

Teens, Sibling Groups, and Youth Adopted on National Adoption Day



Ramsey County Permanent Families Recruitment Project held its 4th Annual National Adoption Day Celebration on Saturday November 20, 2010 at the Ramsey County Juvenile and Family Justice Center where Judge David C. Higgs presided over the adoption hearings. The Permanent Connections Unit under the supervision of Laura Phillips finalized the adoption for 10 youth who were adopted into four families.



This special day was filled with excitement from our keynote speaker, Michael Lehan, former NFL and U of M Gopher football player who dedicates a lot of his spare time helping youth in foster care. Mr. Lehan shared an uplifting message of his experience as an adopted child who was later fostered and informally adopted into a kin family. Mr. Lehan is very aware of the challenges youth in the child welfare system are facing with acceptance, belonging and self esteem issues. "I remember going through the same thing and there was nobody I could talk to and express my concerns to," he said. I feel, "It's imperative to get out there and help." Mr. Lehan also congratulated families and encouraged the adoptive youth to pursue their dreams. Other speakers for the event included Ramsey County Commissioners Toni Carter and Victoria Reinhardt; James Terrell former foster care youth who is a leader with the Ramsey County's Youth Advisory Group.



The audience was comprised of adoptive youth and their forever families, community members, Guardian At Litems, Ramsey County Attorneys, members of the Public Private Adoption Initiative, and staff from the MN Department of Human Services, Ramsey County Juvenile Court, and Ramsey County Human Services. We received quite a bit of news coverage on this day. The event was covered and broadcasted by KSTP - Channel 5 and WCCO – 4 newscasts along with reports from MPR and the Minneapolis Spokesman Recorder community newspaper. The MinnPost.com also wrote an online story which featured one of our older youth who found a forever family just prior to her 18th birthday entitled, “A Happy ending: Ramsey County project helps children find adoptive families.”



For those of you who are not aware, in 2008 Ramsey County was one of 9 recipients who were awarded a 2 million dollar federal grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services-Administration for Children and Families - Children’s Bureau to develop, implement and evaluate a multifaceted diligent recruitment plan to, increase the number of foster and adoptive homes, thereby increasing the number of children reaching permanency through adoption. Although the projects’ overarching goal is to find a permanent family for every child. The projects’ key target population includes African American children who represent the largest percentage of waiting children (57%) and Hispanic/Latino children who represent 13%.

Carolyn Smith, Project Manager and staff, Karen Franklin, Kathy Gilmore and Cynthia Clausen would like to thank the National Adoption Day planning committee (Laura Phillips, Bryan Krinkie, Kate Jorges, Jane McAloney, Latarshia Lewis, Misty Koob, Suzanne Kocurek, Stacey Cotton, and Sarah Easton) the Permanent Connections Unit, PahDaj Chang, Amanda Jamison, LuAnn Stapuk and volunteers for their diligent work in helping to make this event a huge success! We would also like to thank Clyde Turner, our section Manager for the support and assistance he provided.

Submitted by Karen Franklin, Permanent Families Project Recruitment Specialist