

MEDIA RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**CONSIDER THE ADOPTION OPTION:
SUFFOLK DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES RECOMMENDS
ADOPTION DURING AWARENESS MONTH**

SUFFOLK, Va. (November 19, 2008) Governor Tim Kaine proclaimed November as Adoption Awareness Month in the Commonwealth focusing on the theme "Families Matter". In the State of Virginia, there are 1,569 children who have the goal of adoption. Some of those children are already placed and waiting for the legal process of adoption to be finalized. Other children are waiting for permanent families to be located for them.

The State of Virginia established Permanency Planning for children in 1982. Effective July of the same year, the courts began reviewing all foster care cases. The purposes of this law were to minimize the amount of time children remained in Foster Care and to establish a more permanent plan for the children's lives. Adoption services are designed to help children who have been permanently and legally separated from their birth parents become permanent members of a new family.

To achieve permanency for children through adoption, the Suffolk Department of Social Services provides services that are based on the best interest of the child. They believe that:

- ❖ Legal adoption offers a child greater permanence and security than foster care.
- ❖ Every child who cannot return home is adoptable, regardless of disabilities, age, race or other special needs.
- ❖ The child is the client and services shall be focused on finding families for the children, rather than on finding children for the families.
- ❖ Continuity of nurturing relationships is critical to a child's growth and development. Therefore, adoptive planning shall reflect the child's need to be in a permanent placement as soon as possible; and shall consider foster parents with whom the child has developed emotional ties as a primary adoptive resource for the child.

Adoption Assistance is available and helps achieve the permanency of adoption for children who might otherwise remain in long term foster care. In assessing prospective adoptive families, the most important criterion is the family's ability to parent a child not born to them. Marital status, income level, education, age, health and other factors are to be considered only in terms of their relationship to the applicant's ability to parent an adopted child. Beyond its legal definition, adoption is a life long process; therefore, services which meet the unique needs of adoptive families are provided before and after finalization of the adoption.

As we celebrate Adoption Awareness Month, we would like to salute those families who have opened their hearts and their homes to provide a forever home for Suffolk's children.

For more information on adoption in Suffolk, contact Nan Diggs of the Suffolk Department of Social Services, Foster Care / Adoption Program at 757-514-7344.

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