

# Press Packet

A Family for Every Child 2010 Winter  
Wonderland Social and Auction

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# Backgrounder

A Family for Every Child and The Heart Gallery

**Mission Statement:** A Family for Every Child is dedicated to finding loving, permanent families for every waiting child.

## **How It All Began**

Christy Obie-Barrett, a mother of 12 children, nine of whom are adopted, incorporated Family For Every Child (AFFEC) as a nonprofit organization in January 2006. Along with the support of dozens of volunteers, Christy formed AFFEC out of her desire to make a difference in the lives of many more children. During the first six months, AFFEC developed into an organization focused on finding permanent, loving homes for Oregon's waiting children. AFFEC's programs assist special needs or hard-to-place foster children in finding their "forever families."

AFFEC's goals include...

- To build bridges and partnerships with other organizations and nonprofit groups.
- To facilitate, encourage and publicize the need for families to adopt special needs children.
- To inspire and educate families who otherwise may not consider adoption.

## **What Is The Heart Gallery?**

The Heart Gallery opened in November 2006 at the 5th Street Public Market in Eugene. It was the first program sponsored by A Family for Every Child. The Heart Gallery raises awareness in the community about Oregon children who are currently waiting and hoping for their own adoptive family, mentor, or Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) to love and protect them.

AFFEC recruits professional photographers to take meaningful and unique portraits of Oregon's waiting children. Then, the portraits are displayed in various venues where prospective parents can learn more about these special children. The ultimate goal of the Heart Gallery is to help each child find his or her own "forever family."

The Heart Gallery organization thrives because of volunteers who devote their time, energy and resources for the love of children. All Heart Gallery expenses are funded by donations, sponsorships or gifts from businesses or individuals in our area. 100 percent of donations go to the Heart Gallery program.

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## **About Heart Gallery Adoptions**

The Heart Gallery Adoption Agency supports Oregon children and potential parents, throughout the United States, in their search for one other. Heart Gallery Adoptions partners with The Department of Human Services (DHS), the Special Needs Adoption Coalition (SNAC), and other agencies to provide prospective adoptive families with home studies and updates about their progress in the adoption process.

The agency also provides committee representation in Oregon for out-of-state families who have been identified as prospective matches by the Department of Human Services. The Heart Gallery Adoption Agency guides prospective parents through all stages of a special needs adoption.

### **More AFFEC Programs:**

**The Family Finding Program:** Volunteers search to locate relatives who may be enthusiastic about adopting an extended family member.

**The Mentor Program** helps build relationships that may result in the creation of a “forever family” for a child.

**The Child Specific Recruitment Program:** AFFEC conducts exhaustive searches for resources to benefit each and every child referred.

**The Family Building Program** matches experienced mentor families with prospective or newly formed adoptive families in order to provide encouragement and support throughout the entire adoption process.

Whatever the needs, AFFEC’s unique, child-centered approach creates an individualized adoption experience for children and families.

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## Speaker Biographies/ Available for Interview

**Kyara Komisar, Age 11**

Kyara is the 11-year-old daughter of Frank and Tracy Komisar. Kyara was adopted about two years ago through the Heart Gallery. In her new family, Kyara has experienced lots of love and many new adventures, including a trip to New York City where she met her large East Coast family. She enjoyed the excitement of the big city. Kyara is involved in an after school art class and also takes ballet lessons. She adores animals and loves volunteer work, which she does frequently with her family. She also enjoys church activities.

### **Honorary Chairs Lynn & David Frohnmayer**

Dave Frohnmayer served as the 15th President of the University of Oregon between 1994 and 2009. Prior to that, he served as Oregon's Attorney General between 1981 to 1994, and as Dean at the University of Oregon School of Law.

Lynn Frohnmayer served as a case worker and branch manager for the Oregon Children's Services Division, was one of the founders of the Lane County Relief Nursery and continues to work as a volunteer for the Fanconi Anemia Research Fund, established by the Frohnmayers after the disease claimed the lives of two of their daughters.

In addition, Lynn and Dave were named the First Citizens of Eugene in 1998. Lynn received the Portland March of Dimes White Rose Women of Achievement Award in 2002. Lynn also worked as a national trainer promoting an initiative to get abused and neglected children out of the revolving door of foster care and into permanent homes.

### **Christy Obie-Barrett, Executive Director, A Family for Every Child**

Christy Obie-Barrett founded A Family For Every Child in 2006 with the goal of finding permanent and loving adoptive homes for Oregon's waiting children. She is president-elect of the Heart Gallery of America for the 2010-2012 term. Christy is the mother of twelve children, 9 of whom she adopted.

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## **Statistics**

### **About Foster Care and Adoption from Foster Care**

- More than 8,000 Oregon children live in foster care. 200 are also waiting for adoption. (Oregon Department of Human Services)

- Nationwide, on any given day there are about 145,000 children in the foster care system waiting for adoptive families. (The Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption)
- Children often wait three years or more to be adopted, move three or more times in foster care, and are often separated from siblings. The average age of a waiting child is 8 years old. (The Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption)
- Youth who “age out” of foster care face higher risks for unemployment, poor educational outcomes, health issues, early parenthood, long-term dependency on public assistance, increased rates of incarceration and homelessness. (Child Welfare League of America)
- Last year, 29,471 children turned 18 and left the foster care system without an adoptive family. (The Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption)
- It would take less than one percent of the U.S. population to provide a forever family for every child in foster care who is waiting for adoption. (The Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption)
- A 2007 survey conducted by Harris Interactive on behalf of The Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption focused specifically on national attitudes toward foster care adoption. The survey revealed that almost two-thirds (69 percent) of American adults believe society should be doing more to encourage adoption from foster care, and 48 million Americans have considered adoption from foster care.

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