

A TIME FOR CELEBRATING ADOPTION!

Finding permanent adoptive homes for children waiting in foster care is a year-round priority for anyone in the adoption field. But each November, national attention focuses on this mission. National Adoption Month is a country-wide celebration of adoption. It is also a special campaign to raise awareness of the more than 114,000 children still waiting in foster care for forever families and to encourage more Americans to choose adoption.

The month kicked off with a presidential proclamation and national publicity generated by a host of adoption-related organizations. This year's proclamation, in part, read:

The best of America is reflected in the many citizens who have adopted children as their own. Mothers and fathers are the most important influences in a child's life, and children with caring, involved parents can better realize the full promise of America. ...

During National Adoption Month, we pay tribute to the parents who have opened their hearts and homes and helped provide love and stability for young people. By caring for the

youngest members of our society, these families are helping our children grow into successful adults and building the future of our country.

Many of us had opportunities to participate in local Adoption Month activities. PATH and REACH helped stage adoption fairs in Wisconsin and North Dakota. Many Minnesota families and staff participated in the Circus of the Heart celebration. Filled with games, prizes and a host of family attractions, Circus of the Heart attracted over 500 people of all ages from across the state. Members of the Binsfeld family (Neil and Jeanne are PATH foster and adoptive parents) were featured speakers at the event, telling about their recent trip to the west coast to promote adoption.

National Adoption Day November 18

For the last six years, National Adoption Day has made the dreams of thousands of children come true by working with courts, judges, attorneys and advocates to finalize adoptions and find permanent, loving homes for children in foster care.

National Adoption Day is celebrated every year on the Saturday before Thanksgiving. In 2005, judges, attorneys, adoption professionals, child welfare agencies and advocates in 45 states and the District of Columbia helped to finalize the adoptions of more than 3,100 children from foster care. Last year over 200 events were held throughout the country on Adoption Day to finalize adoptions and to celebrate all families who adopt.

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**national
adoption day**

www.nationaladoptionday.org

REACH for Adoption



Tim Plant PATH CEO

REACH is a five-year federal adoption grant administered by PATH. Year 4 of the grant started October 1, 2006.

PATH's goal for REACH (Rural Expansion of Adoptive Communities and Homes) is to increase the number of successful special needs adoptions of children and youth in our rural areas. REACH operates in partnership with the federal Children's Bureau and our state adoption agencies in Minnesota, North Dakota and Wisconsin to further this mutual goal. Through active, collaborative efforts, we

work to recruit and prepare new adoptive families, as well as provide both classroom and web-based education and support for families during and post adoption.

We have now completed three years of our five-year REACH demonstration project. We will continue to 'reach out' to new families who may never have seriously considered adoption as well as support experienced families with new and emerging needs. Throughout the project, we value and require the partnership of like-

minded community agencies that provide support and services in the local community.

One of our continuing priorities is to fully engage ALL of PATH's foster and adoptive parents, staff and volunteers in this important work. Over the past few years PATH's role in finalizing and supporting adoptions, both of our own foster youth and all special needs youth, has grown immeasurably. Only through our combined efforts and total commitment can we enjoy the greatest success in helping all children and youth become permanent members of loving and healthy families.

I know personally there has been nothing more rewarding (and, at times, challenging) in my own family life than our role as adoptive and kinship parents.

Thanks for all you do to help give children 'roots to grow in a forever family.'

Tim Plant,
PATH CEO



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Have YOU ever?

By Esther Hoffman



The Hoffmans are an adoptive family in Rhinelander, Wisconsin. Esther is also a social worker in the Division of Children's and Family Services, State of Wisconsin and a member of the REACH Wisconsin State Steering Committee.

*Have you ever opened wide your door
And met terror eye to eye?
Have you held his trembling body?
Have you rocked him while he cries?*

*Have you clutched a single garbage bag
That held everything he owns?
Have you seen his trepidation
As he moved into your home?*

*Have you ever been a witness
To the toll maltreatment takes?
Not through the Sunday papers
But touched it face to face?*

*Have you guarded the dark secrets
That little ones dare to share?
Has your heart been crushed and broken
By the demons living there?*

*Have you tried to answer questions,
For which no answers lie?
Have you turned your head and looked away,
So he doesn't see you cry?*

*Have you fumbled with the band-aid
To heal a heart left bare?
Have you pulled from depths with measure,
Some bits of you to share?*

*Have you heard him tell of siblings
Whose names he doesn't know?
Have you listened when he tells you,
"They get names when they grow"?*

*Don't tell me that you understand
Until you do your part,
And carry living cast-a-ways
Forever in your heart.*

*You ask for a decision
Does he go or does he stay?
He'll stay in my heart 'til heaven
He moves to some bright day.*

Adoption in Real Life

Kelly and Mike Ratai's adoption story begins a little over a year ago. On the occasion of their first visit with two young boys in need of an adoptive family, Kelly shared these thoughts with their PATH Social Worker, Tenley Ireland Witte in Duluth.

FALL, 2005

Hi Tenley,

I wanted to give you an update on how our visit went with our new little boys this weekend. They are simply AMAZING! We just adored them. We didn't expect them to be so comfortable with us, but as soon as we walked through the door, J came running over to talk and tell us things about himself. In no time at all we learned he loves play dough and bananas and is a wonderful big brother to H. He is so protective and always looking out for his little brother. They were so relaxed with us that their social worker told us to just go ahead and take them where ever we wished for the evening. When we picked them up Saturday morning J came running to the door

and yelled, "You're back!!!" He grabbed his jacket, and then H quickly grabbed his, afraid he was being left behind.

We were very surprised that this boy who had been referred to as "expressionless and didn't smile" was laughing and playing like any other toddler ... Both boys seemed to have the times of their lives. We took them swimming, out to eat, to several play lands and shopping. They were just thrilled with all the new sights and sounds of everywhere they went.

We were very impressed by the staff at Travelodge. They knew we were coming there for the purpose of adoption and had little matching teddy bears waiting for the boys when they got there.

Tenley, we can't thank you enough. You told us many times that you would be looking for that "right match".... and this is definitely it. We already can't imagine life without these two little boys.

When we brought them back their foster mom was also amazed at how they had taken to us so quickly and H cried when she took him from Mike. Needless to say we

had to drive down the road a mile, pull over and shed a few tears ourselves. Tears of joy, tears of sadness to leave them behind and tears of disbelief that you found our children out there in the world. You really know your stuff and we will forever be thankful for all you have done for our family. I will send you our first family picture we had taken this weekend!

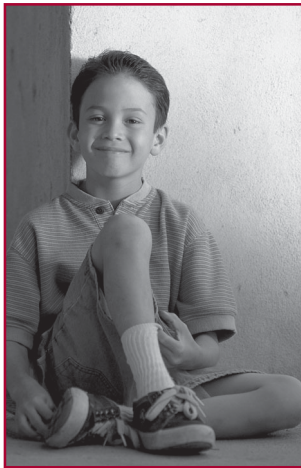
FALL, 2006

On the night of the anniversary of the day we brought the boys home, Mike and I sat in their room rocking them and reading the book, "Happy Adoption Day." When the story got to the part where the parents are painting a baby's room, I said to J, "You know, we painted this room while we were waiting for you. We were so happy to find you and so glad you are home." J looked up at me and said with a soft little voice, "I use to cry in my bed because I wanted a Momma and a Daddy ... I was waiting for you too."

The past year has had some challenges, but the Ratai family is rejoicing every day with their new sons. Their adoption became final on November 17.

Mike and Kelly Ratai meet J. and H.





Ray and Phyl Steiner of Mott, North Dakota have five biological children and had been foster parents for 15 years when they decided they wanted to try something more permanent. Then they attended a fall foster parent conference and sat in on a session by AASK. (REACH's partner, along with Catholic Charities in North Dakota adoption.) They asked for, and got, adoption information.

Every month they received pamphlets in the mail that described waiting children. One month, eight-year-old Mark caught their attention, and soon he became a permanent member of the family. Things moved slowly at first. Mark needed plenty of time to be comfortable around adults. It has been four years now and the Steiner family has never been happier.

Life isn't always easy for RoseAnne Kincheloe but it's always filled with love.

"God has never let us down, even when he's given me choices I didn't ask for," she said.

One of those choices was to become an adoptive parent three times, and she says she's in the process of adopting two more.

"We will, when this is all done and over with have seven children," Kincheloe said.

Her journey as an adoptive parent began in 2000 when she and her husband John made the decision to become foster parents. They already had two children, but felt called to do more.

"We have a special needs child of our own at home and I was at home taking care of him and thought there was more that I could do, I could use my time better and I could give back more if I did foster care," she said.

So the Kincheloes opened the door to their home, and their hearts to some kids who needed it most.

"A lot of these kids go home and it can be heartfelt when they go home, a lot of sad times, but a lot of happy times," she said.

She hopes to share

those times with families thinking about adoption at the fair.

"What there is a big need for in the Eau Claire area are foster parents," social worker Erin Wall said.

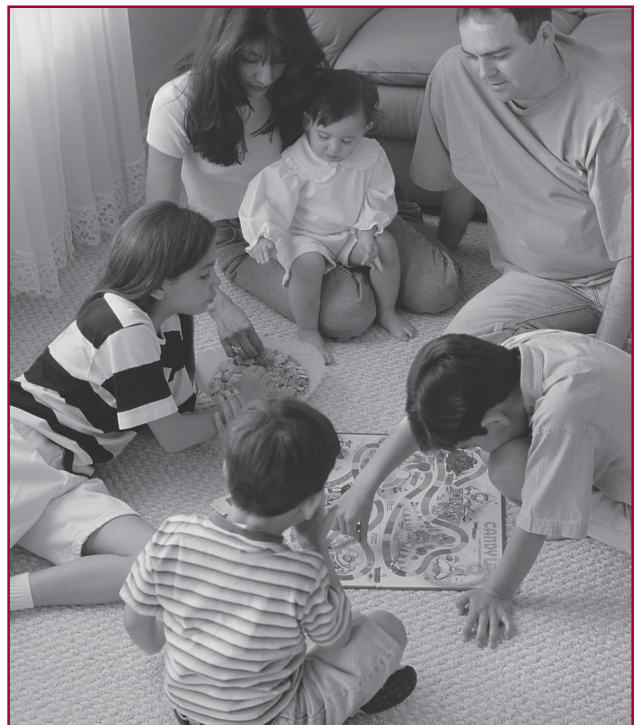
Wall says it's not always easy to foster children but says when you know you've made a difference in the life of a child it's worth it.

"There are difficulties, absolutely, but there are so many rewards too," Wall said.

"We never knew how much we needed these children in our lives. We thought having two children was perfect for us and we've learned differently," Kincheloe said.

"... Learned to love unselfishly and be loved right back in return."

On Saturday, November 4, REACH, PATH, the Foster Care and Adoption Resource Center (housed at PATH Eau Claire) and other local adoption groups presented an Adoption Fair in Eau Claire. WEAU Channel 13 reporter Lindsay Veremis interviewed PATH adoptive parent RoseAnne Kincheloe, and here is her story.



Family Foundations: A Weekend Retreat for Adoptive Families

Adoptive families looking for a fun yet meaningful way to connect with other adoptive families found their opportunity at Eagle Beach Resort in Park Rapids, MN in September.

A scavenger hunt, sand sculpture contest, canoe race, guitar-accompanied sing-a-long and jewelry-making session were just a few of the activities ten families (43 enthusiastic participants) enjoyed at the first ever Family Foundations Retreat.

REACH, MN ASAP (Minnesota Adoption Support and Preservation) and the Travis and Sarah Guida family of Bemidji collaborated to bring this unique opportunity to life. The retreat began as a vision of the Guidas. Adoptive parents with family connections to Eagle Beach, they wanted to bring a retreat experience to adoptive families that would combine family fun and relaxation with parent education and adoption-enhancing

youth activities. The Guidas are special education teachers with many years of experience handling groups of diverse children, and were the overall activity directors for the camp. Therapist Deena McMahon and adoptive parents/professionals Peg Studaker, Wendylee Raun and Ginger Brusewitz provided parent training sessions while youth were involved in a range of adoption-enhancing activities.

Happy faces told the story and the written evaluations proved it: The weekend was a resounding success. Many children were already planning what they wanted to do next year at camp! The Guidas, REACH and MN ASAP all hope to bring the camp back in 2007.



DVD Home Educational Opportunity

Many parents and social workers use the Rick Delaney DVDs purchased and made available through REACH in 2005. They offer an easy, free chance to get good education. Dr. Delaney is a Clinical Psychologist who helps parents identify and understand a range of issues that often affect the children in our care. His creative, solid, practical solutions are offered on 12 different topics:

Anger Outbursts	Fire Setting
Eating Disorders	Self Harm
Running Away	Sleep Problems
Sexualized Behavior	Lying
Wetting and Soiling	Stealing
ADD, ADHD and ODD (new)	
Reactive Attachment Disorder (new)	

Adoptive and foster parents can get education credit for viewing the discs and completing the quiz accompanying each title.

To check out these DVDs, contact one of the offices in your state:

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What's New with REACH?

Staff Updates

Joanne Fielding (Bemidji, Minnesota), **Kelly Mitchell** (Turtle Mountain, Belcourt, North Dakota) and **Erin Wall** (Eau Claire, WI) joined the REACH staff this year. All are involved in adoption outreach in their respective states, greatly increasing the opportunity for local services in rural areas. In addition, Joanne is an ICWA adoption social worker. **Sheila Brommel** accepted an Assistant Professorship at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul upon completing her Doctorate in Philosophy this summer. **Jan Hoppe** (formerly REACH Education and Support Director) was named REACH Director in August, with Sheila continuing as a consultant to the project. Human Resources Director **Gerry Kegler** is the senior supervisor for REACH.

Of Note in 2006

- Since spring, the REACH display booth was used at 18 conferences, fairs, community events and pow wows with recruitment materials available to over 12,100 attendees. The REACH website received 16,930 hits. Twenty-four information presentations about REACH were given, with 447 participants.
 - Billboards were used as a recruitment tool for the first time. With the message "Give a Child in Foster Care a Forever Family: Consider Adoption," the colorful billboards appeared in Williston, Dickenson, Devils Lake, Brainerd, Duluth, Eau Claire, Neillsville and Hillsboro.
- REACH Project Coordinator **Tim Lorentz** launched the Adoption Connection, a monthly e-mail newsletter for adoption ambassadors. Tim welcomes new ambassadors ... people who have adopted and are willing to help spread the news and share their stories with other prospective families. Contact Tim at 866-79 REACH or tlorentz@pathinc.org
- Former PATH Education Manager **Mary McGowan**, who is both a foster and adoptive parent, is hosting monthly internet chats series called "The Ins and Outs of Adoption." They're the third Thursday evening of every month from 7:00 to 9:00 pm. For details on how to get involved, contact **JoAnn Crane** at jcrane@pathinc.org.

PATH Prints

A communication link for our PATH family

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Photographs in this PATH Prints represent the nature of the article. Unless identified by name, the photos are not of the actual people featured in the articles.

Give a child in foster care a forever family.

Consider Adoption.

1.866.79.REACH
www.adoptinfo.org

REACH
 Rural Expansion of Adoptive Communities and Homes

PATH
 Treatment Foster Care and Family Based Services

Give a Child in Foster Care a Forever Family *Consider adoption!*

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