

- Established a partnership with two faith-based institutions in Hartford to provide church-based recruitment of resource families.

Ms. Conyers has advocated for the needs of adoptive families and became a special needs adoptive parent herself. She spearheaded an initiative that led to a new policy under which the Village provides reimbursement for fees/ expenses for their employees who adopt a child.

AWARDEE: **Illinois Department of Children and Family Services** **(Category #3 Increased Permanency for Children with Special Needs)**

ADDRESS: 406 East Monroe, Station #70
Springfield, IL 62701-1498
217-785-2509
217-785-1052 FAX
mcdonald@adcfstate.il.us

Through the leadership of the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), the State of Illinois has restructured its permanency options in ways that build on the strengths and cultural traditions of the African-American family and turned kinship into a positive advantage for achieving permanency. During the late 80's and early 90's there was a radical increase in the number of Illinois foster children living with kin. By June 1996, 61% of all Illinois children in foster care were living with kin. While the use of kinship care was a significant success, DCFS recognized that children in kinship care had longer lengths of stay, partly because they were less likely than children in non-related foster care to exit the system through adoption or reunification. By 1996 Illinois had the highest rate of kinship care in the country, a fact that prompted the Department to rethink its attitudes and policies toward kinship care and permanency. Illinois redesigned its system to be responsive to the strengths and culture of African-American families by initiating three program components:

- The Subsidized Guardianship Waiver Demonstration provided subsidies to families who assume private guardianship of foster children.
- A performance contracting payment system was implemented for the Cook County Home of Relative Programs to reward agencies for the attainment of permanency goals.
- A package of State legislative reform, called the Permanency Initiative, was implemented to shorten the judicial timeline for finalizing permanency plans.

The new casework processes resulted in more adoptions than ever anticipated. The results were striking:

- Kinship adoptions accounted for 58% of adoptions in 1999, up from 43% in 1996;
- An evaluation study showed that the addition of the subsidized guardianship option improves permanency performance without detracting from either adoptions or reunification with parents;
- Another study compared four groups of children who entered care from 1991 - 1997 and found that kinship care provides a significant incentive for permanency for the children who entered the system after the reforms were initiated;

AWARDEE: **African American Adoption Agency** **(Category #5 Public Awareness)**

ADDRESS: 1821 University Avenue
Suite N-263
St. Paul, MN 55104
651-659-0460
651-644-5306 FAX
afadopt@afadopt.org

The African American Adoption Agency (AAAA) is based in St. Paul, Minnesota. AAAA has successfully used mass marketing, cultural connections and community relations to raise awareness and galvanize the community to address the issue of the disproportionate number of African-American children waiting for permanent homes in the State of Minnesota. Although African-Americans constitute just five percent of the population in the State, African American children comprise 43% of the foster care population. The following strategies resulted in 40 adoption finalizations in 2001 and 2002:

- Faith Outreach - Recognizing that a vast majority of adoptive parents are active in their faith community, AAAA made connections with more than 12 faith communities in 2001. Many prospective parents attended orientation meetings as a direct result.
- Professional and Corporate Connections - Partnering with all echelons of the working world, AAAA has formed alliances with American Express, Minnesota Minority Business Association, and over 60 businesses.
- Community Group Recruitment - Community-based organizations such as YWCA and YMCA are well established in the community and offer a family focused recruitment outlet. AAAA has hosted current and prospective adoptive parents at YWCAs and formed partnerships with other organizations such as the Commission on Minnesota's African American Children to connect to other influential community voices.

AAAA has made strides in finding permanent homes for waiting children through its outreach and public awareness efforts. The community has responded by finding homes for more than 260 waiting children.

AWARDEE: **Indiana's Adoption Initiative** **(Category #5 Public Awareness)**

ADDRESS: C/o Children's Bureau of Indianapolis, Inc
615N. Alabama Street #426
Indianapolis, IN 46204
317-264-2700
317-264-2714 FAX
Ssmock@childrensbureau.org

Indiana's Adoption Initiative is an ongoing campaign designed to educate individuals throughout the state about the need for adoptive homes for Indiana special needs children.

- The program is a collaborative partnership with the Indiana Special Needs Adoption Program (ISNAP) and Licensed Child Placing Agencies statewide.

- Other linkages are maintained with Central Indiana Wendy's Cooperative for publicity during Adoption Month, Sears Department Stores for photography services, and media partners throughout the State.
- Statewide Adoption Informational Fairs are held 2-3 times per year with the support of local businesses.
- During the year 2001, Indiana's Adoption Initiative recorded 18,359 inquiries from prospective adoptive parents as a result of recruitment efforts through this program. This compares to only 220 adoption-related inquiries reported by the Bureau in 1996, just prior to the program's launch.

CATEGORY #6 INDIVIDUAL AND/OR FAMILY CONTRIBUTIONS

AWARDEE: **Tom and Elizabeth Richmond** **(Category #5 Individual and/or Family Contributions)**

ADDRESS: 1204 Glenwood
Peoria, IL 61606
309-672-2377
309-672-2958 FAX

Since becoming foster parents in 1993, Tom and Elizabeth have parented or provided respite care for 15 children. The Richmonds have adopted three children, Danielle, age 14, Caden, 8, and Olivia, 3, all having special needs.

- Elizabeth Richmond's interest in helping children in need was sparked during her internship at a crisis nursery as a college senior. She has since become one of Illinois' most vocal advocates for children and the parents who care for them, whether birth, foster or adoptive.
- Tom and Elizabeth's commitment has had an impact within their own family, in their Peoria community, and across the State. They are frequently invited to participate in policy discussions at the State level.
- Elizabeth successfully advocated for establishing the Illinois Adoption Advisory Council to ensure that children and families have the resources they need to move to permanency through adoption.
- The Richmonds were instrumental in implementing the Foster Parent Law, revising DCFS Foster Parent Licensing Standards and securing appropriate resources for foster and adoptive families.
- Elizabeth continues to volunteer at the Crisis Nursery. She also serves as Co-Chair for the Central Region Foster Care Advisory Council, and serves as a trainer for the DCFS Foster and Adoptive Parent PRIDE training curriculum. She has served on the following State level organizations:
 - Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council
 - Child Welfare Advisory Council
 - North American Council on Adoptable Children, Conference Planning Committee
 - DCFS Infrastructure Committee
 - Best Practice Committee

AWARDEE: Allison Rosati, News Anchor

(Category #5 Individual and/or Family Contributions)

ADDRESS: 454 North Columbus Drive
Chicago, IL 60611
312-836-5555
312-527-4238 FAX

Allison Rosati's passion for giving a voice to children underscores her personal and professional approach as an award winning news anchor. Having once been a foster child, she understands and relates to children who long for a stable family structure. Now a newscaster with NBC 5 Chicago, she:

- Enthusiastically accepted the position as host of the Wednesday's Child feature, and dedicated herself to developing a unique segment for each child.
- Dedicated herself to finding permanent placements for children. As a result in two years, 23 adoptions have been finalized, four children are with guardianship families and 59 children are moving toward permanency with identified families.
- Works closely with the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and her producers on each segment to feature a child in a uniquely positive way. Learning that one child loved airplanes, she arranged for the Chicago Chapter of the Tuskegee Airmen to take the boy up for his first ride. As he learned about both flight and Black history, the news team captured images of a child who is exuberant, curious, and happy.

Allison's extraordinary commitment is evident in the way she approaches each segment, how she instructs the production team and how she reaches out to each child.

AWARDEE: Jess McDonald, Director

(Category #5 Individual and/or Family Contributions)

ADDRESS: Illinois Department of Children and Family
Services
406 East Monroe, Station#70
Springfield, IL 62701
217-785-2509
217-785-1052 FAX
mcdonald@idcfs.state.il.us

Under the leadership of Jess McDonald, Director of the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services, the department has made dramatic improvement in securing permanency for Illinois children. Through strategic partnerships, program innovations and bold leadership, Director McDonald has orchestrated an agency success story so striking it has become the basis for a case study at Harvard's Kennedy School of Public Policy. He had a distinguished career in State government, and assumed the directorship of the department in 1994. Director McDonald has long recognized the vital role of partnerships in reform and has reached out to the courts as well as to child welfare agencies personally to demonstrate his commitment. His initial partnership with Cook County Juvenile Court judges resulted in:

CATEGORY #8 PHILANTHROPY

AWARDEE: **Daunte Culpepper, Minnesota Vikings** **(Category #8 Philanthropy)**
African American Adoption Agency
Celebrity Spokesperson

ADDRESS: African American Adoption Agency
1821 University Avenue
Suite N-263
St. Paul, MN 55104
651-659-0460
651-644-5306 FAX
afadopt@afadopt.org

Daunte Culpepper, quarterback for the Minnesota Vikings, is celebrity spokesperson for the African American Adoption Agency (AAAA) in St. Paul, Minnesota. Duante, himself adopted, is personally committed to help finding permanent homes for Minnesota's more than 350 waiting children of color. While Duante's generosity has resulted in significant direct and indirect financial support, his philanthropic contributions are much more far-reaching. He has

- Made substantial contributions by donating the proceeds from television appearances, organizing his own celebrity basketball tournament, committing proceeds from the National Quarterback of the Year awards banquet and much more;
- Hosted the AAAA Annual Celebrity Golf Tournament and raised an additional \$30,000 for the agency;
- Provided key financial support in helping the agency actualize its mission to find permanent and loving homes for older African American children in the child welfare system;
- Engaged the business community and private donors with his strong community presence and notoriety;
- Dispelled pervasive misconceptions about adopting African American boys by speaking openly about his experience as an adopted child in more than 40 media interviews;
- Focused important local and national media attention on waiting children.

Duante is the face of adoption. He helps overcome stereotypes and build community connections. By sharing his story, he has helped the AAAA place more than 260 children in their forever homes.

AWARDEE: **Freddie Mac Foundation** **(Category #8 Philanthropy)**

ADDRESS: 8200 Jones Branch Road
McLean, VA 22102
703-918-8888
703-918-8895 FAX

The Freddie Mac Foundation helps children fulfill the dream of having a family of their own. The Foundation was founded in 1991 as a nonprofit organization dedicated to opening doors to hope and opportunity for children, youth and their families.

- Freddie Mac and the Foundation have invested more than \$130 million in nonprofit organizations that serve children and families.
- The Wednesday's Child program was started in 1992 as a feature of the local news in Washington, D.C. It has become a beacon for the Foundation to highlight the needs of children waiting for adoptive families and has grown to include the Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, Dallas and Atlanta television markets, reaching millions.
- In Illinois, the Foundation works with the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (IDCFS) and NBC 5 to fund the adoption feature that focuses on finding homes for sibling groups and children with special needs or medical conditions.
- Freddie Mac's philanthropy makes a specific and critical difference for local agencies that serve children in foster care. There are countless examples:
 - In Illinois, the Foundation supports programs to prevent child abuse and neglect, implement early intervention services, and provide supervised living programs for children aging out of foster care.
 - For one agency in Maryland, the Freddie Mac grant of \$100,000 over two years supplemented critical services designed to place older foster care children in permanent homes.

Freddie Mac stands out as a foundation that understands the whole picture of achieving permanency for children in foster care: public awareness and education about the need, parent recruitment, family training, skillful assessment, matching and placement, and post-adoption follow-up and support.

CATEGORY #9 JUDICIAL OR CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM IMPROVEMENT

AWARDEE: **Massachusetts Coalition for Permanency (Category #9 Judicial or Child Welfare
for Children and System Improvement)
Betsy Neisner, Chairperson**

ADDRESS: MCPC
PO Box 268
Leverett, MA 01054
413-367-0015
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massadoption@aol.com

The Massachusetts Coalition for Permanency for Children (MCPC) is a multidisciplinary group with representation from the courts, public/private child welfare agencies, attorneys and community advocates, as well as, birth, foster and adoptive families across the Commonwealth. Their common interest is the approximately 3,400 waiting children in foster care who need permanent homes and their birth families.

- Since 1997 MCPC has been meeting on a monthly basis - all members donating their time, energy, and expertise.
- The Coalition identified the need for implementation of a permanency mediation model in Massachusetts. To that end, the Coalition engaged in:
 - a national research effort to identify models used in child welfare,

- defined the optimal model for Massachusetts,
- worked with key policymakers and legislators to educate them about the need,
- secured permanent State funding to provide Permanency Mediation services for child welfare cases across the state in every Probate and Family and Juvenile Court in FY2000.
- Now in its third year the Permanency Mediation program offers an alternative to contested court proceedings. Where a contested legal process takes an average of two to three years to resolve permanency, a mediated permanency agreement takes three to five months after the parties agree to mediate.
- In the first year, 450 children were referred to the program, in the second year 518 children were served. Massachusetts is now a national model for Permanency mediation thanks in large part to the Massachusetts Coalition for Permanency for Children under the chairmanship of Betsy Neisner.

AWARDEE: **Erie County Court Improvement Project** **(Category #9 Judicial or Child Welfare System Improvement)**

ADDRESS: Erie County Family Court
 One Niagara Plaza
 Buffalo, NY 14202
 716-858-8184
 716-858-7115 FAX
stownsen@courts.state.ny.us
 The Honorable Sharon S. Townsend

The Court Improvement Project (CIP) is a collaboration of the Erie County Family Court, Erie County Department of Social Services, New York State Office of Children and Family Services, child welfare agencies, legal advocates, and service providers. Begun in 1998 it was born of the commitment to a process of long-term system change.

- At its inception, a child placed in a foster/adoptive family could expect to remain in the system for 6 ½ years through the finalization of his adoption.
- Five years later, the number of children in foster care has decreased by 44% and more than 900 children have been adopted into permanent families.
- Another key strength of the systems change effort has been consistent multi-disciplinary training on practice areas ranging from the preparation of permanency hearing petitions, to the psychopharmacology of drug addiction, to childhood attachment and bonding. More than 1,500 professionals, foster parents and adoptive parents have received training through the CIP training program.
- System-wide change has affected nearly every step of a child welfare case. This pervasive change was made possible by the dedication of more than 175 community stakeholders who actively participated in CIP subcommittees, made change recommendations and assisted in their implementation.
- A project newsletter, The Same Page, communicates project barriers and successes.
- Erie County's collaboration efforts are affecting practice statewide. Trainings have been replicated in various parts of New York State, and Erie County provides active technical assistance to the surrounding eight counties that comprise the Eighth Judicial District.

AWARDEE: **Catawba County Department of Social Services** **(Judicial or Child Welfare System Improvement)**

ADDRESS: PO Box 669
Newton, NC 28658
828-695-5600
828-695-2497 FAX
Bobby@mail.co.catawba.nc.us

From 1998 through 2002, Family Builders of Catawba Valley (FBCV), the adoption unit of Catawba County Social Services, created a dramatic change in the county's foster care population. Adoption increased by 50%; the foster care population decreased; more children exited the county's custody; and the median number of days in foster care changed from 18 months to 11 months. FBCV partnered with the entire child welfare division of the agency and undertook three major system reforms to realize these achievements:

- The Kellog Foundation's Families for Kids initiative coupled with requirements of the Adoption and Safe Families Act created a shift in agency philosophy that permeated the entire community. The agency agreed to "look through the eyes of a child" and embrace the concept that ALL children are adoptable regardless of age or special needs. This philosophy underscored numerous policy and practice reforms.
- Court Improvement Initiatives redesigned the court system to include day one conferences involving all parties; pre-hearing conferences; more frequent case reviews; and special sessions to hear termination of parental rights cases. Quarterly meetings of judges and staff continue to address barriers to permanency.
- Expanded adoption recruitment was instituted to address the disproportionate number of African-American children in foster care. FBCV used a variety of creative and collaborative approaches.

The entire child welfare staff has celebrated these accomplishments together and remain committed to system reform and accountability to ensure that all Catawba County children are safe in a nurturing home.