

The Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute's

# 2008 *Angels in Adoption*™ Gala

*Ten Years*

# 10

*Celebrating  
Ordinary People Doing  
Extraordinary Things*

September 16, 2008

Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center  
Washington, DC





© 2008 Freddie Mac

## ➤ Making Home a Place Where Children and Families Thrive.

At the Freddie Mac Foundation, we believe in doing everything we can to help make home a place where children and families thrive. That's why we invest in programs that help build better lives for children and families. We're proud to support your efforts to bring about better tomorrows.



[www.FreddieMacFoundation.org](http://www.FreddieMacFoundation.org)

## *2008 Angels in Adoption™* Gala Program

---



---

### **Welcome Remarks**

Master of Ceremonies

### **Invocation**

Dr. Barry Black, Chaplain, U.S. Senate

### **First Course**

### **Remarks from CCAI Board President**

The Honorable Mary Landrieu, U.S. Senate

### **Message From Our Premier & Founding Sponsor**

Ralph F. Boyd, Jr.  
Freddie Mac Foundation

### **Main Course**

### **Musical Performance**

### **Message From CCAI Executive Director**

Kathleen Strottman

### **Message From Congressional Foster Youth Intern**

Betty Krupa

### **CCAI Video Montage**

### **Recognition of 2008 *National Angels in Adoption™***

Ashley Rhodes-Courter  
CBS Entertainment

### **Dessert Buffet**

---



---

**CCAI Would Like to Thank**

**Diamond and Founding Sponsor**

Freddie Mac Foundation

**Platinum Sponsor**

SUPERVALU, Inc.

**Gold Sponsors**

Casey Family Programs

Chevron

Fluor Corporation

**Silver Sponsors**

Cruise Industry Charitable Foundation

Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption

Textron Marine & Land

**Bronze Sponsors**

3M

American Academy of Adoption Attorneys, Inc.

Bethany Christian Services

Freeport-McMoRan Foundation

Holt International Children's Services

Ken & Barbara Strottman

Occidental Petroleum Corporation

Wendy's International Foundation

**Friends Sponsors**

Abbott

Adams & Reese, LLP

Adoptees for Children

Chick-Fil-A

DTE Energy

Edison Electric Institute

Kidsave International

Marathon Oil Corporation

Shaohannah's Hope

**Thank You to the following for providing in-kind gifts  
and donating your valuable time and services:**

**AdoptUSKids**

**Jamie Baker**

**Andy Burmeister**

**Susan Soon-Keum Cox**

**Chip Gardiner**

**The James Fund**

**McLane Layton**

**Brian Luwis**

**Bob and Gerry Marks**

**Jason Matthews**

**Sarada Peri**

**Debbie Riley**

**Adam Sharp**

**Barbara Walzer**

## Message From the Executive Director



Tonight marks a very special occasion for those of us at the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute (CCAI). Over the past ten years, Angels in Adoption has brought to light the incredible stories of over 1,400

individuals whose unyielding commitment has helped a waiting child find their forever home. These “Angels” have come from all over the country and represent every conceivable part of the foster care and adoption process. Despite their many differences, they share one common trait: they all stepped forward to make a difference in the life of a child in need of a home.

Earlier this year, I was telling my daughter Grace about my new job as Executive Director of CCAI. Almost immediately she began peppering me with questions about what I would be doing at this new job. I explained to her that CCAI was a place that was working to find a “mommy” or a “daddy” for every child in the world who was without one. To my amazement she replied, “Wow that sounds like a hard job. How are you going to do that?” Mostly because I had no idea how else to respond I said, “I don’t know Grace, how do you think I should do that?” Without hesitation, she replied, “I know, you and Daddy can be their mommy and daddy!”

Later that night I found myself reflecting on this conversation. The adult in me could not help but react with the thought that only a child would conceive of such an overly simple solution for such a obviously complex problem. And then it came to me that perhaps there was some divine wisdom in her response. What her unclouded eyes allowed her to see is that achieving the dream of a home for every child is possible if each and every one of us takes a single step toward making that dream a reality.

For some, that step is opening their hearts and homes to a waiting child. For others it is taking part in improving the system that works to connect children in need of homes with families wanting to adopt them. For others still, that step is using their power and resources to bring about change.

Because each and every one of the Angels here tonight and those that came before them took such a step, a child’s life was changed forever. I, for one, am endlessly inspired by their examples of love, dedication, perseverance and faith. It is my hope that in highlighting their work we will challenge others to follow in their foot steps and to do more than just lament the inconceivable number of children who will go to bed tonight without the love and protection of a family.

The Angels in Adoption program is just one of the many reasons I am proud to serve as a member of the staff of the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute. Since 2001, CCAI has strived to be an objective resource for information critical to advancing the efforts of federal policymakers on behalf of children in need of homes. Through our five core programs, Members of Congress and staff have the unique opportunity to come face to face with the issues affecting orphaned and foster youth. In my nearly eight years on the hill I learned one simple lesson, knowledge is power. At CCAI, we come to work each day so that Members of Congress have the knowledge they need to use the power they have toward making the dream of a family a reality for every child.

In closing, I would like to acknowledge CCAI’s unbelievable staff for their tireless efforts on behalf of vulnerable children. To the CCAI Board, thank you for your unwavering support and dedication. And to my friend Kerry, thank you for your shining example.

**Kathleen Strottman**  
*Executive Director*



*Angels in Adoption™ Galas Over the Years*



National Angels in Adoption™, Sesame Workshop, brought Sesame Street characters along who charmed adults and children alike during the 2005 Angels in Adoption™ Gala.



This is a bird's eye view of the 2002 Angels in Adoption™ Gala.



Jane Seymour accepts the 2004 National Angel in Adoption™ award.



The Watoto Children's Choir had the audience cheering as they performed during the 2004 Angels in Adoption™ Gala.



Patti LaBelle, a 2007 National Angel in Adoption™, surprises the audience with an impromptu song, "Somewhere Over the Rainbow."



Senator Mary Landrieu welcomes a delegation from China, including the Director of the China Center of Adoption Affairs, at the 2003 Angels in Adoption™ Gala.



2003 National Angels in Adoption™ Steven Curtis Chapman and Muhammad Ali exchange punches before the Gala.

## History of CCAI

In 1985 a small, but committed group of Members of Congress discovered that they had a common goal — to live in a world where every child has a permanent, safe and loving home to call their own. They also found that their shared commitment to eliminating the barriers that hinder children from realizing this basic right to a family was one that transcended party lines and geographical borders. Dedicated to making a difference, these members united to form the Congressional Coalition on Adoption (CCA). Today, at over 215 Members strong, the CCA is the largest, bicameral caucus in all of Congress. Over the last twenty five years, CCA Members have led Congress in the passage of legislation that has dramatically impacted the lives of children including “The Adoption and Safe Families Act” (ASFA); the “John Chafee Independent Living Act;” The “Promoting Safe and Stable Families Act;” the “Hope for Children Act” and the “Intercountry Adoption Act”.

In founding the Congressional Coalition on Adoption (CCAI), adoption advocates sought to match Members’ commitment to finding a home for every child with the information and resources needed to make that dream a reality. Since 2001, CCAI has strived to be an objective resource for information critical to advancing the efforts of federal policymakers on behalf of children. Through its five core programs, CCAI’s goal is to *educate* Members of Congress about the need for reform; *coordinate* Congressional and community efforts to bring about change and *facilitate* opportunities for communication and awareness.





## CCAI Core Programs

Through its **CONGRESSIONAL RESOURCE PROGRAM**, CCAI strives to be an educational and informational resource for the 215 Members of the Congressional Coalition on Adoption. Regular newsletters, briefings, press conferences and round tables provide ideal opportunities for experts and advocates to communicate with interested policy makers about the barriers that hinder children from realizing their basic right to a family.

The **CCAI DELEGATION PROGRAM** is a public-private partnership which exists to increase positive dialogue and the exchange of information among private sector individuals, foreign and domestic government officials, and Members of Congress. Over the last eight years, CCAI has organized delegations to Florida, China, Romania, Russia, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Uganda, and India, and has hosted leaders from around the globe in our nation's capital. Relationships made and lessons learned through these hands-on interactions continue to inspire the work of CCAI and its Members.

The **FOSTER YOUTH INTERNSHIP (FYI) PROGRAM** provides talented college students who have spent their formative years in foster care an opportunity to intern in a Congressional office for a summer. The FYI program instructs these young adults in how best to bring their unique perspective and resilient spirit to bear as advocates for the needs of other waiting children. The FYI Alumni Network now represents over 64 former interns who have used their FYI experience as a foundation for a wide variety of distinguished careers

**NATIONAL ADOPTION DAY (NAD)** is a collective national effort to raise awareness of the 114,000 children in foster care waiting to find permanent, loving families. For the last eight years, National Adoption Day has made the dreams of thousands of children come true by working with courts, judges, attorneys, adoption professionals, child welfare agencies and advocates to finalize adoptions and find permanent, loving homes for children in foster care. On National Adoption Day 2007, more than 200 events were held throughout the country and more than 3,300 adoptions were finalized.



## Mission Statement

The Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to raising awareness about the millions of children around the world in need of permanent, safe, and loving homes and to eliminating the barriers that hinder these children from realizing their basic right of a family.

## CCAI Board of Directors

### **Ralph F. Boyd, Jr.**

*Executive Vice President*

*Community Relations*

### **Freddie Mac**

*Chairman, President and CEO*

### **Freddie Mac Foundation**



Ralph F. Boyd, Jr. is Freddie Mac's Executive Vice President, Community Relations, and reports to Chairman and CEO Richard F. Syron. Boyd also is Chairman, President and CEO of the Freddie Mac

Foundation, and serves on the Foundation's Investment Committee. In these roles, he oversees one of the national capital region's most extensive philanthropic programs, which includes corporate giving, employee volunteer activities, and Foundation grant making. Boyd also serves as a director of the Home Ownership Funding Corporation I and II, two real estate investment trust subsidiaries of Freddie Mac.

Boyd began at Freddie Mac as Executive Vice President and General Counsel. In addition to supervising the company's legal operations, he also was responsible for overseeing Freddie Mac's regulatory relations and legislative activities at the federal, state, and local levels, and the company's internal and external communications functions.

Prior to joining Freddie Mac, Boyd was a senior partner of Alston & Bird LLP, leading its Washington, D.C. litigation practice. Before that, he served as Assistant Attorney General of the United States for Civil Rights, and as head of the Civil Rights Division, U.S. Department of Justice. From 1997 to 2001, Boyd was counsel and then a partner in the Trial and Litigation Department of Goodwin Procter LLP in Boston. During the 1990's, he served for six years as an Assistant U.S. Attorney in the Criminal Division of the Boston U.S. Attorney's office. Following law school,

Boyd was a law clerk to the Honorable Joseph H. Young, U.S. District Judge for the District of Maryland, after which he served as a litigation associate at the Boston law firm of Ropes & Gray for four years.

Boyd has a long history of involvement in community affairs, and currently serves on several non profit boards. He is Chairman of Easter Seals of the Greater Washington-Baltimore Region, and a member of the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors of the American Association of People with Disabilities. He also is a Trustee of the National Housing Partnership Foundation (NHPF), a non profit developer and provider of quality, affordable multi-family housing. In addition, Boyd chairs NHPF's Audit Committee, and is a member of its Investment Committee. He serves as well as Vice President and Secretary of the Board of Directors of the Center City Public Charter Schools, and on the Board of Directors of the Congressional Coalition on Adoption ("CCAI").

Boyd is a Director of the DIRECTV Group, Inc., and a member of its Audit, and Nominating and Governance committees. He also previously served as the U.S. member of the U.N. Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination — a Geneva-based United Nations human rights treaty compliance body.

Boyd is a graduate of the Harvard Law School, and Haverford College. He received an honorary Doctor of Law degree from Suffolk University.

### **Norm Coleman**

#### **Member of the U.S. Senate**



Prior to being elected to the Senate in 2002, Senator Coleman served two terms as the Mayor of St. Paul, Minnesota. Since taking office, Senator Coleman has become a national leader in assisting families with

adoptions. Senator Coleman has helped place close to 400 children from over 20 countries into the homes and lives of Minnesota families. He works with the Office of Children's Issues at the State Department and The United States Citizenship and Immigration Services on policy matters to ensure that the adoptions process is as smooth as possible from start to finish. Senator Coleman has worked closely with his colleagues to improve federal adoption laws including, most recently, the passage of a provision sponsored by Senators Coleman and Landrieu (D-LA) that would allow for an adopted foster child's college financial aid eligibility to be determined solely by their ability to pay, regardless of his or her adoptive family's income level.

Senator Coleman is a member of the Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry Committee, the Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship, the Foreign Relations Committee, the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs and the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations.

## **Jack N. Gerard**

*President and Chief Executive Office*  
**American Chemistry Council**



As President and CEO of the American Chemistry Council, Jack N. Gerard is leading new efforts to redefine the chemistry industry and strengthen its role in advocating public policy. He has pledged to make the ACC the "gold standard" of trade associations.

Since Mr. Gerard took the helm of ACC in July 2005, the Council has seen tremendous momentum in energy, rail, security, regulatory, health, environment and legal reform advocacy. ACC has been recognized as the leader in helping create the most comprehensive shift in energy policy in the last 25 years, moving the U.S. House of Representatives toward support

of natural gas drilling in the Outer Continental Shelf; and has also been lauded for strong efforts to work with Members of Congress in crafting a chemical plant security bill that is balanced.

The ACC also has: restructured to cut costs and operate more efficiently; broken the all time industry record for it's AmeriChem Political Action Committee (PAC) contributions; mobilized a robust foundation for grassroots and Get Out the Vote; gained 26 new members; launched the highly successful "essential2® advertising campaign"; and advanced advocacy at the global, state and federal levels.

Mr. Gerard and the ACC have been named among the "Best of K Street" in an edition of *The Hill* newspaper's listing of top advocates. He was also ranked 14th in the ICIS 2007 Top 40 Power Players in global chemicals.

Prior to joining ACC, Mr. Gerard was President and Chief Executive Officer of the National Mining Association, where he streamlined operations and built a national grassroots organization. He also co-chaired the BIPAC "Prosperity Fund," raising funds to mobilize the business vote.

Earlier in his career, Mr. Gerard was a founding partner, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of McClure, Gerard & Neuen-schwander, Inc., a Washington, D.C.-based government relations consulting firm. He and founding partner, former U.S. Senator James McClure, focused on issues such as international sports, telecommunications, energy and mining. Mr. Gerard also spent close to a decade working in the U.S. Senate and U.S. House of Representatives.

Mr. Gerard also serves as Chairman of the National Capital Area Council – Boy Scouts of America, serves as co-chair of The George Washington University Graduate School of Political Management's Council on American Politics, and is a member of the Conservation Fund's Corporate Council. He is also on

the Board of Directors for the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute.

He has a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and a Juris Doctor from George Washington University.

*The ACC represents 135 leading chemical producers representing the business of chemistry—a \$635 billion enterprise and a key element of the nation's economy.*

## **Wade F. Horn, Ph.D.**

*Director*

**Deloitte Consulting, LLP**



Wade F. Horn, Ph.D., is a director in Deloitte Consulting LLP's Public Sector Practice, focusing on helping state governments provide effective and efficient health and human services that are client-

focused and compliant with federal laws, regulations, and reporting requirements. Prior to coming to Deloitte, Dr. Horn served from 2001 to 2007 as the Assistant Secretary for Children and Families within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) where he oversaw over 60 federal programs aimed at improving the well-being of children and helping families achieve self-sufficiency, including welfare, child welfare, adoption, child support, Head Start, child care, and refugee resettlement.

From 1994–2001, Dr. Horn was President of the National Fatherhood Initiative (NFI) whose mission is to improve the well-being of children by increasing the number of children growing up with involved, committed, and responsible fathers. From 1989–1993, Dr. Horn was the Commissioner for Children, Youth and Families, and Chief of the Children's Bureau within the United States Department of Health and Human Services. Dr. Horn also served as a Presidential appointee to the National Commission on Children from 1990–1993, a member of the National Commission on Child-

hood Disability from 1994–1995, a member of the U.S. Advisory Board on Welfare Indicators from 1996–1997, and a member of the U.S. Advisory Board on Kinship Care from 1998–1999. Prior to these appointments, Dr. Horn was the Director of Outpatient Psychological Services at the Children's Hospital National Medical Center in Washington, D.C., and an Associate Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at George Washington University. Dr. Horn also has served as a member of the U.S. Advisory Committee on Head Start Research and Evaluation, an adjunct faculty at Georgetown University's Public Policy Institute, and an affiliate scholar with the Hudson Institute.

Dr. Horn has written numerous articles relevant to children and family issues, including a weekly newspaper column entitled *Fatherly Advice*, and is the co-author of several books including *The Better Homes and Gardens New Father Book* (Meredith Books, 1998) and the *Better Homes and Gardens New Teen Book* (Meredith Books, 1999). He is also the lead editor of *The Fatherhood Movement: a Call to Action* (Lexington Books, 1998).

Dr. Horn received his Ph.D. in clinical child psychology from Southern Illinois University in 1981. He lives in Gaithersburg, Maryland, with his wife and two daughters.

## **James Oberstar**

**Member of the U.S. House of Representatives**



Throughout his service in Congress, Jim Oberstar has been a leader in adoption and child welfare issues. More than thirty years ago, Jim Oberstar introduced one of the first bills to use the tax code to promote adoption.

His legislation in 1975 would have provided a \$500 deduction for medical expenses associated with the adoption of a child.

In 1985, Congressman Oberstar was instrumental in the creation of the Congressional Coalition on Adoption, and he continues to serve as the House Democratic Co-Chair of this important congressional caucus.

In 2001, Congressman Oberstar was the chief Democratic cosponsor of the Hope For Children Act which extended and expanded the adoption tax credit to \$10,000.

That same year, Congressman Oberstar helped create the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute, and he served as the first President of the Institute Board.

As an adoptive parent, Jim Oberstar knows the immense joys as well as challenges of adoption and he continues to support efforts to promote leave benefits for adoptive parents, and expand opportunities for families to adopt children from foster care and internationally.

## **Paul Singer**

*Senior Vice President*

*Chief Information Officer*

### **SUPERVALU**



Paul Singer is Senior Vice President and Chief Information Officer for SUPERVALU, a position he has held since July of 2006. He is responsible for technology solutions and support across all business

areas of the company. In addition, Paul oversees retail technology services for our independent business customers.

SUPERVALU is the third largest grocery retailer and the leading food distributor in the U.S.

Prior to joining SUPERVALU, Paul was the Chief Information Officer at Target where he gained 21 years of experience and held a number of leadership positions. Early in his retail career, he held positions of increasing responsibility at Kmart and May Company.

Paul holds degrees in Theology, History, and Music Education.

As a former board member for Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Auto Identification Lab, Paul helped shape the standards for RFID. Today he is a board member of Voluntary Interindustry Commerce Solutions (VICS) and a member of The Research Board.

Paul and his wife Teri have five daughters and are deeply committed to raising public awareness of how adoption can provide a safe home and loving family to the 143 million orphaned & vulnerable children in the world. He is a board member for the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute (CCAI), Joint Council on International Children's Services (JCICS) and is President of Almitas.

## **Rita L. Soronen**

*Executive Director*

### **Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption**



For more than 25 years, Rita Soronen has worked on behalf of abused, neglected and vulnerable children. Ms. Soronen has provided leadership for local, state and national efforts working to improve the juvenile

justice and child welfare systems, while striving to assure safe, nurturing and permanent homes for North America's children.

As Executive Director of the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption, a national non profit public charity, Ms. Soronen works to find loving adoptive families for each of the 150,000 waiting children in the United States and Canada's foster care systems.

Under Ms. Soronen's leadership, the Foundation has significantly increased its grant-making and awareness commitments, while developing signature initiatives that underscore and act on the urgency of the issue. In 2007, the Foundation dedicated more than \$12 million to grants and award-winning national awareness activities, including Wendy's Wonderful Kids, Adoption-Friendly Workplace, National Adoption Day, national

foster care adoption attitudes research, *A Child is Waiting: A Beginner's Guide to Adoption*, national poster campaign, PSAs and educational videos. In three years, the Wendy's Wonderful Kids program has grown from seven pilot site grants to 109 active sites in all fifty states, the District of Columbia and three provinces in Canada dedicated to aggressively and effectively moving children from foster care to permanent families. Over 400 children have been adopted as a direct result of Wendy's Wonderful Kids.

Immediately prior to joining the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption, Ms. Soronen served as the Executive Director of Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) of Franklin County, a partner in the national network of more than 900 CASA programs, and one of the 20 largest urban programs in the nation. During that time, she also served as the President of the Board of Trustees of the Ohio CASA/GAL Association and was instrumental in the passage of specialty license plate legislation benefiting CASA programs throughout Ohio, as well as the design and implementation of model program standards assuring consistent application of effective advocacy for children involved in court proceedings at the local and state levels.

In addition to serving on the Board of Directors of the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute, Ms. Soronen serves on the Board of Directors of the Ohio CASA/GAL Association and is a fellow of the Jefferson Fellowship for Executive Leadership. Ms. Soronen is a recipient of the National CASA Association Kappa Alpha Theta Program Director of the Year Award, the Ohio CASA/GAL Association Statewide Leadership Award, and the Angels in Adoption Award from the Congressional Coalition on Adoption.

A graduate of the University of Louisville, Ms. Soronen resides in Columbus, Ohio, and has two wonderful daughters.

## Stuart C. Williams



Following his graduation from Hamilton College in 1981, Stuart joined IBM Corporation, working with money center banks on Wall Street at the time of IBM's announcement of the Personal Computer.

From there, he worked in financial services with State Street Corporation in 1986 and then with Alex. Brown & Sons, beginning in 1993. Alex. Brown was acquired in 1997 and eventually became part of Deutsche Bank's investment bank. He managed DB's private client securities business in Boston for 8 years and recently opened DB's first private banking office in Boston. In March of 2008, Stuart left DB and is currently working on independent projects within the financial services industry.

He and his wife of 23 years, the former Debra Murphy, are the parents of three children: Abbey, 17; Paul, 13 (adopted from Korea); and Anne, 8 (adopted from China). He serves on the Finance and Senior Minister Search Committees of Hancock Church in Lexington, MA where they reside.

Stuart is also a Trustee of Boston Trinity Academy in Hyde Park, MA, a faith-based, college preparatory school of which Debbie was a founder and first Secretary of the board. He is also a member of Hamilton College's Alumni Council, serving as Class Agent for his class since 1999. The Williamses are an active family and spend their summers on Chebeague Island in Casco Bay, Maine.



---

*In Loving Memory of  
Maria Sue Chunxi Chapman*

*May 13, 2003 — May 18, 2008*



Maria Sue Chunxi Chapman is the youngest of Mary Beth and  
Steven Curtis Chapman's six children. Born in China,  
Maria was adopted by the Chapman family as an infant.  
A source of joy and laughter for all who knew her.

*May her spirit live on.*

## Steering Committee

### Alabama

Sen. Jeff Sessions (R)  
Rep. Robert Aderholt (R)  
Rep. Bud Cramer, Jr. (D)

### Alaska

Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R)  
Sen. Ted Stevens (R)

### Arizona

Sen. John McCain (R)  
Rep. Raul Grijalva (D)  
Rep. Rick Renzi (R)

### Arkansas

Sen. Blanche Lincoln (D)  
Rep. John Boozman (R)  
Rep. Vic Snyder (D)

### California

Sen. Barbara Boxer (D)  
Rep. Xavier Becerra (D)  
Rep. Ken Calvert (R)  
Rep. John Campbell (R)  
Rep. Dennis Cardoza (D)  
Rep. David Dreier (R)  
Rep. Anna Eshoo (D)  
Rep. Bob Filner (D)  
Rep. Elton Gallegly (R)  
Rep. Michael Honda (D)  
Rep. Duncan Hunter (R)  
Rep. Barbara Lee (D)  
Rep. Brad Sherman (D)  
Rep. George Radanovich (R)  
Rep. Linda Sanchez (D)  
Rep. Adam Schiff (D)  
Rep. Brad Sherman (D)  
Rep. Diane Watson (D)  
Rep. Henry Waxman (D)  
Rep. Lynn Woolsey (D)

### Colorado

Sen. Ken Salazar (D)  
Rep. Marilyn Musgrave (R)  
Rep. Thomas Tancredo (R)

### Connecticut

Sen. Joseph Lieberman (I)

### District of Columbia

Rep. Eleanor Holmes Norton (D)

### Florida

Sen. Mel Martinez (R)  
Rep. Gus Bilirakis (R)  
Rep. Ginny Brown-Waite (R)  
Rep. Tom Feeney (R)  
Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R)  
Rep. Cliff Stearns (R)  
Rep. Dave Weldon (R)  
Rep. Robert Wexler (D)  
Rep. Bill Young (R)

### Georgia

Sen. Saxby Chambliss (R)  
Sen. Johnny Isakson (R)  
Rep. Phil Gingrey (R)  
Rep. David Scott (D)

### Hawaii

Sen. Daniel Akaka (D)  
Sen. Daniel Inouye (D)

### Idaho

Sen. Larry Craig (R)  
Rep. William Sali (R)

### Illinois

Sen. Richard Durbin (D)  
Sen. Barack Obama (D)  
Rep. Melissa Bean (D)  
Rep. Judy Biggert (R)  
Rep. Jerry Costello (D)  
Rep. Danny Davis (D)  
Rep. Bill Foster (D)  
Rep. Luis Gutierrez (D)  
Rep. Dan Lipinski (D)  
Rep. Donald Manzullo (R)  
Rep. John Shimkus (R)  
Rep. Jerry Weller (R)

### Indiana

Sen. Evan Bayh (D)  
Sen. Richard Lugar (R)  
Rep. Dan Burton (R)  
Rep. Baron Hill (D)  
Rep. Mike Pence (R)  
Rep. Mark Souder (R)

### Iowa

Sen. Chuck Grassley (R)  
Sen. Tom Harkin (D)  
Rep. Steve King (R)

### Kansas

Sen. Sam Brownback (R)  
Sen. Pat Roberts (R)  
Rep. Nancy Boyda (D)  
Rep. Dennis Moore (D)  
Rep. Jerry Moran (R)  
Rep. Todd Tiahrt (R)

### Kentucky

Sen. Jim Bunning (R)

### Louisiana

Sen. Mary Landrieu (D)  
Sen. David Vitter (R)  
Rep. William Jefferson (D)

### Maine

Sen. Susan Collins (R)  
Sen. Olympia Snowe (R)

### Maryland

Rep. Chris Van Hollen (D)

### Massachusetts

Sen. Edward Kennedy (D)  
Sen. John Kerry (D)  
Rep. Michael Capuano (D)  
Rep. William Delahunt (D)  
Rep. Stephen Lynch (D)  
Rep. John Olver (D)  
Rep. John Tierney (D)

### Michigan

Sen. Carl Levin (D)  
Sen. Debbie Stabenow (D)  
Rep. Dave Camp (R)  
Rep. John Conyers, Jr. (D)  
Rep. Vernon Ehlers (R)  
Rep. Peter Hoekstra (R)  
Rep. Sander Levin (D)  
Rep. Michael Rogers (R)  
Rep. Fred Upton (R)  
Rep. Tim Walberg (R)

### Minnesota

Sen. Norm Coleman (R)  
Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D)

Rep. Michele Bachmann (R)

Rep. Keith Ellison (D)  
Rep. James Oberstar (D)  
Rep. Collin Peterson (D)  
Rep. Jim Ramstad (R)

### Mississippi

Sen. Thad Cochran (R)  
Rep. Chip Pickering, Jr. (R)

### Missouri

Sen. Kit Bond (R)  
Rep. Todd Akin (R)  
Rep. Roy Blunt (R)  
Rep. Russ Carnahan (D)  
Rep. Emanuel Cleaver (D)  
Rep. Jo Ann Emerson (R)

### Nebraska

Sen. Ben Nelson (D)  
Rep. Lee Terry (R)

### Nevada

Sen. John Ensign (R)  
Rep. Jon Porter (R)

### New Jersey

Sen. Frank Lautenberg (D)  
Rep. Scott Garrett (R)  
Rep. Frank LoBiondo (R)  
Rep. Frank Pallone (D)  
Rep. Bill Pascrell, Jr. (D)  
Rep. Donald Payne (D)  
Rep. Steven Rothman (D)  
Rep. Jim Saxton (R)  
Rep. Christopher Smith (R)

### New Mexico

Rep. Heather Wilson (R)

### New York

Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton (D)  
Rep. Gary Ackerman (D)  
Rep. Tim Bishop (D)  
Rep. Vito Fosella (R)  
Rep. Peter King (R)  
Rep. Nita Lowey (D)  
Rep. Carolyn McCarthy (D)  
Rep. Michael McNulty (D)  
Rep. Jerrold Nadler (D)  
Rep. Charles Rangel (D)  
Rep. Louise Slaughter (D)

### North Carolina

Sen. Richard Burr (R)  
Sen. Elizabeth Dole (R)

### North Dakota

Sen. Kent Conrad (D)  
Sen. Byron Dorgan (D)  
Rep. Earl Pomeroy (D)

### Ohio

Rep. John Boehner (R)  
Rep. Deborah Pryce (R)  
Rep. Jean Schmidt (R)  
Rep. Patrick Tiberi (R)

### Oklahoma

Sen. James Inhofe (R)

### Oregon

Sen. Gordon Smith (R)  
Sen. Ron Wyden (D)  
Rep. Earl Blumenauer (D)  
Rep. Peter DeFazio (D)  
Rep. Darlene Hooley (D)  
Rep. Greg Walden (R)  
Rep. David Wu (D)

### Pennsylvania

Sen. Robert Casey (D)  
Sen. Arlen Specter (R)  
Rep. Mike Doyle (D)  
Rep. Philip English (R)  
Rep. Jim Gerlach (R)  
Rep. Paul Kanjorski (D)  
Rep. Patrick Murphy (D)  
Rep. Joseph Pitts (R)

### Rhode Island

Rep. Patrick Kennedy (D)  
Rep. James Langevin (D)

### South Carolina

Sen. Jim DeMint (R)  
Rep. John Spratt (D)  
Rep. Joe Wilson (R)

### South Dakota

Sen. Tim Johnson (D)  
Sen. John Thune (R)  
Rep. Stephanie Herseth Sandlin (D)

### Tennessee

Rep. Jim Cooper (D)  
Rep. Bart Gordon (D)  
Rep. Zach Wamp (R)

### Texas

Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison (R)  
Rep. Joe Barton (R)  
Rep. Kevin Brady (R)  
Rep. John Carter (R)  
Rep. Mike Conaway (R)  
Rep. Lloyd Doggett (D)  
Rep. Kay Granger (R)  
Rep. Nicholas Lampson (D)  
Rep. Ron Paul (R)  
Rep. Pete Sessions (R)  
Rep. William Thornberry (R)

### Utah

Sen. Orrin Hatch (R)  
Rep. Rob Bishop (R)  
Rep. Jim Matheson (D)

### Vermont

Sen. Patrick Leahy (D)

### Virginia

Sen. John Warner (R)  
Rep. Eric Cantor (R)  
Rep. Virgil Goode, Jr. (R)  
Rep. Bob Goodlatte (R)  
Rep. Frank Wolf (R)

### Washington

Sen. Patty Murray (D)  
Rep. Jay Inslee (D)  
Rep. Jim McDermott (D)  
Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R)  
Rep. Dave Reichert (R)  
Rep. Adam Smith (D)

### West Virginia

Sen. Jay Rockefeller (D)

### Wyoming

Sen. Michael Enzi (R)

### Wisconsin

Sen. Herbert Kohl (D)  
Rep. Tammy Baldwin (D)  
Rep. Thomas Petri (R)  
Rep. James Sensenbrenner, Jr. (R)

## 2008 National Angels in Adoption™

**CBS**



CBS's commitment to raising awareness for adoption issues is local and national, and in many of the divisions across the Corporation.

The network reaches millions of Americans through its broadcasts, various platforms and partnerships and with relevant stories on "The CBS Evening News with Katie Couric," "The Early Show," and CBS's locally owned stations. Additionally, CBS's annual special, "A Home for the Holidays," has inspired numerous families to adopt children in need.

This December marks the 10th anniversary of "A Home for the Holidays," on which celebrities introduce pre-taped story segments highlighting children and families who have been involved in the rewarding process of adoption. Stories are enhanced by musical performances. Thousands of children have found families due to the inspirational stories and profiles of children in waiting on the special. Mariah Carey, Sheryl Crow, Faith Hill, Reba McEntire, Rod Stewart and Stevie Wonder have been among dozens of top performers. Presenters have included Mohammad Ali, Jamie Lee Curtis, Ellen DeGeneres, Dustin Hoffman, Morgan Freeman, Rene Russo, Steven Spielberg and Bruce Willis.

Last year, "The Early Show" raised awareness about new laws affecting adoption and profiled several families who have adopted. "The CBS Evening News with Katie Couric" has addressed how adoption affects both the biological and adoptive parents as well as possible repercussions of adopted children accessing their birth and adoption records.

CBS's owned stations have been equally committed. Examples include WBZ (Boston) and KCNC (Denver), which weekly feature

a "Wednesday's Child" waiting for a home. WFOR (Miami) partners with The Children's Trust in supporting the adoption of foster children. KTVT (Dallas) is the media sponsor for Lena Pope Home, whose services include adoption and foster care. KPIX (San Francisco) and WWJ/WKBD (Detroit) air specials on adoption on their public affairs programs. WCBS (New York) reporter Cindy Hsu, an adoptive parent, regularly covers adoption stories.

CBS is proud of its ongoing efforts supporting this important social issue, and honored to be among the distinguished group of recipients of the Congressional Coalition on Adoption's "Angels in Adoption" award.

### Ashley Rhodes-Courter



Ashley Rhodes-Courter was born in North Carolina in 1985 and entered foster care in 1989. Over the next nine years, she lived in 14 placements before being adopted at age 12 by Phil and Gay Courter of Crystal

River, Florida.

Ashley just graduated with honors from Eckerd College in St. Petersburg, Florida. She was the recipient of Eckerd's Trustee's Scholarship, their most prestigious full-tuition award. She has won several other national and local scholarships. She completed a double major in communications and drama with a double minor in political science and psychology.

At college, Ashley was a residential adviser, student public relation spokesperson, and speech coach. She spent her January term, 2006 in South Africa working with a children's literacy project. In the community, she has a job in marketing, and works with Heart Galleries.

Ashley was the 2004 Youth Advocate of the Year for the North American Council on Adoptable Children and won the Child Welfare League of America "Kids to Kids" National Service Grand Prize.

On June 1, 2003, the *New York Times Magazine* published her grand prize winning essay, "Three Little Words" about her adoption day. She expanded her essay into a memoir (also called "Three Little Words") which has just been published by Simon & Schuster.

In 2007 she was one of 20 college students selected for the USA Today All-USA Academic Team. She also was one of the four

GOLDEN BRICK Award winners for outstanding advocacy by Do Something, and was named one of *GLAMOUR Magazine's* Top Ten College Women.

Ashley has been featured on Montel Williams, Good Morning America, \$.99 Cool Ranch Doritos bags, and other national and local television shows. She is currently maintaining a full calendar of speeches and workshops all across the country. She has a passion to tell her story and share hope with other foster children and encourage adoption and permanency.

## Program Participants

### **Dr. Barry Black, Chaplain, U.S. Senate**

On June 27, 2003, Rear Admiral Barry C. Black (Ret.) was elected the 62nd Chaplain of the United States Senate. He began working in the Senate on July 7, 2003. Prior to coming to Capitol Hill, Chaplain Black served in the U.S. Navy for over twenty-seven years, ending his distinguished career as the Chief of Navy Chaplains. The Senate elected its first chaplain in 1789. Commissioned as a Navy Chaplain in 1976, Chaplain Black's first duty station was the Fleet Religious Support Activity in Norfolk, Virginia. Subsequent assignments include Naval Support Activity, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; U.S. Naval Academy, Annapolis, Maryland; First Marine Aircraft Wing, Okinawa, Japan; Naval Training Center, San Diego, California; USS BELLEAU WOOD (LHA 3) Long Beach, California; Naval Chaplains School Advanced Course, Newport, Rhode Island; Marine Aircraft Group THIRTY-ONE, Beaufort, South Carolina; Assistant Staff Chaplain, Chief of Naval Education and

Training, Pensacola, Florida; and Fleet Chaplain, U.S. Atlantic Fleet, Norfolk, Virginia.

As Rear Admiral, his personal decorations included the Navy Distinguished Service Medal, the Legion of Merit Medal, Defense Meritorious Service Medal (two medals), Meritorious Service Medals (two awards), Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medals (two awards), and numerous unit awards, campaign, and service medals. Chaplain Black is a native of Baltimore, Maryland and an alumnus of Oakwood College, Andrews University, North Carolina Central University, Eastern Baptist Seminary, Salve Regina University, and United States International University. In addition to earning Master of Arts degrees in Divinity, Counseling, and Management, he has received a Doctorate degree in Ministry and a Doctor of Philosophy degree in Psychology. Chaplain Black has been selected for many outstanding achievements. Of particular note, he was chosen from 127 nominees for the 1995 NAACP Renowned Service Award

for his contribution to equal opportunity and civil rights. He also received the 2002 Benjamin Elijah Mays Distinguished Leadership Award from The Morehouse School of Religion. In 2004, the Old Dominion University chapter of the NAACP conferred on him the Image Award, "Reaffirming the Dream — Realizing the Vision" for military excellence.

Chaplain Barry C. Black is married to the former Brenda Pearsall of St. Petersburg, Florida. They have three sons: Barry II, Brendan, and Bradford.

### **Betty Krupa**

Betty has an uncanny passion for adoption and loves to share her story. She credits a DARE® Officer for helping her to be removed from her biological family and placed in foster care. At the age of 15, when most children are told there is no hope for finding a family, she was adopted by her loving parents, Joe and Susan Krupa. This past summer, Betty was a member of the 2008 Congressional Foster Youth Internship Program, which deepened her passion for politics and changing the foster care system. Through this program, Betty was placed in the office of Senator Jim DeMint from South Carolina and used her time there to raise awareness about adoption and foster care issues to various Members of Congress and their staff. She so valued the experience as it increased her appreciation for all the work constituents across the country have done for these issues that are so close to her heart. Her personal motto is to "be all that you can be," and her time with Senator DeMint and his staff helped her to live up to her motto. Betty B. Krupa is from Owings Mills, MD and attends Stevenson University, formally known as Villa Julie College. Betty will graduate a semester early in coming December with a degree in Human Services. Betty has a strong desire to help people in need and

enjoys motivating people. In her free time, Betty is a spokesperson for the Department of Social Services (DSS), interns at Kernan Hospital as an Occupational Therapist Student Aide, and works for a psychotherapist. When not volunteering, Betty enjoys spending time with her family and friends who she loves dearly. As for her future, Betty dreams of pursuing her Masters in Occupational Therapy at Towson University, but she plans to continue volunteering with DSS and other organizations related to foster care and adoption.

## **Menu**



### **First Course**

Mixed Baby Greens  
Orange And Grapefruit Segments  
Citrus Dressing

### **Main Course**

Breast Of Chicken  
Boursin Whipped Potatoes  
Roasted Winter Vegetable Fricassee  
Cabernet Sauvignon Reduction

### **Dessert Buffet**

Vanilla, Chocolate, Spice and Coffee Flavored  
Angel Food Cakes  
Whipped Cream, Berry Marsh, Caramel Sauce, Warm Banana  
Foster Sauce, Mocha Anglaise, Chocolate Fudge Sauce,  
Cherry Compote and Lemon Syrup





## *2008 Angels in Adoption™*

### **Alaska**

#### **Betsy Woodin**

##### *Representative Don Young*

I started my career in social services working in drug and alcohol treatment, ran a domestic violence shelter for women and children, and later moved into child abuse investigations. During that time I worked with birth parents whose actions placed their children at risk of harm. Unfortunately, many of them failed to work their case plan and lost their parental rights. Now I work for Alaska Center for Resource Families/Northwest Resource Associates supporting foster and adoptive parents that are caring for children removed from families I worked with previously. I consider it a great honor to be able to support and educate foster and adoptive families that are committed to providing abused and neglected children with safe, caring, homes

### **Alabama**

#### **Susan Stewart Smith**

##### *Senator Jeff Sessions*

According to her colleagues, Susan Stewart Smith's career has been marked by an incredible dedication to the children of Alabama. Ms. Smith, program supervisor for Marshall County's Foster Care/Adoption division, has focused on improving the quality of life for families and children, and counts herself blessed to be able to devote herself to such a meaningful activity. By all accounts, Ms. Smith has left an indelible impression on families throughout Alabama, as they have on her. She counts her first adoptive placement, an eight year-old child, as one of her proudest accomplishments throughout her 34-year career. Recently, Ms. Smith led county foster care/adoption workers in the implementation of a comprehensive child tracking system. As a result of Ms. Smith's leadership,

the number of adoptive placements in Marshall County more than quadrupled in the past year alone. Ms. Smith's deep care and concern for the children that she assists is evident to all who come into contact with her. I am pleased to honor Ms. Smith's dedication and service to Alabama's children by selecting her as Alabama's 2008 Angel in Adoption.

### **Arizona**

#### **St. Nicholas of Myra Adoption Center**

##### *Representative Raul M. Grijalva*

St. Nicholas of Myra Adoption, a non profit organization, is a program of Catholic Social Services of Southern Arizona. St. Nicholas is based in a Tuscan, Arizona and contracts with the Arizona Department of Economic Security in Pima County to find adoptive families for children in the foster care system. St. Nicholas of Myra was named after a 4th century bishop of Turkey, venerated as the patron saint of children. St. Nicholas of Myra Adoption Center began in 1991 with five employees and a supervisor. At the present time it has grown to over thirty five staff members. Prior to contracting with St. Nicholas, adoptions in Pima County were handled by adoption specialists working for Child Protection Services, a division of the Arizona Department of Economic Security. In the final year of providing adoption services, the Department of Economic Security finalized 47 adoptions. Within the first year of providing adoption services, St. Nicholas was responsible for nearly doubling the adoptions. By completion of the first year, they finalized 47 adoptions. Within the first year of providing adoption services, St. Nicholas was responsible for nearly doubling the adoptions. The adoption rate has steadily increased through the years. In 2007, 461 children found permanency through adoptions at St. Nicholas. Over the past 16 years (1992 through 2007), St.

Nicholas has finalized 3,888 adoptions. St. Nicholas provided services to a wide geographical area, including not only metropolitan Tucson but outlining areas such as Ajo and two Native American reservations; the Tohono O'odham Nation and the Pasqua Yaqui Nation. In working with the Native population, St. Nicholas has respected the Indian Child Welfare Act and its importance in keeping Native families together when at all possible. The staff recognizes the importance of ensuring that when non-native families adopt Native children, their cultural heritage and customs are respected.

As a result of St. Nicholas's experience in adoption and child welfare, in 2001 they expanded their service delivery area to include Pinal and Gila Counties.

## **Janet Suzanne Story**

*Representative Harry E. Mitchell*

Practicing law since 1991, Janet began focusing on adoptions in 1999 with an emphasis on helping foster parents, grandparents, and other relatives adopt their foster children. Janet plays an integral role in helping families successfully navigate through the adoption process, and Congressman Mitchell is especially proud that she often does so on a pro bono basis. So far this year, Janet has logged over 200 hours of pro bono work.

For the past several years, she has worked with the Children's Law Center representing grandparents in the adoption of their grandchildren and providing mentoring to other volunteer lawyers in this program. Janet has also co-chaired the annual National Adoption Day celebration in Phoenix for the past seven years. At last year's celebration, about 150 children found homes with their own "forever families." The ultimate measure of Janet's success in the adoption field is her unyielding passion for her work. For Janet, the biggest reward is simply to help adopted children become permanent members of their families. Janet's tireless efforts make her a

true advocate on behalf of Arizona's families and an outstanding leader in her community.

## **Arkansas**

### **Children of Arkansas Loved for a Lifetime (C.A.L.L.)**

*Senator Blanche Lincoln*

The C.A.L.L.'s mission is "to educate, equip, and encourage the Christian community to provide a future and a hope for the children in foster care." They have begun recruiting adoptive and foster families in Pulaski County with the goal of having no children waiting in foster care by November 2008 in Pulaski County. They have recruited over 50 adoptive families this year for foster children in Pulaski County. Equally important, this group of dedicated volunteers has worked with DCFS to streamline the agencies' training and certification process to provide qualified foster and adoptive families, they provide support groups and services for families who foster and adopt children. They have created a model program that will be replicated across the state and has already moved to Lonoke County, resulting in all children in foster care being placed in their county. Judges across the state are anxious for The C.A.L.L. to move to their judicial districts so that children can be placed close to their homes and do not have to be removed from their schools, except when it is in their best interest to do so. This is a very exciting and promising program and one that deserves recognition in our state

### **John and Claudia Courtway**

*Representative Vic Snyder*

Before she was married, Claudia Courtway worked in an orphanage in Haiti and was responsible for delivering the babies to their new homes. While she was in social work, she met a couple that had adopted 2 children from China. Claudia and her husband John

had three children but decided that they wanted to give a little girl from China the opportunity to have a family as well. In 1997, the Courtways adopted their daughter Jenny at age 3 who had some health issues from her time in the orphanage. A few years later, their daughter Heidi was adopted at seven months. They discovered that Heidi was hearing impaired and were thrilled to be able to give her a loving and nurturing home. With great pride, Claudia told us that her adopted daughters have been a much greater blessing to their family than they could ever have been to them. Both girls are now thriving in programs in Conway such as the Hendrix Aqua Kids and Heidi has been attending UCA speech clinics and is adjusting well to hearing aids.

### **Jim and Ginger Cozad**

#### ***Senator Mark Pryor***

In February 2005, Jim and Ginger Cozad decided they wanted to adopt a child from China. Little did they know, the process would turn out to be emotionally, physically, and psychologically devastating to their family. It was only their faith in God and support from family and friends that kept them moving forward. After two and a half years of paperwork and waiting, the bureaucratic nightmare was finally over. On July 2, 2007, Jim, Ginger, and their son, Keith, met their new daughter and sister, Elliot-Sloane, in Hefei, China. Elliot-Sloane was extremely calm and a bit overwhelmed when the Cozads met her. She warmed up to the Cozad family on the 30-hour trip back to Little Rock, Arkansas, but was still a little subdued. Not sure how Elliot-Sloane would react to her new home, Jim, Ginger, and Keith Cozad were absolutely thrilled to watch their new daughter run around the house giggling and laughing with joy and excitement. Elliot-Sloane has brought so much joy and happiness to the Cozad Family. She is now 2½ years-old and can count to 50

and sing her ABCs. She can even navigate the Sesame Street website. The adoption process brought the Cozad family closer together and strengthened their faith in God. Elliot-Sloane's life verse sums up the Cozad Family's experience with adoption quite well. "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Hebrews 11:1

### **Jeanne Ann Whitmire**

#### ***Representative John Boozman***

It is my pleasure to nominate Jeanne Ann Whitmire, an attorney in the Office of Chief Counsel for the Arkansas Department of Human Services. Jeanne Ann currently works in Van Buren, AR, and has placed hundreds of children in both foster care and adoptive homes throughout the Third District of Arkansas. Jeanne Ann initially specialized in adoptive services in her own private law practice following the adoption of her daughter Katy, 18 years ago. For the past seven years she has been serving at the Department of Human Services zealously seeking placements for those who do not have a voice of their own, the abused and neglected children. If not for the efforts of Jeanne Ann, these children might otherwise not have a home. This is not just a job for Jeanne Ann, but a mission that she takes on with joy. In addition, Jeanne Ann teaches a paralegal class in Fayetteville, Arkansas, and will selflessly guide others who seek her help through the adoption process, keeping in mind the needs of all parties. A native of Siloam Springs, Arkansas, Jeanne Ann is a 1980 graduate of the University of Arkansas and a 1983 graduate of the Arkansas School of Law. She is married to Kent Kamm, who works in law enforcement in the Fort Smith area. They have one daughter, Katy.

## California

### **Jack Better**

*Representative Dennis Cardoza*

### **Rodney Clark**

*Representative Pete Stark*

Throughout his career in the East Bay Area, Rodney Clark has been dedicated to eradicating domestic violence and ensuring that all children afflicted by violence and neglect have a safe place to heal, grow, and thrive. Since 1996, Rodney has guided Safe Alternatives to Violent Environments (SAVE) as Executive Director. For three decades, SAVE has carried out their mission throughout Alameda County to fight domestic violence, with a particular focus on children. SAVE, under Rodney's leadership, has grown into a nationally recognized organization that has been honored by the National Alliance to End Homelessness among other organizations. SAVE provides a continuum of vital services to children and families, including emergency and transitional housing, group and individual counseling, legal assistance, education and community outreach and awareness. Mr. Clark has not only grown SAVE's organizational capacity to serve the community, he has done so in a way that honors and respects my district's cultural and ethnic diversity. In addition to leading SAVE, Rodney serves on the Board of Directors of the City of Fremont Family Resource Center and the Alameda County Domestic Violence Advisory Board. Rodney is a true leader in our community and his efforts have saved the lives of many children and improved the lives of many more. I am proud to honor Rodney Clark as an Angel in Adoption recipient.

### **Melissa Dodson**

*Representative John Campbell*

Melissa Dodson is an unsung hero in social work, who has spent more than 25 years dedicated to quality adoption services. She is highly respected for her work in Orange

County. Her work encompasses infant adoption, finding homes for medically fragile children, and adoption of children from foster care. She is committed to the belief that there is a family for every child and proves that to be true in the most difficult of circumstances. As only one example, Melissa was called by a local hospital staff to help find a home for a newborn, who needed a heart transplant. Physicians would not do the surgery without a family, as the chances of survival would be very slim without the bonding and nurturing of parents. Within a few days, Melissa identified the family, the surgery was soon accomplished, and the child is stable, healthy, and has been adopted by a wonderful local family. She also provided loving counseling to the birth mother who desperately needed to be supported in a difficult decision. Each year Melissa is responsible for serving more than 100 children and getting them safely into adoptive families. She is also an educator in the field and shepherds masters level interns from schools of social work all over Southern California, preparing many young professionals for careers serving children in foster care and adoption. There is no finer professional in the field of adoption, and I am proud to honor her.

### **Lacey Major-Fairgood**

*Representative Doris O. Matsui*

Ms. Lacey Major-Fairgood first got into foster care because she wanted a daughter. She is a single parent who has been a foster parent for approximately 15 years. She started providing respite for teenage mothers at risk of losing their children. Her experience in foster care eventually led to the adoption of Ms. Major-Fairgood's six children in 2002 and 2006. She is a strong believer that children should know their siblings so she has adopted two sibling sets. She will be finalizing her last two adoptions in the next month. Of the eight children she is parenting six of them are special needs.

The children suffer from a myriad of behaviors including special education needs, anger control issues, aggression, ADHD, poor peer/social relations, self mutilation, depression and PTSD. Ms. Major-Fairgood is a strong advocate for services for her children and has them enrolled in various classes and social activities to help with any deficiencies they may have. She states that the children who have special needs don't know that they are special needs, just very special to her. Mr. Major-Fairgood states that all her adoptions are memorable and so very special, however, one poignant story is the adoption of her son that is now 7. He was brought to her as an infant with such medical needs that his life was in the balance. She was up with him nightly due to sleep apnea, administration of medication, operating his feeding tube and supervising him through his many seizures. On multiple occasions she had to revive him to keep him alive. Today, although he is a Regional Center client, he is an active 7 year old who has made progress beyond what any professional could predict. The sibling set she is in the process of adopting were previously separated due to behavioral concerns. She had cared for the 16 year old as a respite provider but could not let her go. The 15 year old was placed in a foster/adoptive home in Tennessee where she resided with a younger sibling who had previously been adopted. Ms. Major-Fairgood took placement of the 15 year old after she and approximately six other children were removed from her prospective adoptive family due to allegations of severe physical and emotional abuse. Ms. Major-Fairgood did not intend to adopt or care for any more children however, due to her strong convictions regarding sibling contact she took placement of the 15 year old. She is attempting to gain custody of the younger sibling who continues to reside in foster care in Tennessee. Ms. Major-Fairgood is very proud of the family that she has created. She likes to say that many

families don't like each other or don't get along but her family was created by choice and it makes their bond special. Ms. Major-Fairgood is a very remarkable woman. She takes placement of children most people would rather not adopt and makes each one feel unique, appreciated and loved.

### **Eric and Jaci Hasemeyer**

#### ***Representative Ken Calvert***

Jaci and Eric Hasemeyer have been licensed foster parents since 1998. They have fostered 16 children and have adopted seven of those children. Of those seven, six children were considered difficult placements because of their emotional or medical needs of the children. Jaci was a school teacher until 1999 when the requirements of caring for her foster children with special needs prompted her to leave her career to focus her full attention on the children in her family's care. Eric ended 22 years in the financial services industry in 2002 to complete a Masters Degree in Counseling Psychology. He is now a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist. He and a partner have established a clinic that focuses on the needs of children in out-of-home placements. In addition to providing foster care to children in their own home, Jaci and Eric have been active in the foster care ministry in their church. In 2001, they formed the first foster care support group at the Grove Community Church in Riverside, CA. Out of that group of five families, 22 children have found permanent homes. They continue to work with the members of the church in promoting foster care awareness and the need to support foster families. The Hasemeyers and their children were the catalyst for the "Walk Your Talk Walk," an annual event in Riverside, California. In its four-year history, the walk has attracted thousands of participants who have raised over \$10,000 to support the ChildSHARE ministry which raises awareness of the need for faithful foster parents. Recently, Jaci and Eric took in an 18-year-old former foster child,

who had aged out of the foster care system and had been force out onto the streets. Still in high school, the boy was homeless. Without the stability and support provided by a caring family, the boy's grades began to fall and he was in danger of failing out of school. Jaci and Eric took the boy into their family, providing the help and support necessary to allow him to bring his grades up. Because of their attention, the young boy received a diploma and will be attending California Baptist University in the fall semester. Jaci and Eric have been tremendous role models not only to the foster children they have opened their home to, but also to other residents of Riverside County who have an interest in making a difference in the lives of foster children.

## **Miriam Krinsky**

### **Senator Barbara Boxer**

Senator Barbara Boxer is delighted to be honoring a nationally recognized foster care advocate and policy leader, Miriam Aroni Krinsky, as her 2008 Angel in Adoption. Ms. Krinsky has been in the forefront of foster care reform work in California and nationally, serving as a member of the California Blue Ribbon Commission on Children in Foster Care and the American Bar Association's Youth at Risk Commission. Ms. Krinsky has been a tireless advocate for legislative change and the need for the public to address responsibly the needs of children in the child welfare system. In her five year tenure as the Executive Director of the Children's Law Center of Los Angeles, a 185 person nonprofit legal services organization representing over 20,000 abused and neglected youth in Los Angeles, Ms. Krinsky wrote and promoted over a dozen changes in California law, including new laws to assist youth who cross from dependency to delinquency, ensure that teens in foster care have permanent adult connections, and enhance educational stability and opportunities for youth in care. She has also been a strong voice in national reform efforts, spearheading efforts to support youth

aging out of foster care and ensure that youth are engaged participants in the court and case planning process. Ms. Krinsky is a recognized spokesperson on foster care and juvenile justice issues; she has testified extensively before legislative, government and judicial bodies and has authored over 50 articles and columns on issues relating to children and youth at risk. Most recently, Ms. Krinsky is bringing her passion for the needs of vulnerable children to the world of academia; starting this Fall she will be teaching graduate public policy, social welfare and law students at the UCLA School of Public Affairs and Loyola Law School.

## **Timothy and Yvette Lloyd**

### **Representative Gary Miller**

Even before the birth of their son, Timothy Jr., the Lloyds were active in their church and community. They are known by friends as always willing to volunteer to help children and have been highly involved in baseball, soccer, YMCA sports, as well as the Boy Scouts. For several years, the Lloyd family considered adoption when they found it was unlikely that they could conceive more children. Being a devout Catholic family, foster care and adoption was a mechanism for them to live out the tenants of their faith. They turned to Olive Crest, a Judeo-Christian agency that places children of abandonment, neglect and/or abuse, and found a match to foster and adopt two lovely siblings. Now Timothy, Jr. has a younger brother and sister. Tim and Yvette continue to help other parents through the sharing of their love and experience of fostering and adoption. The experience has allowed their family to become closer and grow as both individuals and as a family. Tim and Yvette say that "it feels very humbling to be able to provide to children that have been through so much in their lives" and that "they believed it was their place in this great world to be able to provide a better life for these children in need". This attitude is exactly why Tim and



Yvette Lloyd are the perfect people to receive this honor.

### **Julian and Lourdes Martinez**

#### ***Representative Bob Filner***

Parents Julian and Lourdes Martinez, a married couple who live in Chula Vista, California have been chosen as 2008 Angels in Adoption. They are the adoptive parents of Angel, April, and Alejandro. They have been selected as Angels in Adoption because of their loving acceptance of this sibling set of three, two boys and a girl, in need of a caring, forever family. Angel was four months of age at the time of the adoption, April was four years old, and Alejandro was 6 years old. These children had experienced abuse and neglect which led to foster care. When their birth family did not reunify, the Martinez stepped up with their offer to adopt. Their adoption was finalized in February, 2007. Angel, April, and Alejandro continue to blossom in their adoptive home. Julian and Lourdes are enthusiastically working to send out the message about the importance of adoption. They have volunteered their time to appear in public service announcements promoting adoptions on Univision (Spanish television), a local San Diego TV station, and radio. They speak to others about the benefits of adoption and how it has positively changed their lives. The whole family is involved in the community. The children recently danced at a National Council of La Raza event at the Convention Center. San Diego County Adoptions was the placement agency. I am very pleased to nominate Julian and Lourdes Martinez as my Angels in Adoption for 2008.

### **Karen and Steven Robinson**

#### ***Representative Ellen Tauscher***

The Robinson Family has adopted two children from Kazakhstan: Jack, who just turned three, and Wendy Marie, now 23 months old. When the family decided to adopt children, Russia was in the midst of making changes to their adoption program, making it more

difficult to get children placed with families. As the family worked through the process, they heard about Kazakhstan as the orphanages were overfilled with children in need of homes and decided to visit. They first adopted Jack and as they found the experience “amazing”, decided they would return to find a sibling for him. The Robinsons wanted both of their children to share the same heritage. They returned with Wendy in November 2007. One of the first things the parents arranged for was to have Wendy’s tonsils removed and ear tubes put in to alleviate chronic infections; they report that her eating, sleeping, and speaking are greatly improved! Both children are spending two mornings a week this summer at their church “Seedlings Program” before they actually begin pre-school. Today was Science Day and while the children are in different classrooms, they know the other one is close by. When talking to Karen, she gave me a synopsis of the adoption process: First, it is strictly logic — paperwork, social workers, testing, reports, etc. Then the emotional process begins when you actually see your child and hold them. And that is when it is all worth it!

### **Dean and Lisa Sweet**

#### ***Senator Dianne Feinstein***

Dean and Lisa Sweet have been married for over 20 years. They have four children, all adopted — Kyle, 16, twins Ricky and Reno, 15, and Kaylee, 5. Unable to have biological children of their own, Dean and Lisa adopted their first son Kyle in 1991. Kyle was an easy baby and it encouraged the Sweets to adopt again in 1993. Their second adoption was two Hispanic twin boys, Ricky and Reno, who, they later discovered, had been severely exposed to alcohol while in utero. The two boys presented challenges for the couple but they educated themselves, sought professional advice and raised them with unconditional love. Ricky and Reno are now thriving 15-year-olds. As their three sons grew older, Lisa and Dean became involved with the foster care program

in Contra Costa County, California. In 2002, they became licensed foster parents and in 2003, they became foster parents to a two-month old baby named Kaylee who was born severely premature. Kaylee is now five years old. Lisa, a registered nurse by training, loved fostering kids and wanted to use her own experience to help other families who want to go through the adoption process. Lisa applied for and got the job as Contra Costa County's Foster Parent Liaison. She has truly made it her life's work to help other foster families who want to adopt children.

## **Graham Wright**

### ***Representative Sam Farr***

Graham Wright has dedicated his career to creating and sustaining permanent adoptive families for children in foster care, as a County social worker, manager, advocate, therapist, program architect, and webmaster. He began his career in 1975 as an adoption, rising to direct Children's Services in Santa Cruz, California. Out of concern that foster and adoptive children had little access to appropriate therapy resources, Graham created Future Families in 1984, his State's first nonprofit therapeutic foster care and adoption agency. Integral to the agency's success was the innovative combination of experienced adoptive parent partners on staff, working as a team with adoption therapists and social workers to achieve truly permanent adoptions. Graham has been in the forefront of policy development and child welfare legislation since the late 1970's. He served as Legislative Chair of the California Association of Adoption Agencies from 1979 to 1991, and as State President of that association for two terms from 1996 to 2000. He was appointed to Governor Pete Wilson's Adoption Advisory Council, and, in 2000 through 2003, to Governor Gray Davis's Child Welfare Stakeholders Group, charged with a total redesign of the child welfare system. Graham was the only representative of the field of adoption asked to participate.

In 2000 Graham joined Kinship Center, a statewide adoption, relative care and mental health agency, in order to pilot his proudest programmatic achievement; "Adoptive Family Wraparound". Wraparound is an unconditional, strength-based and family-driven system of intensive post-adoption services to prevent institutionalization or to reunify an adoptive child from placement. Over the past 10 years Graham Wright has developed child welfare web sites, most notably California's Waiting Child and Adoptive Family matching database, with both public and secure agency portals. He is also the creator of several agency sites through his private enterprise at [www.placenet.net](http://www.placenet.net). In 2000, with the support of Kinship Center, Graham created AFTER, Adoptive Family Therapeutic and Educational Resources, a post-adoption center serving Silicon Valley and the Monterey Bay. AFTER received the Adoption Excellence award for post-adoption services in 2002. Graham Wright has been involved in the adoption of thousands of children over his career. He considers adoptive parents to be heroes in the classical sense; giving endlessly despite great challenges and personal sacrifice. He recalls as his most rewarding adoption the successful placement of nine siblings, six of whom were challenged by a life-threatening genetic condition, and who had been languishing in the foster care system. Graham continues contribute as a consultant, trainer and program developer, and seriously doubts that he'll ever retire!

## **Connecticut**

### **Connecticut Association of Foster and Adoptive Parents, Inc**

#### ***Senator Joseph I. Lieberman***

The Connecticut Association of Foster and Adoptive Parents (CAFAP) was founded in 1995 for the purpose of providing training, advocacy and support services for foster and adoptive parents in Connecticut. In 2002,

the association added relative/kinship care providers as families who were caring for their relative children were becoming more prevalent and also needed these same services. The association provides more than 100 classes throughout Connecticut each year for the purpose of helping families build their skills to care for children in their homes. Over 7500 calls are received by CAFAP staff each year from families who need supportive services such as mentors, help with obtaining services for their children, and to discuss parenting issues. CAFAP has been a sponsor of the Connecticut Heart Gallery since its inception in 2003 and is in its sixth year as the state Recruitment Response Team for the AdoptUSKids national foster/adoptive family recruitment program. CAFAP staff maintains the 1-888-Kid Hero statewide foster and adoptive family recruitment line for the state of Connecticut and is an integral partner in the annual Families Are Forever adoption event held every summer.

### **Mary Beth Bruder**

#### *Senator Christopher Dodd*

There are few parents more dedicated in their efforts than Dr. Mary Beth Bruder. Dr. Bruder is a loving single mother of four daughters adopted from China. Her children, Elizabeth, Kate, Mary Grace, and Annemarie, range in age from 2 to 10 years old. All four children have, or had, special needs, though Dr. Bruder feels that all children have special needs—most importantly for a family of their own. Her tireless commitment to her four children is an inspiration to all parents. In addition to raising her four children, Dr. Bruder is the Director of the A.J. Pappanikou Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities at the University of Connecticut (UConn). She is also a professor of pediatrics and education psychology at the University of Connecticut and her area of expertise for the past 32 years has been early childhood intervention. Both her personal and professional commitments have converged as Dr. Bruder has dedicated much of her time to

educating and assisting parents, professionals, and Congressional representatives about children who have, or are at risk of developing disabilities, most especially those who don't have families. All children deserve a permanent, healthy and caring home where they can learn to love themselves and others, and Dr. Bruder's dream is for every child to have a family who will love them for just being who they are, and help them become who they were meant to be. There are few investments as worthwhile as those we make in our children, and Dr. Bruder and her family serve as an inspiring example of how a committed and loving parent can truly change lives.

## **Delaware**

### **Christine Montgomery**

#### *Representative Mike Castle*

It is my distinguished pleasure to nominate Ms. Christine Montgomery as a 2008 Angel in Adoption. Throughout her 18 years of service to the Delaware Children's Department, she has truly exemplified their maxim: "think of the child first." She has consistently shown herself to be an innovative and compassionate figure who works hard to meet the myriad needs of each child she works with. One of her many responsibilities is that of a Recruitment Specialist for the New Castle County Permanency Unit. In this capacity, Christine seeks permanent, loving homes for Delaware children who have had trouble being placed. Since 2004, Ms. Montgomery has helped facilitate the placement of more than 40 children, while also supporting hundreds more through the adoption process. She believes, "there are no unwanted children, just unfound families." Christine tirelessly works to enrich and unite Delaware children, families and the entire community. In her current role as a Family Services Assistant who also serves on the board of the Wilmington Drama League, Christine initiated a program that introduces arts and theatre to children in

foster care. Christine has made immeasurable contributions to the field of adoption and foster care, which is what makes her a perfect Angel in Adoption.

## Florida

### Jim Adams

#### *Representative Ander Crenshaw*

I nominate Jim Adams, CEO for Family Support Services of North Florida (FSSNF). For three decades, Jim has improved child welfare services and juvenile justice in Northeast Florida. FSSNF and Jim are responsible for the care of over 3,000 children. A natural leader, Jim was named one of our newspaper's Change Agents for his "out-of-the-box" thinking and leadership. Through his initiatives, FSSNF continues to rank first among Florida's Community Based Centers and has broken state and national records as it finalized 500 adoptions from foster care in FY 07–08. Jim's given foster children more than "room and board" — he has given them hope, stability and opportunity. Jim spearheaded a partnership for Operation Backpack and the Legislative Delegation Adoption Awareness campaigns. He partnered with a TV-channel to focus on children available for adoption through a weekly news spot. He initiated a mobile, photographic Heart Gallery of children looking for their forever homes; made sure foster care children were included in the Mayor's Book Club; saw that foster families took part in dyslexia screening; and arranged for an educational specialist to track foster children's academic progress and provided tailored tutoring. He created a partnership with a woman's club to provide "secret shoppers" and arranged for Jacksonville's Fire & Rescue Department to collect Christmas gifts for children in foster care. Jim obtained a grant to hire a staffer to concentrate on recruitment of adoptive families and another to buy computers and training for foster children and

parents. He partnered with the Sheriff, library and Pound Puppies inventor to begin a reading club for pre-K and kindergartners providing backpacks, books, library card applications, Pound Puppies, and child-abuse prevention tips for parents. As an adoptive parent, I am impressed with the hard work that Jim Adams has done for the foster care children in my district. Jim's leadership comes straight from his heart. Together with the children and families whose lives he has touched, I nominate Jim Adams as a true Angel in Adoption.

### Amy U. Hickman

#### *Representative Ron Klein*

Amy U. Hickman is a graduate of the University Of Florida College Of Law. She was admitted to the Florida Bar in 1989. She is a partner in Hausmann & Hickman, P.A. and her practice focuses on adoption, reproductive and juvenile law. Mrs. Hickman has placed children for adoption and represented parties in contested adoption and termination of parental rights cases. Prior to founding Hausmann & Hickman, P.A., Mrs. Hickman was a staff attorney with the Juvenile Advocacy Project of the Legal Aid Society of Palm Beach County where she advocated on behalf of juveniles in State and Federal Courts. Mrs. Hickman is a member of the Executive Committee of the Family Law Section of the Florida Bar and Chair of the Section's Adoption and Juvenile committee. Through the Family Law Section, she advocates to improve and reform Florida's adoption law. Amy co-chaired The Florida Bar, Family Law Section's Ad Hoc Adoption Reform Committee during 2001–2002 together. Amy's skill, knowledge, and understanding of adoption law (nationally and statewide) resulted in the Family Law Section being instrumental in reforming serious glitches in Florida's adoption law. Amy co-authored what is now known as Florida's Putative Father's Registry. Amy has since 2003 drafted substantial further revisions to Florida's adoption law and has lobbied Florida's

legislature the past several years, improve Florida's adoption law to provide stability and finality for Florida's adoptive children. This year Amy's legislative was finally embraced by the House and Senate and signed into law by the Governor. Mrs. Hickman provides pro bono services to children through many local charitable organizations. She is a founding board member of the Florida Adoption Counsel, a fellow of the American Academy of Adoption Attorneys, and Vice President of Kids Sanctuary, a local special needs group foster home. Mrs. Hickman was the recipient of the 2007 Chair's Visionary Award Presented by the Family Law Section of the Florida Bar and the 2008 Star Award presented by the Florida Adoption Counsel.

### **Kids In Distress**

#### ***Senator Mel Martinez***

Kids In Distress (KID) is a nationally accredited agency that has been providing counseling and support services to at-risk children and their families since 1979. KID's mission is dedicated to the prevention of child abuse, preservation of the family, and the care and treatment of abused/neglected children. Until a few years ago KID was best-known primarily for its emergency shelter care. Serving over 7,000 children and their families annually, through comprehensive programs offering a continuum of care, KID's unique approach to its supported foster/adoption care and family support services is now gaining attention and praise statewide. KID believes that every family has strengths to build upon and that, in order to change the course of a child's life, not only the needs of the child but the needs and resources of the family as a whole must be taken into account. KID's emphasis on appropriate matching of children with their foster/adoptive homes, and of providing consistent, on-going family support, as opposed to the standard approach of simply finding the child a bed, has had outstanding results. The proof is that 40% of KID foster homes close annually

due to successful adoption, and 98% of children served remain in the first foster home in which they are placed. In addition, clinical services that focus on family systems development are offered, as well as monthly support groups to both pre-adoptive and post-adoptive parents within the community. Support groups for the children are also offered. These groups allow both parents and children to address issues that pertain to the challenges and transitions they experience, even after adoption has finalized. In 2007, KID celebrated 60 adoptions with our foster families. All KID program models are replicable, allowing for growth into new communities as funding becomes available.

### **Stephanie Knight**

#### ***Representative Ginny Brown-Waite***

Sixteen years ago, Stephanie Knight founded A Women's Resource Center in Brooksville, Florida. Over the years, her staff of eighteen employees and volunteers has worked to provide local families with the information and resources to address misconceptions about the process and the blessing of adoption. As time went on, Stephanie renamed the center, A New Generation, to make the center more open to both men and women. A New Generation has been a resounding success. The center provides adoption training, which helps to guides prospective parents through the entire process. A New Generation relies on the local community, churches, and television stations to provide outreach in the community and help families through the adoption process. The impact that A New Generation, and other organizations like it achieve, is evident in the life of the center's Director and his wife. Nineteen years ago, they adopted their daughter through another center, and today, all three selflessly give their time at the A New Generation. Stephanie has been married to Scott Knight a 5th generation Floridian for almost 18 years, they have three wonderful children, Ryan, Jeremy and Brielle. They live on a ranch in Masaryktown, FL.

## **Our Kids of Miami-Dade/Monroe, Inc.**

*Representative Kendrick B. Meek*

Our Kids of Miami-Dade/Monroe, Inc. ("Our Kids") is the non profit lead agency created by local child advocates in response to state legislation mandating local control and leadership of child welfare services. Their innovative "leadership model" is unique from all other community-based care lead agencies in the state, tapping a diverse group of well-known community leaders to act as stewards of an innovative design for community-based care. Our Kids' mission is to provide leadership for, and oversight of, a system of care for abused and/or neglected children, and children at risk of abuse and/or neglect, and their families, in Monroe and Miami-Dade Counties. In its first year of operation, Our Kids had numerous accomplishments including successfully transitioning one of the largest, most complex regions in the state in four months, rather than the planned ten months. The organization finalized the adoption of 1,150 children in its first 3 years, exceeding its annual contract goal in 3 consecutive years. In December of 2006, Our Kids was honored by the Florida legislature for improved outcomes in foster care. The pilot program is being hailed by legislators and the community alike for its early successes and is poised to serve as a national model for privatizing foster care. Our Kids has made the process much easier and with less red tape. Events like the Miami Heart Gallery ([www.miamiheartgallery.com](http://www.miamiheartgallery.com)) and the annual National Adoption Day Celebration have made it possible for more children to be adopted. Today, 36% of children in Miami and the Keys are adopted in 2 years, an unprecedented statistic in the Southern Region and exceeds the federal standard (32%). These extremely positive results would not have occurred without the efforts of "Our Kids," who serve as Angels to our most vulnerable children.

## **Mary Ann Scherer**

*Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen*

Several years ago, Mary Ann Scherer came to State Senator Debby P. Sanderson, as her friend and legislator, regarding major problems within the then existing Florida Adoption Statutes. She and Senator Sanderson worked tirelessly, for a number of years, to rectify and bring forward solutions that would streamline and unencumber the process for the legitimate adoption entities in Florida. It was not an easy task, but one that begged for change, and put attention on the best interest of the children waiting to be adopted and languishing in our state. Senator Sanderson recounts how she could not have moved forward on the issue without Mary Ann Scherer's deep commitment and generosity of time, wisdom, compassion, as well as, her thorough understanding of the adoption process. Mary Ann Scherer's tenacity and dedication to always consider the best interest of all parties; birth mothers, birth fathers, and of course, the adopted child is unsurpassed. Mary Ann's practice includes both domestic and International adoptions. She has gone above and beyond to assure legal and successful adoptions. This would include approximately 2000 international and domestic adoptions, as well as, approximately 1500 agency adoptions. Mary Ann is a remarkable woman and has Florida's complete admiration for her continued efforts.

## **David and Merrie Schwartz**

*Representative Jeff Miller*

I would like to recognize David and Merrie Schwartz for their outstanding compassion and selflessness. For many people, the dream of helping children is tabled until they have more money, more time, and so forth. But for Merrie and David Schwartz, the decision to help the neediest of children could not have been postponed. Their remarkable benevolence provided a home to a half-dozen children (almost all of whom they have adopted) and their unwavering love and patience has given



hope to the most disparaging of circumstances. Aside from each having three grown children of their own from previous marriages, the couple gladly sacrificed their jobs and regular income to care for foster children with extreme medical conditions. Through their sixteen years of marriage, David and Merrie Schwartz have adopted three of their former foster children (all of whom currently have or have had severe medical issues) and are in the process of adopting their fourth. The couple also cares for two infants who were born premature. This remarkable degree of kindness and philanthropy transgresses far beyond the bounds of common humanitarian efforts. Theirs is a story that awes and inspires and is deserving of unyielding gratitude.

## Georgia

### Gene and Paige Atkinson

#### *Representative David Scott*

As I pull into the driveway of the Atkinson's house, I am struck by the beauty and grandeur of the home and its surroundings. A long driveway leads up to the four story brick home, which sits atop a small hill nestled in the woods. I unload my three small boys (ages 8 months to three years) and begin the trek up to the imposing front door. As we walk, my oldest son spots a riding toy car in the bushes and small statues of playful children in the flower bed. We knock on the front door, we are greeted warmly by our host, Gene Atkinson, who also designed and build this magnificent structure. The Brazilian cherry hardwood floors lead to a four story Tara style spiral staircase. I ask Gene where we should go, and he answers, "oh anywhere! Just find a room where you feel comfortable." So we begin exploring. My son wants to climb the stairs up first, and on the next level we find an entire floor of gigantic children's bedrooms complete with a small hidden playroom with a firemen's pole! The boys find the toy box full

of trains and settle down to play. I leave them with my husband to finish my self-guided tour. On my walk, I begin to notice small stains and scratches on the floor and stairs, and I realize despite the size and impressive architecture, this house is a real home for real people who love children. Gene and Paige Atkinson are those people. I met Gene in Church choir on year ago. I have been told that he had four children and that he was also a foster parent. Since I have three small children (two of which are adopted), I was very interested to speak with him and ask parenting questions. In the past year, I have learned that Gene's family has been host to 13 foster children over the last 5 years. Most of the children have come in sibling pairs of a variety of ages, and stay varying lengths of time. No matter how long a child stays or what emotional condition they arrive, every child benefits from the loving and stable environment of the Atkinson home. Atkinson's four biological children play big brother or sister to the new arrivals while Gene and Paige provide a Christian example through their volunteer work in the church community.

### Dan and Susan Chapman

#### *Representative Phil Gingrey*

Dan and Susan Chapman live in Acworth, GA with their two daughters Grace (7) and MiMi (6). Susan retired from her career as a professional golf instructor when Grace was born in 2001. Dan has had a successful family owned business for over twenty-five years. He is very active in their church (North Metro Church) where he has been a member of the praise and worship band for seven years, and has also served on the Board at the church for a three year term. Dan and Susan founded "First Friday's – China Adoption Journey" after adopting their daughter MiMi from China four years ago. First Friday's is an "open house" for families who were interested in adoption or are in the process of adopting from China. Dan and Susan know first hand how much love and support families need during and after the

adoption journey and what an incredible sense of community adopting a child from China creates. These gatherings provide a fun, informal setting to connect and learn about China adoption preparation, find support, and build lifelong friendships during this amazing journey. Meeting other “like-minded” people helps “make sense” of the many challenges during the adoption process and builds a community between those who have travelled this road and those who are just beginning “the journey”. After three years of hosting First Friday’s in their home, the Chapman’s averaged over 90+ people each month and in October 2007 decided to move First Friday’s to North Metro Church in Kennesaw, GA. Susan’s passion is mentoring families through their adoption journey by empowering them emotionally, physically and spiritually. Dan, a devoted family man, shares Susan’s passion to mentor families along this journey. Together, they are finishing their first book entitled “Blessed Journey” which is a mentoring program designed to match mentors who have already adopted with families who are in the process of adopting. The Chapman’s believe being involved in an adoption community “works”. Families benefit, but most importantly, the kids who are waiting for their “forever families” arrive home to families who are well prepared, mentally and emotionally, and know they have a “built-in” support group. Everyone wins! Dan and Susan are also founders of China Tree, a Chinese Language and Culture School, which meets at Kennesaw State University, Kennesaw, GA. Susan serves as President and Administrator of the school, Dan serves as the Vice-President of Extra-curricular Affairs. The school meets on Sunday afternoons and currently enrolls 75 children.

## Idaho

### **Stephen and Tanya Nakamura**

#### *Representative Bill Sali*

Stephen and Tanya Nakamura have adopted 2 children. They have a 5 year old son and a 10 month older daughter. The Nakamuras are very active in foster care issues and awareness in their communities.

## Illinois

### **Muriel Collison**

#### *Representative Mark Kirk*

Muriel Collison truly deserves this recognition because of her diligent efforts to improve the lives of disadvantaged Kazakh orphans. Ms. Collison’s generosity began when she delivered 100 bibs, 100 hats and 50 pairs of socks to the Nexbudka orphanage in Karaganda Kazakhstan during a trip to adopt her daughter Sophia last year. The following holiday season, Ms. Collison asked for donations to raise money for the orphans left behind in lieu of accepting presents. Ms. Collison’s efforts enabled her to raise over \$2,000, which she used to purchase winter clothing and much needed medical supplies for the orphans. Desiring to help more, Ms. Collison founded Kazapolooza, a charity event, where families come together to celebrate the joy of adoption and to raise funds for charities which aid orphanages in Kazakhstan. In conjunction with planning the next Kazapolooza, Ms. Collison is currently collecting underwear and undershirts as donations for “Operation Undergarment”, which she plans to deliver to the Nezabudka orphanage next holiday season. Muriel’s work on behalf of the orphans of Kazakhstan proves how the devotion and commitment of one person can make a huge difference in the world. She is an inspiration to all.

### **Michael and Nancy Dubois**

#### ***Representative Timothy V. Johnson***

Nancy Dubois has been a biological mother, adoptive mother and foster mother. Her oldest daughter was adopted from India in 1981. She and her husband Michael are also the adoptive parents of two daughters from Russia and Romania. It was after returning from Russia with their daughter Nina, and being inspired to help the children left behind in the orphanages, that Nancy and her late husband Larry Kurlander first had the vision to start a non profit organization called Operation Starfish. Since its inception in 2002, Operation Starfish has helped over fifty families with financial grants to adopt children both internationally and domestically. Nancy serves as the Executive Director of the organization. Most recently Nancy and her sister have established an Adoption Ministry at their church which will serve as a community resource to those seeking to adopt. Nancy and Michael Dubois are outstanding adoptive parents who have taken the initiative to assist others with the adoption process. They are an excellent example of an Illinois' Angels in Adoption™.

### **Christine Futia**

#### ***Senator Richard Durbin***

Christine Futia has been a strong advocate for Indian adoptions for many years. Christine adopted her first son from India 21 years ago and has adopted two more children since then. Having lived in India as a high school exchange student, Christine developed a deep love for the country and its people. Naturally, India was an obvious choice for her when she decided to adopt her three children. Christine's unique experiences have proven to be a valuable resource for many families seeking to adopt from India. Equally important is her experience in traveling to India. To assist parents who may be anxious about making the trip, Christine has created a guidebook for parents traveling to pick up a new child or bringing their older children back to India to revisit

their homeland. The guidebook eases parents' concerns and allows them to enjoy their adventures in a new and unfamiliar land. For over a decade, Christine has helped to lead a summer heritage camp for Indian adoptees and their families. She has also led several Adoptee Heritage Tours to India, sometimes subsidizing the cost for others who could not afford to go otherwise. These actions speak volumes about her unselfish generosity in helping others.

### **Tom and Dixie George**

#### ***Representative Jerry F. Costello***

After raising their own children to adulthood, Tom and Dixie George became licensed foster parents in 1981 and continued to foster through 2002. Over the years they have cared for more than 40 children, most of them having very special needs. Mr. and Mrs. George truly loved all the children that they have fostered. Over the years, Tom and Dixie adopted 7 children. All of the children have had special needs due to abuse and/or neglect that they suffered from their birth homes. Their first adopted son was a victim of Shaken Baby Syndrome and was permanently disabled as an infant. Mr. and Mrs. George's second adopted son also has significant disabilities and cannot live independently. Tom and Dixie's last adopted child came to them as an infant. She was later diagnosed with Sturge-Weber Syndrome, has had brain surgery due to the illness and will never develop normally nor live to adulthood. According to Kelly Foster with the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services, "looking back it must have been divine intervention that sent her to the George's who continue to care for her and her complicated medical condition today." Mr. and Mrs. George have worked successfully not only with foster children but birth parents too. They have been able to help some birth parents learn the skills they need to have their children returned to them. Tom and Dixie George are kind, loving people who through

their selflessness, good work and strong faith have given so much to many.

## **The Night Ministry**

### ***Representative Rahm Emanuel***

Since 1976, The Night Ministry has worked with youth and adults in need throughout the Chicagoland area. Regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation or social status, they provide free health care and education, rapid HIV testing and prevention counseling, referral assistance and a listening ear to adults and youth. The Night Ministry was “created out of diverse religious traditions to build relationships with vulnerable youth and adults on the nighttime streets.” Their Youth Outreach Team provides supportive services and referrals to homeless and at-risk youth in the Lakeview, Edgewater and Rogers Park neighborhoods. About 25,000 youth in Illinois experience homelessness each year with nearly 10,000 in Chicago. These young people are typically between the ages of 14 and 21, but The Night Ministry has encountered youth as young as 10 and as old as 25. Their Youth Housing Programs provide housing and supportive services for homeless and runaway youth ages 14 through 20 and their children. These programs provide safe, stable housing, meals and guidance. The staff helps each resident develop a plan to achieve self-sufficiency, setting goals in the areas of education, health care, job training, and next stage housing. Their Response-Ability Pregnant & Parenting Program provides supportive services to pregnant and parenting teens, ages 14 through 18, to strengthen family support systems, reduce subsequent pregnancies, keep teens in school, improve parenting skills, and increase safety and stability of their living situations. They offer these services in the community and at an 8-bed, 8-crib shelter dedicated to homeless pregnant and parenting teens. Volunteering is critical to The Night Ministry’s work.

## **Lynn L. Wetterberg, M.S., C.P.A.**

### ***Representative Melissa L. Bean***

Lynn came to the world of adoption through her children. She and her husband, James, have a 19 year old daughter whom they adopted from Romania in October 1990, a 24 year old son whom they adopted from Russia in March 1992 and who is currently serving in Iraq, an 18 year old daughter whom they adopted from an Institution for the Irrecoverable in Siret, Romania in December 1999 and a 22 year old Romanian daughter also from Siret, who was adopted in 2003 from state foster care subsequent to the failure of her first adoptive placement. Lynn Wetterberg is currently serving as the Executive Director of the Association for Treatment & Training in the Attachment of Children (ATTACH), a national organization of clinicians, advocates and parents of children with disorders of attachment. Lynn also currently serves as co-founder and President of Comfort the Children, a humanitarian aid and child advocacy organization. Lynn is a founding member of For the Children SOS, a grass roots organization which continues to advocate for Romania’s orphaned children. As co-founder and Executive Director of Uniting Families Foundation (UFF), Lynn assisted in the placement of more than 200 children from orphanages overseas including the placement of more than 50 older and special needs children. In April 1993, Lynn was invited to testify before the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Washington, D.C. concerning international adoption issues. She has presented at conferences, has had articles published in newsletters both domestically and overseas, and is a contributing author to *Therapeutic Parenting: A handbook for parents of children who have disorders of attachment*, an ATTACH publication. Lynn Wetterberg served for seven years on the Board of Directors of Joint Council on International Children’s Services, six years of which she served as either the Treasurer or Vice-Chair of this national organization. Lynn Wetterberg remains devoted to the right of every child to be raised in a permanent, loving family.

## **Indiana**

### **Tony and Rett Foster**

*Representative Mike Pence*

When we heard that the mountains of paper-work and persistence had paid off with the wonderful news that Abby and Laney were finally home from China ... our hearts were filled with joy and thanksgiving for the opportunity that Tony and Rett Foster will give to these beautiful twin girls! This story is such an encouragement to all us who know how much adoption matters!

### **Anne Lamar**

*Senator Richard Lugar*

Ann Lamar, a Fort Wayne native, became an adoptive mother after receiving information about the Gladney Agency from a friend in Texas. After visiting the agency and learning of adoption availabilities in China, she decided a Chinese adoption was a perfect fit for her. Nearly thirteen years after her first adoption, Lamar now has four adopted children: Libbi, 14, from Shanghai; Maggie, 11, from Vietnam; Callie, 10, from Vietnam; and Jenny, 9, from China. Lamar works hard to ensure the girls keep in touch with their culture and heritage through celebrating special holidays and travelling to their native countries when opportunities arise. She would love to take each of the girls to their home countries one day. Lamar was one of the first people in the Fort Wayne area to adopt from China. "I have told my oldest daughter, she will never know how many other children were adopted because of her," said Lamar. After Lamar became accustomed to the adoption process she noticed the challenges and wrote an article on adoption; citing the fees assessed by the Secretary of State's office to emboss each form in the process. After the article was printed, the Secretary of State stopped charging for this process. When asked about what a mother of four pre-teen and teen daughters does in her

spare time, she simply laughs and says "try to be good a parent, teach the kids to be tax payers, get involved in their community, get the best education possible and do something big with it." Lamar keeps the girls involved in the community through various Chinese and Vietnamese groups in Fort Wayne. Through her admirable adoptions and continued work with children, we find Ann Lamar to be a deserving and well-qualified candidate for the Angels in Adoption award.

### **Robin Foust**

*Representative Mark Souder*

Robin Foust has been a licensed foster parent with the Allen County Department of Child Services for several years and I have had the pleasure of working with Ms. Foust during that time, and while she has been in the process of adopting several of her children. At this time, she has finalized on two of her children and is in the process of finalizing on three more. Shortly after Ms. Foust became licensed she was asked to take a sibling group of three young girls, all special needs and all most likely would be placed for adoption. Ms. Foust happily accepted the placement only to find out that the girls birth mother was expecting another child that would also need a home. Even though she is single, Ms. Foust did not hesitate to take the child home from the hospital so that he too could be raised with his siblings. Since that time, the birth mother has had another child, and Ms. Foust is now caring for all 5 children, all under the age of 7 and all whom have their own special needs ranging from severe asthma to developmental delays and behavior issues. As previously stated, Ms. Foust is a single person doing the majority of the care for the children on her own. She is also a full time speech therapist at a local hospital. While she does have a wonderful network of friends and co workers to help her with some of her duties, she full takes on the responsibilities of caring for all five children and

continues to be a strong and faithful advocate for her children in seeing that they get the assistance they need for their issues.

## Iowa

### David and Christine Skinner

*Representative Tom Latham*

Congressman Latham is pleased to nominate David and Christine Skinner of Zeoring, Iowa as his 2008 Angels in Adoption. David and Christine wrote a letter to the Congressman to advocate for 35 children that were removed from the Casa Quivira children's home in Guatemala. In their letter they shared their deep concern for the Guatemalan children but it wasn't until subsequent letters from other constituents were received on the Skinner's behalf that it was realized that the Skinner's adopted daughter Lilian was one of the 35 children in question. At first the Skinner's were not looking to adopt a child but they were asked if they would consider adopting Lilian as she is deaf and Christine is trained in working with the hearing impaired. One look at Lilian's photo and the Skinners were hooked. However, one night in August of 2007 their dream of bringing Lilian home began to unravel when the Guatemalan police raided the orphanage and took 35 children away with little or no trace. Months of inquiries, working with Embassy officials and tenacious advocacy eventually paid off when they received word that their little girl was one of 12 cases to be released and that they would soon be able to bring her home. Even after Lilian was home they continued their quest to unite these children with the families waiting in the United States. Their selfless advocacy epitomizes the Angels in Adoption program and deserves this important recognition.

## Kansas

### Michelle Reed

*Representative Nancy Boyda*

In addition to adopting two children from Kazakhstan, Michelle Reed has become an advocate for international adoption by facilitating support groups and by serving on the board of Two Hearts for Hope. Michelle is truly an Angel in Adoption. Michelle's story begins in 2004 when a cousin and a friend announced that they were adopting children from Korea and China. To support her loved ones, she began looking into the process. As Michelle says, "My husband and I had not discussed adopting. We had two children. My son, Jonas, was just starting high school in the fall and our daughter, Libby, was in middle school. The pictures of the children available for adoption were endless on the Internet. I began to think that we could give a home — a family — to one of these children." In March of 2004, the Reeds signed an agency contract and they adopted their son Jess, who was 3 at the time, from Kazakhstan. They traveled to Kazakhstan in November 2004 and lived there for 6½ weeks. In May 2005, they signed a contract to return for a little girl that they met on their first trip who was also 3 years old. They left in October, 2005 and returned home in December with a new daughter, Jsera. When Michelle returned from her adoption journey in Kazakhstan, she started working to help other families. "After our first adoption, we both became passionate about helping those that were thinking of adoption." She is now the moderator of three Internet groups that provide support for families that are in the process of adopting internationally or integration assistance for those that have already adopted. They try to facilitate heritage knowledge, for example, by teaching parents to cook their child's native foods. Michelle and her family also hosted an exchange student from Kazakhstan this year who taught them so much about their children's heritage. Michelle is also a board member of



the newly formed organization, Two Hearts for Hope, which raises donations to send supplies to orphanages in Kazakhstan. Most of the supplies she works so hard to find are those that many of us take for granted, like shoes and warm clothing. "The facilities aren't perfect – there are broken windows and sometimes there's no heat. Because it's just south of Siberia, the need for warm clothing is magnified." When speaking about her visits to Kazakhstan she said, "Once you leave those other children behind, you are not allowed to forget them." The love, warmth, faith and passion for helping others that Michelle possesses shines through when you meet her. I am pleased to say that once you meet Michelle, you are not allowed to forget her or the joy she has brought to others.

### **Debbi Thomas Stone**

#### *Representative Todd Tiahr*

Debbi Thomas Stone's adoption journey began when she experienced an unplanned pregnancy and gave birth to her first child in 1983. Daniel "Danny" Patrick Platts is now 25 years old and is the son of Patrick Platts and Diane Bueller. Five years after placing Danny into his adoptive home, Debbi reconnected with the family through the attorney that handled the adoption. Debbi and Diane found themselves traveling down the road of "open adoption" which seemed uncharted, at least in Kansas. Debbi states that placing her first born child for adoption was the motivation for her to return to college and obtain a degree in social work in order to work directly with birth and adoptive families. She felt that this would be another positive way to grow from her journey. In addition the idea of resiliency fascinated Debbi and she felt that being resilient from this emotional experience would also give the Platts family the respect and love that she felt for them. Debbi's story has been printed in the Hutchison News, Adoptive Family Magazine, and "Making Room in Our Hearts; Keeping Family Ties through Open Adoption," by Micky Duxbury. Debbi's reason for exposing her story to the public is

simple. When she placed Danny into his adoptive home she knew there were whispers of "how could she do that?" The attempt to shed light on the issue of adoption was an attempt to lessen the stigma and shame that women experience and it seemed worth the effort. She doesn't consider herself a "poster birth mother" because she feels that all birth moms are different and grow from the experience in unique and awesome ways. But what we all have in common is the desire to give our children what we could not at the time. Love is never the issue, we all love our children. In fact could there be an act that is more loving? Debbi has worked for Catholic Charities Community Counseling Services as their adoption coordinator for 5½ years. During this time she has united many adoptive parents and their newborn babies. Adoptive parents describe Debbi as "no one better to work with," "a caring, kind and generous person, who knows the adoption process better than anyone," she is truly the ideal adoption worker and Catholic Charities is proud to have her.

## Kentucky

### **Maryhurst**

#### *Senator Jim Bunning*

This September Maryhurst, the oldest child welfare agency in the Commonwealth of Kentucky, will be celebrating their 165th anniversary. Founded in 1843 by the Sisters of the Good Shepherd, Maryhurst is a private, non profit agency in Louisville that provides residential, in-home and community-based treatment programs to children with severe emotional disabilities, most often caused by traumatic experiences of abuse and neglect. Maryhurst is fully licensed as a child caring, child placement and adoption service provider in Kentucky, serving more than 600 children and families each year. I would like to congratulate Maryhurst as they celebrate 165 years of providing services to children and families

across the Commonwealth. I appreciate the hard work and dedication of the Maryhurst staff. They will have a lasting impact on the lives of so many people and they are truly an inspiration to all.

## **Darla and Cheyenne Oglesby**

### ***Representative Ron Lewis***

Darla and Cheyenne became an advocate of adoption the moment their 1st child was placed in their arms. They both had a desire to adopt long before but thought they would have biological children first and adopt later in life. It wasn't until years of infertility that Darla and Cheyenne realized adoption was not only in their plan ... but in God's plan as well. The couple was just about to start the process of adopting, when tragedy struck. On Nov. 4th, 2005, Darla's parents were killed by a drunk driver. Needless to say, their plans to adopt were put on hold in order to give their family time to grieve. Because her parents were hit by a drunk driver, the family was also faced with a double murder trial for the man involved in the crime. On the day of final sentencing (the LAST day the family was to be in court) ... as the family was walking out of the courthouse for the last time, Darla and Cheyenne's miracle came when they received the phone call about their son. They flew out to Utah the next morning (Dec. 21, 2006) to meet Liam Gabriel Oglesby who was almost 4 weeks old at the time. Their second miracle came less than a year later on Nov. 4, 2007. It was the 2 year anniversary of the terrible crash that claimed Darla's parents. That day they learned a birth mother was about to deliver a baby girl and had chosen them to be her adoptive parents. Darla and Cheyenne were at the hospital when Nadia Cathryn Isabella was born on Dec. 3, 2007. Needless to say, the placement of these 2 children has changed the course of Darla and Cheyenne's future. They now advocate for the lives of other children in need of forever homes and for the birth mothers who sacrifice so much to provide a better life for their babies.

Darla and Cheyenne are a voice for Mary Kendall Adoption Program in Bowling Green, Kentucky speaking with families considering adoption. Darla's position as a television anchor also gives her a platform to speak about adoption. She uses that outlet in so many ways with one goal in mind ... planting a seed so that other families would be able to experience the same joy the miracle of adoption has provided for her and her family.

## **Jeff and Amy True**

### ***Representative Harold Rogers***

Although residing in Ohio at the time, the Trues adopted their son, Jacob, in 1999 through a Kentucky-based adoption agency. That same year, Jeff and Amy moved to Kentucky with a heart-felt desire to continue to serve the adoption community. Almost immediately, the Trues became involved in temporary foster care for babies being placed for adoption. If adopting families are unable to immediately receive a baby or a family needs to be identified, the Trues have served as an intermediary to care for these babies until they can be properly placed with their new parents. Other times, adopting families have stayed in the Trues' home in Louisville, Kentucky until paperwork is completed and the united families are able to begin their new lives at home. During these times, Jeff and Amy are able to share their experiences and connect with adoptive parents. Over the past eight years, the Trues have hosted well over 100 families from around the country forming lifelong friendships with many new families. In 2001, Jeff and Amy were again blessed through adoption with the birth of their daughter, Mallory. She is African-American and has prompted the Trues to become strong advocates for interracial adoption. As both foster parents for adoption and adoptive parents themselves, the Trues have chosen to give back to this unique community in profound ways. For these reasons, Jeff and Amy True are true Angels in Adoption.

## **Louisiana**

### **Christi Jones and Sandi Pratt**

*Representative Rodney Alexander*

Christi Jones and Sandi Pratt a true Angels through their passionate work as volunteers with the Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA of Northeast Louisiana) program located in Monroe, Louisiana and their creation of the Heart Gallery of Northeast Louisiana, a mobile display of children in need of a forever family. These dedicated women have helped countless children in north Louisiana find the one thing every child needs and deserves a good home and a family who loves and provides for them.

### **Charmaine Neville**

*Senator Mary Landrieu*

An adoptive mother and local music icon, Charmaine Neville is an inspiration. Her passion for children is ever-present in both her personal and professional life. When you meet Charmaine it is easy to see that she expresses herself best through music. What type of music she communicates with is up to the listener. "All music is good music," Charmaine says firmly. "I try to cover the whole spectrum and do just everything. I don't want to be stagnated and stuck in a rut ... People ask, 'Oh, what category would you put your music in?' and I say, 'Good!'" Born into the third generation of the New Orleans legendary musical family, Charmaine has nonetheless worked hard to get where she is and make her music known as her own. The work has paid off — as one reviewer recently wrote, "Charmaine Neville is beginning to rival her father and uncles in terms of popularity in New Orleans." She started out backing up the Neville Brothers and went on to perform with the survivors, a band whose alumni list includes Harry Connick Jr. and Bobby McFerrin. Charmaine is a local hero in her own right. She chose to stay behind when Hurricane Katrina devastated the coast of Louisiana and helped her neighbors who were

in despair, including the elderly, children, the most vulnerable of her community. Charmaine is very committed to raising awareness about the need for permanent homes for children across our country and most recently served as the entertainment at the Child Welfare League of America's annual conference in New Orleans this past December.

## **Maine**

### **Rick and Lori Hafner**

*Senator Susan M. Collins*

Rick and Lori Hafner, who are from Auburn, Maine, have two adopted sons, Jason and Manny, both of whom had serious health problems when they were growing up. Rick and Laurie adopted their first son, Jason, when he was about a month old. Jason was born with a unilateral cleft palate and required major operations when he was three months and then again at eight months old. Jason is now 22 and only has a small scar that is barely noticeable to remind him of his condition at birth. Jason attended the University of Maine at Presque Isle and has taken a position with the Kennebunk Police Department as a full time officer. Rick and Laurie's younger son, Manuel, or "Manny," came to them from the Dominican Republic at the age of four. He had been abandoned by his birth mother when she learned that he had a heart condition and was eventually sent to an orphanage. He first came to Portland, Maine, accompanied by a nun, to have surgery to repair a hole in his heart. Manny's surgery was done at Maine Heart Surgical, where Lori works as an RN. After the five-hour surgery, Manny went to stay with the Hafner's, rather than returning to the orphanage in Santa Domingo. After three years of red tape, they were finally able to officially adopt Manny. He is now 17 years old and attends E. L. High School in Auburn, where the family resides. In the future, Manny plans to attend college and ultimately become

**Textron Marine & Land**   
**TEXTRON** Systems



***Proud to  
support  
Angels in Adoption***

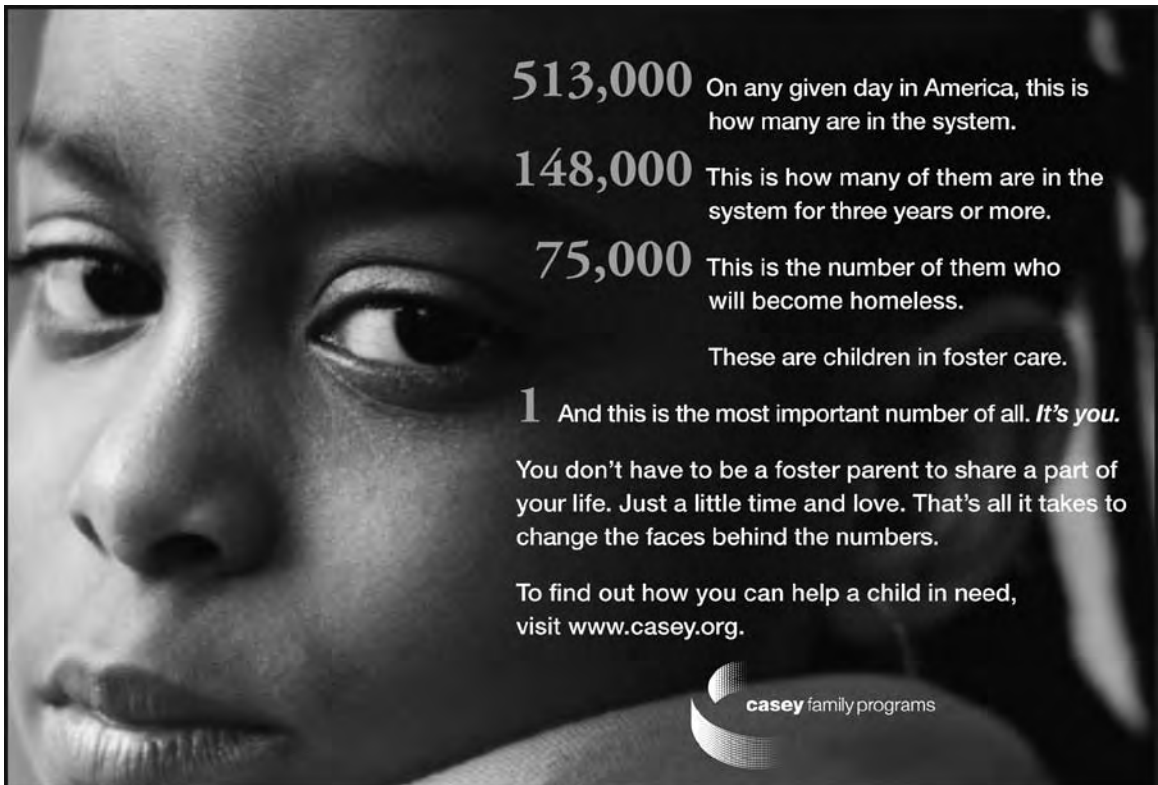
**What kind of energy does it take to get energy?**

When you've been in the energy business as long as Chevron, you learn the importance of lasting relationships. Every day we're forging new partnerships with community businesses and organizations in over 180 countries. That's how the human energy of our more than 55,000 employees is turning local opportunity into success for all. To learn more, visit us at [chevron.com](http://chevron.com).



Human energy™

CHEVRON is a registered trademark of Chevron Corporation. The CHEVRON HALLMARK and HUMAN ENERGY are trademarks of Chevron Corporation. ©2007 Chevron Corporation. All rights reserved.



**513,000** On any given day in America, this is how many are in the system.

**148,000** This is how many of them are in the system for three years or more.


**75,000** This is the number of them who will become homeless.

These are children in foster care.

**1** And this is the most important number of all. *It's you.*

You don't have to be a foster parent to share a part of your life. Just a little time and love. That's all it takes to change the faces behind the numbers.

To find out how you can help a child in need, visit [www.casey.org](http://www.casey.org).

 casey family programs



If children are our future, shouldn't every child have a chance at one?

Each of the 129,000 children waiting in foster care to be adopted deserves a family. These are great kids. They didn't choose to be abused or neglected, permanently separated from their birth parents and placed in foster care. They are right here in your community and they need your help. Adopting from foster care is affordable. Yes, it can be complicated, but these children are worth it. If adoption isn't possible, there are other ways to help. The Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption is dedicated to a permanent home and loving family for every child. Call today.

### Consider Foster Care Adoption

1-800-ASK-DTFA

1-800-275-3832

[www.DaveThomasFoundationforAdoption.org](http://www.DaveThomasFoundationforAdoption.org)



DAVE THOMAS  
FOUNDATION  
FOR ADOPTION®

Finding Forever Families for Children in Foster Care



*Angels speak the  
universal language -*



*Love*



Freeport-McMoRan  
Copper & Gold Inc.  
salutes the Angels in  
Adoption who have  
reached out in love to  
make a difference in the  
lives of foster children  
and orphans from  
around the world.

**FREEPORT-McMoRAN  
COPPER & GOLD**

[www.fcx.com](http://www.fcx.com)



**3M**

*We're proud to  
support the  
Angels in Adoption  
program.*



**WENDY'S  
INTERNATIONAL  
FOUNDATION®**



**Holt** is  
a proud  
sponsor of  
**Angels in  
Adoption.**

[www.holtinternational.org](http://www.holtinternational.org)

**HoltInternational**  
FINDING FAMILIES FOR CHILDREN



a pharmacist. According to Rick and Laurie, they “have been blessed with two young men that they could not be prouder of and who will make a positive contribution to society every day that they are on this planet.”

### Mark Millar

#### Senator Olympia Snowe

Mark Millar truly deserves to be an *Angel in Adoption*™ because of his steadfast commitment to achieving permanent family connections for children in foster care in Maine. Mark Millar has been a critical part of Casey Family Services in Portland for more than twenty years. In that time, he and his dedicated staff have truly helped transform the lives of countless families, by promoting kinship care, providing counseling and other services to strengthen families post-adoption, and helping Maine reduce the amount of time required to

reach legal permanence when a child enters foster care. Time and again, Mark Millar’s tireless leadership on behalf of children and families has exemplified what American novelist, Herman Melville, once said about our obligation to common good, “*We cannot live for ourselves alone. Our lives are connected by a thousand invisible threads, and along these sympathetic fibers, our actions run as causes and return to us as results.*” What a well-deserved honor indeed!

## Maryland

### Felicia Jackson

#### Representative Chris VanHollen

The essence of an “Angel in Adoption” is personified by the selflessness, perseverance and devotion of Felicia Jackson, a single mother of 14 children now living in Poolesville, Maryland. Ms. Jackson grew up in different foster homes beginning when she was three years old. She and her younger siblings—two sisters and a brother—were initially separated but were reunited several years later when one foster family agreed to care for all the children. Because of their painful experiences at such tender ages, the children, and especially the girls, vowed never to be separated again or to let any children they might later have be torn from their family. In 2004 Felicia learned that her younger sister, Cassandra, suffered from a terminal illness. Tragically, Cassandra died of cancer that year, leaving her ten children without parents or a home. Before her sister died, Ms. Jackson vowed that she would not let her nieces and nephews grow up in foster care as they had. When her sister lost her battle with cancer, Ms. Jackson assumed legal responsibility for all ten nieces and nephews. In order to meet the demands of raising 14 children, Ms. Jackson was forced to leave her full-time job at a county correctional facility for a part-time position working as a mall security guard. Due to the strains of such a large family, Ms.



Jackson's husband left, leaving the 14 children to be raised by a single mother on a part-time income. The newly-expanded but close-knit family has experienced enormous difficulties. These included the challenges of finding suitable affordable housing, often being turned down by landlords due to the size of their family, having to accept housing that violated housing occupancy standards, living with housing code violations, and being placed in shelters and shelter-motels, all the while struggling to make ends meet. The family's housing needs were answered when "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition" and a group of dedicated volunteers built a beautiful and permanent new home for them this summer in Poolesville, Maryland. Despite her financial hardships, the break-up of her marriage, and the struggle to find housing for her family, Ms. Jackson has been true to the promise she made to her sister. She is living out the central goal of all adoptions – to provide a loving home for children.

## **Margret E. Swain**

*Representative Benjamin L. Cardin*

Margaret E. Swain, RN, JD is an attorney who represents adoptive parents, birth parents and children in adoption cases. She serves on the Board of the American Academy of Adoption Attorneys, which is dedicated to helping children find safe, permanent homes. She also works to organize the National Adoption Day celebration in Baltimore County, Maryland that highlights the success of adoptions. Ms. Swain also works with the Baltimore County Bar Association, preparing the adoption section of their Bench-Bar Book. In addition to her private practice, Ms. Swain works pro-bono in cases of great need. Ms. Swain's good work was brought to our attention by her children who, along with many others, admire Margret Swain's dedication and tireless work as an advocate for adoption.

## **Massachusetts**

### **Christine Altieri**

*Representative Stephen Lynch*

Christine Altieri is a Public School Kindergarten Teacher. She first became involved with foster care when she fostered a former student who entered the foster care system. Christine is a Foster Parent Liaison for Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children – Brockton and Editor of The Foster Care Review – a monthly Newsletter for Foster Parents. She serves as a Coordinator and Foster Parent Support Group Leader and provides long term foster placement for babies and young children. She has been a foster parent for 5 years. Christine tells all who will listen that she has a wonderful support system which includes husband, children, extended family, co-workers and friends. Christine happily resides with husband Victor, children Jesse (18), Lexi (14), Anthony (3) who was adopted on National Adoption Day 2007, and Nickolas (8 month old foster child). Her goals for the future include: to help bring faster permanency for foster children, foster parent recruitment and bringing awareness of foster care and foster children to suburban communities. In all of her spare time, Christine enjoys creating life books/ picture scrapbooks for her foster children and working with and mentoring foster parents, adoptive parents and biological parents (with children in care).

### **Karen K. Greenberg**

*Representative Barney Frank*

Karen came to my Congressional office over twenty years ago looking for assistance with the adoption of her own child. She was successful and has been a proud mother ever since. Karen has been a practicing adoption lawyer for over twenty years in the town of Wellesley, Massachusetts, which is in my Congressional district, at the law firm of Konowitz & Greenberg, P.C. Karen has also been a pioneer in advocacy. She was a founding member

of the American Academy of Adoption Attorneys and is currently serving as its president. In this role, she has worked in supporting the rights of children to live in safe, permanent homes, promoting reform of adoption laws and actively participating in the drafting of various adoption legislation, among them, the Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption and the new Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children. Karen has also been published in adoption law journals and has been a speaker on the topic of adoption at various events.

### **Raymond O'Brien**

*Senator John Kerry*

Raymond O'Brien, President and Founder of Children are Angels from Heaven, is a wonderful example of what an Angel in Adoption™ should be. A truck mechanic by trade, Ray visited India in 1996 after being asked by his adopted daughter what the land of her birth was like. His trip to India, which included several orphanages and social service agencies, inspired him to found Children are Angels from Heaven shortly after his return to Medford, Massachusetts. In the intervening 12 years, Ray has built an international nonprofit dedicated to helping "profoundly disadvantaged children pursue productive and meaningful lives" because as he writes, "At birth all children are equal in innocence and hope. But they are not equal in circumstance and opportunity. Birth is not a crime". Relying largely on a network of family members, friends, and students from several area parochial schools, Ray has made numerous trips to India to deliver clothes, school supplies and much-needed equipment to support the efforts of organizations in India dedicated to helping Indian orphans and the desperately poor. Children are Angels from Heaven has no paid staff (Ray's wife, Patty serves as the organization's Treasurer) and is completely volunteer driven. The proud father of three adopted children, Ray O'Brien doesn't consider himself an Angel – he views his work and the privilege of

raising his three beloved children as a blessing — but the thousands of children he has helped over the years and all those who know him certainly do.

### **Jack Williams**

*Senator Edward M. Kennedy*

Jack Williams is the evening news anchor of the CBS affiliate in Boston, Massachusetts. Williams has been a respected journalist since 1968, and has been recognized for his continued commitment to the community through the numerous charitable organizations he actively promotes. In 1981, Williams created a weekly news series called "Wednesday's Child" which has become the model for television stations throughout the nation. Each week, "Wednesday's Child" features a special needs child who is in search of a permanent home. Since its creation, the segment has helped more than 525 special needs children find loving homes. In addition, Williams is responsible for raising more than \$5,000,000 for special needs adoption. In April 2000, Williams created the Jack Williams Endowment for Wednesday's Child, a 501(C)(3) charity to ensure continued financial support for special needs adoption.

## Michigan

### **Mike and Jamie Brandmair**

*Representative Dave Camp*

I am proud to nominate Mike and Jamie Brandmair as Angels in Adoption. Mike and Jamie are truly exemplary people. After raising their own children, they recognized that there were still many children in need of loving homes. Through their efforts, they have already adopted three children, and are adopting three more. They have also taken in over 30 foster children, and are often one of the first calls when an emergency placement is needed. What stands out to those that work with them, is their unwavering dedication to the children

in their care. They have adopted two sisters, Courteney and Shannon, both of whom have special needs, as well as another child, Jakob, who has battled drug dependency as an infant. They are also in the process of adopting brothers Matt and Todd, for whom Mike and Jamie are helping to become successful young men. By welcoming these children into their homes, they are giving them a lifetime of opportunities. The Brandmairs, recognizing that family is important, have pursued adopting siblings whenever possible. They have also insisted on maintaining Jakob's connection with his siblings that have been placed with other families. This dedication to their children's emotional wellbeing is worthy of the highest praise. Too often, children adopted or placed in foster care lose all biological ties. By maintaining this relationship, Mike and Jamie are showing their children the true definition of love and family. I believe that Mike and Jamie exemplify all of the good things that adoptive and foster parents should be. I know all of the children who have been lucky enough to be in their home appreciate their hard work and love. It is my great honor and pleasure to recognize Mike and Jamie Brandmair as Angels in Adoption.

## **Ronald and Stephanie Bellisario**

*Representative Joe Knollenberg*

Congressman Joe Knollenberg would like to nominate Ronald and Stephanie Bellisario for their outstanding dedication to adopting a precious little girl from Liberia named Gianna. Mr. & Mrs. Bellisario have two beautiful biological daughters named Francesca and Sophia. When they learned of the difficulty to conceive another child they decided to complete their family through adoption. They researched many countries and found that Liberia, West Africa was at a 90% unemployment and 85% illiteracy rate that has left a significant amount of children orphaned. They discovered an adoption agency in Liberia and they received their precious 5 year old new

daughter this last August. She will start kindergarten in the fall and has learned how to swim and ride a bike.

## **David and Cassie Hambleton**

*Representative Tim Walberg*

When asked about her most memorable experience with adoption, Cassie Hambleton's answer was "They're all memorable". Cassie's answer highlights the love and care that the Hambletons offer the children who comprise their family. The Hambletons consider adoption a wonderful way to add to a family, whether couples are able to biologically bear children or not because as Cassie says, "there are many families with love to share and many children who need it." David Hambleton was in the Navy and stationed overseas when the Hambletons adopted Grace (11) and Eliana (9). Both were born to single women in the service. J. Jonathon (6) and Heidilynn (3) were later both adopted through the foster care system. David shared that they came to recognize how many needy children are in our foster care system and have since made a purposeful choice to adopt foster children. J. Jonathon is African American and the three brothers who will soon join their family (ages 10, 7, and 6) are bi-racial, which will make the Hambletons a racially diverse family of nine. Their social worker shared that. "The Hambletons understand the issues in adoption that children face by acknowledging the bitter-sweetness of adoption in the losses and gains that such children face. They have demonstrated the ability to honor the positive qualities of a child's birth family while gently communicating age appropriate facts that led to their adoption. David and Cassie have included birth family members as a part of their extended family when it has been in the best interest of the child. They honor one another and work together as a team in creating a healthy and loving family in which to grow and thrive. David and Cassie indeed give their children roots so they are grounded and wings so they may someday fly."

**Rob and Christa Murphy**

*Representative Pete Hoekstra*

This “ordinary” family is definitely doing “extraordinary” things! Bethany Christian Services had the honor of working with this family to help them in their pursuit of adopting a child from Zambia. Rob, Christa, and their three biological daughters had previously lived in Zambia and were involved in mission work there. Christa is a medical doctor and Rob is involved in church ministry. During their time there they met a little boy who was HIV positive, very sick, and whose mother had already died of HIV. During their time there they had the sad experience of also witnessing this little boy’s death. After returning to the United States the family’s “vision and heart continued to ache and weep over the suffering” they saw when they were there and they felt compelled to somehow walk alongside the children who experience the injustice they witnessed. They knew that an orphan who is born HIV positive has a death sentence in Africa. They state that “being an orphan is a tragedy, but most orphans still grow up. Orphans with HIV/AIDS don’t get that chance.” Although they wrestled with some of the difficult questions like: “What if one of our children got infected? What if we were to lose close friendships because people would be afraid?”, with no hope of tomorrow and almost none of being adoption. Thus, their eventual decision was to adopt a child from Zambia who is HIV positive. Their entire family traveled to Zambia last Christmas to complete the adoption of little Isaiah. He is a little happy boy with an infectious smile and he connected with his parents and three sisters quickly. Little Isaiah, once an orphan, is now home with his forever family. The Murphy’s are now strong advocates for not only the adoption of orphans, but in addition, the adoption of children who are HIV positive. Their motivation is found in Proverbs 31:9, “Are you willing to be a voice for those who have no voice and ensure justice for those who are perishing?”

**Fred and Ruthann Odren**

*Representative Vernon J. Ehlers*

Fred and Ruthann Odren have been foster and adoptive parents for D.A. Blodgett for Children since 1991. Over the past 16 years, the Odrens have provided care for over 40 special needs children, and have adopted five of these children into their family — a family that also includes five biological children. It was a natural step for the Odrens to become a licensed foster home in 1991, and an adoptive home in 1996. In addition to providing a foster and adoptive home for special needs children, the Odrens have been an inspiration for other families in the community. As winners of a prestigious local award recognizing their role in recruiting other families to become foster and adoptive parents, Ruthann and Fred have been mentors to a number of new foster parents and have been involved in training foster and adoptive parents for many years. They have worked closely with birth parents toward a reunification with their children, and have maintained supportive relationships with parents whose parental rights have been terminated. Ruthann has served as a member of the Foster Parent Advisory Council for over five years, and with Fred, works to maintain a positive relationship with D.A. Blodgett and other social service agencies. Above all else, the Odrens are devoted to helping the children in their care reach their highest potential, and to ensure that the child welfare system acts in a way that promotes the child’s best interests. The Odrens are not a couple who seek out attention for their work as foster and adoptive parents, but rather have become an inspiration for others because they live out their commitment to special needs children day by day, month by month, year after year. Fred and Ruthann Odren are truly individuals most deserving of special recognition.

## Minnesota

### Keith and Beth Heintz

*Senator Norm Coleman*

Although the Heintz family already had three children of their own and had not originally intended to adopt Noah, they had a strong desire to expand their family and began their adoption of little Noah in October 2006. They Heintz family heard Noah's story from a young woman at their church who interned at Noah's orphanage in Jamaica. She had explained to them that Noah has spina bifida and needed medical treatment in the United States, but the orphanage was having a hard time finding someone to file a medical visa for him. The family wanted to help Noah by filling a medical visa for him and traveled to Jamaica to meet Noah, but immediately after meeting Noah, they knew that a medical visa was not sufficient and began the process of adopting him. Beth Heintz, a registered nurse has often seen this type of affliction and knew they could provide him with proper care. The Heintz family knew they had found Noah for a reason and that he was the addition they were looking for. The Heintz family was moving through the adoption process when it suddenly stopped progressing. Given the severity of Noah's condition they reached out to Senator Coleman's office for assistance in ensuring that the process continued smoothly. Following contact from Senator Coleman to USCIS and the Consulate Noah's physical was promptly scheduled and the adoption was able to continue. Keith said "Noah's adoption was the product of three large miracles and a few smaller ones." He stated that "without the help of Senator Coleman's office we would have never been able to get this adoption done when we did." The Heintz family is now all back in Minnesota and as Keith indicated "Noah is adapting extremely well because that's who he is; just a happy kid!" Keith and Beth Heintz have also started the process of adopting another child from Jamaica.

### Tom and Sue Ibs

*Representative Michele Bachmann*

Tom and Sue Ibs have six biological children, ranging in age from 29 to 13. Like so many families, they thought that adoption was primarily for small families or for parents unable to conceive themselves. One day, while looking through a church directory, Sue was struck by how many large families there were with adoptive children. She began to think, if they can do it so can we. Simultaneously and independently, Tom was thinking hard about the adoption option for their family as well. Clearly, the Ibs household is one that knows no bounds for love and caring. They wanted to share the joy that they experienced as a family with an orphaned child. Five years ago, they set out to adopt a special needs child from a part of China near the Korean border. Little Jacob has one foot not fully developed, but in all other respects, he's just like any little boy. And at the age of 4, he became a part of the Ibs family. A few years later, Tom and Sue returned to another region of China to adopt Grace, who was then only 18 months old. She was considered special needs because she's cross-eyed. Today, she is a happy little 3-year-old, with 7 older brothers and sisters, growing up in the close-knit community of Big Lake, Minnesota. Sue said that their six biological children were very excited to adopt two babies into their loving family. And, it is clear that the Ibs children also have the kind of servant's spirit that Tom and Sue have. In fact, one is teaching English in Korea and another has just departed for Kenya to work as a missionary. The Ibs family may appear to be an everyday average family, but a closer look reveals a truly inspirational picture of love and devotion to all. The Ibs Family is a true story of how limitless the capacity for love and caring truly is.

### Cory and Tammy Myran

*Representative Jim Oberstar*

One of the most important issues in adoption this year has been the efforts to continue



ethical adoptions from Vietnam. To that end, Cory and Tammy Myran have been dedicated and passionate advocates to ensure that vulnerable Vietnamese children continue to have the opportunity for a family. In July, they wrote to ask for my support to encourage the State Department and the government of Vietnam to negotiate an updated Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that would address the legitimate concerns with the adoption system in Vietnam, but would also ensure that Vietnamese orphans would not be abandoned. As Co-Chair of the Congressional Coalition on Adoption, Jim Oberstar was pleased to lead a Congressional letter initiative to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice that secured the support of 149 Members of Congress. This is an issue that is very personal for Cory and Tammy. In December 2006, they responded to the call to adopt from Vietnam and welcomed John Thomas Thank Ngac Myran into their home. Their advocacy for Vietnam adoptions continues as they are planning to adopt their second child from Vietnam. Through their advocacy and action, Cory and Tammy Myran have demonstrated that dedicated families can make a difference to promote adoption.

## **Mississippi**

### **John and Kathy Munn**

#### *Representative Chip Pickering*

For several years, Kathy Munn has been advocating and adopting children with special needs. She was active originally in foster care programs in her home state of Maine and has continued that service since her move to Mississippi. Continuing her work in foster care with her husband (a native of Decatur, Mississippi), John and Kathy Munn knew they wanted to be a part of the foster care programs in Mississippi even before they got married. The couple built their house around their desire to be of service to children. Since then, over 80 children have called their house

“home”. Now, the Munns have transitioned from foster care to full adoption. Mr. Munn describes their reasons for the transition into adoption as “just not being able to let them go.” They are parents to six adopted children ranging in age between 5 and 20 years old, many of whom have special needs, such as autism, cerebral palsy, ADHD and depression, which the Munns are dedicated to providing for. At eight years old, they saw one of their children take his first steps, a development which doctors previously thought to be a highly improbable. Mrs. Munn, with her nursing background, has the skills necessary to constantly care for these children. They have taken on the responsibility of managing doctor visits and working with the children’s school to develop specialized education programs. All six will be in school starting the fall 2008 semester with the youngest starting Kindergarten. John, an employee of Lazy-Boy, and Kathy, now a stay-at-home mom, have put the well being of their children at the forefront of their lives. Their determination to enrich the lives of children, especially those with special needs, in foster care and now in their own family, is why they are great examples of what the Angels in Adoption Program wishes to recognize.

### **Steve and Becky Watkins**

#### *Senator Thad Cochran*

Becky Watkins has always had a tenderness for children, especially those who have been abused or neglected. In 1990, Becky had an opportunity to open her home to two teenage girls that were attending high school with her daughter. Both were being sexually abused by their biological father and in order to take them into her home, she had to become a licensed foster parent. Taking in these two children marks one of the most rewarding experiences in Becky’s life. After they were returned to their mother, the Department of Human Services continued to call and ask Becky to take in more children. She was fortunate enough to have her company support her work with

children in the child welfare system, and she would later convince them to cover foster children under their primary health insurance — which remains the policy today. It was difficult being a single mom, and particularly a single foster mom. Becky began to meet other foster and adoptive parents, and in 1994 she founded the Mississippi Foster and Adoptive Parents Association. The purpose of the organization was to bring about change in the child welfare system in Mississippi while providing a network of support for foster and adoptive parents. In 1997 her organization was successful in seeing Senate Bill 2173 (BEANie Baby Bill) pass for our state, and later it would be adopted by 37 states as a model for Foster Parent Bill of Rights and revamping the child welfare system. The organization was also the first state organization recognized by the National Foster Parents Association. To date, Becky remains as the President and sits on the Council of State of Affiliates for the National Foster Parent Association representing Mississippi foster and adoptive parents. Becky continued her many years in advocacy work for children both as a foster parent and adoptive parent. In 1999 I was truly blessed with a wonderful and Godly man in her life. At the time she had two (twin) foster children age 6 months that both had very special needs. This would have deterred most men, but God truly does bless and reward. Steve is an International Pilot (Captain) with Delta Air Lines. At the time of our marriage Steve and Becky instantly had his, hers and theirs — what a wonderful blended family. Most thought the Watkins were crazy with 8 kids between the two of them, but they saw it not as a chance meeting but a gift from God. When explaining their story, the Watkins often say that some children are born of the womb and some children

are born of the heart. The Watkins are very blessed as our children get to travel all over the world through our benefits with Delta Air Lines. We have also had excellent benefits for the best medical coverage and resources for their youngest two children. In their spare time, Steve and Becky are lay leaders in the United Methodist Church and attend First United Methodist Church in Quitman, Mississippi. They serve as mentors in our school district and are active in the Quitman Parent Advocates Working for Solutions (PAWS) in our community. Their work continues in the Mississippi Foster and Adoptive Parent Association and the National Foster Parent Association. Steve and Becky were honored by the Mississippi Legislature with a bill passed honoring our work for advocacy and change in the children welfare system of Mississippi. Their children range in ages: Kevin, 38, Kelli, 31, Wes 30, Adam, 27, Kratin, 23, Jonathan, 16, Gage, 9 and Drew 9. Foster children: 14 full time — long term and 31 respite children in foster care. Through their efforts they hope to have made a difference not only in the lives of our children but also the lives of children in the child welfare system of Mississippi and the United States.

## Missouri

### John and Micky Baltes

#### *Representative Roy Blunt*

My husband John called from his office in Branson and asked if I would mind telling the story of our family. I will try to tell how we came to be the parents and grandparents of this beautiful group of people we love to call ours. We began to grow with the births of our two oldest. John Anthony was born November 22, 1970, and Christopher Allen was born October 3, 1972. I had always wanted a large family, and had also always felt a special pull towards adoption. John and I spent many, many evenings planning and dreaming about

adopting a child, and when our youngest was about two years old we began to explore the possibility of adopting a Native American child, since John is part Black Foot. We were told that it wasn't possible, so we changed direction a bit. We feel very strongly that every child needs and deserves a loving home. We talked to agencies in Ohio, where we were living the time, about the possibility of adopting a child, any child, regardless of race or "special needs". Friends of ours had friends in Costa Rica to whom they told our story, and they suggested that we try to adopt a Costa Rican child. After two years of paper work and government regulations, we got a phone call one night, telling us that our baby girl had just been born. Two months later we were able to travel to Costa Rica to bring back our daughter, Linda Maria, who was born in San Jose on September 29, 1977. She was about 2 months old when we were able to welcome her into our family. Shortly thereafter we moved from Ohio to San Diego, California. Still wanting to grow as a family we contacted the Children's Home Society of San Diego, and began the process of adopting a child from Korea. After about a year we were able to travel with our three little ones to the Los Angeles airport and meet our daughter, Casey Michelle. Casey was born in Seoul, South Korea on or about December 7, 1979, and was 10 months old when we brought her home. Even before Casey's adoption was complete, we found ourselves moving to Springfield, Missouri. There we completed her adoption process, and settled down. It was 1980, and John was working at Silver Dollar City and I was home, happily raising babies. Our family did not yet feel complete, and we couldn't turn our hearts or our minds away from the children who needed families to love and care for them. We decided to contact Family Services to explore the possibility of adopting another child. We told the case workers that we wanted a child that needed us, regardless of race, or special needs., and figured that it would be another two years

before the process was complete. Surprise! We received a phone call telling us about a 10 month-old Bi-racial boy who was ready right then for a home. We fell in love with the little guy, and after several visits with him in his foster home, we were able to bring him home. Joseph Michael was born July 5, 1981, and was 11 months old when he came home with us. Through Family Services, Catholic Charities of Illinois contacted us about a baby. He was bi-racial, and had been given up for adoption. Our family was chosen by the birth mother because we already had children of other races, and we were Catholic. The baby was born on August 26, 1984, and was about two months old when we named him Patrick Michael and brought him home. Very shortly after Patrick's adoption became final, Family Services called us about another baby. This little girl was born in Kansas City, was bi-racial, and her birth mother was unable to care for her. Christy Leighanne was born on October 10, 1986, and we traveled to Kansas City to bring her back to our home. It was hard, but we felt that our family was finally complete. Some of our children came to us with special circumstances, special needs, and we learned and grew together, and if we had to put all the "challenges" into a box, that box would be a speck of dust next to the box containing the joy and happiness our beautiful family has brought to us.

### **Rich and Kim Blackford**

#### ***Representative Russ Carnahan***

Rich and Kim Blackford are truly deserving of recognition and admiration for their noble deeds as active foster/adoptive parents who also provide tremendous support for fellow adoptive families. Their devotion and care for others is prevalent by the network of support they offer through an array of services, one of which is GIFT. GIFT, Getting Interracial Families Together, was created to form a bond within and between interracial families. It is an organization that embraces diversity, hoping to

bring understanding and strength to families of all ethnic mixes. The Blackfords are the backbone of this organization, uniting families with their love and support. Mr. and Mrs. Blackford have demonstrated all the qualities and characteristics of loyal, courageous, and affectionate human beings, but their big hearts ordain them as true angels on earth.

## **Two Hearts for Hope**

**Senator Claire McCaskill**

Two Hearts for Hope was started in January 2008 by two women, Kimberly Prud'homme and Stacy Segebarth, who traveled to Kazakhstan in 2007 to adopt their own children. Going through the adoption process from April to June 2007 made Kim and Stacy aware of the environment that these orphans reside in. Less than perfect conditions with not enough supplies plague these orphanages and make these children's lives very hard. After seeing these conditions first-hand and how many children are still awaiting adoption in Kazakhstan, Kim and Stacy decided to create Two Hearts for Hope. The organization intends to make Kazak orphans lives better while they wait for a caring family to adopt them. Every month Two Hearts for Hope takes donations for items ranging from shoes and socks, to hygiene products, to toys. These donations are boxed up and carried to Kazakhstan by other families looking to adopt a child. While there, the boxes are dropped off to various orphanages for the children. The supplies enrich the lives of these orphans and help to add joy and hope to them as they wait to be adopted. Kim and Stacy started this organization all on their own and it has grown immensely to help make 1,000s of Kazak orphans lives better. Two Hearts for Hope continues to accept donations for Kazak orphans and is currently planning a trip to Kazakhstan to personally deliver these presents to the orphans. Stacy and Kim's devotion and dedication for helping Kazak orphans makes them an excellent example of Missouri's Angel of Adoption.

## **Bob and Susie Rafferty**

**Senator Kit Bond**

For nearly a decade and a half, Bob and Susie Rafferty have served as foster parents to numerous infants, in addition to raising two children of their own, Patrick and Natalie, twenty-eight and twenty-four respectively. The Rafferty's give credit to their years as foster parents to giving their own children a greater sense of parenting and how failure to take it seriously may end up with the child paying the price. The rewards are many but to experience and adoptive family get to experience parenthood and infants receive the enrichment of loving parents cannot be surpassed, according the Rafferty's. And, as years pass by, seeing children they have been associated with prosper from the nourishment of love is very satisfying in knowing they will be successful on the road of life. Many friends, family and adoptive parents who have been associated with the Rafferty's know ever infant that had has the warmth of their love has greater chance to blossom in life as part of loving family.

## **Montana**

### **Damon Gannett**

**Senator Max Baucus**

Damon Gannett has been a voice for abused and neglected children in the Billings community and surrounding areas since 1977 when he began representing children as a Guardian ad litem. In addition, since 2001, he also represents children in the Yellowstone County Family Drug Treatment Court. Over the past 31 years, Damon has represented thousands of children from their removals to their adoptions. Unfortunately, too often, many of these abuse and neglect cases involved horrific acts committed against children by their parents or family members including severe physical abuse, sexual abuse, and even homicide. Damon is well respected by the media community, social workers, attorneys, and judges.

His skills in the courtroom, including his style, competency, and vast knowledge give the children he represents a strong voice. At the same time, he is fair to all parties, including the parents and children. Judges depend on Damon; he has earned their respect and trust. Likewise, many social workers, attorneys, and other professionals look to Damon for advice, support, and information. Damon is a zealous and diligent advocate for these children who lose their birth families through the legal process in hopes of helping them obtain a safe, stable, and supportive, permanent home. He fights for the best interests of his clients—the children—so that they might have a brighter future. Damon is very deserving of the Angel in Adoption award for his tireless efforts for over three decades on behalf of foster and adoptive children in the state of Montana.

## Nebraska

### **Adoption Links Worldwide**

#### *Representative Lee Terry*

Adoption Links Worldwide was founded by Cheryl Murray and Diane Baumgartner in 1993. Dianne and her husband were parents to four birth sons, six special needs adopted daughters and over 150 foster children. Cheryl Murray took the executive director position in 1999 and adopted her son in 2001 through the agency's infant adoption program. The agency through its dedicated staff embodies one belief that every child is entitled to a safe, permanent and loving family. The agency's accomplishments are vast which include 15 years of service to children and families. Adoption Links Worldwide is the only Nebraska based adoption agency that sought and achieved Hague Accreditation, and is in full compliance with the Intercountry Adoption Act. The Dave Thomas Foundation for adoption just extended the Wendy's Wonderful Kids project into Lincoln, due to ALW's success over the past 4 years in Omaha. ALW is the only Nebraska

agency in the state that places a priority on finding families for African American infants and requires families who wish to adopt through their Infant Adoption Program to be completely open to race, gender, and open adoption, allowing birth parents to choose a family that is prepared and committed to any type of child they give birth to. Adoption Links Worldwide recognizes that families created through adoption, especially transracial and older-child adoption require additional support. For that reason, ALW implemented a Therapy and Post Adoption Support Program. ALW has helped over 1300 children join permanent and safe families, some of whom have received the Angels in Adoption Award.

### **Paul Ries and Deb VanDyke-Ries**

#### *Senator Chuck Hagel*

Paul Ries and Deb VanDyke-Ries have been advocates for children for many years. Coming from a very large family, children have always been an important part of Paul's life. After acquiring his Master's degree in social work, Paul began working as a family therapist. He has since narrowed his practice to primarily working with foster children. Deb's involvement with adoption began when she became a volunteer for Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) for abused and neglected children. She went on to serve as the Executive Director of CASA; she currently serves as CASA's Program Coordinator. Deb also participates in the Lancaster County Juvenile Court National Adoption Day festivities. Being involved in National Adoption Day allows Deb to advocate for children and serve as an information source for those considering adoption. Not only are Paul and Deb professionally active in adoption, they are also the proud parents of an adopted daughter. After the birth of two biological children, Paul and Deb agreed that adoption would be a great way to expand their family. Serving the community as both professionals and volunteers, Paul and Deb are

outstanding citizens who continually strive to advocate for the welfare of children.

## Nevada

### **MGM/Mirage**

#### **Senator John Ensign**

As a major employer in the great state of Nevada, the MGM/Mirage has a direct impact on thousands of families in our community who chose to foster or adopt children. The MGM/Mirage has instituted a program that provides eligible employees with benefits of \$2500 per child to the maximum of \$5000 per family to assist with adoption costs in addition to providing paid leave and other types of assistance. The MGM/Mirage has been named one of the 2008 "Best Adoption-Friendly Workplaces in America" by the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption. This industry leader's commitment to helping families is a reflection on their outstanding example of helping our community and families with the most important role of any organization, helping build better lives for our children.

### **Randall and Jeina Shelley**

#### **Senator Harry Reid**

Randall and Jeina Shelley have long been involved with children through their community and church activities, but it is their history of welcoming vulnerable children into their home that deserves recognition by the Angels in Adoption program. Over the past 13 years, the Shelleys have fostered numerous children with therapeutic or treatment needs and their siblings. Randy and Jeina are now the proud parents of three adopted children, although adoption was not in their original plans at the very beginning. Early on, they fostered a young man who left to be reunited with his family but later returned to the Shelley home at his request. Two years later, he was adopted by the Shelleys. The Shelleys have also experienced adopting internation-

ally through a summer program that enabled them host orphan children from Kazakhstan. The two children fit into their family so well that Randy and Jeina considered adoption to be the natural next step. Randy and Jeina are now looking forward to finalizing the adoption of a five year old girl initially placed in their home through foster care. When it became apparent that she could not return to her birth family, the Shelleys decided to adopt her. Soon she will be a joyful addition to their family. The Shelleys state, "Adoption has completed our family. We have welcomed children into our home as our own. They have grown and we have grown. It is always a challenge, a reward and a lot of work to mesh that past chapter of their life with the upcoming chapters of a new life. We love to tell our story; we love to spread the experience in hopes of opening more opportunities for other children."

### **Scott and Kathleen Greenberg**

#### **Representative Jon C. Porter**

Congressman Jon Porter is honored and privileged to nominate Scott and Kathleen Greenberg as his 2008 Angel in Adoption. The road that led Scott and Kathleen to adopting Evan Alexander was filled with many twists and turns, but has brought them great joy. They had decided to pursue adoption because becoming parents was a top priority and they wanted to experience the joys of parenthood. Additionally, Kathleen was adopted as an infant and has a first-hand perspective with the rewarding experience that adoption can bring for all parties involved. There were multiple setbacks along the way, including a birth mother who changed her mind, a birthfather who decided to fight the placement, and an international program that had longer waits than expected. Just when Scott and Kathleen had decided perhaps it was not meant to be, they received a call from the agency that had conducted their Nevada home study. There was a birth mother who was due in three weeks who had not found the right adoptive



parents. After visiting over dinner, she and the birthfather decided they were comfortable with Scott and Kathleen and asked them to attend future medical appointments. Evan actually arrived five weeks premature and remained in the NICU at Sunrise Children's Hospital for a week. After the 72-hour waiting period was finally over, the relinquishments were signed and Scott and Kathleen were the proud parents of Evan. They still maintain a relationship with his birthparents and recently celebrated his first birthday and Baptism. The most important aspect for Scott and Kathleen is that Evan realizes that he is loved by many. They viewed their journey as an arduous wait but believe Evan was absolutely meant to be their son. They remain hopeful that another successful adoption will be in their family's future.

## New Hampshire

### **St. Charles Children's Home**

*Senator John E. Sununu*

St. Charles Children's Home is a program of New Hampshire Catholic Charities located in Rochester, NH. It is a group home for children between the ages of three and twelve who are preparing either for reunification with their families or for transition into adoptive families. The Home is staffed by the Daughters of Mary, Mother of Healing Love, an Association of Sisters founded to work for the healing of children and families. When all efforts for children to return home to their parents have failed, the staff at St. Charles set to work in helping them to grieve their losses, and to prepare for the wonderful and often frightening journey ahead of getting ready to live with an adoptive family. The children will need special support to come to terms with their memories of the past without shame or blame, and they will need help to be able to make the transition successfully. Without this heart-filled help and support, many children continue to suffer the

fears of loving again; they end up rejecting the love of caring adoptive parents, and they fail to thrive in their adoptive homes. To prevent this, the staff at St. Charles have learned through experience how to open the hearts of children in need, how to soothe their worries, and how to provide them with every possible reassurance that the world may be a place of safety where it is okay to take the risk of loving and being loved. The staff also provide ongoing advice to adoptive parents to help them to deal successfully with their own emotions and the sometimes difficult behaviors of the children. In recent years St. Charles Children's Home has become well known because the Sisters have discovered the amazingly therapeutic benefits of running with the children every day for four miles; but it is really their ability to communicate the unconditional love of God which has allowed the Sisters to go a step beyond conventional success in helping children transition successfully into adoptive homes. It is the great desire of each of the Sisters and the staff at St. Charles that every child can be welcomed into and learn to live successfully in a family, and it is for their work towards this goal that the Sisters and staff at St. Charles Children's Home are truly Angels in Adoption.

## New Jersey

### **Children's Aid and Family Services, Inc.**

*Representative Scott Garrett*

*Representative Steven R. Rothman*

Children's Aid and Family Services, Inc. has been providing adoption services continuously since 1899. Since its inception, it has placed more than 10,000 children with adoptive families. Located in Paramus, New Jersey, the agency is a recognized leader in providing innovative, high-quality programs that focus particularly on foster care and adoption services to infants, children and teenagers with special needs, and particularly those

that have suffered severe abuse and trauma. In 2007, the agency received an Adoption Excellence Award from the US Department of Health & Human Services in recognition of its many programming innovations in permanency services: adoption program for special needs children, programs for birth parents considering adoption for their infant children, pre-adoptive group homes, Pre-and Post-Adoption Counseling Services, the Path to Adoption program, and the NJ Adoption Resource Clearing House. In 2008, the agency has also added services for kinship legal guardians, including a "KinKonnect" web resource, as well as services to medically needy infants and toddlers. The agency's 250-member staff is supplemented by the dedicated support of more than 600 active community volunteers. Children's Aid and Family Services has been at the forefront of developing collaborative partnerships with businesses and foundations to recruit adoptive families, and has recently partnered with Angel in Adoption, Darryl McDaniels (DMC of RUN-DMC) to raise awareness through advertising billboards, print ads and Public Service Announcements, of the need for families for these children.

## **Mary Daily**

*Representative Jim Saxton*

A professional at Adoptions From The Heart (AFTH), Mary Daily began her career as a social worker in a trauma unit, supporting birth mothers through the difficult decision of placing their child for adoption. As a part-time resident, Mary also applied for a second job with AFTH and experienced the process of adoption from start to finish, leading her to a full-time position at the agency. Twenty years later she is now the agency's Director of Social Services, overseeing activity with social workers throughout the agency, and has helped both the agency and field of adoption grow in so many ways. Her years of experience working in the adoption community have led her to expand the agency by opening offices in several states, including two in New Jersey, and in turn helping to build

thousands of families. Outside of the agency, Mary conducts workshops at conferences, is an active member of New Jersey's Adoption Council, and she is involved in assisting legislators and licensing changes. Mary feels it's rewarding to watch the development of how adoption has changed over the years and how the agency has done the same – coming to understand a new level of openness and its importance. While adoption was once considered a quiet topic of conversation, Mary points out that today almost everyone you meet has been touched by adoption in some way. While the number of individuals who have been touched by Mary and her advocacy is too great to pinpoint, Mary is just happy to be a part of these families' lives in such an amazing way, empowering adoptive and birth parents to have knowledge of, and a connection, to each other. "Life is not easy with secrets, so to have the ability to communicate information with these families is rewarding," said Mary, who's happy to see families be proud of whom they are.

## **Judy Foster**

*Representative Rodney P. Frelinghuysen*

Judy Foster became involved in the adoption reform movement in 2000 after reuniting with her daughter, whom she surrendered to adoption in 1961. As one of "the girls who went away," Judy went on with her life, but never forgot her daughter. After 37 years of silence, Judy joyfully reunited with Donna 10 years ago, sparking a completely new "career" and passion for giving back to the adoption community. Retiring in 2000 after a 40-year career in various management positions with Bell Laboratories, AT&T and Lucent Technologies, Judy uses her skills and expertise to help educate the public, professionals and state legislators. For the past eight years, she has been the New Jersey state representative to the American Adoption Congress (AAC), and an active member of the New Jersey Coalition for Adoption Reform and Education (NJ CARE). Promoting greater public understanding of the

need for truth in adoption, she continues to lobby for legislation that would restore access to original birth certificates to New Jersey adoptees. Judy co-facilitates a model post-adoption support group in Morristown that has been meeting monthly for over two decades, serving adoptees and their parents by birth and adoption. While not a professional searcher, Judy has been instrumental in reuniting several birth families. She has been a panelist and presenter at adoption conferences sponsored by AAC, North American Council on Adoptable Children (NACAC), Concerned Persons for Adoption (CPFA), and the NJ Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW). Judy has also presented to adoption law and adoption counseling classes at Seton Hall and Montclair State Universities. Judy holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Management from Fairleigh Dickinson University and she completed Northwestern University's Kellogg Executive Development Program. Judy lives with her husband, George Avenier, in Randolph, NJ.

### **Natalie Hamilton**

*Senator Robert Menendez*

It is a great honor to select Natalie Hamilton to be recognized for her dedication to the adoption community. Adopted as a toddler herself, Natalie is a loving adoptive parent of two. As adults, her daughter and her son both searched for and found their birth families. She joined the Morristown Post Adoption Support Group seeking guidance and support. Before long, she had shared information about her own adoption and initiated a search for her birth family. She was reunited with siblings in Canada and continues to enjoy a close relationship with them. Natalie made many wonderful contributions to the Morristown by bringing in other adult adoptees from the Canadian maternity home connected to her adoption. In 1998, Natalie became active in CHATS (Connected Hearts Adoption Triad Support) in North Plainfield, NJ, soon after it came into existence. A faithful member, Natalie

shared her personal stories, provided emotional support for others and often led informational discussion groups. Natalie was instrumental in bringing numerous workshops and speakers to CHATS including one with her adopted daughter and daughter's birth mother. Natalie joined the NJ Adoption Resource Clearing House, a Program of children's Aid and Family Services at its inception in 2003. NJARCH is a federally funded, statewide program. Natalie's greatest gift is the empathy and support she provides in response to calls and emails. Natalie uses her own adoption history and the knowledge she acquired in the Rutgers Adoption Certificate Program to help prospective adoptive parents, adult adoptees thinking about search and reunion, new NJARCH staff members and others. Natalie continues to participate in a volunteer capacity in the NJ adoption community where she is often asked to join in panel discussions for adoptive parents and adoption professionals. Natalie Hamilton is an exemplary member of the adoptive community. Her true compassion and dedication both as an adoptive parent and in the adoption field is what makes her such an Angel in Adoption.

### **Marilou Heim**

*Representative Albio Sires*

With over 35 years experience in child protection and permanency, Marilou Heim's recognition as an "Angel in Adoption" acknowledges a modest, non-assuming social worker who has made a huge difference in the lives of children day after day, year after year. Marilou has been a tireless advocate to help children achieve permanency through the process of adoption. Much of her career has centered on mentoring scores of young caseworkers in the importance of this work, and her ability to impart her wealth of knowledge has resulted in thousands of successful adoptions in New Jersey. Marilou served in several leadership positions in the state's Adoption Resource Center (ARC), where she worked relentlessly to provide quality adoption services to families, becoming familiar

with each and every child under the supervision of her staff. Her dedication to children's permanency was apparent from the many weekends she spent approving consents for adoption, so they could move forward with their forever families. Marilou, a master's level social worker and member of the National Association of Social Workers, also created a model known as "Metro Select". The model was created to ensure that children requiring selective home placements received the in-depth services they needed and deserved. Marilou also spearheaded training protocols so her staff was proficient with best practice skills and delivering the highest quality service to children and families. Despite her many accomplishments, she is extremely modest and asks for no recognition. Working diligently in the background, Marilou continually troubleshoots to ensure that children move smoothly through the system and ever committed to guiding and supporting the filed. A skilled manager and strong leader, Marilou has been a wonderful role model for her staff. Her dedication and advocacy for all of her clients made her a highly valued member of the child welfare team in New Jersey.

## **Najlah Feanny Hicks**

*Representative Bill Pascrell, Jr.*

Najlah Feanny Hicks is the heart and soul behind one of the most effective and innovative adoption programs in the United States. The Heart Gallery of New Jersey is a unique not-for-profit corporation dedicated to raising awareness about local foster children who are available for adoption. Portraits are taken that help capture the individuality and spirit of each foster child; the photographs are shared via the web and through the gallery exhibits in the hope that potential families will be moved to inquire about adoption. Incorporated in New Jersey on March 4, 2005, it has been the reason why about 140 children considered "hardest to adopt" have now had their adoptions finalized. None of this would be possible without the dedication and determination of Najlah

Hicks. She was able to gather a collection of professional photographers and photo editors whose work has graced the covers and pages of countless magazines and newspapers that donated their time and talents to the Heart Gallery. HGNJ's latest project is drawing attention to "100 Waiting Children," children who have lived in foster care for the longest period of time — some their whole lives — most are well into their teenage years and still desire permanent homes before they turn 18 years old. Najlah, a professional photojournalist, has contributed to several books and been on foreign assignments all over the world. A former *Newsweek Magazine* contract photographer, she has covered national issues, news stories, the business world and political arena, but she considers the Heart Gallery the most important story of her career.

## **Harry and Priscilla Hopkins**

*Senator Frank R. Lautenberg*

I am extremely proud to select Harry and Priscilla Hopkins of Stratford, New Jersey as my 2008 Angels in Adoption. Nearly anyone can become a biological mother or father, but not everyone is equipped to be a good parent. Harry and Priscilla Hopkins exemplify the rare case of two people who could not bear biological children themselves, but who were nonetheless destined to become absolutely outstanding parents and raise a wonderful family. Mr. and Mrs. Hopkins have devoted their lives to providing a loving, nurturing home for their children, and in the process they have become exceptionally good parents. The Hopkins' have adopted five special needs children since 1998, and they currently serve as foster parents to a two-year old boy, whom they also hope to adopt. Seeing happy, active ten-year-old twins Tahjae and Tiyyana today, one could not hope to imagine the hurdles they have had to overcome from the time they were first placed in the Hopkins home. Mr. and Mrs. Hopkins saw to it that the twin's medical, emotional and developmental needs were met. Then, after several prior placements, six-year-old Trenyce joined the family

in 2002 and found her forever family. The two youngest Hopkins children are birth sisters, three year old Tana and two year old Tamala. When Tamala was born she was initially placed in another Resource Home because of her medical condition. After adopting Tana, Mr. and Mrs. Hopkins worked tirelessly to ensure that Tamala could grow up with her sister. The Hopkins' worked hard to reunite the sisters in their family and they were successful. Today, the Hopkins' are a family complete with their own family song, "Lean on Me" that is used as much to calm down a rowdy household at bedtime as it is to bind Mom, Dad, and all the children together as one. Though others may seek fame and fortune, Mr. and Mrs. Hopkins find that raising healthy, happy children gives their lives purpose and meaning. Harry and Priscilla are truly Angels in Adoption, but more important to them, they are the proud parents of a loving family.

### **William and Patricia Reents**

*Representative Frank Pallone, Jr.*

In September of 1996, Patricia Reents of Middlesex, New Jersey, read a newspaper article that deeply affected her. A local adoption agency in New Jersey described the desperate need for homes for children languishing in Chinese and Indian orphanages. Patricia and her husband, William, had successfully parented two teen-aged sons, but welcomed the idea of expanding their family. In November 1996, with energy and resources remaining, the Reents began the process of adopting two little girls from India. The Reents devoted themselves to understanding the adoption process. They joined an adoption support group to learn about parenting adopted children and readied themselves for the arrival of their new daughters, Juliana and Rebecca. On April 10, 1998, Juliana entered the Reents lives followed by Rebecca who came in November 30, 1998. The Reents fostered an open environment with their daughters, encouraging them to ask questions and express feelings about their original families. The

Reents immersed themselves in Indian culture. Every summer, the family attends an Indian culture camp where children from India and their adoptive parents learn more about the children's native country. The family also cooks Indian meals, listens to Indian music, and at times wears traditional Indian clothing. Last winter, Patricia, William, Juliana, and Rebecca traveled to India. They explored the regions of the country where Juliana and Rebecca were born.

Today, Juliana and Rebecca are thriving American 12-year-olds, taking music lessons, devouring books, playing with friends, and excelling in school. They are active in their church and assist their parents in educating others about India and adoption.

### **Toby Soloman**

*Representative Donald M. Payne*

Toby Solomon is indeed an angel on earth whose dedication and outstanding work has made a difference in countless lives. Over two decades ago, she formed and also chaired an adoption subcommittee in order to address amendments to the New Jersey Adoption Statute and other adoption issues. Her prior personal and professional experience made her aware that adoption was an area which needed both reform and advocacy. The committee she chaired accomplished the task of writing amendments to the existing adoption legislation and getting the amendments passed by the Legislature. The amendments to the Statute brought forth a variety of new concepts to the adoption process, which were sorely needed. Ms. Solomon also founded and chaired the Children's Rights Committee. A graduate of Seton Hall Law School, she has devoted a tremendous amount of time and energy to educating other attorneys and clients about the adoption process. She continues to lecture and has authored numerous articles on adoption in order to educate both professionals and prospective adoptive parents in adoption matters. I hope that you will

give favorable consideration to this nomination — we need more angels like Toby Solomon!

## New Mexico

### **Anthony and Linda Tabar**

#### *Senator Jeff Bingaman*

This remarkable family shouldn't be recognized just for 2008, they should be recognized for a life time. They adopted three children in great need because it was the right thing to do. When Linda and Anthony Tabar adopted an infant boy in 1986, they knew it would change their lives, they just didn't know to what extent. Only a few months, their baby, Phillip, was diagnosed with brain damage, epilepsy, and blindness- the outcomes of a drug addicted pregnancy. As if fighting to keep him alive weren't enough, Linda Tabar had to fight the government and school system to give Phillip an education, and a chance at a normal life. Because of Linda's fight on Phillip's behalf, adoption incentives for medically fragile children were extended until age 21. Phillip wasn't expected to live a year. He celebrates his 22nd birthday this year. The Tabars also adopted Rebecca. At 26 months, with sever cystic fibrosis, she was taken from state foster care and placed with the Tabars. Due to repeated head trauma, Rebecca was expected to be mentally retarded. She graduated from high school with honors and received her diploma carrying a five-gallon tank of oxygen. Rebecca had one double lung transplant at UTSW St. Paul Hospital in Dallas Texas. Her team at this time is not allowing her to have another transplant, but the Tabar's are in prayer that the team will change their mind. Like everything Rebecca has had to fighter harder than anyone can dream of to just be alive. Rebecca was taken out of the Intensive Care Providence Hospital in El Paso to attend her graduation. She has two oxygen tanks to support her before transplant as she graduate from high school in May 2005. In spite of losing her lottery scholarship due to continued hospitalizations, Rebecca went back

to college last fall. Next, the Tabars adopted Lissette, who like her brother Phillip, is quadriplegic and blind. She was saved by the Tabars at 24 months. Age 12, Lissette is in school, continuing the triumphant path to graduation that her brother and sister made before her. Linda and Anthony consider their children to be blessings, inspirations to everyone they encounter. Linda has dedicated her life to all the voiceless, medically fragile children in the United States. She continues to fight for Title IV-E funds for them. Linda and Anthony have one wish: that one day CYFD will respond to adoption calls by saying, "We're sorry, all the children already have families. Would you like to be on our waiting list?"

## New York

### **Jeanine Castagna**

#### *Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton*

#### *Representative Mike Ferguson*

Jeanine Castagna, Esq. has been involved with adoption for a decade. At the age of eleven she was told she might not be able to have biological children, while this turned out not to be the case, from that moment on she knew that in some way she wanted to help others in similar situations. She received her law degree from Hofstra University in 1996 and has been practicing adoption law ever since. While still in law school she handled a pro bono case involving adoption. Six years ago Jeanine started her own practice that focuses specifically on adoption law. Throughout her career, Jeanine has been involved in over three hundred private placement domestic newborn adoptions, step-parent adoptions and international re-adoptions. She is a fellow of the American Academy of Adoption Attorneys, a member of the Adoption Committee of the New York State Bar Association, the American fertility Association, RESOLVE, the National Infertility Network Exchange, and of DES Action. She and her husband are founding members of the Tender Loving Care Foundation, a non profit organization supporting the



parents of babies in the neonatal intensive care unit of the North Shore Long Island Jewish Health System in New York, as well as serving on the Board of Directors for that organization. Finally with all of these other responsibilities and working full time Jeanine and her husband, Ed, still find time to raise their two wonderful children, Sam and Jack.

## **Steve and Dawn Dziegiel**

*Representative Michael A. Arcuri*

## **Dr. Glen and Dr. Nancy Mark**

*Representative Tim Bishop*

The Marks adopted their oldest child, Gabriel, privately. Their son knows he is adopted and the Marks have kept the lines of communication open with his birth mother. He was involved in the family's decision to foster and later adopt the two younger children placed in their home by the Department of Social Services. As foster parents, the Marks made all efforts to facilitate visits between both parents and foster children. The Marks traveled a considerable distance to ensure that the children visited their birth mother. They brought the children to her each week. The children continue to visit with their biological sibling because the Marks realize how important it is to maintain sibling contact. The children were immediately enrolled in therapy to help them deal with the loss and separation issues that are so predominant with children in foster care. The Marks ensure that their children are involved in all sorts of extra curricular activities. The children play hockey and softball, take dance lessons, and participate in Girl Scouts. The children are doing well in school and they have been on various vacations most especially to Disneyworld. The Marks bought a home in Manorville in 2001. They received their Doctorates in Chiropractic in 1993 from the Life Chiropractic College in Marietta, Georgia. The couple have had practices in Port Jefferson, Stony Brook, Blue Point and currently have practices East Moriches and Riverhead, New York. The Marks are active members of

their community and are involved in raising their children so that each child reaches his or her full potential. The Marks family exemplifies all that concerned and responsible foster and adoptive parents should be.

## **Hollee McGinnis**

*Representative Carolyn B. Maloney*

Hollee McGinnis presently serves as the Policy and Operations Director for the Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute, a nonpartisan, national not-for-profit based in New York City. Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute is the pre-eminent policy, research and education organization in its field, thanks in large part to Ms. McGinnis's contributions. Ms. McGinnis is responsible for researching, writing, and distributing the institute's monthly e-newsletter. Additionally, Ms. McGinnis supervises all operations in their New York Office; conducting critical research projects, international presentations, such as her presentation at an adoption conference in England and media relations, such as a major story in the New York Times. Prior to her work at the Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute, Hollee founded a highly regarded national adult adoptee organization called Also- Known-As, which provides services including mentorship for adopted youth and their families. Hollee McGinnis has dedicated her time and effort to contributing to the lives of children and families touched by adoption. She is truly a remarkable woman and I am proud to represent her.

## **Thomas and Jaqueline Todaro**

*Representative Steve Israel*

Jaqueline and Thomas Todaro have adopted three children through the Suffolk County Department of Social Services. Mr. and Mrs. Todaro had a history of infertility issues for a number of years. Through in vitro, the couple got pregnant and became proud parents of 4 children, triplet boys aged 17 and another boy age 19. Mrs. Todaro still felt that she "had mothering left in her" and felt strongly that

they didn't need to have any more biological children, that there were "plenty of children out there who needed a good home". The Todaro's became certified in 2003 and waited a year for a child to adopt. They decided to take in foster children at this point, 2 girls, Andrea age 6 and Ahriyannah age 8. One year later, the girl's older sister, Savannah, age 13 joined the family. Their adoption became finalized in 2007. The three girls also have biological brothers, who the Todaro's encourage facilitated visits with. "It's like having an extended family," says Mrs. Todaro. "It's rewarding for us to see these children, who have suffered from neglect and other terrible things, become so happy and lead normal lives. And it's important to us that our own children understand the importance of making a lasting impression in someone's life." Mrs. Todaro says that their entire family has embraced the girls. According to the Suffolk County Department of Social Services, Mr. and Mrs. Todaro have incorporated the principals of the agencies training program into their adoption. The Suffolk County Department of Social Services feels that this family is deserving of this award because they have provided a stable environment for the three girls, and has incorporated them into their family of boys. Mrs. Todaro says that they will not be adopting or taking in any more foster children because of their large family of 7 children. But she and her husband will remain members of FCAP, Foster Parent Adoptive Committee, a support group in their community. She wants to be able to share their adoption stories to those who may be interested in becoming adoptive parents, continuing to make that lasting impression that she hopes her children understand and remember for their own lives.

## North Carolina

### Center for Adoption Policy

*Senator Richard Burr*

It is my pleasure to nominate the Center for Adoption Policy (CAP) for the Angels in Adoption Award. Founders Diane Kunz and Ann Reese were led to their mission to find a permanent family for every child through personal experience. Their adoption journeys exposed the legal, policy and societal barriers that exist between willing and able parents and children in need. Since 2001, CAP has been a voice for those who cannot speak for themselves—children whose birth parents have been unable or unwilling to care for them. Through education and advocacy efforts, CAP has forged alliances with lawyers, doctors, NGOs and child welfare professionals to remove obstacles to adoption. Their focus is the child's best interest; their objective is to facilitate the creation and implementation of ethical and effective laws, recruitment and training practices that will keep adoption as a viable option for the children throughout the world who have no seat at the policy table, and whose interests are too often secondary to other agendas. The Center for Adoption Policy Annual Adoption Law Conference, held in conjunction with the Justice Action Center of New York Law School, has become the pre-eminent adoption forum, bringing together scholars, practitioners and members of the adoption community. The Annual Conference exemplifies the CAP approach which is to utilize the study of the theoretical to create collaborative teams to accomplish the practical goal of ensuring that all children can find permanent, loving homes. Diane is the mother of eight children, of whom the four youngest were adopted from China. The two youngest of the five Reese children were adopted from Romania.

## **Hopscotch Adoptions**

*Senator Elizabeth Dole*

Hopscotch Adoptions, Hague accredited and a member of the Joint Council on International Children's Services, is a not for profit adoption program that focuses on helping children with special needs. They specialize in adoptions from the countries of Georgia, Armenia, and the Ukraine (and soon to add Bulgaria and Ghana). Her own experience of adopting a special needs child internationally led Robin Sizemore and a volunteer board to start Hopscotch Adoptions in 2006. The fundamental belief of Hopscotch is that each child has the right to a lifelong, loving family. They recognize and support efforts that allow children to safely remain in their original families and, where this is not possible, to be adopted in their countries of birth. When these options are not available, however, they believe that children should be placed internationally with adoptive parents who can provide a nurturing and stable permanent family. Sometimes, sadly, children do not meet the legal standards for international adoption and are subject to institutional life. In these cases, Hopscotch supports their needs through directed humanitarian assistance aimed at improving their quality of life. These efforts have included medical and surgical care from U.S. volunteer doctors, maternal and infant care projects, and assistance to children in orphanages. One ground-breaking part of their work has been the Hopscotch Downs Syndrome project. Hopscotch has found families willing to adopt children with Down's syndrome, children who traditionally have been left in orphanage or institutional care as a result of cultural views in the countries in which they were born. The newest Hopscotch project is to encourage families to keep their handicapped children at home if possible, as opposed to automatic institutionalization. As part of this project, Hopscotch will assist the establishment of a community-based early childhood intervention program to provide critically needed services that help children stay within their own families. Hopscotch's work has already touched the lives

of hundreds of children and families through humanitarian aid and international adoption, it will continue in the future to touch the lives of many, many others.

## **North Dakota**

### **Jeff and Julie Hoffman**

*Senator Kent Conrad*

*Senator Byron Dorgan*

With over 26 years of experience in social work, Julie serves as Administrator of Adoption Services at the North Dakota Department of Human Services. She has led the State's adoption program for the past 10 years. An adoptive parent herself, Julie is noted for her helpfulness, compassion towards the children and families she serves and her vision for adoption. Julie and her husband Jeff have two high-school aged children, Emily and Trent who they adopted when he was six years old. The Hoffmans also served as foster parents for a number of years. One young man who was placed with the Hoffmans for four years is now married and has two children of his own. His children call Julie and Jeff grandma and grandpa.

### **Jason and Dana Mitzel**

*Representative Earl Pomeroy*

Jason and I have been privileged to provide care for 13 children over seven years. After many teenagers, we were placed with a young 4 year old Native American boy named Brandon. While working with the tribe for adopting him, we discovered he had two more brothers and two sisters. Both boys were placed separately while the two sisters were in foster care together. We were told it would not be possible for this sibling group to be reunited. We patiently met with tribal leaders and county social workers never giving up on our goal of uniting this sibling group. We knew it was God's plan even though it seemed impossible to us too. The second oldest boy Ben moved into our home in July of 2004 and was adopted

in December of 2005. The oldest boy Johnny moved into our home in May of 2006 and was adopted in January of 2007. Brandon who started this all moved into our home in January of 2002 and was adopted in August of 2007. The two sisters Sky Rain and Alicia moved into our home in December of 2006 and were adopted in January of 2008. Each of our children has had significant individual challenges with attachment, emotional and educational needs since placement with us. We have shown great commitment, compassion and patience to help these five miracles/blessings deal with their traumatic and disruptive past. By doing this, this sibling group has been able to form healthy attachments, catch-up on their educational gaps and stabilize emotionally. We have honored tribal connections that the children have to their respective tribes as well as re-establishing contact between the children's birth mother and maternal grandmother.

## Ohio

### **Troy and Cindy Breidenbach**

*Representative Jim Jordan*

Troy and Cindy Breidenbach always knew they wanted four children. When they tragically lost their fourth child a week after birth, and they later learned that they were medically unable to have more children on their own, they set forth to begin the adoption process. By July 2007, their home study was complete and they were well on their way to adopting a Guatemalan child, when like so many other American families they were deterred. They began the process anew with Russia, ultimately finding two-year old Owen in the town of Astrakhan along the Kazakhstan border. Owen never knew his parents. He was given up at birth, and spent the first two years of his life among 100 other children under the age of three, at one of three orphanages in Astrakhan. Today, Owen lives with his new parents and his three new siblings in rural Allen County, Ohio. He has

begun his life as a typical Midwestern American child. The miracle of adoption means that Owen will one day learn to ride a bike, go to school, play sports, and pursue his dreams as one can only do in America. Troy and Cindy say that if it weren't for the hint of his Eurasian background in his facial features, most would guess that Owen is "just one of the family". That he is! Since bringing Owen home in February, Troy and Cindy have recommended adoption to 3 or 4 other families, who are actively considering it. The Breidenbachs always knew they wanted four children — and just like they made Owen's dreams come true, Owen made their dreams come true as well!

### **Marcy Fleisher and Jo Ann Walsh**

*Representative Pat Tiberi*

Estevan was the oldest of four children. He and his three sisters were in a group home as foster care children in Texas. Jo Ann Walsh, her husband Brian, and their two boys were in the process of adopting a girl from China when they were made aware of a website profiling children in Texas who needed to be adopted. As soon as they saw Estevan and his sisters they knew they had to bring them into their family. Social workers in Texas said Estevan would not thrive in such a large family. So, the Walsh's adopted Estevan's three sisters and set out to find a family near their home to adopt Estevan. They wanted Estevan to be near his siblings. This is where Marcy Fleisher comes into the picture. Marcy's communications firm works with an adoption attorney helping him to get the word out about adoption cases and his practice. When attorney Tommy Taneff called Marcy and said "you are going to find a little boy a home", Marcy did not know what to think. Tommy explained the Walsh's situation and Estevan's story. Right away Marcy jumped at the chance to get the local media involved with hopes of someone seeing the story and coming forward with the desire to adopt Estevan. The process was long and grueling. Many of the media outlets did not jump on the story right

away. Marcy kept at it and used all the contacts she had to get the media involved and Estevan's story out. Finally, the major newspaper in the area published a story on Oct 24, 2007. The local news stations began running stories about Estevan, his sisters and the quest to keep them together. The Clark family saw this story and called Tommy Taneff right away. Tommy set them up with Jo Ann and Brian Walsh so they could meet Estevan's sisters and him while he was visiting for the Christmas holiday. The rest is history. The Clark's live a quick drive away from the Walsh's and their families have now become one, creating a large family for the Clark and Walsh kids. Marcy and Tommy donated both their services free of charge. According to Texas social workers, if it weren't for the work of Marcy and Jo Ann this little boy may have never been adopted. The adoption was finalized at the end of July 2008.

### **National Center for Adoption Law & Policy at Capital University Law School**

*Representative Deborah Pryce*

Since 1998, the National Center for Adoption Law & Policy at Capital University Law School has achieved national prominence in the areas of adoption and child permanency and has become the source for timely substantive adoption information. The National Center for Adoption Law & Policy works to educate and advocate on behalf of children who are involved in our nation's child welfare systems and to assist professionals who serve these children in an effort to ensure timely permanency and to minimize "foster care drift". Through its core services, the National Center addresses three systemic issues in adoption and child welfare: 1) the lack of up-to-date, user-friendly information for families and professionals; 2) the need for more educational and training opportunities for current and future child welfare practitioners; and 3) the need for law and policy reform to bring about improved outcomes for kids in need of permanent homes. In a given year, the Center directly touches the lives of over 5,000

people and impacts thousands more indirectly. They accomplish this through the coordination of several educational programs for students; offer symposia for academicians and practitioners, provide information and research services for the general public, sponsor comprehensive education programs for prospective adoptive parents, and managing several other special projects related to advocacy and system reform. The Center has an Adoption and Child Welfare LawSite ([www.adoptionchildwelfarelaw.org](http://www.adoptionchildwelfarelaw.org)), a website which provides user-friendly information on adoption and child welfare law for all 50 states, as well as helpful resource pages for adoption and child welfare stakeholders. This website averages approximately 2,500 hits per day. We are very fortunate to have The National Center for Adoption Law & Policy in my home town of Columbus, Ohio, and it is with great pride that I submit the Center as a recipient of the 2008 Angel in Adoption award.

### **Joe and Becky Puckett**

*Senator Sherod Brown*

It is my honor to nominate Joe and Becky Puckett for the Angels in Adoption 2008. Joe and Becky adopted a sibling group of 4 with special needs. Prior to the adoption, the kids were in their home as foster children. When the goal for the children became adoption, Joe and Becky made the ultimate commitment to raise these 4 children as their own even though they had already raised their own biological children. Becky was 15, Kaylee was 7, Caleb was 5 and Seth was 2 when the adoption was finalized. Due to their special needs, Joe and Becky spent a lot of time at the doctor's office. Since the children have been adopted by Joe and Becky, they have made tremendous progress. When told about the award, Becky commented "we are so honored" when in reality, we are the ones who are honored to have them.

## **Gary 'Tut' and Debra Turner**

### *Representative Zach Space*

Debra and Gary Turner have adopted four children from two different families during the course of their eighteen years as foster caregivers. In addition to the dozens of foster children who have shared their home over the years, the Turners have six birth children, including several who are now adults and who have successfully entered the world of higher education and employment. The Turners exemplify the commitment to children that is shown by all successful foster and adoptive parents. Until recent funding cuts forced its closure, Gary served for years as the administrator of a tri-county Alternative School and was also active in coaching and refereeing. Debra is active both as one of Jehovah's Witnesses and in the community and both are relentless advocates for children. Several years ago, the Turners adopted one of their foster children, then, in 2007, they adopted a sibling group of three very young children. At a time when most couples might be looking forward to emptying their nest, the Turners elected to make a commitment to children in need of a forever family. They did so out of love, and because they knew that they could make a permanent difference in four young lives.

## **Merle and Sue Wentz**

### *Senator George Voinovich*

The Wentz family initially became licensed as foster parents in 1999 and proceeded to adopt two children through the child welfare system in Richland County, Ohio. Their daughter Briana Grace is now six years old. She was initially placed in their home in 2002. Throughout the adoption process the Wentz's showed the same love and compassion for Briana's birth parents supporting reunification, but when it was determined that Briana could not return home, they welcomed her with open arms providing a permanent home through adoption in 2004. Then in 2006 their second child, Bryce Allen, was placed into their home as a foster child. Bryce's mother was addicted to drugs and left

Bryce with a man she alleged to be his father. When the man realized Bryce was not his son, he struggled whether or not to continue to care for him, but then decided to place him in foster care. The Wentz's, who were already providing an adoptive home for Briana, opened their hearts and home to Bryce. Shortly after beginning to care for him, Bryce was diagnosed with Retinoblastoma, which is cancer of the retina. This condition eventually called for Bryce to have his eye surgically removed and replaced with an ocular prosthesis. Bryce now receives regular care from Children's Hospital in Columbus. The Wentz's transport Bryce to Columbus on a frequent basis for ongoing medical care that includes MRI's and blood tests. Throughout Bryce's medical treatment the Wentz's endured many commutes from Mansfield to Columbus. They eventually used up all of the sick time at work, but never gave up on Bryce by requesting leave without pay on several occasions to continue his care. The Wentz's have learned how to remove Bryce's prosthetic eye in order to clean and care for it properly. Recently the specialist indicated that Bryce has a high chance of getting Retinoblastoma in his other eye. The Wentz's continue to remain positive about Bryce's medical diagnosis and are just happy to have him as their son. Bryce who is now three receives specialized services through Richland Newhope. It is with this ongoing commitment of providing a permanent home for two children through difficult circumstances that I nominate Merle and Sue Wentz. Their commitment to taking in children who were not their own embodies the spirit of the Angels in Adoption Award.

## **Oklahoma**

## **Rick and Kathy Clarke**

### *Senator James Inhofe*

When Rick Clarke served for five years as a judge in juvenile court, working with abused and neglected children, both he and his wife, Kathy, formed a desire to help children who are



most in need — those without families. Today, Rick dedicates part of law practice to adoption cases. He serves as a volunteer attorney through Tulsa Lawyers for Children, as a guardian ad litem through court appointments, and is on the board of Heritage Family Services, a Tulsa-based adoption agency. Kathy has served as a Court Appointed Special Advocate for children and currently works on special education issues and with the PTA. However, it is this family's personal story that sets it apart from the other Angel in Adoption candidates. The Clarkes have personally participated in the adoption process for thirteen years and have adopted nine children. Throughout these years, the Clarke family has faced hardships, and obstacles, yet they continue to grow as a family, both in number and character. The Clarke's first adopted child was a three-year old boy who was a victim of "shaken baby syndrome". The next two young children joined the family from Russia after being diagnosed with medical complications. The Clarkes later adopted two girls, ages 15 and 13, who had been abused by their fathers, and an eight year-old girl who had suffered neglect by her biological parents. Lastly, they provided homes to two sisters from Liberia and an older boy from Ethiopia. The faith and perseverance of the Clarke family enables them to overcome the challenges of providing a permanent and loving home to so many children. Remaining steadfast in their belief that God has a special plan for every child, Rick and Kathy have raised each of their nine children to be productive, healthy, and strong leaders in their schools and communities. The Clarkes truly represent the blessings and the power of adoption.

## Oregon

### **Mike and Marti Hill**

#### *Representative Greg Walden*

Mike and Marti Hill are the birth parents of nine children, ranging in age from 2 months to 16 years. They are also the adoptive parents of

their nephew Mason, age 4, and are in the process of adopting Gloria, age 2. Mike and Marti first came to the Oregon Department of Human Services to be a resource for their nephew. Knowing the huge need for adoptive families for children in the foster care system, they then opened their hearts and home to Gloria, who came to their family with a variety of special needs. Mike and Marti are tireless in their quest to advocate for children with special needs, and to raise awareness of the need for foster and adoptive families. They are currently involved in local activities in the community, including the Heart Gallery of Oregon in Jackson and Josephine counties, recruiting for foster and adoptive families, and identifying the many ways that people can help children. The rest of their family is made up of Alyssa, age 16, Ethan, age 14, Savannah, age 12, Gianna, age 10, Garrison, age 9, Emma, age 7, Alden, age 5, Johnathan, age 2, and Amelia, age 2 months.

### **Mary Masterson**

#### *Representative Earl Blumenauer*

The Oregon Health & Sciences University (OHSU) Adoption Medicine Program is the brainchild of Mary Masterson, a faculty member in the Department of Family Medicine at OHSU in Portland, Oregon. Mary is an adoptive mother of two girls from China and a Korean adoptee. Mary thought that Oregon could benefit from an adoption medicine program and was successful in getting this program established in early 2006. Her program provides a full-spectrum of adoption and travel medicine services for international and domestic adoptions. A sign of her program's success is the increasing number of adoptive families who request pre and post adoption services through the recommendations of their adoption agency and other adoptive families who have used their services. Mary's unique perspective of the adoption process as an adoptee and an adoptive parent helps with her ability to understand and communicate effectively with the adoptive parents and adoption agencies who work with

her successful program. She truly understands that adoption is a 24/7 process that doesn't end at 5pm on a Friday. Mary helped to establish a mandarin language program at her daughter's elementary school. She actively participates in local adoption groups and events so her daughters can stay connected with other adoptees, and to continue growing her own personal adoption experience.

## Pennsylvania

### **Patrick and Deborah Beck**

*Representative Charles Dent*

*Representative Jim Gerlach*

Pat Beck is a current staffer for Congressman Gerlach and a former staffer for Congressman Dent. He and his wife Deb hold the respect, admiration, and fondness of his current and past colleagues. In addition to fostering/adopting two small children already in their home, the Becks have been undergoing the long and arduous process of adopting three sisters in Haiti and bringing them here to raise in the United States.

### **Barbara Casey**

*Senator Arlen Specter*

Barbara Casey has worked tirelessly to bring families and children together for 23 years. Barbara is the Director of Adoption Associates, LLC, a licensed Pennsylvania adoption agency, and heads up a law firm specializing in all adoption issues. She has a Masters Degree and graduated from the University of Pennsylvania Law School. She is proud to be a Fellow of the American Academy of Adoption Attorneys and an active member of several organizations that serve families. She lectures on adoption topics around for the Pennsylvania Bar Institute and local associations. She came to the practice of adoption by coincidence. Her law partner's wife was experiencing severe frustration with infertility and, simultaneously, a pregnant client came to Barbara asking her to make an adoption plan; the rest is history. Twenty-one years

later that same child came to work for Barbara as an intern. Barbara performs pro bono adoption services for Berks County and is grateful to make a lasting, positive contribution to families in the community. So many of her clients and colleagues call Barbara and her staff, "Angels on Earth", because they work miracles to bring children into their homes. Barbara and her staff were credited with being especially warm and caring; qualities that help families navigate through the difficult, emotional journey of adoption. When asked about favorite moments, Barbara recalls the newborn triplets that were placed in an Amish family where the entire community was on board to help. She credits her colleagues in the Adoption Academy with fostering her success. She recalls a family who had adopted an Asian-Hispanic girl and called Barbara's office asking for assistance in locating an older child with the same background. Barbara worried that it might be a stretch, but later that very day an Academy lawyer from California called requesting a placement for a six year old boy that filled the bill perfectly – and a new family was created. Barbara is appreciated by so many families across the Commonwealth who say she goes above and beyond the call of duty to make adoptions happen and bring families together. As one of Barbara's supporters said, "Congressional recognition as "Angel" would not only be an appropriate reward for someone whose career has been spent benefiting others, but it would also support her continued efforts to place children into loving homes."

### **Dannah Gresh**

*Representative John E. Peterson*

After hearing about 13-year-old Autumn through a friend who had met her while visiting China, Dannah Gresh soon realized she could not let this young girl just "age-out" of the Chinese orphanage system. In just nine months, Autumn would turn fourteen only to face a future of threatening circumstances through life on the streets of China. Dannah and her husband, Bob, understood that adopting

a Chinese orphan was going to be a challenge. However, after just a few months of struggling with bureaucracy and the Chinese government, while remaining focused on this international humanitarian effort, Dannah and Bob are proud to call Autumn their daughter. In addition to being a dedicated wife and mother to three children, Dannah is a world-renowned speaker and author who regularly speaks abroad, and is a frequently interviewed by the likes of *TIME* magazine, *Focus on the Family* and *The Chicago Tribune* on issues concerning children's and teens. She is the author of an abstinence curriculum used in the government schools of Zambia (Africa), one of the world's most AIDS-ravaged nations. It was her work in Africa, beginning in 2004, that led her to become a voice for the needs of children in third-world and developing nations. This is where her heart was initially open to adoption and eventually led her to be a spokesperson for Holt International. She and her family live in State College, PA.

### **Tara Gutterman, Esq.**

#### ***Representative Chaka Fattah***

Tara Gutterman is the founder and executive director of Adoption ARC, Inc., a non profit agency licensed in PA, NJ and DE. Tara is also an attorney. She began her career as an attorney with the City of Philadelphia Law Dept., where she handled hundreds of child abuse and neglect cases as well as termination of parental rights hearings. Later, she worked for a private, non profit adoption agency in Philadelphia, encountering the range of issues she now confronts at Adoption ARC, while specializing in termination-of-parental-rights hearings and adoption finalization. Since the beginning of her career, Tara's goal has been creating permanency for children as early in their lives as possible. Tara has found loving families for hundreds of children throughout the years including many children who are considered to be hard to place or special needs. Her agency provides outstanding services to birthparents throughout the community it serves by ensuring that they

receive objective, respectful counseling throughout their lifetime. She also argued and won the seminal case in Pennsylvania that permits adoption assistance to be made available to children placed through private agencies. This case has been relied upon in other states throughout the U.S. for this and other important propositions favoring adoption assistance. Several years ago, Tara petitioned the county court for custody of an abandoned infant forcing the county children and youth agency to drastically alter their policy on abandoned infants by offering immediate permanency. Tara is an outstanding advocate for children and families whose work embodies the very purpose and spirit of this award. I provide my fullest support and highest recommendation for Tara's candidacy for this wonderful award.

### **Scott and Kerry Hasenbalg**

#### ***Senator Robert P. Casey, Jr.***

Scott and Kerry Hasenbalg live with their children, Cole and Maya, in Bear Creek, Pa., the home base from which they work tirelessly to help orphans around the world. A native of Danville, Pa., Kerry has worked in orphanages in Russia and was a co-founder and former executive director of the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute. Well-known in the child welfare community as a gifted speaker and teacher, Kerry has spoken on social welfare topics at such notable locations as C-Span live, Capitol Hill, JCICS, NCFA, National Council for Faith-Based Youth, Moody Broadcasting, Family Life, Focus on the Family, and in churches around the nation. She has traveled to over 30 countries and met with many presidents, prime ministers, and various leaders of government regarding the welfare of orphans, including nations such as China, India, Russia, Romania, El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, Rwanda, and Uganda. Her husband Scott is the director of the adoption grant and education organization, Shaohannah's Hope, which has given grants to almost 2,000 families in the last five years to help them bring their children home. The Hasenbalgs are founding members

of the Christian Alliance for Orphans, and Kerry sits on the board of Equality for Adopted Children (EACH). The Hasenbalgs have laid the foundation for adoption among their extended family and friends, and their ongoing and powerful advocacy has helped many parents and children become “forever families.”

## **Stephen and Jennifer Pebly**

*Representative Joseph R. Pitts*

The Peblys are a loving family with a big heart. Steve and Jen had two children, Lydia and Caleb, when they decided to adopt for the first time. Three years ago, they returned home with a precious 1 year old from Russia, named Dasha, who has been a wonderful gift to their family. Steve and Jen recently decided they would like to adopt again. Through their adoption agency, Bethany Christian Services, they obtained information on Qiuke, an adorable 6 year old boy from China. Qiuke is a burn survivor, evidenced by the remaining scars on his face and hands and the loss of all of his fingers. On July 24th, Steve and Jen returned from China with this newest addition to their wonderful family. The Peblys are a nurturing family who can offer Qiuke an incredible amount of love and emotional support. Qiuke, in turn, has filled a new place in this family's heart.

## **The Children's Home of Pennsylvania and Lemieux Family Center**

*Representative Mike Doyle*

For more than 100 years, the Children's Home of Pittsburgh has been respected in the community and across the country for the quality of their work in infant adoption. The philosophy of open adoption became well-known and accepted in Pittsburgh because of the Children's Home's commitment to providing the best choices for their clients. Educating other agencies about openness became an important part of the program's mission. Underlying the success of The Children's Home is a dedication to the philosophy that birth families, adoptive

families and adoptees can benefit from a lifetime of supportive services. With the goal of helping everyone to have a stable, successful adoption experience, all support services are provided by Master's Level social workers or counselors and are available to everyone in the community. With three licenses from the Department of Public Welfare, The Children's Home is considered a full service adoption agency providing birthparent counseling, adoptive family studies, foster care and infant placement services. Staff members also provide infertility counseling, support groups for birth and adoptive families, post-adoption counseling, a research and reunion program and community education. Since 1893, more than 7,000 infants and young children have found permanent loving homes through The Children's Home of Pittsburgh & Lemieux Family Center.

## **Rhode Island**

### **Robin Costello and Albert Gamble**

*Representative Patrick Kennedy*

As adoptive parents of three children born in Guatemala, Robin and Albert are strong, passionate advocates of adoption. They both recognize how blessed they are to have such a wonderful family and happily provide resources to other community members contemplating the adoption process. The adoption agency they worked with to bring home their three children frequently refers them to individuals waiting for a child, which is often a time of intense anticipation and emotion. Albert and Robin are available to answer their questions on the phone, relaying information about their own experiences to help comfort a waiting family. In addition, both have worked professionally as television journalists to help improve the lives of children and families by educating the public on the subject of adoption. During Robin's tenure as an anchor/reporter on ABC6 in Rhode Island, she relayed countless stories on the benefits of adoption for the child, the

waiting family and the community. For the past eight years as Chief Photographer for NBC10 in Rhode Island, Albert has photographed and edited a weekly segment entitled, “Tuesday’s Child”. These stories explore the possibilities of adoption by introducing the public to a child looking for a forever family. Albert says it’s the best part of his job. Anyone who knows Robin and Albert understands immediately that their children are the center of their life. Adoption has helped shape who they are and how they live their lives.

## **Michael and Patricia Lill**

*Senator Sheldon Whitehouse*

Michael and Patricia Lill were recommended for this award by the Rhode Island Foster parents Association. The Lills had four biological children of their own, and got involved with the Rhode Island Foster Parents Association when their children were grown. Over the course of this relationship, Mr. and Mrs. Lill have cared for over 30 foster children, and adopted four siblings that would have otherwise been separated had it not been for their assistance. They have also adopted one other child within the past two years.

## **South Carolina**

### **Jeff and Rebecca Bate**

*Senator Jim DeMint*

Three years ago Jeff and Rebecca adopted a girl, Mary, and late last year sought to adopt a brother for Mary—they got much more than they bargained for! They learned of an opportunity in California to adopt three brothers for Mary—identical triplets. Knowing the daunting circumstances that these three babies and their birth mother were facing and anticipating that the triplets would come early, Rebecca flew out to Los Angeles, while Jeff stayed home with 2 year old Mary. Rebecca showed great courage and tenacity in facing all she did in an overwhelming and unknown city, encouraging

the process along. In addition, her handling of the prenatal and neonatal care of the triplets (they came 8 weeks early) with the help and encouragement of her husband is amazing and an inspiration. After the babies spent four weeks in the Neonatal ICU, Jeff and his mom flew to California to bring the three boys home. The triplets are now growing and happily settled into their new home in Anderson with a wonderful new family and radically different opportunities than those Rebecca and Jeff rescued them from in L.A.

## **Jacqueline Bond and Amy Paul**

*Senator Lindsey Graham*

It was not uncommon as Presbyterian College psychology majors for Amy Paul and Jacqueline Bond to share the same classes. But four years after graduation their work is still tied together at Adoption Advocacy; work that is changing the face of traditional adoption recruitment, families in South Carolina, and children in foster care across the country. Amy and Jacqueline wear the title of “Family Caseworker” at the adoption agency in Greenville, South Carolina. Amy is employed full time, while Jacqueline is employed there part-time, while attending Charleston School of Law in pursuit of helping children through a family law practice. Amy and Jacqueline became certified adoption investigators in 2006 and have, to date, assisted in helping 40 families in South Carolina and seventy-seven children across the United States know the joy of finding a “forever home” through adoption. The average age of the children placed is nine years old and the average time in foster care for these young children was over three years. Jacqueline and Amy’s uncommon success lies in being able to use new cutting edge technology, the ability to “think outside the box”, and their belief that there are no unwanted children, just unfound families. In addition to their dedication to finding adoptive homes for children, both have co-authored and published national articles that relate to adoption choices and adoption law. Jacqueline and Amy are both

certified as a Guardian ad Litem and volunteer in Greenville and Charleston, South Carolina. Amy was most recently honored with the prestigious S.C. Adoption Angel award. What started out as classmates has now grown into a dynamic duo looking for new ways and ideas to help the nation's children in foster care find love, stability, and permanence through adoption.

## **Dale Dove**

### ***Representative John Spratt***

Around the time that Dale Dove completed law school in the early 1980s, he and his wife Susan learned that they could not have biological children. It was through this difficulty that God would bless them through adoption. On a cold and windy Christmas Eve, the gift of a lifetime was placed in their arms — their precious daughter, Beth. And so began Dale's passionate pursuit of helping place children needing parents in the arms of parents needing children. Since that first experience with adoption, Dale has provided legal and practical advice and counsel in over a thousand adoptions. He promotes adoption by speaking at seminars for adoptive parents and foster parents, as well as at continuing education seminars for professionals who work with adoptions. He freely shares his counsel and legal forms relating to adoption with other attorneys who seek his assistance with adoptions they are handling. Dale served on a team to provide revisions to the South Carolina Adoption Act. He also helped found an adoption services agency in South Carolina: Christian Family Services, Inc. Dale is a member of the American Academy of Adoption Attorneys. The Academy is an invitational, non profit organization of approximately 330 members throughout the United States and Canada who are experts in the complexities of adoption law. Dale, Susan and Beth make their home in Rock Hill, South Carolina.

## **Curtis Loftis**

### ***Representative Joe Wilson***

Curtis Loftis is the founder and chairman of the Saluda Charitable Foundation, as well as its benefactor. Under his dedicated leadership, the foundation focuses primarily on housing and medical care for the elderly as well as the care and education of orphans. Much of Mr. Loftis's work has been focused on orphanages in Ukraine. The Saluda Charitable Foundation provided a new English language lab for the Koropets Orphanage, complete with a TV, VCR, cassette tape decks, and audio/visual language instructors. Mr. Loftis has even assisted in adoption oversight in the case of a South Carolina family who were attempting to adopt two sisters from a Ukrainian orphanage. Locally, in August 2008, Mr. Loftis' foundation sent 10 residents of the Glenn Spring Boys Academy of Pauline, South Carolina along with their chaperons, on a trip to British Columbia, Canada, where they enjoyed a fun-filled week of outside adventure. It is a pleasure to honor Mr. Loftis and his organization for the dedicated work they do for orphans both domestically and internationally.

## **South Dakota**

## **Hark Ng**

### ***Representative Stephanie Herseth Sandlin***

When Hark and Janet Ng decided to fulfill their dream of having a family, they chose adoption. Through their families in Malaysia, they learned of a little boy, Linus whose birth family was unable to care for him. The Ngs were eager to share their lives and love with Linus, as well as the opportunities afforded them as naturalized Americans. As they embarked on the process of adopting Linus, they were unaware that American law would force upheaval up on their family. Because they adopted directly from their birth family, the law required either Hark or Janet to fulfill a 24-month custodial relationship overseas before bringing their son home.



Though disappointed, the Ngs were committed to Linus. With the benefit of family support and frequent visits from Hark, Janet and Linus forget a strong and loving bond a half a world from home. Sadly, just four months from satisfying the requirement, Janet suddenly died of a brain aneurysm. Though mourning the heart-breaking loss of his wife, as well as assuming full responsibility for both their family business and new son, Hark secured humanitarian parole for Linus. This allowed him to bring Linus home, and fulfill the remainder of the custodial requirement in the South Dakota. Through the enduring love and devotion of his father, along with the support of a broad network of family friends, Linus has developed into a happy, well-adjusted, four-year-old boy. Now a U.S. citizen, Linus is settled into the new home Hark built for them ... each fulfilling a void in the others life. Despite the most difficult of circumstances, each day Hark fulfills the commitment he and Janet made to one another—the promise of a peaceful, safe, and loving family atmosphere for their son. In doing so, Hark Ng epitomizes the spirit of an Angel in Adoption.

### **Hillcrest Baptist Church**

*Senator Tim Johnson*

Hillcrest Church in Sioux Falls, South Dakota is truly enriching the lives of foster children and orphans. After years of giving money to adoption organizations, Hillcrest decided that its congregation would actually enter into the adoption process. Hillcrest recognized that one of the biggest barriers to adoption is often the cost. It set a goal of financing 10 adoptions. With Hillcrest's help, the Cummins family was able to adopt a little girl from China, the Christensen family is bringing a little boy into their family from Haiti, and the Stroh family is in the early stages of a local adoption. Hillcrest has been able to take away the financial burden of adoption for families that otherwise may not have been able to adopt. While this program has been a church-wide endeavor, Pastor Doug Bartel has led this mission. This program was

undertaken by the Church before it was known how it would be paid for – the pastors at Hillcrest were not sure at the time if there would be enough funds to pay their salaries after checks were given out to adoptive families. The Church also chose to forgo construction of a new building, instead selling the land the new building was to be constructed on and applying those monies toward their adoption commitment. The second chapter of James tells us that “faith without works is dead.” The work that Hillcrest has done on behalf of children shows that this Christian community's faith is vibrant and alive. In addition to this outstanding program to help families with the adoption process, Hillcrest encourages and helps its interested congregants become foster families, partakes in mentoring and is active in addressing hunger. The members of Hillcrest Church are truly Angels in Adoption. Their exceptional program has made a real and significant difference in the lives of children and the families that these children are now part of. I am pleased to have this opportunity to highlight Hillcrest Church's efforts and commend them for their ongoing dedication to the larger community of Sioux Falls.

### **Randy and Lori Stofferahn**

*Senator John Thune*

This year I am pleased to nominate the Stofferahn family of Sioux Falls for the Angels in Adoption Award. While raising their four children, Randy and Lori felt led to open their home to children in need of a family. This calling took them to Ethiopia last year where they adopted three siblings, Amara age 6, Quiana age 4, and Titus age 3. In order to connect with the culture of their new children and give back to the country which was giving them so much, the Stofferahns decided to travel to Ethiopia as a family and provide agricultural outreach to the region while finalizing the adoptions and gained custody of Amara, Quiana, and Titus. During this trip last July, something unexpected happened when the family visited an HIV positive orphanage. The Stofferahns

met and fell in love with Bethlehem, a two-year-old girl who was struggling with the effects of HIV. Randy and Lori immediately began the process of adopting Bethlehem. This culminated with a second trip to Ethiopia in March 2008 in which they were able to bring Bethlehem home to Sioux Falls to be with her new family. In just under a year they Stofferahn family doubled in size from four children to eight and with it so too has the joy in life and love of family. In speaking with anyone from their household, it is evident that their hearts are filled and they cannot imagine life any other way. It is for these reasons I feel Randy and Lori exemplify the nature of the Angels in Adoption Award and are deserving recipients.

## Texas

### Mike McMahon

#### *Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison*

Mike McMahon's commitment to children and adoptive parents is exemplified by his leadership as President of the Gladney Center for Adoption. Guided by the strong belief that every child deserves a home, Gladney has found homes for countless children in foster care. Under Mike's leadership, Gladney added International Adoption Programs, establishing a strong presence in Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, and Latin America. In addition, Gladney continues to improve the lives of children in these countries by financially supporting numerous humanitarian aid projects. Mike's leadership also extends to the greater Texas community, where he serves as a Board Member of the Texas Alliance of Child and Family Services and served as a founding Board Member of the Ronald McDonald House of Fort Worth. His tireless work to better the lives of children and adoptive parents make Mr. McMahon an outstanding choice for the Angels in Adoption award.

### Bruce and Catherine Thomas

#### *Representative Sam Johnson*

Since 1991, Bruce and Catherine Thomas have made a difference in the lives of Romanian children. The Thomas' can be described as invaluable assets serving as advocates for the care and welfare of the children of Romania. Bruce and Catherine have devoted years to ministering and caring for orphaned kids in Mures County, Romania. Their children's ministry vision has flourished into full time residential care for over 50 Romanian children and teenagers and an on-going ministry to another 500 children and teens who still live in state care in Romania. Today their team in Romania is made up of over 50 full time Romanian staff and western missionaries. The Thomas' appropriately named their foundation 'Livada' because it means orchard and serves as a symbol to them. In the words of Bruce and Catherine, "We don't merely want to do good social work. We want our daily labor with these great kids to bear fruit that will last." Today the Thomas' serve in the USA raising resources and awareness of the ministry opportunities in Romania. Bruce and Catherine Thomas' dedication to orphaned Romanian children make them an outstanding choice for the 2008 Angel in Adoption for the Third District of Texas. It is my honor to nominate them. They are to be commended for the great work they do.

## Utah

### Cynthia Bigelow

#### *Senator Gordon Smith*

Cynthia Bigelow is the executive director and cofounder of CHOSEN, a faith-based organization reaching out to teen adoptees and their parents with educational, emotional and spiritual support. She and her husband, Greg, are the parents of four children, two by adoption. Together they founded the Hearts of Compassion Adoption Fund in 1998 to provide educational and financial assistance to those

wishing to adopt but lacking all of the necessary financial resources. The organization's mission was later expanded to include post adoption support programs and in 2006, the name was changed to CHOSEN International.

As CHOSEN International's executive director, Cynthia Bigelow is committed to helping strengthen adoptive families by providing opportunities to educate, encourage and empower them. Current CHOSEN programs include teen adoptee camps, adoptive parenting conferences, and local support groups facilitated by adoption family therapists. Online counseling and teen mentoring programs are under development.

Cynthia Bigelow has been actively involved as a volunteer community adoption educator for the past fifteen years, and is a passionate advocate for foster and adopted children, and for those parenting them. CHOSEN International's teen camp motto is the Ella Fitzgerald quote: "It isn't where you come from; it's where you're going that counts", and it is Cynthia Bigelow's personal desire to have this empowering truth shared with adolescents who have been adopted as they make choices that can affect the direction of the rest of their lives.

### **James and Alicia Quigley**

*Representative Rob Bishop*

James and Alicia Quigley have been married for more than 25 years. They have five biological children ranging in age from 18 to 24. After watching a report on 20/20 regarding needy children, their hearts were warmed by the idea of adopting in Romania. Since that time, they have adopted 14 children with special needs or as they like to say, "children with special circumstances." Six were adopted internationally and eight were adopted domestically. They range in age from 3 to 20 and represent an enriching mix of ethnic backgrounds. In addition, Alicia has volunteered with Adopt America Network for eight years and has been fortunate to help hundreds of families and special children find permanent adoptive homes. The Quigleys have

been blessed to adopt three older children from the Republic of Georgia. The oldest, 20-year-old Tylan was adopted at age 8 after the Quigleys received a photo-listing of available children who were living in orphanages. Tylan's profile read "... the only time he cries is when shoes are passed out at the orphanage and he doesn't get a pair, because he has no feet." Tylan (now 20) has decided to collect shoes, blankets and clothing to send back to the people of Georgia and the children he left behind. He and the other Quigley children have discovered the blessings and joy that come through service to others less fortunate than themselves. Their children, who have been cold and have gone without, hope that no one anywhere will have to go without basics of life. Their family has been greatly blessed by participating in service projects. They are true Angels in Adoption.

## **Vermont**

### **Dawn Smith-Pliner**

*Senator Patrick Leahy*

*Senator Bernard Sanders*

*Representative Peter Welch*

Dawn Smith-Pliner's journey in adoption began 30 years ago when she and her husband Joel experienced rejection from numerous adoption agencies. Agencies gave them a variety of reasons: they had not been married long enough, were not making enough money, they did not share the same religion. Recognizing that she would need to take things into her own hands, Dawn vowed that no one was going to tell them they could not become parents. Dawn became actively involved in finding legal alternative to the agencies saying "no", and learned that there were birth families themselves who thought that they would make great adoptive parents. In 1979 Joel and Dawn became parents to their daughter Aura through an open adoption. A year later, they again became parents to Isaac via a closed adoption. After these two very different experiences, and they personal joy Dawn

felt, she had a desire to help others fulfill their dreams of having a family. In response to receiving phone calls from families wanting her to assist them in adopting, "Friends in Adoption", a non profit licensed adoption agency was established. Dawn has been a pioneer in promoting a child-centered, compassionate approach that emphasizes nurturing a trusting relationship between birth parents and prospective adoptive parents — with a common focus on the needs of the child and recognizing that adoption is a lifelong process based on honesty and mutual respect among all the participants in this triad. During the past quarter century, Dawn's tireless effort has created over a thousand families, and more than fifty in the last year.

## Virginia

### **Bethany Christian Services of Hampton Roads**

#### *Representative Thelma D. Drake*

Beginning in 1944 when two women cared for a homeless infant in their Grand Rapids, Michigan apartment, Bethany Christian Services has grown into a comprehensive agency providing services that include adoption, foster care and counseling. They are committed to finding the best families for children in need around the world, as the ministry has grown into an international team of nearly 900 dedicated professionals actively ministering to children and families, including the local branch in Hampton Roads. As a result of local need, Bethany of Hampton Roads began serving clients in December 1991 and numerous children have been served in the area since that time. In just the past year, 56 clients were served through the pregnancy counseling program with an additional 83 women, men and their families receiving help to meet their pregnancy-related needs. In addition, 29 children received adoption placement services, 11 children received foster care services, and 100 families received adoption preparation services. After bringing home her

newly adopted infant son, one mom said "We thank God, Bethany, and the love of Mathew's birthparents every day for this precious new creation we have been chosen to care for and love. Mathew completes our home." Because of millions of stories like this one and even more waiting to be told, Bethany Christian Services remains a passionate and vital community partner actively engaged on behalf of the children of our Hampton Roads Community. Through their mission and good works, Bethany Christian Services serves as a beacon of hope for those working through the adoption process, in need of a family, struggling with unplanned pregnancies or infertility, and a host of other deeply personal challenges. They have touched the lives of countless Hampton Roads children and families with a compassion and sincerity that is unmatched.

### **Bill Dingman**

#### *Representative Bob Goodlatte*

Bill Dingman has a history of service. He had a career in the postal service, serving the public. In retirement, he continues his service to others as a single father to three adoptive children and as an inspiration to Central Virginia families. Mr. Dingman was widowed with two grown children when he met his late wife Lynda Dingman. Lynda had been a foster parent for more than 30 years when the couple met. After the couple married they continued in providing a loving home for foster children, and in particular three foster children that they would make permanent members of their family: Melissa, Kaitlyn, and Marty. The couple began as foster parents for Kaityln and Marty as infants, and finalized their adoptions shortly after. Melissa, who has cerebral palsy, was older when she came to the family, and her adoption was not finalized until after Lynda passed away from breast cancer. Now, Bill is a single parent to his three children. He, like all parents, stays busy getting his children to all their various school and church activities and getting Melissa, who has had two major operations, to regular physical

therapy appointments. Bill has a strong faith and uses that to raise his family and confront the challenges that they face. He is modest about how inspirational his story is, but it is clear that Bill and his family are an inspiration. He and Lynda, through service in foster care and through adoption, show that ordinary people can do extraordinary things in the lives of others. It gives me great pleasure to honor the work of the Dingmans by nominating them as Angels in Adoption. I hope that this story will raise awareness about the need for foster and adoptive parents and inspire others to open their homes to children in need.

### **Colleen Marea Quinn**

#### ***Representative Eric Cantor***

Ms. Quinn is a strong advocate for adoption as an attorney in the Richmond, Virginia area. Since 1989, Ms. Quinn has represented hundreds of adopting parents, birth parents, intended parents, and adoptees. Ms. Quinn has been an active member of the American Academy of Adoption Attorneys (“AAAA”), serving on the Board of Trustees and speaking frequently at annual and mid-year meetings. She published the “Representing Birth Parents Handbook” for the AAAA in 2003. She also served as Chairperson of the AAAA 2007 Annual Convention in Williamsburg, Virginia and as Chairperson of the Birth Parents Representation Committee from 1999 to 2003. Ms. Quinn has been active in aiding the Virginia legislature to improve their adoption laws over the past few years. Her participation in this process has been vital to the improvement of Virginia adoption laws and she was recognized by LDS Family Services in 2006 for her extensive legislative work. She has been responsible for teaching and moderating numerous Continuing Legal Education programs in Virginia since 1987. Ms. Quinn also was recognized by Virginia Business magazine as one of Virginia’s “Legal Elite” in 2005, and *Richmond Magazine* named her a “Super Lawyer” in 2006, 2007, and 2008. She holds an “AV” rating by Martindale

Hubbell — the highest rating given in the law for ethics and expertise.

### **Lydia Maddox**

#### ***Senator John Warner***

Lydia is a single mom who adopted 2 siblings from a sibling group of 9 who were in foster care in our agency (King William Social Service). These 2 were originally placed with her mother, Mrs. Burnell Maddox in foster care, Lydia was very involved in their care while they were with her mother. Lydia decided to adopt these 2 siblings and has made it a clear mission on her part to keep the children in touch with their siblings before and since the adoption. Not only does she make sure that her children stay in touch, but she goes out of her way to visit with the other siblings wherever they have been placed to make sure they are all in touch with each other. She has been the “link” for all 9 of the siblings. She has attended trainings on foster and adoptive parenting and has even worked for a brief time with “One Church, One Child” in Richmond, VA, an organization with the mission of reducing the numbers of children (especially African American) in the Virginia foster care system by promoting and recruiting adoptive families from area churches. Lydia has served on the Social Services Board for King William County, VA and is a very active member of her church — Third Union Baptist. Ms. Maddox has a big heart and has “adopted” into her life these 9 children, even if she has only legally adopted the 2.

## Washington

### **Janis Avery**

#### ***Representative Jim McDermott***

Janis Avery is the Executive Director of Treehouse. Treehouse, a nonprofit agency based in Seattle, offers education and enrichment services for children and youth living in foster care, filling gaps that no other agency addresses. Since 1988, Treehouse has been making a

difference in the lives of foster kids by helping with school, fulfilling key material needs and paying for extras that are, for most kids, just a regular part of growing up. Academic success, combined with social and recreational enrichment, is the key to opportunity for children coping with the effects of abuse and neglect. Treehouse serves foster kids with six programs: "The Wearhouse" is a free store where kids shop for clothing they need in styles they want, along with school supplies, toys, books and other essentials; "Little Wishes" pays for activities and experiences that every child deserves – things as small as hair care and as big as horseback riding lessons; "Summer Camp" sends kids on adventures that create memories for a lifetime; Tutoring works with kids at their schools and after school, helping to bridge the educational achievement gap between kids in foster care and their classmates from more stable homes; "Educational Advocacy" works statewide to protect students' educational rights and remove barriers to school success. This is the only Treehouse program that operates beyond King County; and "Coaching-to-College" gives kids support as they explore career options and follow their dreams for the future. Janis has been director of Treehouse for ten years. As a social worker and adoptive parent of two children from foster care, she has dedicated her life to improving the circumstances of children in foster care. She serves on the Children Youth and Families Advisory Committee, advising Assistant Secretary for Children's Administration, Cheryl Stephani. She is a member of the Children's Alliance Public Policy Committee and the Child Welfare Advocacy Committee. She is well known as a leader in improving educational outcomes for children in foster care and co-chairs the statewide Educational Oversight Committee for Children and Youth in Foster Care. As Executive Director, she devotes her time to program management, community collaboration, fund raising and systems advocacy.

## West Virginia

### Jeff and Amy Dunford

#### Senator Jay Rockefeller

Jeff and Amy applied to be foster parents in September 2003 with a desire to make a positive difference in the life of at least one child. Jeff and Amy received their first foster placements in December of that same year. While their first placement was short lived, only a 5 day stay for the two siblings, it wasn't long before their whole world would change forever. In January 2004, the Dunfords took in a sibling group of three. The children were ages 5, 10, and 14. With these new additions to the Dunford home, things weren't always "sunshine and roses," yet the Dunfords endured and a few short months later they agreed to take in another child. This time, they were blessed with a one-month old girl. The Dunfords and "their kids" had some difficult times ahead. As with most foster care placements, visitation occurred on a weekly basis for all the children. Plus there is the countless medical appointments, MDT meetings, counseling sessions, parent/teacher conferences, and all the other little things that foster parents do. Amy was running ragged trying to keeping up with it all. The 14 year old eventually had to be placed in a separate foster home during to behaviors that were more than the Dunfords could handle. They tried for months to work through the problems that were occurring with her, but sadly, Amy and Jeff had to say their good-byes to her. However, her two brothers stayed with the Dunfords. During this time, the Dunfords were able to adopt the three foster placements that were in their home. The Dunfords officially became parents for the first time. They adopted Jeremy (age 11), Walter (age 6) and Holly (age 1) in the Spring of 2005. The Dunfords continued to take in more children. Some stayed for short-term placements while others became more long-term. One of the placements was another sibling group of three small boys; ages 2, 1, and 1 month old. These boys came with lots of health concerns. Amy



and Jeff spent many sleepless nights rocking congested babies, countless hours waiting in doctor offices, and many unexpected trips to the emergency room. They have fought infections and diseases that most of us had never even heard of. But yet, they endured. The Dunfords wiped away tears when the biological parents wouldn't show for visits, they picked up the pieces to broken toys and furniture when the boys would act-out after visiting with their parents, they provided love and comfort when the boys would cry for their mother. The Dunfords, after 3 long years of patiently waiting for DHHR staff to decide how many more chances they would give the parents, finally were able to adopt the boys that they had helped to raise. The Dunfords were asked if they wanted any more children. Amy immediately said she's have a dozen if the state would let her, but the six that she had would keep her busy enough. Today, the Dunford family consists of Jeff and Amy, the proud parents of Jeremy, Walter, Holly, Richard, Greg, and Christopher. The family keeps in touch with staff, providing updates on school performance, health, birthdays, and special milestones ... just like when they were fostering. The Dunfords will always be part of the CHS family and staff feels blessed to have been an integral part of helping bring this family together. Amy and Jeff continue to participate in foster care recruitment and training.

## Wisconsin

### **Sandy Destrampe**

*Representative Jim Sensenbrenner*

Sandy Destrampe is being honored for her dedication and commitment in bringing a message of hope to orphaned children both here and abroad. Sandy is founder and Executive Director of Children's Hope Network, Inc. of Grafton, a not for profit child placement agency in Wisconsin. The organization assists and supports parents in the process of domestic and international adoption. After

experiencing the international adoptions of her two daughters from Russia in 1997, she was determined to assist others who would also go through this often long and complex adoption process. Through her work with Children's Hope Network, she has undertaken countless humanitarian aid mission projects that have provided orphaned children around the world a message of hope through donations of educational and medical supplies, hand made quilts, and support of nutritional and educational infant resuscitation programs. As an adoption advocate and for her humanitarian projects, Sandy has been featured in several local newspapers including the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, *M-Magazine*, *Ozaukee Press*, and the *Ozaukee News Graphic*, for raising awareness in the community and finding support from the local area public and private schools, churches, a Boy Scout Troop, and hospitals for her organization's mission programs. Through all her efforts, Sandy works to bring the message of hope to children who have none while inspiring others through the gifts that come with giving. For these efforts, Sandy Destrampe is supported as a 2008 Angel in Adoption.

### **Lynn M. Lehr**

*Representative Paul Ryan*

Lynn M. Lehr is employed by the WI Department of Children & Families in the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children Program. Lynn has been involved in this program for the past ten years. This award is a reflection of Lynn's commitment and continued dedication to serving the children of Wisconsin. Lynn goes above and beyond, providing quality services and making a difference in the lives of children. As a result, the children are placed in a safe and stable environments and nurtured so that their lives are better and they have a chance to enjoy life, no matter where they live or whom they are placed with, saving one child a time.

## Mark and Jennifer Poehlmann

*Representative Steve Kagan*

Mark and Jennifer Poehlman were glowing with joy at the arrival of their new beautiful babies — Emanuel ‘Manny’ and Lilliana ‘Lil’. I couldn’t have chosen a better family to be named an Angel. Mark and Jennifer fought through an ever changing and emotional demanding international adoption from Guatemala. Mark and Jennifer worked with an adoption agency from Dallas, TX to obtain their referral. Mark and Jennifer literally snuck under every closing door. An unexpected road block came to the family when the agency told them they could not match anymore families. They were devastated. Soon, Mark and Jennifer were helped by a different agency and received a referral for Manny. They were overjoyed! Then, the Dallas agency called and informed them that another family backed out and they had a child for them. Mark and Jennifer went from being told they could not get a child to being blessed with two. The Poehlman’s made several trips to Guatemala to visit Manny and Lil. The wheels had begun to turn and now it was time to wait. Lil’s approval and move to the states went very smooth; however, Manny’s did not. Mark had to stay in Guatemala for two weeks trying to get an appointment for himself and Manny so they could go home to their family. He waited amongst mobs of people at the American Embassy. The experience was frustrating and the Poehlman’s relied on faith and perseverance to get through the ordeal. Eventually, Mark was able to get an appointment with the help of his Congressman and they boarded the plane to the United States. The Poehlman’s, Mark, Jennifer, Manny and Lil, are all together in Green Bay, Wisconsin where they begin a new adventure as a family. Mark and Jennifer’s strength earns them this recognition and their story is an inspiration to us all.

## Tom and Debra Schmelz

*Senator Amy Klobuchar*

In July of 2007, Tom and Deb Schmelz held their four month old daughter, Maria, for the first time. Although the temperate 75-degree days of Guatemala City dipped to cooler temperatures during the mornings and evenings, reminding Tom and Deb of a warm, Minnesota fall day, they still had a long journey before returning home. Tom and Deb had decided that if Maria wanted a sibling, the time to complete the process was while they were still in-country, before the future of pending Guatemalan adoptions became unknown. So at the conclusion of that initial visit, while Tom had to return to the United States, Deb was able to hold their second daughter, Eliana, when she was just six days old. Deb lived in Antigua for seven-and-a-half months as a foster parent to Maria and Eliana while waiting for their adoptions to be fully processed. She became fluent in Spanish, set up an apartment for the family, and met other foster parents along with members of the local community. Tom returned to work in Minneapolis, but flew in to visit whenever possible. Finally, in February of 2008, the adoptions were granted, and the entire Schmelz family – Tom, Deb, Maria and Eliana – was reunited back home in Hudson, Wisconsin, just across the Minnesota-Wisconsin border. Far from this being the end of their wonderful story, however, Tom and Deb have continued to show their commitment to international adoptions by becoming a source of information and support to other adoptive families. During a Vietnamese and Guatemalan Adoption Forum sponsored by Senator Klobuchar, Tom and Deb attended, after having only been home for two-and-a-half months, to offer whatever help and hope they could to waiting parents. For Tom and Deb, adoption has given them the “great gifts of two daughters” — a gift which they wish to share with other hopeful parents. We applaud their dedication to their own family, and are honored to recognize their efforts to afford others that same joy.

Proud to support Angels in Adoption™  
for their service to families  
across the United States.



# **SUPERVALU.**

**ACME**



**Albertsons**



**bigg's**



*Bristol Farms*  
An Extraordinary Food Store

**Cub**



*Hornbacher's*

**Jewel-Osco**

*Lucky*

**Save**  
*a lot*



*Shop'n Save*

 **SHOPPERS**

*To know even one life has breathed  
easier because you have lived...  
This is to have succeeded!*

— Ralph Waldo Emerson

**Special Thanks To  
Our Diamond Sponsor  
Freddie Mac Foundation**



**Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute**

311 Massachusetts Avenue, NE  
Washington, DC 20002  
Phone 202.544.8500  
Fax 202.544.8501  
[www.ccaainstitute.org](http://www.ccaainstitute.org)