

ADOPTION EXCELLENCE AWARD RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE YEAR 2009

There are a total of sixteen recommended awards out of nine award categories.

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

Two nominations were reviewed. None are recommended for award.

CATEGORY #2 INCREASED ADOPTIONS OF OLDER CHILDREN

Three nominations were reviewed. None are recommended for award.

CATEGORY #3 INTERJURISDICTIONAL ADOPTIONS

Two nominations were reviewed. None are recommended for award.

CATEGORY #4 SUPPORT FOR ADOPTIVE FAMILIES

Eight nominations were reviewed. Two are recommended for award.

AWARDEE: *Creating a Family, Internet Radio Show*
 (Category #4 Support for Adoptive Families)

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 Brevard, North Carolina 28712
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 dawn@creatingafamily.com

Creating a Family is a one-hour, weekly internet radio show that provides resources, education, and support to adoptive families. Each week, the host, Dawn Davenport, an adoption educator, interviews leading experts on topics of interest to families considering adoption and families that have already adopted. The show educates adoptive parents about their options, how to adopt, and covers issues they and their children may face post-adoption. There is no charge for any of the shows and the host and guest experts donate their time. *Creating a Family* has promoted adoption from foster care since its inception in October 2007. Since then, there have been a number of shows, which are all archived, on topics ranging from open adoption and the rewards and challenges of adopting older children to post adoption depression and special issues facing adoptive families. The show provides a platform to reach a wider and more diverse audience to help prepare, train, and support adoptive families and prospective adoptive families. A link to

the show is shared and posted on other websites, which helps to increase its outreach. As of May 2009, over 60,000 people have listened to the *Creating a Family* show. Internet radio and podcasts are on the leading edge of communication and social networking, which makes the *Creating a Family* show more appealing to those adoptive and prospective adoptive parents who take advantage of the technology. The show is now the #1 ranked adoption podcast on iTunes. All shows are downloadable and available through internet forums, podcasts, Facebook, and Twitter. *Creating a Family* has proven itself in leading the way toward reaching the next generation of adoptive parents through cutting-edge media.

AWARDEE: **Generations of Hope**
 (Category #4 Support for Adoptive Families)

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 Rantoul, IL 61866
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Generations of Hope, a nonprofit corporation, has changed the way social services are provided to children and families by using “community” as an intervention. The organization created Hope Meadows, a planned multigenerational neighborhood, where families who agree to adopt children from the foster care system live in exchange for below market-rate rent. Older adults who volunteer six hours per week also live at Hope Meadows and provide endless support to the families. Elders also receive benefits in the way of maintaining meaningful relationships and purposeful engagement until the end of life. The community includes approximately 12 families, 50 children, and 60 adults. Hope Meadows accepts applications from prospective parents throughout the United States and must complete a thorough screening process, including background checks, fingerprinting, and licensing training. All prospective parents must agree to adopt three to four children from the foster care system and great care is given to the matching process. To ensure income, Generations of Hope pays the family a salary, which allows one parent to stay home. In addition to an income, the organization provides health insurance, housing, and retirement benefits. Generations of Hope also provides training to prepare families for adoption and offers ongoing support after the adoption, including monthly Family Team Meetings with staff, life skills training, and opportunities to attend conferences and seminars. The organization supports and empowers the youth by offering a supervised place where teens can congregate and an “Intergenerational Center,” which is the center of daily activities, such as a children’s library, computer lab, kitchen, and open space for other enrichment and social gatherings. Other built-in services include counseling, tutoring, and educational field trips. A strong component of this community program is the use of older adults as Senior Volunteers who provide indispensable support to parents and their children. After nearly 20 years of providing services and by the end of 2008, Hope Meadow’s adoption rate was nearly 90%. Other indicators of the program’s success include over 50 children growing up in loving, adoptive homes and 12 sibling groups were kept together.

CATEGORY #5 INDIVIDUAL AND/OR FAMILY CONTRIBUTIONS

Twenty nominations were reviewed. Nine are recommended for award.

AWARDEE: **Joshua Ledbetter & Bethany Ledbetter Blank**
(Category #5 Individual and/or Family Contributions)

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Joshua Ledbetter and Bethany Ledbetter Blank are siblings who have served as remarkable examples in their homes and community as advocates for children. Their mother, Karen Ledbetter, and her late husband have nine children - including biological, adopted, and foster children. Foster care is a long-standing tradition in the Ledbetter family; Ms. Karen Ledbetter's great-grandmother, grandmother, and mother have all been foster parents. One of Joshua and Bethany's siblings, Jared ("JD"), was adopted at age three with special needs. JD cannot walk, sit independently, feed himself, or speak. He is completely dependent on those around him and Joshua and Bethany have always been there to support JD and provide him with anything he needs. Bethany enjoys dancing with JD in his wheelchair and is particularly helpful to JD at home, where she is a constant source of assistance to her mother and brother. Despite their 10-year age difference, Joshua is known as JD's best friend. Joshua makes special efforts to give JD the life of a boy without disabilities. Because of Joshua, JD has been skateboarding, skiing, snowboarding, bowling, and he is on swim teams. They can frequently be found hanging out at the movies or riding go-carts during their "boy's night out." Joshua is always willing to take his brother out with him and used to call JD his "chick magnet" when he would take him to the mall to hang out with his friends. Joshua gives credit to JD for enriching his life. Joshua and Bethany have always known that their relationship with JD was special. As teenagers, they knew that others in their situation would not have dedicated so much of their time to a sibling with or without disabilities. The siblings are never too busy to take time to help JD or to serve as his advocate. They have sacrificed their time and energy over the past 13 years to assure that JD has a wonderful life.

AWARDEE: **Rita Goodman**
(Category #5 Individual and/or Family Contributions)

ADDRESS: Clayton County Department of Family & Children Services
Clayton County DFCS
877 Battlecreek Road
Jonesboro, Georgia 30236

Rita Goodman has been an adoption case manager in Clayton County, Georgia for six years. She has always shown great compassion and determination in finding permanent homes for children in foster care and has worked incredibly hard to network in the community and statewide to secure services and resources for adoptive families and children. Ms. Goodman has a strong partnership with the judicial system and a good relationship with the adoption attorneys, which has helped expedite the adoption process for families. Ms. Goodman has found ways to streamline the adoption process to shorten the time it takes from the Termination of Parental

Rights to finalizations down to approximately two to three months. In 2006 and 2008, Ms. Goodman was named “Queen of Adoptions” in the Metropolitan area of Atlanta for securing the most adoptions in a fiscal year. Ms. Goodman’s dedication, energy, and skill are key to her success. Since 2003, she has placed 113 children with permanent families, including 18 sibling groups. She has also achieved permanency for over 17 children over the age of 14 and placed 20 children with severe emotional, behavior, or medical difficulties. Colleagues admire Ms. Goodman for her ability to “think outside the box” and maintain numerous community connections. She has a great knowledge of the local county offices, private agencies, mental health and medical providers, and the education system. If she has trouble locating resources, Ms. Goodman is not afraid to ask for help and quickly finds what is needed to help children and families. Ms. Goodman also exhibits strong leadership skills by voluntarily helping other permanency staff talk with children about their feelings before termination of parental rights and teaching new staff about adoption policy.

AWARDEE: **Tammy DeHesa**
(Category #5 Individual and/or Family Contributions)

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Tammy DeHesa is the Founder and Executive Director of Making a Difference Association, a non-profit organization that provides education, support, and programs to adoptive, foster, relative caregivers, and biological parents of children that have been drug, alcohol or trauma exposed. In addition, Ms. DeHesa works part-time as a Parent Leader Coordinator for Parents Anonymous. In this role, she oversees and coordinates all activities relating to the California State Parents Team (CSPT), which ensures that parents are actively engaged in the planning and implementation of family support and child welfare services statewide. Ms. DeHesa works diligently to increase the number of children who are adopted from foster care by promoting awareness, providing services and supports, and helping to advance national, state, and county policy. Her work on several boards, committees, and task forces have given Ms. DeHesa the opportunity to speak out on issues relating to the importance of permanent homes for children in foster care. Ms. DeHesa promotes and values collaborative partnerships to achieve permanency for children in the child welfare system and shows her commitment to collaboration by including it as the foundation of her non-profit organization. She routinely partners with parents and caregivers, social workers, community organizations, and other systems that work together to promote permanency for children, including national organizations like the National Foster Parents Association and the National Alliance for Drug Endangered Children. Ms. DeHesa has helped to create community resources and programs, including monthly support groups, training nights, a lending library, and a *giving center* that provides families in San Bernardino County with needed items to care for children with special needs. Always striving to lead by example, as a foster and adoptive parent of nine children, Ms. DeHesa encourages her children to become involved in their community to help other foster and adopted children.

AWARDEE: **Sharen E. Ford, Ph.D.**
(Category #5 Individual and/or Family Contributions)

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Division of Child Welfare
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Sharen E. Ford, Ph.D. has been a committed advocate for waiting children for 25 years. During her career, Dr. Ford has worked tirelessly to improve the lives of children waiting in the Colorado foster care system. She is currently the Manager of the Permanency Unit of the Colorado Department of Human Services, where she oversees seven programmatic areas, including the Adoption Program. Dr. Ford has provided leadership to child welfare by serving in many different capacities, including her position as President of the National Association of State Adoption Programs (NASAP) and the Association of Administrators of the Interstate Compact on Adoption and Medical Assistance (AAICAMA). One of her greatest achievements has been the contributions she has made through her work with faith-based collaborations. In November 2008, Dr. Ford spearheaded an event, “Wait No More: Finding Families for Colorado’s Waiting Kids,” that brought together more than 50 organizations (1,300 people attended) to find families for the nearly 600 children waiting in the Colorado foster care system. As a result of the conference, 260 families moved ahead with the homestudy process. The 2008 conference served as a template for other States to address the same issue and a second annual “Wait No More” event is planned for Colorado later this year. Recognition of her work in faith-based recruitment has earned her the invitation to speak to and train others in implementing collaborations with faith communities across the county. Other accomplishments include Dr. Ford’s work as faculty and coach to the Minority Adoption Leadership Development Institute (MALDI), national presentations and trainings on Special Needs Adoption, and authoring numerous trainings and publications. Dr. Ford’s outstanding contributions to child welfare have resulted in more than 20,000 waiting Colorado children placed for adoption in her 25 years working for the State and nearly 2,000 adoptive families served by the Colorado Post Adoption Resource Center, which she initiated in partnership with The Adoption Exchange.

AWARDEE: **Honorable Michael Nash**
(Category #5 Individual and/or Family Contributions)

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The Honorable Michael Nash is the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court of Los Angeles (LA) who has demonstrated outstanding leadership in securing permanent and loving homes for children. In 1997, Judge Nash evaluated the total backlog of children who had been freed for adoption by the Children's Court, but whose final paperwork had not been processed by the system. Several systemic factors, including judicial oversight, were identified as barriers to finalizing adoptions. At the time, there were 6,000 children awaiting adoption in LA County and the adoption process took over a year to complete, which was unacceptable to Judge Nash. He immediately formed a unique collaboration among the Children's Court and two child advocacy groups in Los Angeles. These groups agreed to recruit and train attorneys and caseworkers throughout the city to handle these cases *pro bono*. Judge Nash approached his fellow judicial officers from all over LA County and asked them to volunteer their time one Saturday during the year to help finalize adoptions. Judge Nash and his partners successfully implemented the first Adoption Saturday in the country in 1998. Since that time, over 24,000 adoptions have been finalized in Los Angeles, of which an impressive 5,000 have taken place as part of Adoption Saturday. Opening the court on a Saturday was an innovative idea that resulted in significant media attention on the issue of children in foster care and the effect has rippled throughout the country. In 2008, more than 4,000 children in foster care were adopted across the country as part of National Adoption Day. Judge Nash has also worked diligently to reduce the disproportionate representation and disparate treatment of minority children and families in the child welfare system and to improve outcomes for children who are dually-involved in the dependency and delinquency court systems. Without Judge Nash's superior leadership, many children would continue to wait for their forever families.

AWARDEE: **Elisa Esh**
 (Category #5 Individual and/or Family Contributions)

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Elisa Esh is a skilled professional who is passionate about helping children involved with the child welfare system, specifically for those without a permanent connection. Ms. Esh is the Director of Resource Family Recruitment and Development for Diakon Adoption & Foster Care, a program of Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries. She is well known for her large, Statewide adoption awareness events, the training she provides to child welfare professionals, and for her enthusiasm and compassion for finding a permanent home for every child in foster care. Across the sites Ms. Esh manages, the rate of families that inquire about becoming a resource family and follow through with the process toward licensure has increased to over 10%, a rate above the national average. Under Ms. Esh's leadership, she has formed partnerships with several private and public organizations across the State in an effort to raise awareness about the number of children in foster care without a permanent family. As a result of her efforts, partnerships with 67 counties in Pennsylvania were established with the goal of serving more youth. Ms. Esh is the creator of the annual William's Grove Speedway Adoption and Matching event, which established a collaborative approach for numerous child-placing public and private

agencies to showcase children and youth awaiting adoption. During the successful event, children are matched with a sprint car driver and their photo is placed in vinyl across the wing of the car throughout the race. Ms. Esh has coordinated other adoption awareness events at basketball stadiums, shopping centers, laser tag facilities, golf tournaments, and for public television. Ms. Esh is also well known for developing marketing plans to target non-traditional and typically underutilized populations of potential adoptive families, such as single parents, empty nesters, relatives, and same-sex couples. Ms. Esh participates in many committees on behalf of children in need of adoptive families and provides education and training locally on matching, marketing, and transracial adoption.

AWARDEE: **Kate Cleary**
(Category #5 Individual and/or Family Contributions)

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Kate Cleary has a 35-year history of involvement and advocacy in child welfare. When she first began her career, Ms. Cleary focused her efforts on the right of adult adoptees to gain access to their original birth certificates and court files. Later, she became the Executive Director of the Adoption Network of Catholic Charities in San Francisco, where she helped to refocus the agency's purpose from the placement of infants to the adoptive placement of children in foster care. Under her leadership, Ms. Cleary was able to increase the number of adoptions from 10 to 150 per year. In 1998, Ms. Cleary founded the Consortium for Children, where she remains the Executive Director. Ms. Cleary developed and directs the following initiatives:

1. California Permanency Planning Mediation (PPM) program - provides mediators who meet with families in their homes and then brings together all parties to determine a permanency plan and potential post-adoption contact. Since the program's inception in 1999, the organization has mediated permanency for 9,500 children in foster care in California, with an 80% success rate in avoiding contested court action. The program shortened the average time between the end of reunification efforts and adoption placement from 2 years to 90 days. PPM started in 8 counties and is now State-wide and expanding to at least two other States.
2. Permanency Partner Program (P3) – trained retired social workers to be mediators and work with Los Angeles County workers to find meaningful connections from a youth's past and present with which the child might establish life-long permanency, reunification, guardianship, or adoption. The P3 program has served over 2,000 youth since 2005 and has identified or established permanency for approximately 32% of the youth.

Ms. Cleary has also served in a variety of leadership roles throughout her career, including President of the American Adoption Congress; Executive Director of Children's League of California; member of the Child Welfare League of America National Advisory Committee on

Adoption; and the Statewide Citizen Review Panel. She also served on the California Governor's Adoption Initiative and the Legislative Committee and Permanency Committee. Ms. Cleary's background of being a foster and adopted child and all of her advocacy work regarding adoption reform has helped to build a better world for children in the California child welfare system.

AWARDEE: **Anthony & Iris Thorpe**
(Category #5 Individual and/or Family Contributions)

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Ithorpe@comcast.net

For over 15 years, Anthony and Iris Thorpe have accepted many of society's most challenging children in to their home. Mr. and Mrs. Thorpe have provided temporary care and permanence by fostering almost 50 children and adopting five. The Thorpes and their two biological children have always embraced each child, regardless of their special needs, with open arms. They are advocates for the adoption of children with HIV and drug exposure and support children maintaining contact with their biological families whenever it is possible and appropriate. The Thorpes are adept at navigating the complex medical, educational, and child welfare systems to make life better for their children. Mr. Thorpe is a career Army officer who retired and is now a teacher who has been nicknamed "The Medicine Man" because he has taken on the responsibility of securing and administering medication to his children. Mrs. Thorpe is the President of the Support Board of Family and Children's Services of Central Maryland and provides support to foster and adoptive parents and disseminates information packets on foster care and adoption to Army families through their Army Community Services. Mr. and Mrs. Thorpe enjoy being parents and watching children grow and thrive, which is why they cannot say for certain how many more children they may adopt.

AWARDEE: **John & Patricia Chapman**
(Category #5 Individual and/or Family Contributions)

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For over 15 years, John and Patricia Chapman have exemplified an unwavering contribution and commitment to children in the foster care system. The Chapmans have expanded their family of four biological children to ten, through the adoption of six boys. The family's entire history with adoption has been with children with special needs. Mr. and Mrs. Chapman have always immersed their children with all the love and treatment they needed to help them through their recovery issues, including obtaining necessary resources and advocating on their behalf. The Chapmans have also provided strong leadership and shown a commitment to being involved in

their community by advocating for older children with special needs. A few years ago, Mr. Chapman was invited to serve on the United Way's Vision Council, which focused on adoption, and he co-chaired a task force with the Director of Cuyahoga's Department of Children and Family Services. Together, they developed *Adopt Cuyahoga's Kids* and contracted with Adoption Network to run the program, which helps to find permanent adoptive homes for the County's children in foster care. Due to the efforts of the initiative, the number of children available for adoption in Cuyahoga County went from 1,500 to under 700 within 3-4 years. Mr. Chapman also co-chaired the Disbursement Oversight Committee, which determined how federal and state funds for adoption were being used. He also served his community through his membership and leadership on several committees and boards to help raise funds and awareness for adoption. Together, the Chapmans provide adoption and permanency trainings to prospective foster and adoptive parents and share the story of their family and parenting experiences. United Way asked the Chapmans to speak on adoption on their behalf and is planning to feature the Chapman family in their next campaign. Mr. and Mrs. Chapman have proven that they have what it takes to sustain placements, help children in need, and raise awareness and advocate for children in foster care.

CATEGORY #6 PHILANTHROPY/BUSINESS CONTRIBUTIONS

One nomination was reviewed. None are recommended for award.

CATEGORY #7 Judicial or Child Welfare System Improvement

Two nominations were reviewed. None are recommended for award.

CATEGORY #8 ADOPTION OF MINORITY CHILDREN FROM FOSTER CARE

Four nominations were reviewed. Two are recommended for award.

AWARDEE: **Adoption Network Cleveland**
(Category #8 Adoption of Minority Children from Foster Care)

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Betsie.norris@adoptionnetwork.org

Adoption Network Cleveland (ANC) was selected to be the lead agency in addressing the high number of children waiting for adoption. In 2002, Cuyahoga County had 1,700 children waiting to be adopted, many of whom were at risk of leaving the foster care system without any means of support when they reached age 18. The ANC, in collaboration with the Cuyahoga County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and a dozen private adoption agencies, launched the Adopt Cuyahoga's Kids Initiative in 2004 to address the challenges. Of the original

780 children referred to the Initiative, 78 percent were African American. The Initiative provided an integrated and comprehensive approach to address specific barriers to adoption, one of which was child centered recruitment. This method engages children in their adoption process by considering their backgrounds and important figures in their lives that may be willing to adopt. Using child centered recruitment, 84% of the children placed through the Initiative were African American. The ANC also used Adoption Navigators, another innovative method, to accomplish the goals of the Initiative. Adoption Navigators are paraprofessionals who provide guidance and support to potential families who are trying to navigate the child welfare system. With their assistance, the rate for initial inquiries that resulted in adoption was approximately 1 in 8. The Navigators had more than 10,500 contacts with prospective resource families by the end of the third year. Adoption Network Cleveland also launched two adoption recruitment campaigns targeted at the greater Cleveland African American community. In addition to improving the number of minority children who were adopted, the ANC also created a collaborative atmosphere between DCFS and private adoption agencies and helped them to focus on working together to place at-risk youth in loving adoptive homes. The ANC is developing a business plan to help other organizations who are interested in replicating the Initiative.

AWARDEE: **Regina Louise**
(Category #8 Adoption of Minority Children from Foster Care)

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Regina Louise's experience in the foster care system as a child has had a national impact on the promotion and understanding of children in foster care, particularly that of older youth and children of color. After living in over 30 foster and group homes and losing contact and being denied adoption by someone of a different race, Ms. Louise's perseverance and optimism as an adult gave her the strength to take charge of her life. When she was in her mid-30s, Ms. Louise wrote her memoir, "Somebody's Someone," which arrived in bookstores in the summer of 2003. While she did not know it then, the book she wrote about her dark past would bring about remarkable opportunities in her future. After her book was published, Ms. Louise was reconnected with the woman who once fought to adopt her when she was 13 years old. The two women met frequently, recounted the past, and introduced their own families to each other. Amazingly, in the same county courthouse where a judge once denied a request to adopt Ms. Louise decades ago, their bond was sealed as kin when Ms. Louise was adopted at age 42. Ms. Louise remains committed to sparing children in foster care the experiences she endured. Last year, she spoke about adoption to almost 50,000 people at numerous conferences across the country. Her mission is to speak in every State in an effort to give voice to all the children in foster care. She is dedicated to the goal of removing the kinds of obstacles that kept her apart from her adoptive mother, particularly the issue of transracial adoption. Ms. Louise's life story was adapted to a stage play in 2007 and plans for developing her story in to film are underway.

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

Seven nominations were reviewed. Three are recommended for award.

AWARDEE: **Detroit Free Press**
(Category #9 Media/Public Awareness of Adoption from Foster Care)

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In 2005, the Detroit Free Press provided a photographer to take photos for the Michigan Heart Gallery and over the next few years, the Detroit Free Press continued coverage of the Heart Gallery with more photos and articles. During this time, one photographer, Kathleen Galligan, documented the lives of some of the children she photographed. As a result, the Detroit Free Press, in partnership with the Michigan Heart Gallery, the Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange, and Christ Child House (a residential treatment center) published a special report of those children. Over three years, several Detroit Free Press staff volunteered their support by taking photos, writing articles, and producing a video, which provided rare insights in to the lives of these children, many of whom were African-American boys. This coverage made the children's stories real and helped to raise awareness and contribute to the adoptions of several children. The Detroit Free Press did a good job of illustrating the issues faced by the children and youth living in Christ Child House who did not have permanent families and homes. The body of work was engaging, compassionate, and effective in bringing attention to the problems of children waiting for adoption. In addition to raising awareness of the issues, it also brought possible solutions. The Detroit Free Press supported its staff reporters, photographers, and editors in producing over 20 articles and 5 video segments around the experiences and needs of children and youth in residential care. These stories were often on the front page, which made it possible for millions of people to read the articles and get to know the children. Christ Child House is grateful for the time and energy it took for the Detroit Free Press to examine the truth and speak with knowledge and love regarding children in foster care.

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

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Rich Newman has worked professionally in the field of corporate media since 1973 and is

currently a media producer with Walt Disney World at the Disney University, Training and Development Department. In 2006, Mr. Newman approached AdoptUsKids to offer his professional expertise and foster/adoption experience, free of charge, to help raise public awareness about the need for foster and adoptive parents. The result of this offer was the 2008 release of a DVD entitled, "*The Road to Foster Care and Adoption*," which was directed and produced by Mr. Newman. The DVD uses the stories of real foster and adoptive families recounting their experiences and quickly became nationally recognized as a public awareness and training tool. Over 1,000 copies of the video, which are available at no cost, have been provided to public and private agency child welfare staff across the country and an additional 1,000 copies have been distributed at national meetings and conferences. Mr. Newman has made a significant nationwide contribution with this video. His unwavering dedication to children led Mr. Newman to use his personal and vacation leave from work to create the DVD. By reaching out to his church for support with this two-year project and with donations raised by his congregation, Mr. Newman was able to travel around the country to interview dozens of foster and adoptive parents and children. After his travels, Mr. Newman edited 48 hours of raw footage down to a two-hour finished product. Because of his long career and professional relationship with Disney, the company donated the use of all video and editing equipment that Mr. Newman needed for the project. Driven by his passion that every child deserves a loving, permanent family, Mr. Newman took his personal initiative and vision of making a difference in the lives of others and made a significant and lasting contribution to raise public awareness and to recruit families for children in foster care. Mr. Newman is currently working with AdoptUsKids to produce a second DVD focusing on challenges to adoption across jurisdictional boundaries.

AWARDEE: **The News Press**
(Category #9 Media/Public Awareness of Adoption from Foster Care)

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The News Press of Ft. Myers, Florida entered in to a strong partnership in 2007 with the Children's Network, the lead agency for community-based care in Southwest Florida, to raise awareness and address the needs of children. The News Press is a free, local newspaper with a voice for children and it dedicated one full-time staff member to cover child welfare and immigration issues. The News Press created a children's resource page on its website where children's needs would be featured and also included a weekly blog of a child awaiting adoption and photolisting of children waiting to be adopted. This effort helped raise awareness in southwest Florida because millions of people had access to the newspaper and blog. The New Press further partnered with Children's Network by interviewing and video recording waiting children and featuring them on the front page of the newspaper online. Journalism is not the only calling for the News Press; it has gone beyond that and reached out to be sponsors of the majority of the local community awareness events, such as the Annual Walk to prevent Child Abuse, the Heart Gallery of Southwest Florida, and printed feature articles in its partner

magazine, “Parent and Child.” The News Press is a leader in advocacy and making permanent contributions to the lives of children in its local community.