

**ADOPTION EXCELLENCE AWARD RECOMMENDATIONS
FOR THE YEAR 2011**

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

AWARDEE: **Lilliput Children's Services**
(Category #1 Decrease in Length of Time in Foster Care)

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Founded in 1980, Lilliput Children's Services is a licensed, statewide adoption agency that also provides foster care services to families in several California counties. The agency's strategic placement of twelve offices in Northern California has ensured that its staff is available and accessible to various counties to provide children in foster care expedient permanency services. Lilliput has finalized nearly 5,000 adoptions for California children in foster care, half of which were completed in the past five years. In counties where the agency has made the most impact, anywhere from 38% - 64% of foster adoptions were completed successfully by Lilliput. Collaboration is the model used by Lilliput to serve California children and families. The agency's working relationship and strong rapport with several California counties and agencies has been crucial to Lilliput's large number of foster adoption finalizations. Lilliput was one of the first foster family agencies to receive an adoption license, permitting them to dually certify families for both foster care and adoption. This has allowed the agency to speed the certification process for foster families who wish to adopt, giving Lilliput's placement program an average of 11 months from placement to finalization with a disruption rate of less than 10%. The placement program also provides intensive training for prospective adoptive parents, which consists of 22.5 hours held once weekly for nine weeks. Lilliput Children's Services has changed the lives of thousands of children, giving them the safe home and loving family they deserve.

AWARDEE: **Diane Dexter & Wanda Audette**
(Category #1 Decrease in Length of Time in Foster Care)

ADDRESS: Lund Family Center
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Wanda Audette and Diane Dexter are colleagues who have both devoted their personal and professional lives to children. In 2000, there were nearly 100 youth in Vermont who would age out of foster care at the age of 18 with no permanent family. While these youth waited for adoptive families, no one knew there were so many children in Vermont who needed adoptive homes. That same year, Ms. Audette, Lund Adoption Director, and Diane Dexter, State of Vermont

Adoption Director, teamed up to address the problem. They secured a federal grant and hired an international design firm and market research experts to collect research and develop an outreach plan. From this collaborative emerged Project Family, a public-private partnership to recruit families for older children in foster care. The marketing firm, DiPaola Kemp and Marketing Partners, applied market research principles and data mining to form a comprehensive public relations campaign. Under Ms. Audette and Ms. Dexter's leadership, Project Family found adoptive families for all but one of the children in its original caseload. Project Family also contributed to the decrease in the time in foster care prior to permanency with "A Day to a Lifetime." This initiative aimed to increase the number of potential adoptive families in the foster care system. It also created loving, supportive foster homes for children through statewide recruitment efforts focused on respite care capacity. Ten years after it was created, Project Family has had several major accomplishments, including:

- A reduction in the time for which a child in foster care whose parental rights were terminated waits to be adopted. In 2000, the length of time was 26 months; now it is 6 months.
- An increase in the number of resources and knowledge about the needs and expectations of potential adoptive parents and the children in foster care, which has significantly impacted the permanency rates for children in foster care.
- Found over 300 adoptive homes for older youth who were originally thought to be hard to place.

After the original Federal grant funding ended, the Vermont Legislature supported and funded Project Family as a testament to the commitment of Ms. Audette and Ms. Dexter. Their flexibility, vision, and compassion have made a significant difference to hundreds of Vermont children in foster care.

CATEGORY #2 INCREASED ADOPTIONS OF OLDER CHILDREN

AWARDEE: **Betsie Norris**
(Category #2 Increased Adoptions of Older Children)

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Betsie Norris is the founder and Executive Director of Adoption Network Cleveland, which was created in 1988. Ms. Norris also played an integral part in the creation and implementation of the *Adopt Cuyahoga's Kids Initiative*. Under her leadership, this program has been wildly successful in placing vulnerable, older youth and addressing their immediate needs to establish permanent connections. Over the years, Ms. Norris has implemented many innovative programs that have been instrumental in reducing the number of older youth available for adoption from 1,700 in 2002 to 647 in July 2011. At the heart of the *Initiative* is the Child Centered Recruitment program, which is responsible for placing 58% of children over the age of 13 and 6% over age 18. Ms. Norris also designed Adoption Navigators, a program that includes paraprofessionals who provide guidance and support to encourage prospective adoptive families

to adopt older children. Other community supports championed by Ms. Norris include Child Preparation Services, where individual and group work help older teens get ready for life in an adoptive family; support groups for potential and post-adoptive families; and Permanency Champions, where adult volunteers mentor, advocate, and provide support for teens in foster care. Ms. Norris's efforts have contributed to an atmosphere of collaboration where it never existed before by bringing together 14 public and private adoption agencies to focus on placing older youth. Without her dedication, hundreds of youth would have aged out of the foster care system without families they could call their own.

AWARDEE: **Harmony Adoptions of Tennessee, Inc.**
(Category #2 Increased Adoptions of Older Children)

ADDRESS: 131 Cherokee Heights Drive
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Harmony Adoptions of Tennessee, Inc. is a non-profit adoption agency with a mission to share life, love, and joy through adoption. Founded in 1996, the agency's primary focus is on the plight of children who languish in foster care. Harmony has developed several programs designed to find adoptive families for older, hard-to-place children and youth and to support adoptive families. One such program is *Finding our Children Unconditional Support* (FOCUS), which uses intense recruitment methods to find potential adoptive families. The FOCUS program aims to increase adoption and permanency for children age 13 and above who are in full guardianship without an identified placement or children with other barriers to permanency. FOCUS staff use a variety of tools to search deep into a youth's background and history in order to find a broader network of relationships and potential connections that might have been overlooked. Some of the processes used by FOCUS staff include interviews with children and family members, online research, genograms, and eco-mapping. Using these tools, staff can trace a youth's path through life to identify support networks that might include teachers, neighbors, and extended family. From July 2010 to May 2011, the FOCUS program served 257 hard-to-place children and youth. Of the 90% who reached permanency, 39% were adopted and 14% were reunified with birth parents or relatives. Since this program began, the average number of days a FOCUS case remained open decreased from 426 days in FY 2008 to 157 days in FY 2010. Harmony has a collaborative relationship with the Tennessee Department of Children's Services and other private provider adoption and child-serving agencies. Harmony's innovative FOCUS program has demonstrated that using intensive family-finding methods is benefitting many older Tennessee youth, adoptive families, and communities.

CATEGORY #4 SUPPORT FOR ADOPTIVE FAMILIES

AWARDEE: **American Samoa Government, Department of Human and Social Services, Adoption Division**
(Category #4 Support for Adoptive Families)

ADDRESS: Department of Human & Social Services
American Samoa Government
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The American Samoa Government's Department of Human and Social Services, Adoption Division is the primary provider of adoption support services in American Samoa. The approach and management of this division require a unique set of skills and high level of respect for Samoan traditions and culture. In American Samoa, the needs of the children and families are uniquely met through an extended communal family system. The entire extended family cares for children, which often results in biological parents giving their children to other family members through means of verbal consent. Therefore, the adoption process involves the extended family, including aunts and uncles and grandparents and the expectation is that needs are met within the framework of the extended family. In these cases, the Adoption Division is called upon to conduct assessments and home studies of biological and adoptive parents. There are also special logistical challenges for the Division because while the vast majority of adoptions occur on the main island, support services must also be provided to three islands that are a far distance for Division staff to travel with limited air and sea travel available. Despite the challenges faced by Division staff that must interact with a wide range and number of family members and travel great lengths to provide supportive services, they consistently demonstrate a high level of professionalism and skill. All services for adoptive families and extended family members are operated by the Adoption Division free of charge. Through the support that the adoptive parents receive from the Adoption Division, American Samoa has a success rate of between 50-80 adoption cases each year.

AWARDEE: **Kathi Donofro**
(Category #4 Support for Adoptive Families)

ADDRESS: Big Bend Community Based Care
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Kathy Donofro has been a strong advocate for children in foster care for over 25 years. As a result of her hard work and dedication, over 300 children have been adopted into loving families. Since 2006, Ms. Donofro has worked in her current position as a Permanency Specialist for twelve North Florida counties, supporting families in adopting children. In this role, Ms. Donofro insures that children do not languish in foster care and advocates for adoption over alternative goals, when appropriate. Ms. Donofro was the first Circuit 14 Home Finder for hard to place children and successfully found homes for many children who had been on the State's waiting list for lengthy periods of time. One of her most successful placements was that of a family of 8 siblings who wanted to remain together. Her passion and strong advocacy also led to her instrumental role in the rewrite of the Adoption Code for the State of Florida where she included language that was clear on how to recruit adoptive families, retain and support them, and engage children in understanding what adoption means. As a founding member of The Heart Gallery of North Florida, Ms. Donofro's efforts have resulted in numerous families inquiring about becoming foster and adoptive families. Ms. Donofro's education and

involvement with the judicial system on adoption issues has resulted in a better understanding of the importance of children having permanency and the supports needed to maintain adoptive families. Her varied level of involvement in the adoption process has put Ms. Donofro in a leadership role in Northern Florida as she continues to serve as a model for effective adoption support and recruitment.

AWARDEE: **Right Turn**
(Category #4 Support for Adoptive Families)

ADDRESS: 124 South 24th Street, Suite 200
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Created in 2010, Right Turn is a collaborative effort between Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska and Nebraska Children’s Homes Society. Right Turn is an innovative program that was designed to provide dedicated supportive services to children and families. The program began as a result of a few difficult cases that came out of Nebraska’s 2008 safe-haven law, which brought to light the need for post-adoption and post-guardianship support for families. The freedom and flexibility granted to program staff provides a sense of relief for families who receive supportive services to address a number of different needs. The staff at Right Turn is well known for their ability to brainstorm and find unique ways of helping families and locating services. For example, they provide hearing aids to those in need, help families to move and relocate, provide respite, and attend IEP school meetings. The types of supports offered by Right Turn motivate the staff to build a strong community network to support the families it serves. Since its inception, 254 families have been served by Right Turn and 99% of those families were able to receive the support they needed and remain intact.

CATEGORY #5 FAMILY CONTRIBUTIONS

AWARDEE: **Bernadette Dorsainville**
(Category #5 Family Contributions)

ADDRESS: 622 Delaware Avenue
Kingston, NY 12401

Bernadette Dorsainville has opened her heart and home to children in foster care for over 15 years. A single mother and nurse who works an overnight shift, Ms. Dorsainville has fostered 14 children, adopted 4 children, and is in the process of adopting another child. Her dedication to children is evidenced by the strong advocacy and tireless attention she shows to all children she encounters. To ensure that each child’s needs are addressed, Ms. Dorsainville keeps a notebook for each child tracking their educational progress, doctor’s appointments, parental visits, and all interventions necessary. Her attention to the children she has cared for often leads to uncovering needs that had previously gone unidentified. One of Ms. Dorsainville’s main goals is to create family memories for children in her care. She plans family outings and vacations for children in her home and siblings of the children under her care who live in other foster homes. Despite the

number of children she has adopted, Ms. Dorsainville will continue to foster teenagers because she wants to give hope to as many youth as possible. She is currently working with the Department of Social Services and Family of Woodstock on a proposal to supervise a home for foster youth who have reached the age of 21 and can no longer receive services under the foster care system. Her goal is to make a three bedroom home across the street from her own house into an independent living facility for youth who need support as they become adults. She plans to provide supervision and mentoring to teach them how to perform daily tasks, such as grocery shopping, financial management, and being a contributing member of the community. In addition to the positive impact she has had on her own family, Ms. Dorsainville continues to be a powerful, positive and influential role model in the lives of her entire community.

CATEGORY #7 JUDICIAL/CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM IMPROVEMENT

AWARDEE: **Judge Karen Eileen Howze**
(Category #7 Judicial or Child Welfare System Improvement)

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Judge Karen Howze began dedicating her career to children as an influential journalist with USA TODAY, where she was involved with numerous stories about children in foster care. The impact of that experience brought her to the decision to adopt 3 girls from foster care. Through her personal experiences, Judge Howze became convinced that more needed to be done on behalf of families and children involved in the foster care system. As an attorney, she began specializing in foster care and adoption cases. Over time, Judge Howze became recognized as a tenacious, passionate, and successful advocate for children and families. In 2001, she served as Special Master in the Family Division of the D.C. Superior Court, where she developed strategies and prepared judicial officers for the implementation of the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA). As a member of the Family Court Abuse and Neglect Subcommittee, Judge Howze later developed projects to promote interagency cooperation and compliance with the ASFA and its enabling legislation in Washington, D.C. In her role as an appointed Magistrate Judge of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia, Judge Howze heard criminal cases and was assigned nearly 300 cases in the Family Court. Judge Howze has also given her time and expertise as a distinguished author and presenter giving lectures on topics such as cultural issues in international adoption, processing adoptions from petition through finalization, health concerns for teens in foster care, and interstate compact on the placement of children in care. For more than two decades, Judge Howze has provided outstanding service and has been dedicated to her profession and mission of helping children in foster care.

AWARDEE: **Huron County Department of Job and Family Services - Children Services Unit**
(Category #7 Judicial or Child Welfare System Improvement)

ADDRESS: 185 Shady Lane Drive

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The Children Services Unit of the Huron County Department of Job and Family Services serves a relatively small rural community in Northwest Ohio. The agency is responsible for administering a number of public social services including Family Support, Child and Adult Protective Services, Child Care, and Workforce Development. Over the past three years, the Department has experienced several changes and in the fall of 2008, a new vision, mission, and core set of values were established that more closely aligned with community expectations and customer needs. After establishing a new Child Services Unit leadership team, there was an analysis of individual and division areas of strength and barriers to providing quality services to children and families. Areas in need of improvement were immediately prioritized and plans were developed and implemented to systemically address each issue. Among the areas of critical focus was permanency for children, which included some of the following changes to improve outcomes:

- Implemented new recruitment efforts to find families for teens;
- Required all new families to be dually licensed;
- Streamlined the process for licensure by implementing a concurrent training and home study process;
- Implemented the single worker model of service provision to ensure continuity in relationships and responsibility; and
- Included children in permanency planning efforts

Of the thirteen adoptions that occurred over 2 years, six of the children who were adopted were over the age of eight and 5 of the six children were teenagers at the time of their adoptions. Overall, the Children Services Unit has reduced all placements by 60% and reduced the number of children in permanent custody by 65%. While the Unit's numbers may be small, they represent a significant level of commitment on the part of staff who is dedicated to implementing necessary systemic changes and practices to ensure that every child waiting in foster care finds a permanent family.

AWARDEE: **Maura Corrigan**
(Category #7 Judicial or Child Welfare System Improvement)

ADDRESS: **Michigan Department of Human Services**
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Maura Corrigan, Director of the Michigan Department of Human Services (MDHS), is a tireless advocate for children and families. Ms. Corrigan was nominated for the MDHS position by Governor Rick Snyder due to her "unwavering commitment to children and families, and her unstoppable determination." Within six months of Ms. Corrigan's directorial leadership, MDHS improved its management of foster care cases so dramatically that the Agency is no longer on the precipice of being placed in Federal receivership. Ms. Corrigan defended MDHS against the alleged systemic deficiencies, economic distresses, and reports of mismanagement and improved the reputation of the agency overall. As a Supreme Court Chief Justice, Ms. Corrigan performed

the federally-dubbed “Michigan Miracle” when she rescued Michigan’s stalled effort to create a federally-mandated statewide computer system for enforcing child support orders. Ms. Corrigan also created the Michigan Adoption Forum by inviting 13 counties to participate in collaborative meetings to find barrier solutions to expedite adoptions. Due to work accomplished by the Forum, in 2009 Michigan achieved its highest number of adoptions from foster care, with 3,030 children adopted. Ms. Corrigan also created the Permanency Options Workgroup, which drafted five legislative proposals that were signed into law within two years. The bills authorized MDHS to implement concurrent planning; created subsidized guardianships for juveniles; required courts to find termination of rights to be in the child’s best interest; required courts to obtain the child’s views regarding their permanency plan; and required states to consider out-of-state placements for permanency. Ms. Corrigan’s efforts in these and other initiatives have decreased the number of children in foster care from 17,000 in 2008 to 14,500 in 2011.

AWARDEE: **Dona Ana County Child Welfare Team**
(Category #7 Judicial or Child Welfare System Improvement)

ADDRESS: C/O Children’s Court Judge Fernando R. Macias
Third Judicial District Court
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The Dona Ana County Child Welfare Team, in partnership with Judge Fernando Macias, has developed unique and innovative ways to approach safety, permanency, and well-being for children in foster care or other out-of-home placements. As the second largest county in New Mexico, Dona Ana County had finalized only 20 adoptions at the end of 2007. The County partnered with the courts to develop intervention strategies that would increase the number of adoptions and by the end of 2008, the county had finalized 62 adoptions. The number of children in care between 24-35 months (14% in 2010) and the number of children in care for 3 or more years (15% in 2010) also decreased consistently every year. In the two years between 2008 and 2010, the Dona Ana County Child Welfare Team completed another 65 adoptions. These tremendous accomplishments were achieved by implementing practices that included establishing additional in-home services, implementing family-centered meetings and adoption and adolescence review teams, establishing concurrent planning and legal debriefings, increasing staff training, developing paced/interval permanency reviews, and increasing the emphasis on recruitment and retention. Judicial contributions and collaborations also contributed to the County’s success, including the New Mexico Court Improvement Project, staff brown bag luncheons, open adoption mediations; open docket settings for Adoption Finalization; Kids Day in Court; frequent judicial reviews; expedited adjudication timeframes; and the Children’s Law Institute Annual Conference. The Dona Ana County Child Welfare Team has overcome unique challenges, including its geographical location, and has found creative ways to provide effective and culturally competent solutions to a variety of permanency related barriers.

CATEGORY #8 ADOPTION OF MINORITY CHILDREN FROM FOSTER CARE

AWARDEE: **Catherine A. Swessel**
(Category #8 Adoption of Minority Children from Foster Care)

ADDRESS: Children’s Service Society of Wisconsin
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Catherine Swessel has spent her entire professional career serving children, youth, and families. Ms. Swessel has worked at Children’s Service Society of Wisconsin for 32 years, where she is the Director of Special Needs Adoption and oversees 1 of 3 state adoption regions and all adoptions performed on behalf of the Bureau of Milwaukee Child Welfare. Established in 1889, Children’s Service Society of Wisconsin (CSSW) is the largest private, nonprofit, non-sectarian provider of community-based child and family and child welfare services in Wisconsin. Over 90% of the children served in Ms. Swessel’s jurisdiction are African-American. The agency assumed responsibility for special needs adoption services in September 2001 and from the start, Ms. Swessel ensured that her staff understood that every case is a child and every child deserves a permanent, loving home. She also believed that the quality of adoption services was more important than the mere number of services and she practiced this in her work and supervision. Ms. Swessel led her foster care program to participate in “dual licensure”, where staff assigned to foster care and adoption cases were required to work together on conducting home studies. After 5 years of implementing this promising practice in her program, Ms. Swessel bid on and received a state contract to fully integrate foster care and adoption services. By increasing community and political interest, Ms. Swessel led the program to acquire and license nearly 200 new foster and adoptive homes in just 12 months, a challenge set forth in the contract she was awarded by the state of Wisconsin. Under her leadership over a nine year period, CSSW found adoptive homes for 3,000 children in foster care in Milwaukee County.

AWARDEE: **Jeri Jasken**
(Category #8 Adoption of Minority Children from Foster Care)

ADDRESS: **White Earth Adoption Agency**
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Jeri Jasken has been the Director of the White Earth Indian Child Welfare Division since 1996. During her tenure, Ms. Jasken has expanded the child welfare program to meet the needs of Tribal members of the White Earth Reservation in Minnesota. Serving an average of 115 youth, this program provides services such as mental health social workers and substance abuse counselors, independent living skills, urban social services, child protection services, and foster care. Ms. Jasken does everything possible to reunify children safely with their parents and works tirelessly to provide culturally appropriate services to meet the needs of Native American youth, including talking circles, tribal-family meetings and traditional healers. Ms. Jasken was instrumental in developing the customary adoption process that is a successful tool used by White Earth Tribal Court and other Tribes to provide permanency for Native American children. Her vision and perseverance spread to Tribal elders, attorneys, judges, and members of the Tribal

Court who all worked together to develop the code that would later give authority for the court to complete adoptions. Her active leadership has helped over 250 Native American children find permanency through the customary adoption process in the White Earth Tribal Court. Ms. Jasken's unwavering dedication also resulted in White Earth becoming one of only three Tribes in Minnesota to begin implementing a grant that helped build systems collaboration between the Tribal and county services and transferred responsibility to provide child welfare services for American Indian children and the related funding from the county to the Tribe. The project also improved permanency outcomes for children at risk of or in out of home placements and provided substance abuse treatment and services to caregivers and their children in rural areas.

AWARDEE: **Reverend Dr. DeForest B. Soaries, Jr.**
(Category #8 Adoption of Minority Children from Foster Care)

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Reverend Dr. DeForest Soaries, Jr. is the founder and CEO of Harvest of Hope Family Services Network, Inc (HOH). With the help of the New Jersey Division of Youth and Family Services and the First Baptist Community Development Corporation, Dr. Soaries originally started this program in 1996 to assist with the boarder baby crisis in New Jersey. The HOH approach was to identify and train foster parents from a network of churches throughout the State. Since its inception, HOH has achieved an 85% annual retention rate of foster parents. The HOH program expanded its services from placing babies to include the placement of children, teens, and sibling groups and it has been licensed as a full service adoption agency. Harvest of Hope also manages a separate family reunification component which facilitates weekly family visits; provides assistance to the State agency in facilitating placements; and it connects foster parents with ongoing training. Dr. Soaries is the Senior Pastor of the First Baptist Church of Lincoln Gardens in Somerset, New Jersey and the program's affiliation with the church lends itself to easier access to resources, such as training, administrative support, and church volunteers who help children in foster care. Dr. Soaries' success through his ministry includes recruitment of over 300 families to become foster parents to 700 children and he has helped over 200 minority children find adoptive homes. The program has also served hundreds of youth in after school and entrepreneurial programs and other means of community development. In addition to his pastoral duties, Dr. Soaries is a public speaker, former government official and chairman of the U.S. Election Assistance Commission, and he has received numerous awards for his leadership and community service.

CATEGORY #9 MEDIA/PUBLIC AWARENESS OF ADOPTION FROM FOSTER CARE

AWARDEE: **Honorable Martha Walsh Hood & the 5th Judicial District National Adoption Day Committee**
(Category #9 Media/Public Awareness of Adoption from Foster Care)

ADDRESS: Onondaga County Family Court, Room 109
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The Honorable Martha Walsh Hood, Supervising Family Court Judge for the 5th Judicial District in Central New York, had a vision eleven years ago after reading about National Adoption Day efforts across the country. Judge Hood thought about children in foster care in her own community, their lack of voice and need for loving, permanent families. She was determined to be the voice these children needed and created an opportunity on a local level to raise awareness of children in foster care who were available for adoption. The first Annual Onondaga County National Adoption Day event was held in November 2001 with a small group of people gathered in a courtroom to recognize and celebrate children who had been adopted. Judge Hood then handpicked a select group of people who she knew would be devoted to the cause and purpose of the event. This National Adoption Day Committee included Court personnel, local Department of Social Services staff, attorneys, and non-profit agency representatives. The Committee worked year round to ensure success of the annual event. The event has evolved over the past 11 years into a community affair that draws over 600 people and finalizes an average of 50 adoptions on one day. As word spread about the National Adoption Day event, invitations and participation grew to include the highest ranking Judge in the State of New York, Honorable Judith Kaye, and neighboring counties within Central New York. Eventually, adoptions from across six counties were recognized and finalized at the event. After much success by 2009, the number of children adopted grew and a special touch was added to the ceremony. As each child was adopted, the presiding Judge would ring a bell to symbolize that a family was born. Today, the National Adoption Day ceremony and celebration is a collaborative community event that includes an inner city youth music group; the Onondaga County Sheriff's Department, who supplies fingerprinting and issues child identification cards; a local photographer who snaps the first family photo of a newly adoptive family; and presentation of a large gift bag for adoptive families. The Honorable Martha Walsh Hood and the National Adoption Day Committee have remained the driving force behind the success of this local event and the creation of partnerships within their community to positively impact the lives of so many children and families.

AWARDEE: **Kim Johnson**
(Category #9 Media/Public Awareness of Adoption from Foster Care)

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Kim Johnson made the difficult decision to leave her job as an attorney in 2007 to serve as the Adoption Specialist for Partnership for Strong Families. Within the same year, Ms. Johnson was promoted to the Adoption Program Manager position to oversee the Adoption Department at the lead agency over foster care and adoption in 13 counties in North Central Florida. Two years later, Ms. Johnson attended an adoption conference where her passion for her work took on an even greater meaning after hearing Pat O'Brien's *You Gotta Believe* presentation which

highlighted the need for adoptive families for older youth. Shortly after the conference, Ms. Johnson and her husband adopted a 17-year old teenager. The Johnson family felt that they had been given an amazing gift through the adoption of their son and have been moved to share with others the job of adoption. In 2010, Ms. Johnson contacted Pat O'Brien to thank him for influencing her and her family. She was later invited to participate in a live radio interview on Mr. O'Brien's radio show to discuss her family's experience. This helped propel the Johnson family into the public eye with their personal story and they were soon invited to the 2010 Governor's Event in Tallahassee to celebrate adoptions and kickoff National Adoption Month for the State of Florida. The event was televised on public television statewide and it was segmented on the local news with a corresponding article in the local newspaper. Ms. Johnson continues to reach out to the public and her local community through additional media efforts focused on the adoption of teens. She had an article published in a local newspaper and received much positive feedback about its impact on how people view adoption. Ms. Johnson has made it her mission to share with others the joy brought to her and her family from adopting. Through her work and personal commitments, she continues to pave the way for children and youth in foster care.

AWARDEE: **Lynne Hayes-Freeland & KDKA-TV**
(Category #9 Media/Public Awareness of Adoption from Foster Care)

ADDRESS: KDKA-TV
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In the expert hands of Lynne Hayes-Freeland, a KDKA-TV reporter, a special event unfolds in Pittsburgh every two weeks. While there are other programs in Ms. Hayes-Freeland's area that spread the word about the more than 5,000 waiting children in Pennsylvania, no others do what she and KDKA do with such passion and on such a large and consistent scale. Ms. Hayes-Freeland features children in foster care on her bi-weekly KDKA program, *Waiting Child*. The program could not happen without effective collaboration, which Ms. Hayes-Freeland has secured with SWAN, Three Rivers Adoption Council, and business owners who generously sponsor "wishes" of the waiting children. Her overall impact is significant with nearly 70% of the children featured on the program placed in permanent homes. Ms. Hayes-Freeland has worked with *Waiting Child* for over 20 years; she and KDKA recently introduced the 533rd child on their program. A media leader in community affairs, KDKA is one of Pennsylvania's oldest television stations and one of Pittsburgh's most civic-minded. The station's long standing history and successful attributes have made it rich with resources over the years. Ms. Hayes-Freeland takes full advantage of these resources by reaching out to all corners to find homes and resources for the children featured on her program. Throughout its 29 year history, KDKA has remained steadfast in its commitment to the purpose of *Waiting Child*, using the power of its voice to reach out to an audience who may be able to help. KDKA-TV seeks to provide adoption opportunities for all waiting children and has made this part of its mission. The station lives out this mission by using Ms. Hayes-Freeland's expert talents to put a name, face, and personality to waiting children across Western Pennsylvania.