

Adoption Excellence Awards for the Year 2005

Category: Decrease in the Length of Time That Children in Foster Care Wait For Adoption

Awardee: **Massachusetts Department of Social Services
Holyoke Office Adoption Unit
(Category #1 Decrease in the Length of Time That Children in Foster
Care Wait for Adoption)**

Address: Department of Social Services - Holyoke Area Office Adoption Unit
261 High Street
Holyoke, Massachusetts 01040
413-493-2600
413-533-9355 FAX
lynn.trybus@state.ma.us

The Massachusetts Department of Social Services Holyoke (MDSS) Office Adoption Unit has demonstrated incredible commitment, leadership and creativity in finding permanent and loving families in a timely manner and in identifying and implementing new methods of achieving permanency for children in Massachusetts. Out of 29 adoption units in Massachusetts, the Holyoke Adoption Unit had the highest number of legalizations. The Unit has demonstrated its commitment to timely permanence by matching 146 children with pre-adoptive families in the past twelve months, also the highest number in the state. The Holyoke Adoption Unit works closely with the Massachusetts Adoption Resource Exchange (MARE), where 93% of its children are listed in the MARE Photolisting. The Unit makes good efforts to try new and different recruitment methods, including having older youth create PowerPoint presentations about themselves. Since July 1, 2004, the Unit reported placements for 17 children who were registered with MARE, which accounts for 11% of all the placements across the state. The contributions and outstanding practices of the MDSS Holyoke Adoption Unit and its' staff continue to shorten the amount of time that children in Massachusetts spend without permanent homes.

Awardee: **Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare, Statewide Adoption and
Permanency Network (SWAN) Legal Services Initiative (LSI)
(Category #1 Decrease in the Length of Time That Children in Foster
Care Wait for Adoption)**

Address: P.O. Box 2675
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17105
717-772-7046
717-214-3784 FAX
lodeck@state.pa.us

In 1996, Pennsylvania children in foster care who had a goal of adoption spent approximately 40 months in care until their adoption was finalized. In an attempt to seek permanency in a timelier manner, the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare's Statewide Adoption and Permanency Network (SWAN) began the Legal Services Initiative (LSI) as a pilot project. The LSI project is currently funded in 14 counties across the state through SWAN. The primary goal of the LSI is to decrease the length of stay for children in foster care with a goal of adoption by utilizing paralegals hired through SWAN. When a county agency joins the LSI project, a paralegal is hired to collaborate with and act as a liaison between attorneys, case workers, and the courts to bridge the gap between child welfare and legal practice. In counties that have instituted the LSI, the average length of stay for children in foster care with a goal of adoption decreased by more than 11 months. This decrease has been demonstrated in two different areas of the court process:

- The average number of days from goal change to termination of parental rights (a decrease of an average 157 days);
- The average number of days from termination of parental rights to adoption finalization (a decrease of an average of 182 days).

In FY 2004, LSI staff worked on behalf of more than 1,400 children in matters related to adoption, adjudication and review hearings, and permanency plan reviews. The LSI has implemented other creative solutions, such as a Diligent Search Package to help locate missing fathers or other relatives who may be an adoptive or other permanent resource to children in foster care. It also created a "Warm Line" to answer legal questions posed by child welfare workers, the courts, and the general public. All of these efforts have resulted in significant cost savings in court and legal fees to the agencies.

Category: Support for Adoptive Families

Awardee: **Adams County Social Services Department
(Category #5 Support for Adoptive Families)**

Address: 7401 North Broadway
 Denver, Colorado 80221
 303-412-5091
 303-412-5325 FAX
 monica.sorenson@dss.co.adams.co.us

The Adams County Social Services Department, in Colorado, is committed to finding a home for all of its children in foster care. The Department has supported adoptive families in a number of ways, including:

- Formal pre-placement and adoptive classes to help prepare families for child placement in their homes.
- Monthly newsletter with trainings, helpful tips and ideas, and articles on the latest issues involving foster and adoptive children and families.

- Supply funding and support of foster and adoptive support groups, established and run by parents.
- Offer continuous, free, and extensive training to adoptive families.

In addition to providing a range of support services to adoptive families, the Adams County Social Services Department implemented a recruitment/public relations campaign that targets community agencies, churches, school districts, and the yellow pages. The Department makes good use of its successful adoption website, which receives an average on 385 hits a month. It also incorporated use of Chafee youth alongside trained staff in establishing the "Personal Touch" call center, where county employees and youth return phone calls to families interested in becoming foster or adoptive parents. Adams County ranks number one in Colorado with 300 finalized adoptions in the last two years, with no disruptions in the past year.

Awardee: **Kinship Center**
(Category #5 Support for Adoptive Families)

Address: 124 River Road
Salinas, California 93908
831-455-9965
831-455-4777 FAX
cbiddle@kinshipcenter.org

Kinship Center's dedication to developing and supporting permanent families for children in foster care has resulted in more than 1200 children served in life changing ways in 2005. The agency provides program services in child placement, adoptive family wraparound programs, adoption specialty children's mental health clinics, relative caregiver support programs, and operates an Education Institute for parent and professional education. Thirty adoptive families from Kinship Center benefit from wraparound services each year. These services assist families to bring home their adopted children from residential care, or keep a child from entering residential care. The agency offers other creative post adoption services, including access to adoption-specialty child mental health clinics, where more than 200 children and their families are served each week. A relative caregiver support program is also available through Kinship Center. In the past two years, this program assisted grandparents to achieve more than 120 relative adoptions and legal guardianships. Kinship Center's child placement programs, which specialize in sibling, older child, and adolescent placements, has a disruption rate of less than 5% because of the ongoing post placement and post adoption support and education for families.

Awardee: **The Center for Adoption Support and Education, Inc. (C.A.S.E.)**
(Category #5 Support for Adoptive Families)

Address: 11120 New Hampshire Avenue, Suite 205
Silver Spring, Maryland 20904
301-593-9200
301-593-9203 FAX
caseadopt@adoptionssupport.org

Founded in 1998, The Center for Adoption Support and Education, Inc. (C.A.S.E.) is a nonprofit organization specializing in post-adoption support services including counseling, consultation, training, education, publications, and advocacy. C.A.S.E. demonstrates clear and measurable success through its collaborations, partnerships, innovations and replicable programs and curriculum. Through the strength of its collaborations, C.A.S.E. has created novel programs designed to meet the challenging, complex needs of children in foster care, adopted children, and the professionals involved in their lives. With an Adoption Opportunities Grant, C.A.S.E. developed "Lifelines for Kids" (LFK), a unique model and clinical curriculum for children in foster care designed to promote strong and healthy attachments by developing coping methodologies to deal with past losses. One hundred and twenty-five children have participated in this program. Other successful collaborations that have contributed to the success of C.A.S.E. include The Permanency Planning Project with Montgomery County Child Welfare Services, the Montgomery County Juvenile Court, and the Virginia Department of Social Services' Rural Adoptive Family Initiative, which provides specialized mental health services targeted at rural families who have adopted a child from the public child welfare system and who are at high risk of dissolution. In another unique collaboration, the Crossroads Project, C.A.S.E. developed and implemented an early intervention program with Gallaudet University to support deaf adoptees and their families.

Category: Individual and/or Family Contributions

Awardee: **Denise Hoskins**
(Category #6 Individual and/or Family Contributions)

Address: Indiana Foster Care and Adoption Association
509 East National Avenue, Suite A
Indianapolis, Indiana 46227
317-524-2600
317-524-2609 FAX
dshoskins@ifcaa.org

The tireless efforts of Denise Hoskins have made the lives of children in foster care much better in Indiana. Ms. Hoskins is an Adoption Program Manager at the Indiana Foster Care and Adoption Association. During the past two years with the Indiana Special Needs Adoption Program, she has overcome child welfare systemic challenges by creating and maintaining relationships with and between public and private agencies to promote child/parent information sharing on a state-wide basis. She is relentless in her efforts to promote adoption and engage youth in the process. Ms. Hoskins has taken photographs of almost 90 children around the state and helps to design and maintain the Indiana Adoption web-site where the children's photos are posted. Approximately 40% of the children she has photographed have been placed in adoptive homes. Ms. Hoskins also helps with the creation of a monthly adoption book which features waiting children and other general information on adoption. Ms. Hoskins has shown innovation in the types of promotional items she uses to promote adoption, such as soda can openers, computer paper holders, and magnifying bookmarks. Ms. Hoskins has been a role model for a new way of thinking in her field, namely by involving waiting children in the recruitment

process and giving them a sense of empowerment and involvement in the process of recruiting adoptive families.

Awardee: **Fredi Juni**
(Category #6 Individual and/or Family Contributions)

Address: Alameda County Social Services Agency
Department of Children and Family Services
401 Broadway
Oakland, California 94607
510-268-2433
510-268-2824 FAX
fjuni@acgov.org

As an Adoptions Management Analyst, Fredi Juni has made major contributions to achieving permanence through adoption and other lifelong commitments for children in foster care in Alameda County and across the State of California through her active involvement in the California Permanency for Youth Project. Ms. Juni co-created "A Guide to Permanency Options for Youth" (2004), which is a compilation of the various types of permanence for foster youth and emphasizes the importance of involving them in planning for their own futures. Through collaboration with a child welfare training academy and advocacy group, Ms. Juni took the lead role in developing a youth-driven training curriculum on permanence for foster families, child welfare staff, and others who work with foster youth. She has also created five annual National Adoption Day events for Alameda County and has taken the lead in organizing a Bay Area Heart Gallery, which is scheduled to open in spring 2006. Ms. Juni has been instrumental in developing a partnership with a local private adoption agency that has successfully obtained funding to work on adoption and permanence for older youth in foster care. Ms. Juni's dedication is also evident through her efforts in Alameda County with the "Step Up and Out" program. This program is designed to move youth out of congregate care settings and in to less restrictive care settings, largely with relatives.

Awardee: **Governor M. Jodi Rell**
(Category #6 Individual and/or Family Contributions)

Address: State Capitol - Office of the Governor
210 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, Connecticut 06106
860-566-4840

As Chief Executive Officer of the State of Connecticut, Governor M. Jodi Rell works tirelessly to eliminate disincentives to adoption and raise awareness of the need for more adoptive families. Governor Rell proposed a budget that included more than \$58 million in new initiatives to strengthen Connecticut's Department of Children and Families' (DCF) ability to increase permanency outcomes. Under her leadership, Governor Rell established a new, centralized point of contact, KID-HERO Hotline, for those seeking information on foster care and adoption. The

hotline creates time saving economies by assisting social workers because prospective parents speak with experienced foster/adoptive parents who prescreen families. The Governor recognized that new, long-term post-adoption services remove barriers to adoption of children with mental/behavioral needs. In response, she created partnerships to address assessments and referrals for clinical services that require immediate response. Governor Rell also directed DCF to work with two local universities to develop a post-masters' Adoption Competencies Certificate Program, the 4th of its type in the United States. The Governor also eliminated the decrease in subsidies to families adopting children with special needs and she eliminated financial changes when an adoption is finalized. Further, assistance is now provided to youth who age out of foster care and attend college and to youth who are adopted from foster care and attend college. Governor Rell has also made personal commitments to adoption, including her regular promotion of foster and adoptive care initiative by recording radio public service announcements and by serving as keynote for the 2004 Connecticut Heart Gallery.

Awardee: **Randy and Elizabeth Travis**
(Category #6 Individual and/or Family Contributions)

Address: Elizabeth Travis Management
1610 Sixteenth Avenue South
Nashville, Tennessee 37212
615-383-7258
615-269-7828 FAX
Charlene@randytravis.com

Randy and Elizabeth Travis exemplify the type of collaboration and community involvement that helps make the lives of waiting adoptive children brighter and they help raise awareness about the need for "forever families." While Randy Travis is well-known as an award-winning country-western singer and his wife, Elizabeth, is a businesswoman and manager, it is the Travis's dedication to the children of New Mexico and the nation that makes them outstanding. In 2001, the Travis's were asked to appear at the New Mexico Heart Gallery, an event exhibiting portraits of children in foster care to raise awareness about waiting children. Mr. and Mrs. Travis graciously accepted the invitation and participated in the event, which had record high attendance. Seven older children were placed in adoptive families as a result of the Heart Gallery the Travis's attended. They also participated in the 2004 New Mexico Heart Gallery, where Mr. Travis spent hours signing autographs and posing for pictures with the children. During the holidays, Mr. and Mrs. Travis shop for gifts on the wish lists of many children in foster care, buying truckloads of toys and clothes.

Awardee: **Deborah Goodman**
(Category #6 Individual and/or Family Contributions)

Address: Oklahoma Department of Human Services
2400 N. Lincoln Boulevard
P.O. Box 25352
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73125

405-521-2475
918-588-1757 FAX
Deborah.goodman@okdhs.org

Deborah Goodman, Program Manager for the Oklahoma Department of Human Services - Swift Adoption Program, has displayed exemplary leadership and dedication to serving families and children in the State of Oklahoma. She has worked for the Department for 29 years. In 1998, Ms. Goodman was instrumental in developing the Swift Adoption Services Program. This program was developed to address the barriers to adoption and permanency for more than 1200 children in the child welfare system waiting for an adoptive family in Oklahoma. It focused on providing quality services that would result in positive adoption outcomes for children and families. The results of Swift Adoption Services have been remarkable since Ms. Goodman has been in the forefront of the effort. From 1999-2004, over 8,268 Oklahoma children in the foster care system have been authorized for placement with adoptive families. In 2004, Ms. Goodman's visionary leadership resulted in the State receiving one of the largest federal bonus amounts ever for federal fiscal year 2003 increases in finalized adoptions. She also serves on local and national committees to advocate for permanency and to provide and ensure policy and procedures are in place to address the needs for children in foster care. Ms. Goodman is an adoptive and kinship parent and has made a personal and professional commitment to the children in Oklahoma waiting for a permanent home.

Awardee: **Diane Granito**
 (Category #6 Individual and/or Family Contributions)

Address: New Mexico Children, Youth and Families Department
 Protective Services Division
 PO Drawer 5160
 Santa Fe, New Mexico 87502
 505-476-1045
 dianeg.granito@state.nm.us

Diane Granito opened the first annual "Heart Gallery" exhibit on March 9, 2001 at the prestigious Gerald Peters Gallery in Santa Fe, New Mexico. An unprecedented crowd of 1,200 people gathered at her first opening to see professional portraits of New Mexico children in foster care who needed permanent homes. The exhibit gave the New Mexico Children, Youth and Families (CYFD) and the children a chance to reach out to prospective adoptive parents and afforded the community an opportunity to learn about foster care and adoption. Numerous reporters covered this first Heart Gallery event and country music star Randy Travis performed. Under the leadership of Ms. Granito, Special Events Coordinator for the New Mexico CYFD, the New Mexico exhibit was almost entirely underwritten by local and national businesses. Among other things, the photographers' and celebrities' time, gallery space, food and beverages were all donated by businesses who wanted to make a difference in children's lives. Since its premier in 2001, the Heart Gallery exhibit has proven to be an effective recruitment effort on many levels. It has raised general adoption awareness and enjoyed overwhelmingly positive press coverage. The Heart Gallery idea has spread across the country and Ms. Granito is available to provide support,

ideas and energy to each exhibit effort. To date, more than 60 Heart Galleries have been held or are being planned in over 34 states. In celebration of her great idea, a National Heart Gallery is planned to kick off National Adoption Month in November 2005 in Washington, DC.

Awardee: **Judge David Gooding**
 (Category #6 Individual and/or Family Contributions)

Address: Duval County Courthouse
 330 East Bay Street
 Jacksonville, Florida 32202
 904-630-2688
 dgooding@coj.net

Judge David Gooding is a presiding judge in the Family Law Division in Duval County, Jacksonville, Florida. Since taking office, Judge Gooding has embraced the need for permanency for children and he has started to look at the process and ways to improve outcomes for children. The Judge has instituted unique approaches in his courtroom to achieve permanency for children. For example, Judge Gooding created "Family Fridays", where he sets aside time to complete adoption finalizations each Friday so there are no delays in obtaining permanency due to scheduling court time. Each Thursday he sets aside time for "open mike", which is court time for children awaiting adoption to speak to the Judge directly without case managers, attorneys, etc. The adoption process has also been streamlined by Judge Gooding through his weekly status hearings for children whose parental rights have been terminated. Since Judge Gooding has been in dependency court, adoption numbers in Duval County have risen tremendously. His efforts contributed to the overall adoption of 258 "special needs" children in Duval County during fiscal year 2004-2005. When he is not in the courtroom, the Judge volunteers his time in the community by working with numerous agencies in Duval County that provide services to children and families. Judge Gooding also attends classes with prospective foster and adoptive parents so he can obtain a better understanding of the preparation foster and adoptive parents receive. Judge Gooding is a man of action and continuously creates new processes and procedures to help children obtain permanency.

Awardee: **Carla Williams**
 (Category #6 Individual and/or Family Contributions)

Address: Catholic Charities, Diocese of Joliet
 c/o 203 N. Ottawa Street
 Joliet, Illinois 60432
 815-723-3053, ext. 29
 815-723-2853 FAX
 cwilliams@cc-doj.org

Carla Williams and her husband are the proud parents of eight adopted children, seven of whom came from the Illinois foster care system. All but one of their children is part of a sibling group and most were ages 10 and older when adopted by the Williams family. Mrs. Williams feels that

she and her husband made a commitment to their children and believes that includes the good, bad, easy and difficult times they share. In addition to being a mother, Mrs. Williams is the Foster Parent Support Specialist at Catholic Charities, Diocese of Joliet, where she recruits and trains foster parents. She is dedicated to her role and makes herself available to foster parents and spends as much time with them as needed. Mrs. Williams also facilitates a monthly agency support group for 300 foster and adoptive families and sends out a monthly newsletter to them to provide support and information.

Category: Philanthropy

Awardee: **Deborah Rahmer**
 (Category #7 Philanthropy)

Address: 697 Old Skippack Road
 Box 193
 Salfordville, Pennsylvania 18958
 610-287-9682

Deborah Rahmer was instrumental in the success of the Second Annual Statewide Adoption and Permanency Network (SWAN) Night at Williams Grove Speedway, held in July 2005 in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania. Ms. Rahmer's relentless efforts helped raise awareness about the event and impacted the lives of more than 30 waiting children and 75 approved adoptive families who were able to attend the event. The event was free for families because of the financial donations Ms. Rahmer single-handedly collected from more than 30 sponsors. She also secured community support and volunteers for the event and took advantage of every opportunity to educate sponsors, individuals, and businesses about adoption and the need for permanent families for children in foster care. Prior to the race, Ms. Rahmer arranged for an Adoption Fair to be held, where public and private agencies displayed information on their waiting children and families. The Fair was open to all 10,000 attendees of the race. Other results of Ms. Rahmer's fundraising efforts were a \$100 gift for each of the waiting children who attended the event and an autograph session for the children with the top sprint car drivers in the region. Because of her philanthropic and charitable support of this event, adoption awareness was heightened on an unprecedented scale. Ms. Rahmer's creativity and passion for the children brought this event to a higher level and gave the children a voice in their own recruitment.

Category: Business Contributions/Initiatives

Awardee: **kirshenbaum bond + partners**
 (Category #8 Business Contributions/Initiatives)

Address: 160 Varick Street, 4th Floor
 New York, New York 10013
 212-633-0080
 212-463-8643 FAX
 lporigow@kb.com

kirshenbaum bond + partners (kbp) has helped change the lives of countless children and families while drawing attention to the thousands of children in foster care who are waiting to be adopted. Working in partnership with The Advertising Council, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and AdoptUsKids, kbp created a public service advertising (PSA) campaign, pro bono, for television, radio, print and Internet media that encourages prospective parents to consider adopting a child from foster care. The ads address barriers that prevent many prospective adoptive parents from adopting from foster care. They also include a call to action that encourages interested adults to learn more. Prospective adoptive parents learn more by visiting the AdoptUsKids website or by calling a toll free phone number. Since the ads debuted in July 2004, they have reached an estimated 24 million people. In the year following the campaign launch, phone inquiries tripled from the pre-campaign numbers to over 7,000. AdoptUsKids website traffic also increased by more than 40 percent and to date, almost 4,000 families have started the adoption process. The ads created by kbp and The Ad Council have been acknowledged by the advertising community and have received four Region 2 Gold ADDYs, the industry's most representative and arguably toughest competition recognizing and rewarding creative excellence in the art of advertising. All of the work on this ad campaign, including message development and creative design, was performed by kbp, pro bono. This work represents a significant agency investment and dedication to the issue.

Awardee: **Cox Media/Cox Communications' "A Welcome Home" Program
(Category #8 Business Contributions/Initiatives)**

Address: Cox Media/Cox Communications
6725 Via Asti Parkway
Las Vegas, Nevada 89119
702-933-2605
702-386-8042 FAX
suken.shah@coxmedia.com

The "A Welcome Home" program is a public awareness campaign designed to find adoptive or foster homes for children in Southern Nevada. It began in May 2000 with the goal of finding homes for over 3,000 "special needs" children in Southern Nevada who were waiting to be adopted. The program developed between a partnership with the Nevada Department of Child and Family Services and the Olive Crest Agency. Cox Communications provides an annual investment of over \$100,000 in the "A Welcome Home" program. Specifically branded to Cox Communications, this program has impacted over 400,000 cable households through Child Messages, Sponsor Vignettes, Promotional Messages and Interactive Website. Child Messages is a :30 second commercial featuring children who are available for adoption. The Sponsor Vignettes feature the sponsor's spokesperson educating the public about the program. Promotional Messages is a unique commercial which features prominent people within the community endorsing the program and the Interactive Website includes photos and biographies of each child and a link to state agencies, adoption information and sponsor information. The program has also achieved the following successes:

- Forty-one percent of the children profiled have been adopted or are in the process of being adopted;

- Fifty-percent call volume increase with informational calls; and
- Ninety-five percent increase in adoption orientation attendance.

Awardee: **Carlisle Corporation**
(Category #8 Business Contributions/Initiatives)

Address: 100 Peabody Place, Suite 1100
 Memphis, Tennessee 38103
 901-526-5000
 901-271-2564 FAX

Carlisle Corporation, under the leadership of owners Gene and Karen Carlisle, has demonstrated excellence in the field of adoption through generous contributions to agencies that promote permanency for children in the child welfare system. The company is a franchise owner of 100 Wendy's restaurants in Mississippi, North Carolina, Louisiana and Arkansas. Carlisle Corporation undertakes several fundraising programs each year to provide support to non-profit organizations in the identified states that focus on permanency for youth. Each year, through Carlisle Corporation's urging, Mississippi Governors proclaim the Sunday prior to Thanksgiving as "Children's Day of Hope" in Mississippi. The company donates 100% of that day's sales from its restaurants. Since the inception of "Children's Day of Hope", over \$850,000 has been raised to increase adoptions in Mississippi. As a result of these contributions, one benefactor, Harden House Adoption Program, has doubled its number of placements of "special needs" children. Carlisle Corporation also supports adoption efforts through Wendy's sponsorship of "Wednesday's Child". This segment has been the longest running adoption show in the State and is the only recruiting tool the Mississippi Department of Human Services has for placing foster children, other than through their adoption picnics. The adoption rate for children featured on "Wednesday's Child" is a remarkable 95%.

Awardee: **Waterworks Photography Association**
(Category #8 Business Contributions/Initiatives)

Address: 4320 S. Victor Avenue
 Tulsa, Oklahoma 74105
 918-284-4888
 918-742-4689 FAX
 glarson@ktul.com

The first Waiting Child Photography Exhibit in Tulsa, Oklahoma took place in 2002 and would not have been possible without the assistance of Waterworks Photography Association. The purpose of the Exhibit was to raise awareness of the need for more adoptive homes and to find permanence for children in foster care. Since 2002, Waterworks Photography Association has donated their talents and time to photograph and create portraits of children who are awaiting adoption from the Oklahoma Department of Human Services. Waterworks Photography has been

responsible for producing the exhibits, finding photographers from across the state, matching photographers with children to be photographed, raised funds, and found exhibit locations. Oklahoma's first exhibit opened with more than 300 visitors on the campus of the University of Tulsa where fifty portraits of waiting children were displayed. Approximately thirty children were placed in permanent homes that were featured in the exhibit. The second exhibit held September 2004 through the end of August 2005 was also successful, with 20 children placed in permanent homes. Once the photographers met with the children and took their photographs, many were so touched that they formed bonds with the children. All of the photographers wrote a short statement of their experience meeting the children and their impressions of them. These statements were then typed on cards and attached to the easels with the photographs of the children.

Awardee: **Kansas Professional Photographer's Association
(Category #8 Business Contributions/Initiatives)**

Address: Michael Bishop, President
211 N. Broadway
Pittsburg, Kansas 66762
620-232-1155
bishopstudio@sbcglobal.net

Since 2002, the Kansas Professional Photographer's Association (KPPA) has partnered with the Kansas Children's Service League (League) to help find families for the nearly 700 Kansas children awaiting adoption. The KPPA's initial work with the League focused on ensuring that quality photos of children were available to be placed on the League's photolisting website. Over the next two years, nearly 200 photos were taken by more than 50 photographers across the state for free. An offshoot of this effort was the ability for the League to begin more aggressively profiling children needing adoptive families in newspapers and other publications across the State. Currently, the League works with approximately 45 publications. This recruitment activity would not have been possible without the support of the KPPA. Over the past year, the League has been able to expand its efforts by actively recruiting through churches. With the help of KPPA's photographs, the League works with nearly 80 churches, distributing more than 9000 inserts per month. In early 2004, the League approached the KPPA with a new project, Klicks for Kids. Modeled after the New Mexico Heart Gallery, this project is a gallery style event that features photos of children and sibling groups awaiting adoption, taken by the State's premier professional photographers at KPPA. The 2005 exhibit, featuring 40 photos, opened in Wichita in November 2004 and has been touring the state throughout 2005, making stops in 20 communities. Due in large part to the donated time and expertise of KPPA's photographers, as of June 30, 2005, 13 children have found adoptive families and the League had received nearly 300 inquiries as a result of the photos.

Category: Judicial or Child Welfare System Improvement

Awardee: **New York State Office of Children and Family Services**

(Category #9 Judicial or Child Welfare System Improvement)

Address: Washington Street
Rensselaer, New York 12144
518-474-9406
518-486-6326 FAX
lee.lounsbury@ocfs.state.ny.us

During the past several years, the State of New York has made tremendous progress in improving outcomes for the children and families served by the State's child welfare system. Over the past ten years, the foster care population in New York State has been reduced by half from 59,112 in 1995 to less than 30,000 in 2005. This has been accomplished through increased preventive services to prevent admissions, intensified services to hasten safe reunification, and streamlining the adoption process when reunification is not possible. The number of children legally freed and waiting to be adopted in the State has also been reduced, from 6,068 in November 2002 to 4,325 in July 2005. The number of adoptions finalized in New York State increased by 15% from 2002 to 2003. Spearheading these efforts was the State's "Adoption Now" collaboration, a partnership among the New York State Office of Children and Family Services' (OCFS) Commissioner, New York City's Administration for Children's Services' Commissioners, and local districts, contract agencies and court personnel across the State. Other improvements in the area of adoption in New York include OCFS' successful completion of a 3-year federal grant funded project, "Families for New York's Longest Waiting Children". This project resulted in permanence for 74 youth. In June 2005, the New York State Legislature passed the Permanency Bill which will streamline the process to facilitate the achievement of timely and safe permanency for children.

Awardee: **Permanency Planning Project, American Bar Association**
(Category #9 Judicial or Child Welfare System Improvement)

Address: ABA Center on Children and the Law
American Bar Association
Anne Marie Lancour, J.D.
740 15th Street, NW Washington, DC 200054
202-662-1756
202-662-1755 FAX
lancoura@staff.abanet.org

To address one of the findings from the 2001-2004 Child and Family Services Reviews regarding the amount of time states achieve timely termination of parental rights, the American Bar Association (ABA) Center on Children and the Law began a "Termination Barriers Project". The ABA received support for this project from the New York State Department of Social Services and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. From 1989-2004, the Project undertook six major tasks within New York counties that focused on examining ways to develop, streamline, and fine-tune termination procedures, including:

- Identifying and analyzing the cause of delays
- Interactively developing policy recommendations
- Establishing written protocols, procedures, and timetables
- Implementing reforms outlined in agreements
- Monitoring the impact of implemented changes
- Disseminating project results throughout the State

The ABA has completed the "Termination Barriers Project" in 20 New York State counties. As a result, the average time children spend in foster care was reduced by 15 months, with a resulting cost saving of over \$15 million. The Project entails on-site case reviews to identify key actors and problems that cause significant delays in freeing children in foster care for adoption. Once problems are identified, they are addressed through tasks such as providing legal analysis and technical assistance, training staff involved in child welfare cases, and sharing useful information from other projects and States.