



DAVE THOMAS
FOUNDATION
FOR ADOPTION®

Finding Forever Families for Children in Foster Care

The faith community and foster care adoption

CHILDREN ARE WAITING

Every day children are abused, abandoned and neglected. Through no fault of their own, many end up in foster care and eventually are made available for adoption. These children often move three or more times, are frequently separated from siblings, and can wait five years or more for an adoptive family. One in five will turn 18 or 21 and leave the system without a family. Today, more than 107,000 children wait in U.S. foster care for loving, permanent families.

YOU CAN HELP

The faith community has long been one of the most dynamic, powerful resources to help children without families. The following are just some of the many ways to get involved in foster care adoption – because every child deserves a loving home and forever family.

SUPPORT ADOPTIVE FAMILIES

- Celebrate when members of your congregation make the choice to adopt. Recognize adoption as a valued way to build families.
- Establish support groups for adoptive parents. Learn how at nacac.org or adoptamericanetwork.org.
- Host activities and outings for adoptive families.
- Raise funds for medical and educational needs. Donate clothing or other necessities for a growing family. Offer respite childcare.
- Consider establishing an adoption ministry.

HOST OR JOIN A NATIONAL ADOPTION DAY EVENT

National Adoption Day is celebrated in communities across the United States on the Saturday before Thanksgiving (November 19, 2011). Host a National Adoption Day event of your own by inviting members of your congregation or parish to join you for a workshop, picnic, reception or other event in celebration of adoptive families, and generate awareness of waiting children. To partner with a local foster care adoption agency, visit childwelfare.gov/nfcad. Be a part of the national effort and get a free banner by registering your event at nationaladoptionday.org.

Join an already scheduled event near you by visiting nationaladoptionday.org. There are events in communities all across the nation. Contact the event coordinator to volunteer your time or donate items for the newly-formed families.

NOVEMBER IS NATIONAL ADOPTION AWARENESS MONTH.

SHARE THE MESSAGE WITH YOUR CONGREGATION

Use the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption's free resources. Order online at davethomasfoundation.org, or call 1-800-ASK-DTFA (1-800-275-3832).

- Order the Foundation's free awareness materials.
- Show the Foundation's powerful video, *Say Yes*, about the urgent need for families and learn more about the joy of foster care adoption.



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- Display the Foundation's adoption posters in your place of worship.
- Offer members the Foundation's free guide: *Finding Forever Families: A Step-by-Step Guide to Adoption*.
- Dedicate one worship service to focusing on adoption. The month of November is the perfect time, when America celebrates National Adoption Awareness Month. The weekend of National Adoption Day (November 19, 2011) would even be better.
- Dedicate a sermon or message to the topic of adoption. (Visit childrensdefense.org for copies of the Children's Defense Fund's online and print *Multi-faith Resource for Year Round Child Advocacy and the National Observance of Children's Sabbaths® Weekend*. Examples for Christian faiths can also be found at shaohannahshope.org.)
- Allow an adoptive family to tell their story during worship or time of fellowship.
- Bring all members who were adopted or did adopt forward for closing worship/prayer.

TIPS FOR SPEAKING ABOUT ADOPTION

Why encourage adoption?

- From the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (*AFCARS Estimates as of January 2010*):
- 107,000 children in U.S. foster care are available for adoption because parental rights have been terminated.
- Last year, nearly 28,000 children aged out and left the foster care system without being adopted.
- Forty-eight million Americans have considered foster care adoption, more so than any other form of adoption. However, they lack awareness and information to move through the adoption process. More needs to be done to connect these families with waiting children. (From the *National Foster Care Adoption Attitudes Survey*, conducted by Harris Interactive and commissioned by the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption in 2007)
Sixty-nine percent of American adults think more should be done to encourage adoption.
- One in three American adults has considered adopting a child, if just a fraction of them adopted, every child waiting in foster care would have a permanent family.
- Many Americans have misperceptions about the foster care adoption process and the children waiting for adoption. They need to know that these children did not enter foster care as juvenile delinquents, that foster care adoption is affordable, and that the biological parents cannot try to take the child back.

Waiting children:

Children enter foster care through no fault of their own as victims of child abuse, neglect or abandonment. They are removed from their biological families for their own safety and left without a permanent, loving home.

Tens of thousands of foster youth age out of the system each year with no one to call family and no place to call home.



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Making your presentation more personal:

Reach out to adoptees or youth currently in foster care to gain insight from their perspectives and learn more about their experiences. Organizations that work directly with foster youth are wonderful resources: FosterClub (503-717-1552), Foster Care Alumni of America (703-299-6767) or Orphan Foundation of America (571-203-0273).

Use state-specific data on the number of children in care, the length of stay in the care, the number waiting to be adopted, the number of foster youth who age out of care, and other relevant facts. Visit childwelfare.gov/systemwide/statistics/ or kidsarewaiting.org/publications/statefacts for more information.

For more information on the Foundation, visit davethomasfoundation.org, or call 1-800-ASK-DTFA.