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2013 FOSTER CARE MONTH AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

Youth in Foster Care Need Permanent Relationships with Caring Adults!

Join the 2013 Foster Care Month Awareness Campaign in May 2013 to Help Raise Awareness of the Challenges Facing Young People in Foster Care

Minneapolis, MN, May 1, 2013— U.S. President Barack Obama has declared the month of May National Foster Care Month to shine a light on the experiences and urgent needs of the more than 500,000 children and youth in the foster care system nationally. There are more than 11,000 children and youth in foster care in Minnesota. With more than 450 aging out of foster care each year, many are without homes, education, employment, or connections to caring adults. Connections to Independence (C2i), Hennepin County, The Minnesota Guardian ad Litem Program (GAL of MN), Ampersand Families and the Children's Law Center of Minnesota (CLC) have formed a partnership to raise awareness around youth in the foster care system that do not have permanent connections to caring adults.

- Over 60% of Minnesota's homeless youth population (age 21 and under) have been in foster homes or group homes; (Wilder 2009)
- Only 46% of youth in foster care graduate from high school by the time they exit care (<http://www.ihep.org/assets/files/publications/m-r/opportunitiesfosteryouth.pdf>); and only 10% go on to post-secondary. (<http://www.nrcyd.ou.edu/publication-db/documents/educating-children-in-foster-care.pdf>)
- Youth in foster care suffer from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) at twice the rate of U.S. war veterans. (http://www.dhs.state.mn.us/main/idcplg?IdcService=GET_FILE&RevisionSelectionMethod=LatestReleased&RenderItem=Primary&allowInterrupt=1&noSaveAs=1&dDocName=dhs16_138979)

Jessica Rogers, Executive Director, Connections to Independence, said, "I was in foster care and was adopted as an infant by a loving and supportive family who helped me become the person I am today. Every child in foster care, from infancy to adolescence, deserves a loving family. Please help us raise awareness of the struggle for a decent, productive life that many youth in foster care encounter here in Minnesota and across the nation."

Join the 2013 Foster Care Month Awareness Campaign to help local children and young people who are in foster care to gain access to supportive adults, and to successfully navigate the challenges of living in the foster care system. There are a number of ways that adults in the community can step up to support youth in the foster care system: becoming foster parents; volunteering as a guardian ad litem; providing volunteer legal representation; becoming an adoptive parent for an older youth; providing a summer internship, and financially supporting the important work of agencies providing services to this population. The 2013 Foster Care Month Awareness Campaign is offering video and audio public service announcements to be aired on TV and radio. The 2013 Foster Care Month Awareness Campaign is also offering access to interviews with leaders of advocacy groups, nonprofits and young people who are willing to discuss their experiences in the child welfare system, the need for supportive adults in the lives of youth in care, the challenge faced by youth aging out of foster care, and barriers to successfully entering the adult community.

The following organizations are partnering to promote awareness of the challenges facing children and youth in foster care in the Twin Cities area are:

C2i exists to provide unique programming and advocacy to foster care youth, ages 15-21, to promote a successful transition to living independently as they reach adulthood. This is done through a holistic approach to teaching independent living skills through a healthy mind, body, and soul.

Hennepin County provides child protection, adoption, foster care, and foster care licensing services to provide assistance and guidance for youth, biological families, and individuals and families interested in providing foster care and/ or adopting youth from the foster care system.

GAL of Minnesota, Hennepin County (Guardians ad Litem) provides professional advocates who are appointed by the Juvenile or Family Court to represent the best interests of abused and neglected children in court proceedings. Guardians ad Litem are volunteers or staff who work with youth, families and the child protection system to create better outcomes for youth in court.

Ampersand Families recruits and supports permanent families for older youth, and champions practices in adoption and permanency that restore belonging, dignity and hope.

Children's Law Center of Minnesota (CLC) promotes the rights and interests of Minnesota's children, especially children of color and children with disabilities, in the judicial, child welfare, health care, and education systems. CLC works to stabilize and protect foster care and at-risk youth through direct legal representation, systemic reform, and education.

Confirmed media partners include: The CW, Insight News Inc., and KMOJ Radio

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If you would like more information about this campaign, please contact Jessica Rogers at 612-354-2437, email at jrogers@c2iyouth.org or visit www.mnfostercaremonth.info