



PRESS RELEASE

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NOVEMBER MARKS NATIONAL ADOPTION MONTH The 2010 Family Fall Festival to Honor Local Adoptive Families

PLANTATION, FL –When Juanita and Aaron Cosby first saw Ashlee’s photo, as part of the Heart Gallery’s traveling display of local foster care children available for adoption, she knew immediately that she wanted to make her part of the Cosby family. Both Juanita’s husband Aaron and her 12 year old son Aaron Jr. were immediately on board with extending the family through adoption. Initially the family wanted a younger daughter but once they met 14 year old Ashlee they knew that she would fit seamlessly in their family. Unfortunately, a month after Ashlee moved in the family suffered the tragic loss of Aaron Cosby, Sr. The sudden passing was such a severe blow to the family unit that it was uncertain if Juanita would continue with the adoption as a single parent. “Despite the heartbreaking and unexpected circumstance, I knew that Aaron had already considered Ashlee a daughter, so continuing with the adoption process was unquestionable,” said Juanita Cosby.

Adoptive families like the Cosbys will be celebrated at the **2010 Family Fall Festival on Saturday, November 6th**. The fall themed family picnic kicks off National Adoption Month. During November, 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. Statewide, there are about 850 children in foster care available for adoption. In Broward County alone, there are over 1,900 children under ChildNet’s supervision; of those, 219 children are waiting to permanently be 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 seven years, ChildNet has exceeded its adoption goal,” notes Mr. Benitez. “Our 2009-2010 fiscal year concluded on a high note with 202 children being adopted.” He credits the agency’s success in adoption finalizations to the caring families and individuals, who like Juanita Cosby, are committed 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 adopting, please call ChildNet’s Recruitment Hotline at (954) 414-6001 or visit www.browardadopt.com.

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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.



5 Steps To Adopting in Broward County

1. **Get up and get out.** The first step is to attend a ChildNet Adoption Orientation, 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 Orientation 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 Advocate will work to match the needs of an available child with the strengths of your family. At this step your Adoption Advocate 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 to provide a loving home, we have the child!