



Alameda County  
**Social Services  
Agency**

**MEDIA ADVISORY**

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**Children in Foster Care Get Permanent Families Just In Time For the Holidays**

Alameda County - Department of Children and Family Services Celebrates Past and Future Adoption Finalizations and The Making of Families

Oakland, CA— Across the nation, and for over 30 years, November has been recognized as National Adoption month. This year to date, the Alameda County Social Services Agency - Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) is on track to provide permanent families to 98 children in foster care, some of whom are sibling groups, who may have otherwise not known the joy, frustration, and support of a permanent family. Eleven of these 98 children and their families will celebrate past and pending adoption finalizations on November 16, 2016. Children taking part in tomorrow's celebration range in age from 3 years to 17.

"In Alameda County we celebrate Adoption Month to raise awareness of the growing number of children for whom adoption and the promise of a permanent family slips further and further away as they celebrate another birthday," explained Lori A. Cox, Director of the Social Services Agency. "Children who reach young adulthood without finding new families or being reunited with their biological one rarely go to college. They need all of the typical support that you would expect - help filling out college applications and navigating the college entrance process just like every other young person. And when the dorms close for winter break, where are they going to go? We want to get kids into a permanent family as quickly as possible. There's no time in your life that you reach a certain age and don't need family."

The goal of the DCFS is to find permanent, loving homes for all children in foster care when they cannot safely return home to their parents or guardians. There are currently 1,441 children in foster care in Alameda County; 154 are available for adoption. Research has shown that abused and neglected children who are placed in a permanent, loving and supportive environment experience much better long-term outcomes emotionally and developmentally. There are

currently 498 children in foster care in Alameda County who are 13 years of age or older. The longer a child remains in foster care and the older they become, their chances of being adopted decrease dramatically. By age 8, the trend turns downward and adoption becomes more challenging.

Most recent data from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services reports that there are 400,000 abused and neglected children in foster care nationwide. They range in age from infants to 21 years old (in some states). The average age of a child in foster care is more than 8 years old. There are slightly more boys than girls, and more African American children than White, Latino and Asian. Some children return to their biological families, but a large number wait for new families that may or may not appear.

Nationally, more than two-thirds (69 percent) of children in foster care are adopted by a foster parent and 23 percent are adopted by relatives, but 27,000 children turn 18 and "age out" annually, with no permanent family to support or love them.

In recognition of this national problem, President Ronald Reagan proclaimed the first National Adoption Week in 1984. In the 90's President Bill Clinton expanded Adoption Awareness to the entire month and also directed the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to develop a plan to increase use of the internet as a tool to find homes for children waiting to be adopted from foster care.

WHO: Eleven Former Foster Children and Youth and Their "Forever Families"  
(A family has been identified for media interviews)

WHAT: Adoption Finalization Celebration

WHEN: Wednesday, November 16, 2006, 1:30 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

WHERE: 1111 Jackson St., Oakland CA

We invite you to help us tell the story of these remarkable and resilient children, youth and families, and to remove the stigma that often accompanies children who are in foster care. The public needs to be reminded that children and youth enter foster care through no fault of their own, because they have been abused, neglected, or abandoned and are unable to continue living safely with their families. But those circumstances make them no less deserving of a family.

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