) excels in providing comprehensive and extensive support for adoptive families consisting of a variety of educational and support services. The program recognizes the importance of adoptive parent preparation and support as a means for promoting placement stability and the long-term well-being of children who are adopted. The agency also recognizes that in order to serve adoptive families with best practice standards, it is crucial to ensure that agency adoption social workers have the necessary knowledge and skills. In this effort, SDCA has built a network of resources to ensure that agency staff and adoptive parents are provided with relevant education on a variety of adoption issues as well as on-going support, resources, and services for the post-adoption period of adoptive family life. SDCA ensures continued education for adoption staff by providing on-going adoption specific training on a regular basis. For adoptive families, the agency provides education on a variety of adoption topics in the process of completing an adoption home study. Prospective adoptive parents are required to take PRIDE classes and they must attend a minimum of three adoption specialty classes, which are all provided throughout the county in both English and Spanish. SDCA also offers adoptive parents on-going educational opportunities for continued learning and building of knowledge and skills. After recognizing a further need of adoptive families, SDCA partnered with a community agency, San Diego Youth and Community Services (SDYCS), to provide post-adoption services. These resources include monthly support groups, group respite, and monthly group enrichment for adopted children, clinical services, family advocacy, mentoring and tutoring, and a monthly newsletter. Since 2004, SDCA and SDYCS have provided extensive post-adoption support to over 500 families. SDCA has made tremendous efforts to provide its staff and families with the tools necessary to thrive, grow and work to create healthy family environments.

AWARDEE: **Adoption Resource Network at Hillside Children’s Center**

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Early in 2006, Adoption Resource Network at Hillside Children’s Center (ARN) introduced Adoption Support and Preservation (ASAP), a full range of services to support and ensure stability of adoptive families. A truly community-based program, ASAP services include information referrals, support groups, skill building, crisis intervention, advocacy, respite, and counseling. ASAP services are free to TANF-eligible families who have adopted or are in the process of adopting a child. During 2006, over 200 families were served by the program. The

program has helped to prevent disrupted adoptive placements for 99% of the families served and has prevented 100% of the potential post-adoption dissolutions. A few of the services that make Adoption Resource Network's ASAP program unique include:

- All services are coordinated through parent liaisons, adoptive parents who have experienced the challenges of adoption and are able to establish strong connections with families in need of help. The program's reliance on parent liaisons has proven effective in preventing adoption disruptions and helped to lower overall costs of the program.
- ASAP teen groups are support groups specifically for youth identified as difficult or challenging. These groups meet monthly to help teens build trust and relationship skills.
- AdoptMent is a mentoring program that matches adults who were adopted with teens who have been freed for adoption. The mentors' personal experience with adoption helps to normalize the teens' experiences and attitudes and often facilitates a change in attitude toward adoption.

To build partnerships, Adoption Resource Network has participated in a number of national and international conferences and reaches out to community organizations to make presentations about ASAP and the unique challenges of adoptive families. ARN has promoted its services through informational brochures, a newsletter to keep families aware of upcoming events, and a Resource Guide developed by parent liaisons. ASAP has empowered many adoptive families to get the support and resources they need to be successful.

AWARDEE: **New Alternatives for Children, Inc.**

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The New Alternatives for Children (NAC) Post Legal Adoption (PLAN) program was initiated in 1994 to train, assist and strengthen the capacity of families who have adopted one or more children with special medical needs in New York. PLAN provides support groups, case management services, transportation, referral and advocacy and counseling services in an effort to avoid adoption dissolutions. It also assists families with purchasing and installing necessary home renovations to accommodate children in their homes. Specifically, support is provided to help strengthen families who have medically fragile children and to prepare families before the adoption is complete so they will know what to expect and where to turn as new needs arise. Children also receive medical and mental health services to help them cope with their own disabilities and being adopted. NAC has maintained its standing as the preeminent health care and social services agency for children with special medical needs, servicing over 2,300 children since its inception. The PLAN program has demonstrated success at keeping families together and away from further involvement with the child welfare system. To date, it has not experienced any dissolutions and has completed a total of 266 adoptions. In early 2007, PLAN added a Family Forum component to the program, which provides increased supports for foster and adoptive families parenting children with developmental disabilities. Most recently, the new

AdoptMent program was added; this group was formed to link adopted young people with adult mentors who were adopted as children. NAC is also a member of many local and national associations and collaborates with several local hospitals and a wide variety of agencies that provide supplemental services such as employment training and legal services. For many years, NAC has succeeded in delivering high quality care which has resulted in positive outcomes for children and families, including preventing dissolutions, reuniting children with their birth parents, and finding loving, adoptive families.

AWARDEE: **Northwest Arkansas Adoption Coalition**

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The Northwest Arkansas Adoption Coalition (NWA) is a grassroots organization of community residents that started when an adoptive parent asked if there was anything in their community to assist adoptive parents or to recruit adoptive parents. Since its first meeting in May 2007, the Coalition has raised public awareness and community understanding of the need for permanency for children in foster care. NWA's first event was a Balloon Lift, where balloons were released in to the air in front of each county courthouse to honor each child adopted in Northwest Arkansas over the last year. One of the Coalition's unique initiatives is a program that gives each child a bear when they are adopted, along with an adoption certificate for the bear. Once the child's adoption is completed, the judge gives the child the bear and asks the child to name it; the judge fills in the name that was chosen and signs the Bear Adoption Certificate, giving the child a memento of the special day. In February 2008, the Coalition hosted the first Northwest Arkansas Heart Gallery, which was held at a well-known local restaurant. Entertainment was provided by an award winning artist and songwriter, Becky Wright, who was touched by adoption. Portraits of the waiting children from the Heart Gallery were shown at a local bank and as a result, many people inquired about adoption. Since the efforts of NWA have gained the interest of many prospective adoptive parents, the Coalition has created a website that lists upcoming events and photos of waiting children, along with creating adoption bracelets that are shared at events to further increase awareness. Members of the Coalition meet with interested families and offer support while they are going through the process and assist them with questions they have while filling out paperwork. Despite being a new organization, NWA has touched the lives of many children and adoptive families and plans to continue its innovative efforts in the future by raising awareness about adoption, especially of older children.

AWARDEE: **Tennessee Adoption Support and Preservation**

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The Tennessee Adoption Support and Preservation (ASAP) program is a successful collaborative initiative that was implemented in May 2004 with the support of Agape Child and Family Services, Catholic Charities, Harmony Adoptions, and Spaulding for Children. The ASAP program is designed as a life-long resource for the support and assistance of adoptive children and families, providing them with needs assessments, family and individual counseling, crisis intervention, support and education groups, advocacy and respite services, and pre- and post-adoption resources. The program conducts statewide trainings to service providers, professionals, and adoptive families and also holds regional conferences, which have been attended by up to 180 adoptive families and professionals. As a result of its efforts, the dissolution rate in families served by ASAP has gone from 1.3% in May 2004 to less than 1% in 2007. The ASAP program has made substantial contributions through family support and advocacy and by recruiting adoptive families through some of the following services:

- Therapy/Crisis Intervention: Between May 2004 and June 2008, ASAP served 1,607 children and 4,821 family members.
- Resources for Adoptive Families: Informational and educational resources are provided to adoptive families through on-line articles and lending libraries.
- Adoptive Family Groups: 282 adoptive family support groups have occurred statewide.
- Respite: 568 families statewide have benefited from respite services.
- Recruitment: ASAP draws upon adoptive families to be used as advocates to recruit others in the community that may want to foster or adopt.
- Annual State ASAP Bike Tour: A bike ride to raise awareness of the need for more adoptive and foster families in Tennessee began in 2005 with six riders riding 433 miles. In 2006, the ride grew, attracting more than 75 riders and it was covered by news media.

AWARDEE: Riverside County Permanency Programs: Adoptions: Post-Adoption Support Program

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Riverside County Post Adoption Services provides a comprehensive program for all families who have adopted children in Riverside County. The services include post-adoption information, information and referral, community education, education groups, and assistance with adoption assistance and medical issues. The program begins with an education seminar that is offered monthly for all adoptive families and covers several topics such as teaching families negotiation skills and educating them about the court process. A major component of the program is the collaboration between adoption assistance eligibility workers and the post-adoption services team. Together, they provide referrals for services and help families who are having trouble accessing services. The teams have worked together to make the adoption assistance program as efficient as possible so families do not have long waits for changes to their benefits. The teams address problems and create solutions as rapidly as possible, which has decreased the time for benefits changes from six weeks to 20 days in the last year. The post-

adoption services program also includes assistance with in-home provision of mental health services and residential treatment. When out-of-home placement is necessary, staff assists families in selecting a placement and act as guides and support through the process and after placement. Families have no financial obligations for placements and the agency works with the family to find a placement suitable for the child's needs. Post-adoption services provided by Riverside County are designed to provide the necessary building blocks before and after adoption to keep families safe, secure, and stable.

CATEGORY #6 INDIVIDUAL AND/OR FAMILY CONTRIBUTIONS

AWARDEE: **Cynthia Deal**

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Cynthia Deal, Executive Director of Northeast Ohio Adoption Services (NOAS), came to the agency in 1996 with strong management and leadership skills. She brought to NOAS many other qualities that have proven successful over the years, including creativity, an open mind, an eagerness to listen and learn, and a vision of providing a family for every child in foster care. Northeast Ohio Adoption Services is a private non-profit 501 (c) (3) agency that develops and supports lifelong adoptive families for children with special needs. Most of the children served by Ms. Deal's agency are school-age, sibling groups, and some have physical, developmental, and/or emotional problems. Under Ms. Deal's leadership and cooperative spirit, she has increased the number of public agency and private partnerships. A few of the partners who have been inspired to step forward and support adoption and the work of her agency include Sharon Speedway and the Phantom Hockey Ice Zone, television stations, Wendy's franchises, and local media celebrities. The combination of Ms. Deal's focus, vision, and ability to develop new strategies has led to improved outcomes for waiting children in Ohio. Children served by NOAS in FY 2002 waited an average of 21.6 months from referral to placement; in FY 2006, NOAS achieved a new record of 7.5 months. Ms. Deal's emphasis on customer service and outcomes has helped to increase recruitment and retention of families who want to adopt. This increased pool of families has resulted in more matches for children served by NOAS. Family intakes have risen steadily from 326 in FY 2001 to an average of 846 for each of the next five years. One of Ms. Deal's most notable qualities is her contagious leadership style, which is said to be one that encourages those around her to lead, innovate, and to create.

AWARDEE: **Gail Johnson Vaughan**

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Gail Johnson Vaughan has made several significant contributions to child welfare and policy over the past thirty-four years at the regional, state, and national levels. Ms. Vaughan served as the Executive Director of Sierra Adoption Services for 22 years and is a recognized expert in clinical adoption and permanency issues. Under her leadership, she guided the placement of more than 1,100 youth in to permanent homes. Ms. Vaughan instituted the first Therapeutic Adoptive Family Resource Center for pre- and post-finalization psycho-therapeutic services to adopted families. Ms. Vaughan is also an effective grant writer who has reached out across the country to businesses, individuals, and foundations to obtain the resources to find permanent placements and improve public policy. Ms. Vaughan has always been motivated to start new initiatives that will promote positive change for youth, including an annual Capitol Heart Gallery to display photographs of California youth in foster care. She also founded the annual “calling out of names” at the California Capitol of the first names and ages of thousands of California children awaiting adoption and the annual Celebration of Hope at a Sacramento mall to connect children to permanent families. More recently, Ms. Vaughan created and leads Mission Focused Solutions to improve local, state and national policy related to foster care and child welfare. Over her 22 years as a leader of Sierra Adoption Agency, and with her 34 years improving permanency opportunities, Ms. Vaughan has increased permanency options for youth in foster care and changed the belief systems of many professionals.

AWARDEE: **Dixie van de Flier Davis**

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Dixie van de Flier Davis, Ed.D, President and Executive Director of The Adoption Exchange, Inc., has worked for almost three decades to connect adoptive families and waiting children. In 1983, Dr. Davis founded The Adoption Exchange, which is headquartered in Aurora, Colorado. The Exchange provides professional expertise to ensure the successful adoption of children in foster care. Under her guidance and leadership, The Exchange has facilitated over 5,280 adoptions of children in the United States foster care system. Among other affiliations over the past several years, Dr. Davis has served as President of the Adoption Exchange Association (AEA); she has been the Principal Investigator for “The Collaboration to AdoptUsKids”; and she was a founding member and former President of Voice for Adoption. Dr. Davis’s contributions have also included several innovations, including the launch of a website with photos and descriptions of waiting children in 1995, hosting adoption network parties for waiting children and prospective parents, and partnering with the media for 26 years to feature Wednesday’s Child. Dr. Davis has formed several collaborations through Federal and State grants and has also worked with the military to develop collaborations between the armed services and States to form networks, supports and assistance for families who are adopting. She continues to share her knowledge and expertise regarding special needs adoption through numerous keynotes,

presentations, novels, and participation on various committees and workgroups. Dr. Davis has brought innovation and collaboration in her efforts to achieve permanency for children in foster care and continues this work through her demonstrated dedication to the adoption community.

AWARDEE: **Tim Morris**

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Tim Morris, President and CEO of Exhibit Design Consultants, Inc., has helped many Michigan children in foster care through his unwavering acts of kindness and generosity. In 2005, the Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange (MARE) was contacted by another local agency and asked to bring a Heart Gallery to Michigan. MARE reached out to Tim Morris to see if he could provide any help in the construction of the Heart Gallery exhibit, which would consist of professional photos of children who are waiting to be adopted. Mr. Morris agreed to meet with MARE, where he learned about the Heart Gallery concept and how it worked. The MARE staff hoped to at least get a reduced price on the design costs from Mr. Morris but was surprised by his reaction when he answered, "I'll take care of it." And he meant it. Since 2006, Mr. Morris has donated more than \$100,000 in time, equipment, and transportation to the Michigan Heart Gallery. He donates his staff and vehicles to help set up, take down, and transport the exhibits to each location. In 2007, Mr. Morris donated more than \$20,000 in labor, gas, and transportation costs. Thanks to Mr. Morris, the Michigan Heart Gallery has reached hundreds of thousands of people at over 100 locations including art galleries, movie theatres, business offices, and museums. The size and impact of the Heart Gallery is made possible mainly through Mr. Morris's donated generosity and professional, "green" exhibit presentations. Mr. Morris, an adoptive parent, is said to be humble about his donations but many would agree that he is extremely devoted and generous. With Mr. Morris's assistance over the past three years, the Heart Gallery has helped find permanent, adoptive homes for more than 100 Michigan children and raised awareness of thousands of children who are still waiting.

AWARDEE: **Debra Gilmore**

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Debra Gilmore was hired to be the first full-time attorney for the Carteret County Department of Social Services in North Carolina in 2006. Ms. Gilmore has made an exceptional difference in the lives of Carteret County's children in foster care since that time. Prior to her acceptance of the position, the agency used the services of a contract attorney, which resulted in many

outstanding court orders and numerous permanency delays. Ms. Gilmore used her child welfare credentials to resolve many of the issues that caused children to linger in foster care unnecessarily. She created and implemented a strategic plan that fully resolved the outstanding court orders and significantly increased permanency outcomes for those children awaiting legal clearance to be adopted. To accomplish this task, Ms. Gilmore used a system of advanced communication to prepare draft orders for all hearings. Further, Ms. Gilmore has litigated many overdue termination of parental rights cases on behalf of children with permanent plans of adoption; in a single year, she successfully cleared 18 children for adoption. With Ms. Gilmore's guidance, the number of children in Carteret County's care was cut in half in one year and the backlog of children awaiting legal clearance was eliminated. In addition to her legal representation, Ms. Gilmore provides training to the agency's child protective services social workers and has also gained the trust of her peers, including parents' attorneys and attorney advocates. Ms. Gilmore has proven herself to be an outstanding leader and advocate for children in foster care.

AWARDEE: **Twila Costigan**

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From her personal life to her professional career, Twila Costigan has worked tirelessly to better the lives of children in foster care in Montana. Ms. Costigan began her career at Intermountain, a non-profit organization in Montana that provides nurturing, therapeutic environments for children under severe emotional distress. She then worked for the Montana Department of Health and Human Services as a child protective services worker and adoption worker before returning to Intermountain as a program manager. In this role, Ms. Costigan has helped create legislation that would create a new classification of foster care to pay for more support for families that care for children with reactive attachment disorder or other mental illnesses. She also developed and led a program that places skilled treatment coordinators in to families to provide supportive services in the home. In order to recruit and find families willing to take children who are ordinarily difficult to place in to their homes, Ms. Costigan partnered with Montana and other foster care and adoption organizations to create a network, Family Find, which recruits families together. Family Find is an effective collaborative effort that works well to recruit families for children in need of a home. Further, during every legislative session, Ms. Costigan prepares legislation, finds sponsors for bills, and organizes lobbying efforts. She also testifies at committee hearings and works with the Department to create rules and regulations regarding foster and adoption services. In addition to the impact she has made by serving on several committees, Ms. Costigan has been a foster parent herself and adopted two children. She continues to be a leader in the field in promoting permanency for children in foster care.

AWARDEE: **Veda D. Thompkins**

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Veda Thompkins is the founder and President of *Families on the Move, Inc.*, a support organization for foster, adoptive, biological, and relative families. Founded in 1996, *Families on the Move* (FOTM) works to enrich the community by supporting positive change for at-risk families living in Detroit. In 2006, the family centered organization received its non-profit, tax-exempt status as a non-profit 501(c) (3). Through her tireless efforts, Ms. Thompkins developed educational workshops for families and social providers, which laid the foundation for open and honest communication within the community. These efforts eventually led to increased adoptions, fewer disrupted adoptions, and an increase of families seeking information about being foster parents. Over the years, FOTM has become a well-respected resource for foster and adoptive families. In addition, the Detroit Department of Human Services partnered with Ms. Thompkins' organization to promote monthly group meetings and provide speakers to address the needs of the community. This collaborative relationship allows both the community and the Department to view and work with each other as equal partners. In addition to the work she does through her own organization, Ms. Thompkins is a regular advocate with politicians at all levels; she played a major role in new Michigan legislation that allows adoption subsidy to follow the child if they are moved to another placement. Outside of her role as a professional, Ms. Thompkins has also devoted her personal life to children. She is a single mother of eight children, seven of whom are adopted. As a foster/adoptive parent for the past twenty-four years, Ms. Thompkins maintains an "open door" policy for a sense of belonging to past foster children who have "aged out" of foster care. She continues to make herself available to provide spiritual, emotional and psychological support to many of the children she opened her heart and home to over the years.

AWARDEE: **Robyn L. Harrod**

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Robyn Harrod was inspired to pursue a career in social work, specifically to work with children, after doing volunteer work at a group home facility for babies living with AIDS. After she received her degree, Ms. Harrod accepted a job with the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), where she worked exclusively in the adoption unit. In 2000, Ms. Harrod became the Adoption Director at Southern California Foster Family and Adoption Agency (SCFFAA). Since her time there, the agency has achieved a high ranking in

the state for the percentage of children who have been adopted; 27% of the children who left the agency were adopted since 2000. A major reason for this success is Ms. Harrod's community involvements. She has opened the doors to the Gay and Lesbian (LGBT) community, which had been excluded from adopting for many years. Ms. Harrod arranged for the Department's Heart Gallery to be displayed at the Gay and Lesbian Center of Los Angeles by securing funds and ensuring that waiting families attended the event. Recruitment of adoptive families has been a major focus for Ms. Harrod and she also works with a number of temples and churches to recruit families. She also speaks to groups and provides information and resources at information booths at many events, such as the annual "Parenting with Pride" conference. Since half of the parents fostering and adopting through Ms. Harrod's agency are gay or lesbian, the Department calls upon her to assist with writing training modules for agency social workers to help them work more effectively with this population during the home study and adoption processes. Another concern of Ms. Harrod's is the adoption of older children; she is currently working with Kidsave, a program to help older children in Los Angeles County find permanent families, and on a training program to recruit parents who will host older foster children. Ms. Harrod also gives her time to the Adoption Consortium of Los Angeles, which she helped establish in 2005. The Consortium is instrumental in policy and procedural issues relative to adoption.

AWARDEE: **Marcie Velen**

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In 1983, Marcie Velen joined Arizona's Children Association (AzCA) and she is currently the Director of Permanency Planning in the Southern Region of Arizona. Arizona's Children Association, founded in 1912, is the oldest and largest statewide nonprofit child welfare and behavioral health agency in Arizona. It serves more than 45,000 children and families in all 15 counties in the state each year. During her 33 years as a child welfare professional, Ms. Velen has worked diligently and made several contributions to improve Arizona's child welfare system. Ten years ago, Ms. Velen managed the development of ANCOR, a post-adoption resource network for adoptive families of special needs children in Pima and Yuma counties. ANCOR identified needed and existing services; it built on, enhanced or facilitated existing resources; and helped to create new ones. An ANCOR steering committee was formed, which brought together colleagues in key positions to collaborate, consult and disseminate information. As a result of ANCOR, adoption agencies in Pima County began to work together like they never had before. In 2001, Ms. Velen was instrumental in founding the Kinship and Adoption Resource and Education (KARE) Family Center, the first center of its kind in Arizona to provide resources and support for kinship caregivers. The KARE Center uses non-traditional approaches such as yoga, nutritional guidance, and therapeutic support groups for adults and youth. Over the past five years, the Tucson KARE Center has served more than 6,000 families and made a difference in the lives of over 10,000 children. Also in 2001, Ms. Velen initiated and administered the Kinnections Project, in collaboration with other community collaborators. The goal of this project

was to increase permanency for children in care more than 5 years, primarily using Family Group Decision Making to revisit family resources. Ms. Velen is currently a field instructor in the Arizona State School of Social Work and faculty member for the Arizona Supreme Court Confidential Intermediary Program.

CATEGORY #7 PHILANTHROPY/BUSINESS CONTRIBUTIONS

AWARDEE: **Western Reserve Restaurant Management Group, Inc.**

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Western Reserve Restaurant Management Group (Western Reserve Wendy's) is owned by brothers, Richard and Robert Fox, of New York. Together, they own 115 Wendy's restaurants in five states. Western Reserve Wendy's consists of twenty-eight restaurants in Cuyahoga and Lorain Counties in Ohio. The partnership between Western Reserve Wendy's and Northeast Ohio Adoption Services (NOAS), a private, 501 (c)(3) adoption agency, began in 2000 when Wendy's was looking for a non-profit agency to donate proceeds from a sales campaign called Valentine Fun Packs, which contain Wendy's menu coupons. As a result of the campaign, NOAS received a donation of nearly \$50,000 from the Western Reserve Wendy's. Over the past eight years, the employees of the Western Reserve Restaurant Management Group's Wendy's stores raised over \$600,000 from its Valentine Fun Packs. Western Reserve Wendy's also plays a large role in marketing and outreach efforts. It conducts numerous activities to recruit adoptive families, including "adoption corners" in restaurants where NOAS staff display tables for customers to pick up information about adoption; they can talk to a social worker and watch videos of waiting children. Several of the Wendy's stores in the Western Reserve group have photos of NOAS waiting children and brochures with contact information hanging on restaurant walls. The Western Reserve group has also included adoption flyers in carryout bags, put adoption messages on the bottom of cash receipts, and recruited for families to be displayed on tray liners. Western Reserve Wendy's has shown an outstanding commitment and had a tremendous impact on children in foster care through the number of people it reaches who request information about adoption. From January 2002 through June 2008, over 400 intake calls (nearly 10%) have resulted from Wendy's efforts, with the largest number of contacts coming from brochures displayed at Wendy's restaurants.

CATEGORY #9 ADOPTION OF MINORITY CHILDREN FROM FOSTER CARE

AWARDEE: **Pennsylvania Statewide Adoption and Permanency Network (SWAN)**

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In 2000, the Statewide Adoption and Permanency Network (SWAN) produced and launched its first media campaign to raise awareness about children in foster care in need of adoptive families and to highlight the need for African American adoptive families. The television and radio advertisements aired in the largest media markets in Pennsylvania and were targeted specifically on stations identified as the most popular with African American and faith-based communities. SWAN also reached out to Hispanic communities to recruit prospective adoptive families by developing advertising materials in Spanish and broadcasting them in Latino markets. To enhance the adoptive family recruitment campaign, in 2003, SWAN partnered with the Pennsylvania State Foster Parent Association to begin a similar statewide foster parent recruitment campaign, targeting African American and Hispanic children. These campaigns continued through 2005 and were very successful, generating a 124% increase of approved adoptive African American families. SWAN also recognized that facing the fact that children of color are disproportionately over-represented in the foster care system is crucial. With this, SWAN began challenging workers by talking to them about how they could help change the face of the waiting population. Families who had successfully adopted older minority youth began speaking to child welfare workers about the importance of providing permanency in a timely manner to all children in foster care, which allowed the public and private child welfare workers to examine their own values. As a result of these efforts, Pennsylvania saw an increase in the number of minority children with adoption finalizations. In 2003, SWAN expanded its services by allowing child and family profiles, child preparation for permanency, and child specific recruitment to be provided prior to the goal of adoption. By performing these services prior to the goal of adoption, workers were able to identify relatives and other significant individuals that were previously unknown to them. In 2006, SWAN launched a new, Mid-Atlantic Emmy Award winning media campaign to recruit foster and adoptive families who are reflective of the children in care. Currently, Pennsylvania has more than 1,200 approved adoptive families and less than 900 children with a goal of adoption who do not have an identified adoptive family. By the end of FY 2006, 1,962 of the 3,370 children with a goal of adoption were minorities and by the end of FY 2007, 975 of the children adopted were minorities. SWAN has helped Pennsylvania make significant strides in minority adoption through its multi-faceted efforts over the past several years.

CATEGORY #10 MEDIA/PUBLIC AWARENESS OF ADOPTION FROM FOSTER CARE

AWARDEE: Summit County Children Services

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Summit County Children Services has served the needs of children and families in its community for more than 125 years. The agency is considered the “front line” for the community’s interest in protecting abused and neglected children. One way Summit County Children Services ensures that children are safe is through its recruitment outreach. In doing so, the agency has developed an innovative public awareness program, specifically for the faith community. For years, Summit County Children Services tried to develop awareness and outreach programs to reach places of worship, but had very little success. A collaborative team comprised of agency staff and clergy leaders was formed to discuss the critical need of finding permanency for children and the best way to reach and market to congregations. The outcome was the development of the Faith-Based Recruitment Tool Kit and a series of partnerships. The Tool Kit, which was officially launched in January 2008, consists of marketing and awareness materials to educate and inform the members of places of worship about foster care and adoption with Summit County Children Services. Items in the Tool Kit include bulletin inserts, posters, information pamphlets, handheld fans, magnets, and pens. In addition to these items, the agency also offers outreach opportunities such as fellowship luncheons, speakers, and prayer ministries. The agency sends a professionally produced four-minute CD that explains in detail what the Tool Kit is and how it can be used. To date, 18 places of worship have partnered with Summit County Children Services and are successfully conducting their own awareness campaigns to educate their members about foster care and adoption. The overall goal is to have 100 partnerships with places of worship at the end of 2008. Places of worship are hearing about the Tool Kit and they are requesting their own kits so they can be part of the new outreach ministry. Summit County Children Services launched another multi-media advertising campaign in May 2008 that includes television, radio, print, transit, and internet ads. Since the beginning of 2008, the agency has received nearly 500 inquiries for foster care and adoption information; 53% of these inquiries were generated by its awareness and media campaigns. Additionally, 33 successful adoption matches and 51 adoption legalizations have been made since January 2008.

AWARDEE: **World Association for Children and Parents**

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The World Association for Children and Parents (WACAP), a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization, was established in 1976 by a grassroots group of adoptive parents from Washington State. Over the past 32 years, WACAP has found loving families for more than 9,600 children and provided nutrition, healthcare, education, and essential supplies to more than 200,000 others. WACAP is committed to finding permanent families for waiting children in its home region of Puget Sound/Western Washington. To help find forever families for its children, in 2005, WACAP created “QKids: A Family For Me”, a media-based family recruitment campaign that was started with the financial and volunteer support of McGavick Graves, P.S., a Tacoma, Washington law firm with a mission of reinvesting in the community. After the McGavick Graves grant funding ended, WACAP incorporated the program in to its internal budget. Each week, QKids features

children in foster care who are in need of a permanent family. WACAP collaborates with several government, business, non-profits, and volunteer partners to make the QKids program a success. These partners include the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), community volunteers, local businesses, and the Northwest Adoption Exchange (NWAE). WACAP also collaborates with Q13/FOX TV station, which donates airtime each Monday to spotlight a waiting child and Yuen Lui Studio, a locally owned photography studio that donates professional portraits of waiting children to feature on the television and websites. Since its launch in August 2005, QKids has spotlighted 117 waiting children. The program focuses on sibling groups and children who are older and may have emotional, behavioral, or cognitive special needs. To date, 60% of the children featured on QKids have joined permanent families. Through this program, WACAP has built a strong and active partnership with a diverse group of public and private entities, community businesses, and volunteers who are all committed to the common goal of helping children find loving, permanent homes.