



PRESS RELEASE

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CHILDNET GEARS UP TO CELEBRATE NATIONAL ADOPTION MONTH The 2009 Adoption Fall Festival to Honor Local Adoptive Families

PLANTATION, FL – More than 120 families are excited about planning for an extra seat or two at this year's Thanksgiving dinner. The extra seats will be filled with former foster care children who were recently adopted by these extraordinary families. The families will be honored at ChildNet's 2009 Adoption Fall Festival on October 31st. Omega Psi Phi fraternity has sponsored the event for the past nineteen years. This year's festival will have a dual purpose by also serving as an adoption matching event. "This is an excellent arrangement," said Theresa Kennedy, ChildNet's Director of Permanency. "In a very festive and fun setting, potential adoptive parents can get to know some of the children and teens seeking a forever family, while meeting other families and individuals who have recently completed the adoption process."

The 2009 Adoption Fall Festival will kickoff National Adoption Month, which is celebrated in November. Throughout the month, ChildNet, Broward County's Community Based Care lead agency, heightens its focus to raise awareness about the need for adoptive families for children in the foster care system. Nationally, there are 129,000 children in foster care waiting to be adopted. In Broward County alone there are over 1,900 children under ChildNet's supervision; of those, 219 children are waiting to permanently be a part of a loving family. Emilio Benitez, ChildNet's Chief Executive Officer, notes that the agency has done exceptionally well in the area of adoption since its inception in 2003. "For the past six years, ChildNet has exceeded its adoption goal," notes Mr. Benitez. "Our 2008-2009 fiscal year concluded on a high note with 235 children being adopted." He credits the agency's success in adoption finalizations to the caring families and individuals that commit to loving and parenting these children. Mr. Benitez stresses the never ending need for adoptive parents for the foster children and teens waiting for a family. "Most of all these children need a loving, stable and permanent family."

To celebrate National Adoption Month, ChildNet encourages the community to find out more information about adoption. The pages following this release cover *Five Steps to Adopting in Broward County* and *Five Myths About Adoption Debunked*. For additional information about fostering or adopting, please call ChildNet's Recruitment Hotline at (954) 414-6001 or visit www.childnet.us.

ChildNet is the private, not for profit organization selected by the state through a competitive process to serve as the local Community Based Care lead agency. As the lead agency, ChildNet manages the local system of services and supports for Broward's abused, abandoned and neglected children and their caregivers. This system of care was developed with extensive input from local stakeholders and its effective implementation depends upon their continued support. For more information on ChildNet, visit the Web site at www.ChildNet.us or call (954) 414-6000.

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5 Steps To Adopting in Broward County

1. ***Get up and get out.*** The first step is to attend a ChildNet Adoption Open House, where you will get more information about the adoption process, children available for adoption and required training for adoptive parents. This initial step will help you evaluate if adoption is right for you and your family. The Adoption Open House is held monthly every third Thursday from 6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at ChildNet's Main Office, located at 313 N. State Road 7 in Plantation. To reserve your seat contact Jim McElhannon at (954) 461-9219 or Natalie Gomes at (954) 234-4394.
2. ***Get the training.*** The Model Approach to Partnership in Parenting (M.A.P.P.) is a 30 hour training and preparation course that covers a wide range of parenting topics such as managing behavior, proactive parenting and bonding with your new child. These training sessions are usually held one night a week for ten weeks.
3. ***Get a home study.*** At this stage you are assigned an Adoption Recruiter that will work one-on-one with you and your family to gauge your readiness for adoption. Background clearances, personal references, visits to your home and interviewing with an Adoption Recruiter are a few of the requirements that must be met at this step.
4. ***Get matched.*** Your Adoption Specialist will work to match the needs of an available child with the strengths of your family. At this step your Adoption Specialist will discuss with you pre-placement activities, including supervised and unsupervised visits with the child. Once you, your family, the child and the child's case manager determine that the child is ready, the official placement will occur.
5. ***Get finalized.*** After a child is placed in your home, a case manager must make monthly visits for a minimum of 90 days to assess the child's adjustment. At the end of the supervision period, the Adoption Specialist provides a "consent to adopt" to your attorney.



5 Adoption Myths DEBUNKED

Myth 1: Adoption is expensive. Adopting children from the foster care system carries a relatively low cost, with much of the associated legal fees being reimbursable. Many families who adopt receive financial support in the form of adoption subsidy. In addition, many city and state employees may be eligible for additional financial supports.

Myth 2: Only married couples can adopt. This myth could not be further from the truth. There are many single people who have successfully adopted and built a stable and loving home for their newly formed family.

Myth 3: The child's biological parents can come back and take their child. Prior to a child being classified as "available for adoption" the courts must terminate the rights of the biological parents. Furthermore, at the adoption finalization, a judge confers all the appropriate rights of a biological parent on the adoptive parent.

Myth 4: You must own your own home to adopt. This is totally false. There are many wonderful adoptive parents who do not own their own homes. What matters most is you are willing to make your residence a home, and you have the space to accommodate an additional child.

Myth 5: You must have parented before you can adopt. On the contrary, you can adopt a child if you have no biological children. If you have the patience, the commitment, and the heart, we have the child!