

Family Matters

Presented to you by
The Special Needs Adoption Coalition

A Family For Every Child
www.afamilyforeverychild.org
541.343.2856

Finding Forever Families for Children with Special Needs

January/February 2009

2009, the Year of Change

By Valerie Pitcher

DHS finalized adoptions for 995 children in Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2007, down from the previous year's 1,095 adoptions. Of the 995 children adopted, 268 were younger than age 3 at the time their adoption was finalized. As children get older, the chances for an adoptive placement decrease dramatically, creating a critical need for adoptive homes for children older than age 8. In FFY 2007, 523 children who were adopted had siblings also adopted during the year. Of these children, 486 (92.9 percent) were adopted by the same family as one or more of their siblings. Approximately two-thirds of children are adopted by relatives and/or their current caregiver. In FFY 2007, 75.5 percent of the children adopted from DHS were adopted by

relatives or non-relative foster parents. Finding permanent homes for the remaining children requires DHS to recruit for homes from the general population within and outside of the state. The median time to finalized adoptions in FFY 2007 was 33.3 months. Statistics show 94.8 percent of Oregon's adoptive placements continued to finalization without disruption in FFY 2007. **(DHS 2007 Status of Children Report, a CAF annual report of Oregon adoption statistics. See DHS webpage for complete report).**

If the 2007 adoption trends continue, it will be sad news for the Oregonian children still waiting to be adopted today. But hope springs eternal that 2009 will be their year to celebrate a new beginning with their forever families. 2009 promises hope and change for all of us worldwide and locally, and we embrace the possibilities with some degree of uncertainty.

For those of us involved in the Special Needs Adoption

Coalition (SNAC) of Oregon, significant changes have already occurred, and will be explained in this article. Special needs children are usually considered special needs if the child is over eight, part of a sibling group, has some physical, mental or emotional disabilities, or is part of an ethnic minority group.

The Special Needs Adoption Coalition of Oregon (SNAC) is comprised of 14 private adoption agencies who work together with DHS to locate potential adoptive families for foster children in state custody. The member agencies significantly reduce fees for this program, and fees are partially refundable when the adoption is finalized.

"We are all stronger through collaboration..."

**For general adoptions,
please call**

**Boys & Girls Aid @
877.932.2734**

&

**Child-specific recruitment,
please call**

**A Family For Every Child
877.343.2856**

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2009, the Year of Change

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Through a contract with the State of Oregon's Department of Human Services (DHS), the SNAC is now facilitated and administered by A Family for Every Child: Heart Gallery Adoption Agency, rather than The Boys and Girls Aid Society. This change occurred in November of 2008 and as we make the necessary adjustments, all of the SNAC agencies continue our commitment to the children and families we serve and to our partnership with each other and DHS. We are all stronger through collaboration and while The Boys and Girls Aid Society of Oregon will continue to provide many of Oregon's recruitment

services, A Family for Every Child: Heart Gallery Adoption Agency will now coordinate the training for foster and adoptive resources and publish "Family Matters," Oregon's free monthly special needs adoption newsletter featuring profiles of "waiting children." Oregon is proud of this nationally recognized public-private partnership which has successfully increased the adoption opportunities for foster children and we will continue to build on that success. One of our values is to build bridges and partnerships with other organizations and non profits. We believe we are stronger when we stand together.

INTRODUCING...



www.afamilyforeverychild.org
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A Family For Every Child

"Dedicated to finding loving, permanent families for every waiting Oregon foster child"

Our contract with DHS also provides that AFFEC/HG Adoption Agency will develop and implement individual recruitment plans (IRP's) for specific special needs children identified by DHS's Central Office Adoption Program in Salem. These are the children that are legally free and have been in care the longest. We will also provide committee representation in Oregon for out-of-state families who have been identified as a prospective match by the Department of Human Services.

All of us at AFFEC/HG recognize the monumental tasks before us, but we are excited by the challenge and we share the passion and vision of our partners: to help children and families find each other and build safe, healthy life-long relationships. AFFEC began with an idea and grew out of love and collaboration.

A Family For Every Child, a nonprofit organization, was started by Christy Obie-Barrett and dozens of dedicated and passionate volunteers. Christy Obie-Barrett, the mother of 12 children, 9 of whom are adopted, was looking for a way to

make a difference in the lives of more children. So in January of 2006, AFFEC was incorporated, with Christy as the Executive Director. The agency was formed and developed for the purpose of finding safe, permanent and loving homes for Oregon's waiting children. Christy's intention was to develop programs that assist special needs/hard to place foster children in finding their own forever families. In April of 06, Christy's friend Andrea Rippee (Board President) joined in her mission and the first of the programs, sponsored by A Family for Every Child, was the Heart Gallery of Lane County.

The Heart Gallery opened in November 2006 at the 5th Street Public Market, in Eugene, Oregon. Since then, The Heart Galleries have flourished around the State and now we have blossomed into ten incredibly successful programs. None of this could have occurred without the wonderful support from community sources, including volunteers, sponsors, photographers, in-kind donors and many more.

Our Programs

- HEART GALLERY
- HEART GALLERY ADOPTION AGENCY
- MENTOR PROGRAM
- FAMILY BUILDING PROGRAM
- FAMILY FINDING PROGRAM
- BUSINESS ADVOCATE PROGRAM
- LIFE BOOKERS
- LIFE TIME COMMITTED PARENTS
- MEDIA
- WEBSITES

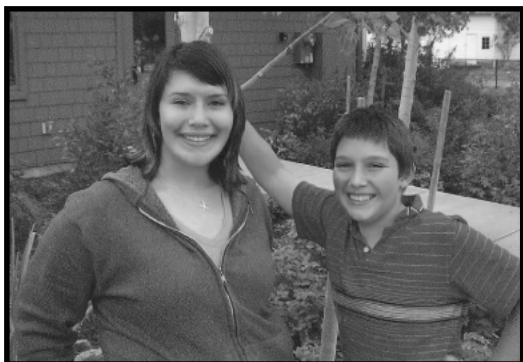
For more information on our programs and to meet our staff, please visit our website www.familyforeverychild.org

The Heart Gallery Adoptions works in conjunction with all of the programs offered by A Family for Every Child to find forever families for waiting children. Our Family Finding Program might locate relatives that are enthusiastic about adopting an extended family member. Our Mentor Program might create a relationship that results in the creation of a forever family. Our Child Specific Recruitment Program exhaustively searches for resources for each child referred. The Heart Gallery displays framed portraits in public areas to create community awareness. Our 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, our unique, child-centered approach creates an individualized adoption experience for the children and families we serve

Our Waiting Children...

Tanya & Corey, ages 16 & 12

Tanya is an attractive 16-year-old with an olive complexion, short brown hair, and brown eyes. She loves to listen to music and write in her journal. Tanya is very personable. She is inquisitive and polite in conversation. Tanya has many friends at school and enjoys social activities.



Tanya has dreams of traveling all over the world, and learning new languages. She currently can speak Spanish and is taking French in school.

Corey is a 12-year-old boy with brown hair and brown eyes. He has an olive complexion and a great big smile. He loves to ride his bike and would really like to learn how to skateboard. Corey is very friendly and polite to others.

The ideal adoptive family for these children would include a stable home life and a willingness to adopt both children. Tanya states she wants a family that is mutually respectful and Corey is looking for a supportive family, one in which they can focus on his needs. **Oregon #1282.**

Jennifer, age 10

Brown haired, blue eyed Jennifer has a cute dimpled smile. Jennifer loves to play with dolls, play games and go swimming. She is pretty easy going and is a people pleaser. She will voice her dislikes, but often 'flip-flops' on them depending on who she is trying to please. She likes to eat spaghetti.

Jennifer has a good relationship with her paternal grandmother who lives in Oregon. She has other relatives in that area as well. Jennifer's adoptive family needs to be able to work with her birth family towards visitation/contact.



The family chosen for Jennifer will be one that can work with the birth family to continue visitation and contact, one that will meet Jennifer's needs for supervision, ensure her safety, and set appropriate boundaries for her. **Oregon #12741.**

Mark, age 7



Mark is a bright and engaging boy with a big smile. He has an amazing sense of humor and very positive outlook on life. Mark has an advanced vocabulary for his age and enjoys sharing stories with children and adults. He has expressive brown eyes and a quick smile. Mark easily warms up to new people and is comfortable in new social situations. Mark enjoys various sports activities, especially basketball. He also enjoys playing video games and legos. Mark recently took swimming lessons for the first time and enjoyed this tremendously.

Mark needs a family that can provide him with a safe, loving and nurturing home. He needs a family that will support and encourage his academic strengths. It is hoped that Mark's adoptive family will be willing to have openness with his siblings, if appropriate. DHS is hopeful to find a family open to exploring mediation with Mark's birth parents as well. **Oregon #12834.**

Chrissi, age 10

Chrissi is a cute and likable girl who thrives on individual attention and reassurance. She can appear to be shy and withdrawn in social situations, but does well with people she is familiar with.

Chrissi loves to play Scrabble, ride her bike, and enjoys camping with her foster family. She also enjoys playing video games.

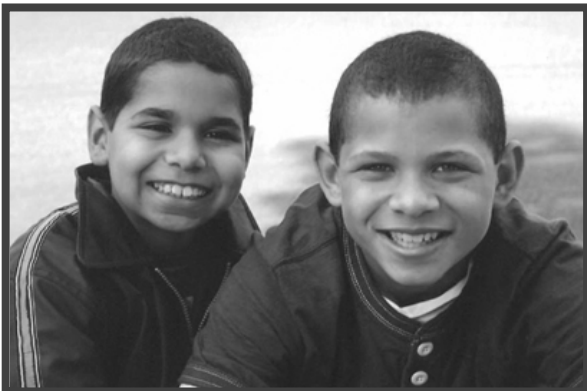
Chrissi is an enjoyable child full of potential. She will surely thrive in a healthy, nurturing environment where the family is dedicated and supportive of her needs. **Oregon #12852.**



Tanten & Tobias, ages 10 & 12

Meet two attractive boys in need of a loving, stable home. Tanten and Tobias are delightful, full of energy and ready to become a part of a family. They need a family who is patient, caring and willing to provide a loving, nurturing atmosphere. Tanten and Tobias are fun, loving brothers who bring a sense of fun and adventure to those around them.

Tanten is a bright, resilient, hard working boy who enjoys reading, sports and Tae Kwon do. He plays piano and is functioning at grade level. His teachers and foster parents see him as bright and insightful. He has been able to maintain steady academic and social growth. He tends to keep his feelings to himself and, as the older brother; Tanten tends to be protective of his brother. Under the care of his current foster parents he has become better at understanding his role in a family.



Tobias is an affectionate boy with a winning smile. He loves to stay active and is very drawn to Tae Kwon Do. He has made great strides in school and in the foster home. He is in the third grade. Tobias is very helpful, friendly, polite and easily entertained. He can play by himself for hours and has a vivid, active imagination.

They would be best in a family that has both male and female role models. They require quite a bit of parental energy and it would be in their best interest to be in a home where they are the only children or children of parents with much older siblings. **Oregon #12774.**

Crystol, age 12

A pretty girl with dark eyes and a lovely smile, Crystol would like to have a family who takes pride in her African American and Caucasian heritage and will provide opportunities for her to feel connected to her roots. Crystol, who especially enjoys working with clay, enjoys crafts, art, and science. She also has a beautiful singing voice. She is a good swimmer and likes to spend time with her foster family camping at the lake.

She enjoys school and proudly shows off the award she won for self-management skills.

Crystol is placed with foster parents who are very experienced and skilled in working with special needs children. **Oregon #12415.**



Nicholas, age 10

With his adorable smile, bright brown eyes and beautiful dark hair, Nicholas is sure to bring enjoyment to the right family. Nicholas is an energetic young boy who loves to do anything that involves physical activity. Nick's hobbies include riding bikes, playing football, baseball, and volleyball.

Besides being physically active, Nicholas also enjoys a relaxing day indoors. He likes to cuddle up for a good movie and loves to play his Play station II. Nicholas enjoys helping around the house and likes being around people. He is very social and gets along well with adults and children. Nicholas likes animals, especially dogs. Nicholas is a wonderful, nice boy who needs a family who will appreciate him and love him unconditionally! Nicholas is very excited about having a family who will adopt him and love him for who he is. **Oregon #12840.**



Brent, Seth, and Zackary, ages 10, 8, & 5

Brent, Seth, and Zackary are a delightful trio of brothers, each with a unique personality.

Brent is an attractive and very intelligent 10 year old boy with blond hair and a slender build. He is gentle and compassionate toward others and enjoys adult attention and security. Brent has impressed adults with his ability to adjust to the changes in his life.

Seth is a six year old boy with blond hair, a fair complexion, and a pleasant appearance. Like Brent, he tries very hard to be good and needs a secure home.

Zackary is an attractive five year old with blond hair and a slender build.

It is very important that the boys be able to remain together in an adoptive home, as they are quite attached to each other. It will also be important to them to be able to have visitation with their parents in the future. **Oregon #12720.**



More waiting children...

Nathan, age 10

Nathan is a handsome, nine-year-old boy with a mischievous smile and dimpled cheeks. A healthy boy with a medium build, he is a good eater and is very athletic. He has a good sense of humor and enjoys playing video games and cards. Quick to forgive, Nathan loves animals and would love to have a dog of his own. He is very kind to children younger than he is, but is very drawn to teenage boys; he loves to have opportunities to show off and hang out with them. Although shy and sometimes slow to warm up to others, Nathan really wants to be part of things and wants to please, but does not always know how. He likes to be the center of family attention – the receiver of quality individual time. With the loving support of his foster parents, with whom he has lived for over a year, and mental health counseling and mediation therapy, Nathan has made many positive gains. **Oregon #12531.**



Zane, age 5

Zane is an attractive five year old boy with brown hair, brown eyes, and a toothy smile. Zane loves attention, likes to be held and have his back rubbed, and can be very lovable. He is a very active boy and he loves to run and climb. He loves outdoor activities such as camping and picnics. Zane also likes to build things and take things apart. He likes to shop and do crafts and loves animals.



Zane is a very fun and engaging boy. He loves to laugh, be silly, be on the move, enjoy outdoor activities, and especially ice cream. Zane is ready for a forever family and will be a great addition to a family with older children or no children.

Zane needs a home that can provide him with the structure and consistency he thrives on. He also needs a home that is stable, loving, and nurturing. Zane needs a family that will be able identify and access services as needed. **Oregon #12845.**

LyDarrien, age 4

LyDarrien is a polite, energetic, and handsome boy. His big smile draws you in and his manners will impress you. LyDarrien likes to play video games, ride his bike, and play with his two older brothers. He tends to be pretty quiet and shy around people that he does not know but is always curious of what is going on around him.

LyDarrien is an adorable child with a calm and quiet disposition. He is polite and tends to be more of an observer when he is around adults. He is playful with other children and makes friends easily.

LyDarrien needs a committed and loving family. He needs a family that will assist him in fulfilling his potential while standing by him during his struggles. He needs a family who can be patient with his stubborn streak and role model constructive problem solving. **Oregon #12850.**



The SPOTLIGHT's on Dorrie, age 9



Dorrie is an adorable, healthy girl with brown eyes and hair and a beautiful smile. She is very bright and has a terrific sense of humor. Dorrie enjoys drawing, singing, writing stories, and is a huge fan of Hannah Montana. She loves animals, especially dogs, cats and horses. Dorrie enjoys school, and when asked what her favorite subjects are she is likely to respond, "Everything!"



It is extremely important that her adoptive family is willing to learn about her specifically, so that they understand what she has experienced. It would be an act of love and commitment for her adoptive folks to participate with her in family counseling during her transition into their home.

Dorrie participates in an after school program that provides a variety of neat activities; she's having lots of fun playing African drums, HipHop dancing, and playing soccer. It is important for Dorrie's new family to value ongoing sibling contact. **Oregon #12676.**

Training Resources

DHS Foster and Adoptive Trainings by district

The State of Oregon, Department of Human Services in partnership with Portland State University brings training to Foster / Adoptive / Relative caregivers through the Child Welfare Partnership. There are far too many classes to list them all – below is a sampling of one class from each district. For the complete list of classes offered in your area please visit the website:
<http://cwpsalem.pdx.edu/foster/index.htm>
or call Dawn Perrault at 503-365-4772.

DHS & SNAC "Foundations" Training

The "Foundations" series covers: Attachment, Grief and Loss; Impact of Abuse on Development; Behavior Management; Sex Abuse and its Effects on Children; Working with Biological Parents; Drug Endangered Children; and Honoring a Child's Heritage. Classes begin with an orientation that provides an overview of the adoption process in Oregon. The classes are taught by DHS or by a SNAC agency that contracts with the State of Oregon.

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District One (St. Helens):

2/17 6:00pm-9:00p.m.
Enhancing the Caseworker/Caregiver Relationship
Kelli McKnight, MEd
Registration: 503-397-3292 x 8330 or
email: janna.m.owens@state.or.us

District Two (Portland):

2/4 9:00am-12:00pm
Facilitating Developmental Attachment
Debbie Kirby, LCSW
Registration: Metro Training Line 971-673-1822

District Three (Keizer):

2/7 9:00am-4:00pm
Creating Positive Behavior in Teens
Gary and Jean Lasater
Registration: 503-373-1200 x 345 or
email: erma.s.brundidge@state.or.us

District Four (Albany):

1/6 9:00am-12:00pm
Ten Tips for Parenting Teens
Jennifer Scholes, MA
Registration: 541-791-5717 or email:
tia.stevens@state.or.us

District Five (Eugene):

2/24 9:00am-12:00pm
Parenting a Special Needs Child
Penny Jordan, MA
Registration: 541-349-4459 or email:
tammie.k.harris@state.or.us

District Six (Roseburg):

2/9 6:00pm-9:00pm
Effective Communications
Jennifer Scholes, MA
Registration: 541-464-2077 or
email: jody.meza@state.or.us

District Seven (North Bend):

1/20 6:30pm-8:30pm
Permanency Mediation of a Post Adoption Communication Plan – Myths and Facts
Jeanne Smith, LCSW
Registration: 541-756-5500 x 25 or
email:

frannie.mcmahon@state.or.us

District Eight (Grants Pass):

1/7 6:00pm-9:00pm
Thriving in Stressful Times
Linda Morley, RN, MN PMHNP
Registration: 541-474-3120 X375
or

Email: kyndra.burdiss@state.or.us

District Nine (The Dalles):

2/24 6:00pm-9:00pm
Taking Note of Your Work with DHS
Sandra McIlhenny
Registration: 541-506-5222 or
email:

jennifer.r.garner@state.or.us

District Ten (Redmond):

1/13 6:00pm-9:00pm
The Continuum of Attachment
Lynne Herbert, LPC
Registration: 541-388-6331 or
email: tanya.cloning@state.or.us

Benton
Carla Francis or Kathleen Poole
(541) 757-4121 x 225

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Multnomah
(971) 673-1822 x1

Washington
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(503) 277-6673
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Oregon. The "Foundations" curriculum is currently undergoing revision and class schedules vary depending on district and county. During this time of revision, it is best to contact your local DHS Office to get a current schedule of the "Foundations" classes near you. However, the following link provides the schedules for many of the larger counties:
<http://www.lanecountyheartgallery.org/HeartGallery/Trainingsbycounty.html>

A Family for Every Child: Heart Gallery Adoption Agency - Eugene

2/12 6:00pm-7:30pm Adoption and Volunteer Info Meeting

3/12 6:00pm-7:30pm

Adoption and Volunteer Info Meeting

Registration: 541-343-2856 or email: angela@afamilyforeverychild.org

Boys and Girls Aid - Portland

2/10 6:30 pm-8:00 pm Special Needs Adoption Program (SNAP) Training

4/14 6:30 pm-8:00 pm Special Needs Adoption Program (SNAP) Training

Registration: 503-542-2392 or email: adoption@boysandgirlsaid.org