



SUPPORTING  
EFFORTS  
TO RECRUIT  
PERMANENT  
FAMILIES  
FOR WAITING  
CHILDREN

COLLABORATION

DECEMBER  
2000

# Recruiting News

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## Collaboration Helps Find Families

By Marie Zemler, Coordinator,  
Adoption 2002 Support Project

Although the value of cooperation is among the earliest lessons of childhood, professionals working on behalf of children still struggle when asked to collaborate with other organizations. Competition, conflict, and lack of time leave agencies reluctant to develop partnerships that could help find homes for waiting children.

Despite the pervasive pessimism about collaboration, some of the most innovative approaches to recruitment occur when organizations work together. For example:

- Oregon's waiting children take a "Fantasy Flight to the North Pole" (actually landing at a decorated gate on the opposite side of the airport) to visit Santa thanks to sponsor United Airlines. The annual event attracts media attention and highlights the need for families.
- In 35 states, Sears Portrait Studios take free photographs of children who will appear on the National Adoption Exchange's web site.
- New Jersey's Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS) cooperates with the Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency to help low and moderate income families buy or modify their homes so they can adopt children with special needs. The Home Ownership for Permanency Project offers below market rates for qualified families referred by DYFS.
- The Museum of Natural History donates free admissions for the Utah Adoption Council's annual adoption month event. An adoption month quilt created by children, adoptive parents, and birth parents hangs in the Museum's lobby throughout November.
- In Maryland's Howard County, jurors can donate their pay (\$10 per half day of service) to the Department of Social Services to buy items foster children need such as school supplies, haircuts, athletic fees, and luggage.
- The Massachusetts Department of Social Services encourages state employees to adopt children in foster care by working with state colleges to offer tuition waivers for adopted children.
- The Georgia Department of Human Resources introduces waiting children to families through a quarterly video of profiles. Partner Kroger's supermarkets help by lending out the tapes at their rental counters.

## A Waiting Child

*Kristina, age 9, enjoys going to the playground, playing with computers, and watching Barney videos. Games—including Uno and Don't Spill the Beans—are among her favorite activities.*



**Kristina**  
June 30, 1991

*Very feminine, Kristina is especially happy when she can wear a dress. Like many girls her age, she sleeps with her baby doll and does not like to go to bed. Kristina reports that pizza, macaroni and cheese, and candy are her favorite foods, but she will not eat salad or green beans. Kristina's worker says, "I just love this little girl. She's a wonderful kid."*

*Diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder and oppositional defiant disorder, Kristina takes medication to help manage her depression and keep her mood and behaviors stable. At school, she has an individualized education plan that includes speech and occupational therapy. Kristina, who attends a fourth-grade class but works at a first-grade level, is most successful in small groups. The one-on-one attention she receives from an aide who accompanies her to class also helps.*

*Kristina would do best in a home without other children. The parents must support her schooling, understand her diagnoses, and tolerate her behaviors with patience. A slow transition toward adoption, including pre-placement visits, will help Kristina become gradually acquainted with her new family. To learn more, contact Carol Byer at the Wyoming Department of Family Services: 307-473-3927. ✕*

Inside this edition of *Recruiting News* are detailed descriptions of recruitment collaborations with furniture stores, hospitals, and children's clothing retailers. We also offer tips on how to make collaborations work and ideas on what organizations to approach. The key to finding families is creativity—the breadth potential partners and the possible structures for collaborative relationships are unlimited. ✕

## Hints from the "Queen of Collaborations"

By Gail Johnson, Executive Director, Sierra Adoption Services

Sierra Adoption Services has long practiced the belief that collaborations are essential to positive change in adoption policy and practice, so I was not surprised to gain the nickname "queen of collaborations." Sierra has shared services in several different configurations—with private adoption agencies, multi-disciplinary private agencies, a private group of agencies combined with a large public agency, and several independent public agencies. The structure of these collaborations have ranged from cooperation around a discrete service to a virtual merger of all foster care and adoption activity with a particular county. Our experiences have allowed us to identify common themes, and perhaps some truths. I'd like to pass along some observations.

**1. Collaborations are difficult.** Public/private collaborations are especially hard. A successful collaboration requires relationship building, which in turn requires meeting with partners face to face; developing a shared language; understanding each other's institutional cultures, job expectations, and decision-making structures; and appreciating the personal needs of the individual players. Collaborations require the development of trust. They require tolerance of imperfection, disappointment, and delays. They require appreciation and acknowledgment. Don't be hard on yourself if collaborations seem difficult. It comes with the territory. When you get discouraged, read #6.

**2. The overriding key to successful collaboration is a shared vision.** Synergy begins when all players hold the same vision of what they can accomplish together, such as an increase in the adoptive placements of children with special needs. Synergy is defined as working together to produce an effect greater than the sum of individual efforts. A shared vision is a powerful tool that will take you past differences to a solution-focused partnership. If you are in a partnership that has not articulated a shared vision, stop and do it now.

**3. Partners' reputations rise and fall together.** In collaboration, you share the consequences of each other's successes and blunders. Choose your partners carefully, and continually consider the impact of your actions on your partners' individual and institutional reputation. Celebrate together often when things go well. Practice forgiveness if mistakes happen, but learn from them. Document what you have learned so you don't have to relearn it.

**4. Build a new, shared culture.** Start using the words "us," "we," and "ours" rather than "them" and "theirs." Create opportunities to deliver joint presentations on your collaboration. Others want and need to learn from you.

**5. Don't be afraid to ask for help.** Bring in an outside facilitator from time to time to gain perspective on your process. We have done this in each of our collaborations. In every case we watched what seemed like boulders of misunderstanding melt like ice cubes in the sun. Our most powerful helper was Stewart Levine, author of *Getting to Resolution: Turning Conflict into Collaboration*. Call him at 510-814-1010 or visit [www.resolutionworks.org](http://www.resolutionworks.org).

**6. Successful collaborations are worth the effort.** They break down barriers to reaching goals. They eliminate duplication. They provide access to new resources. They accomplish significantly more than the sum of what either could have done alone. They create lasting positive change.

*Thanks to my teachers, our partners at San Francisco County, Sacramento County Services, Placer County, California DSS Adoptions Branch, Kinship Center, Future Families, Black Adoption Placement and Research Center, Sacramento Children's Home, Stanford Home for Children, River Oak Center for Children, and Family Alliance Inc. To learn more call 530-265-6959 or e-mail [gail@gv.net](mailto:gail@gv.net).* ✨

## CREATIVE COLLABORATORS

Searching for creative ideas to enhance recruitment? Consider a collaboration with those who have:

### Traditionally supported adoption.

- Public agencies representing the county or state.
- Private agencies and exchanges, locally, regionally, and nationally.
- Child protection and foster care units.
- Juvenile courts.
- Child advocacy groups.
- Parent support groups.

### An engaged audience at their disposal.

- Television, radio, newspaper, and internet media organizations.
- Companies with a large number of employees.
- Schools or community organizations where families gather.
- Movie theaters.
- Organizers of festivals, fairs, and community events.
- Restaurants and coffee shops.

### Goods and services families need.

- Housing organizations.
- Car dealerships.
- Hardware and household goods vendors.
- Toy or art supply stores.
- Clothing retailers.
- Child care providers.
- Sports teams, amusement parks, and other entertainment venues.

### Expertise to share.

- Marketers, advertisers, and graphic artists.
- Journalists and film makers.
- Law firms.
- Mental health professionals.
- College students and professors.
- Health care professionals.

### A mission compatible with yours.

- Volunteer mentoring programs.
- Children's mental health groups.
- Churches.
- Civic organizations.

# *From Furniture to Families: A Corporate Recruitment Partner*

By Carolyn Smith, Tracy Scatterday, and Julie Lima of the Massachusetts Adoption Resource Exchange. To learn more, call 800-882-1176 or visit [www.mareinc.org](http://www.mareinc.org).

What could furniture have to do with recruiting families for waiting children? For the Massachusetts Adoption Resource Exchange (MARE), the answer is, "Everything." Over the past two years, the nonprofit organization has successfully combined its child welfare expertise with the resources of Jordan's Furniture to help the state's waiting children.

In Massachusetts, the name Jordan's Furniture brings an image to mind: two middle-aged gentlemen impressing the Boston Celtics with their dunking abilities or discussing the logic of sprinting down the track when two comfortable chairs sit invitingly nearby. Brothers Barry and Eliot developed Jordan's and since their innovative marketing campaign, they are two of the Commonwealth's most visible citizens. Their approach sells more furniture per square foot than any other store in America.

Initially approached as a potential donor, Jordan's volunteered to sponsor an adoption party in February 1999. Their radio advertisements generated an overwhelming response—2,000 people attended the most successful party in the state's history. The event's success thrilled organizers and highlighted the need to bring parents and waiting children together more effectively. That realization was the impetus for the "Jordan's Initiative," a series of innovative, far-reaching structural changes in the adoption system.

To implement system change, Jeffrey Locke, commissioner of the Massachusetts Department of Social Services, and Carolyn Smith, executive director of MARE, extended a call to action to the top-level agency executives in the public arena and the private agencies that contract with the state. With the financial and marketing support of Jordan's as an incentive, they asked agencies to institute profound changes that would positively affect the state's waiting children. In the resulting Memorandum of Commitment, participating agencies promised to offer joint training, attend regional matching meetings, share home studies, free their families to adopt children through any agency, and register all children on MARE's exchange.

Energized by the example of Jordan's, adoption workers dared to dream of creative new methods to reach prospective parents. Jordan's hosted an adoption party for older boys, led a button campaign during which employees wore a child's picture with the note "Ask me about this child," and continue to display waiting child books in their stores. The down-to-earth Jordan brothers also attend planning meetings with adoption staff. Their customer-pleasing attitude has spilled over onto their social service partners—instead of competing among themselves for resources, agency staff have linked arms and embraced change.

## Keys to Successful Corporate/Non-Profit Partnership

All corporate/non-profit partnerships function differently; however, key guidelines can help these initiatives succeed:

- **Form a task force or advisory board.** Once a corporate partner is identified, approached, and secured, individuals who represent every party involved with the collaboration should convene and commit to regular meetings for the partnership's duration. They should be able to motivate others in their organizations and have decision-making power so as to minimize delays.
- **Develop an image for the partnership.** The partnership should take on a life of its own. The group should create a name, logo, and stationary that includes all the parties involved and reflects the partnership's mission.
- **Develop shared goals and objectives.** The first business of the partnership should be to discuss goals and objectives. Since it is essential that everyone involved is on the same page in this respect, plans should be put in writing. For example, MARE's Memorandum of Commitment outlines the partnership's general mission and each party's overall responsibilities.
- **Maintain consistent communication.** An initial issue with MARE's partnership was that the public and private agencies were not communicating well. Each had its own forms and training requirements. The Jordan brothers accurately characterized this fragmented system as a hindrance to the recruitment and retention of families. Before they would commit to sponsoring any events, Jordan's insisted that the agencies develop uniform processes.
- **Follow up! Follow up! Follow up!** Regardless of what kind of recruitment initiative is chosen, follow-up with families must be immediate and consistent. A plan for follow-up should be developed prior to the initiative.
- **Recognize sponsors.** Be sure to recognize corporate sponsors in recruitment literature and media coverage connected with your partnership. In addition, give a thank you gift that reflects the work of the partnership. MARE periodically sends Jordan's a booklet of children that have been adopted as a result of the initiative. Even more than the additional publicity, sponsors appreciate seeing the results of their work.
- **Evaluate and track progress.** As with the follow-up system, an evaluation and tracking plan should be developed prior to the initiative.

Corporate/nonprofit partnerships can be beneficial to both sides. A connection to a well-known, reputable company increases the recruitment capacity of a social service agency and promotes positive attitudes about adoption among the public. Often, for-profit companies can evaluate nonprofit programs and positively challenge their systems. On the other side of the partnership, socially conscious companies like Jordan's have the opportunity to use their resources in the community, interact with the nonprofit sector, and increase the scope of their publicity. ✎

## *Illinois Hospital Employees Targeted as Adoptive Resources*

**“W**e’re just crazy about Eric and Ezra,” declares Crystal Mobley, who adopted the seven-year-old twins just over a year ago. This is her first experience parenting children with special needs, but Mobley has adopted twice before; Reginald and Scott, ages 20 and 17, came to her home as infants. After “being out of the adoption circle for more than 15 years,” Mobley was not thinking about adopting again until recruiters brought their message of the need for families to her office at Bethany Hospital in Chicago, Illinois.

The outreach effort that reignited Mobley’s involvement was part of the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services’ (DCFS) Corporate Partnership for Recruitment of Adoptive Families. “Courting of corporate America’s involvement beyond the check-writing predisposition of the CEO into a new realm of volunteerism and support” is the basis of the project, according to the statewide project coordinator Diane DeLeonardo. Foster families complete more than 90 percent of Illinois adoptions, yet not all foster parents can make a permanent commitment. DCFS and the Governor’s Office launched the Corporate Partnership initiative to bring adoption messages to large numbers of corporate employees. Since children who need a resource specifically for adoption typically wait the longest, the project aims to target, recruit, train, and match “adopt-only” families.

### **Hospitals as Partners**

In 1998 the Corporate Partnership—which hinges on alliances between DCFS, private child welfare agencies, and corporations—secured the commitment of the Illinois Hospital and HealthSystems Association (IHHA) for its pilot collaboration. The enthusiasm of IHHA was exactly what DeLeonardo hoped for. IHHA mailed letters to the CEOs of its 200+ member hospitals. Its vice president personally telephoned or visited the CEOs to ask them to participate. To date, 41 hospitals employing 65,000 workers have spread the word about the need for adoptive families. This year the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services honored IHHA with an Adoption 2002 Excellence Award for its outstanding philanthropic effort.

For the hospitals that join, partnership is no small commitment. However, Jill Fraggos, director of government relations at Children’s Memorial Hospital, explains that her hospital chose to participate because, “The project seemed like a natural fit. Our mission is to serve all children. All children need the permanency of a loving family to maximize their health and well-being. Even if just one child is adopted, the effort is worth all its weight in gold.” Besides, she notes, DCFS staff, “just make it so easy.”

Prior to partnering with an interested hospital, DCFS’s DeLeonardo meets with its key staff to discuss the

# *Family Forever*



*Open your heart,  
adopt a child.*

*The Partnership’s logo unites all materials.*

program. Several variables, she has learned, are essential for successful collaboration. DCFS asks each hospital to help develop marketing strategies targeted to their employees, assign a particular employee as the contact person for the initiative, and enthusiastically believe in and support recruitment of adoptive families.

With that commitment secured, Children’s—like all participating hospitals—was paired with a private child welfare agency. DCFS facilitated the first meeting between Children’s and their new partner, Volunteers of America, to help establish a recruitment plan and timeline.

All hospitals that participate in the Corporate Partnership share some common recruitment methods. DCFS has created materials to blanket the hospitals—brochures, table tents for cafeterias and waiting areas, and paycheck envelope inserts, all of which can be personalized with the specific hospital’s and private agency’s logo and contact information. At each location, agency staff provide adoption information at hospital-sponsored tables. Every hospital also promotes an on-site orientation session via internal communication methods such as memos, voice mail, e-mail, or corporate newsletters. Recruitment messages also highlight the particular hospital’s adoption benefits package, which must minimally include time off for training and licensing meetings, free medical exams, and parental leave upon placement.

Pat Trudeau, clinical director at Volunteers of America, professed, “We have a wonderful partner in Children’s. They really opened their arms to us.” Children’s above-and-beyond commitment included welcoming Volunteers of America staff to set up information tables three times a day—at 7 a.m., noon, and 7 p.m.—to catch each of the hospital’s three shifts.

Children’s, as one of the first hospitals to join the Corporate Partnership, also organized a media event to kick off the collaboration. The hospital’s CEO, the executive director of Volunteers of America, and the deputy director of foster care and permanent services at DCFS spoke at a program covered by several major newspapers and television stations in Chicago. The pinnacle of the event was a video produced by the hospital’s marketing department featuring the story of a Children’s employee who had adopted brothers ages 11 and 12.

All participating hospitals host a second round of recruitment activities as part of DCFS's "seed-planting theory." DeLeonardo explains, "Employees who were moved to think about adoption the first time may be ready to act the second time the message is presented." Again demonstrating the depth of their commitment, Children's is now preparing for its third recruitment blitz. As her hospital's adoption contact person, Fraggos gets calls for information even in "the off-season" and notes that "Children's runs campaigns all the time, but adoption information travels fast. Our employees definitely remember adoption is among our causes."

### Working with Private Agencies

A key to the partnership's success has been securing not just the commitment of the hospitals, but also the whole-hearted dedication of the private agencies that are responsible for guiding newly recruited families through the process. DeLeonardo knows that responsiveness is especially necessary to overcome a legacy of poor service, particularly with families seeking to adopt rather than foster.

All private agencies that are part of the initiative enter a contractual agreement with DCFS. DCFS pays financial incentives to agencies at each of three steps in the adoption process: when a family submits a completed application, when a license is issued to a family within 75 days after their application is submitted, and when a child has been in an adoptive home for 30 days. DCFS awards bonuses to agencies that match families with children within 90 days of their approval.

DCFS has worked not only to speed the adoption process, but also to make it more customer-friendly. DeLeonardo has trained private agencies on retention, beginning from the philosophy that, "If you don't have time to nurture families through the process, you don't have time to recruit." "Follow-up," she says, "is not a message left during the afternoon on the answering machine of a family that always works during the day. I don't think we're done with a family until they say, 'Stop bugging me.'"

Agencies that work on the Corporate Partnership must:

- Respond to all inquiries within 24 hours.
- Tailor all recruitment materials to their agency and include the names and phone numbers of identified staff who can provide additional information.
- Follow up with and track all families who express interest in adoption.
- Schedule on-site information, orientation, training, and fingerprinting sessions for interested hospital staff.
- Work flexible hours so that families can schedule meetings at their convenience.
- Provide six hours of "adopt-only" training using the curriculum developed by DCFS.
- Develop an individualized plan for further training with each family, selecting relevant topics for the type

- of child the family has expressed interest in adopting.
- Expedite the processing of applications so they are complete in 75 days.
- Designate a project coordinator who can respond and help to solve family or agency problems within the same day.

### The Families and Results

In the two years of the Corporate Partnership with IHHA, 730 hospital employees have signed up at recruitment tables to express their interest in adopting. The 51 completed applications and 43 licensed families have come from all professions within the hospitals—doctors, nurses, administrators, computer contractors, insurance personnel, and laundry room staff. Eight families have completed 11 adoptions, with four more finalizations pending. Three families are planning to adopt again and 19 additional families are waiting for matching and placement.

Trudeau notes that the Corporate Partnership's approach is not right for every agency, as a large amount of time and energy is invested to get a small number of families who were not previously involved all the way through the process. Nonetheless, she believes the project has been good for Volunteers of America as it is a "very unique way to market adoption in a different arena" and "find families you might not otherwise find."

DeLeonardo and DCFS are also pleased with the Corporate Partnership's results over the first two years and plan continued enhancements. For example, recruiters are increasingly incorporating child-specific messages into the presentations made in hospitals. An upcoming campaign in rural southern Illinois will focus on the 36 children who wait for adoption in that hospital's own county. DCFS is also seeking new corporate partners, particularly African American run or owned businesses.

But the true measures of success, DeLeonardo explains, are the newly created families like Crystal Mobley's. "In this field, we are constantly reminded that love isn't enough. But love and permanency, together with Crystal's refusal to be scared away or shocked by the boys' behaviors, goes a long way. They've been with her for a year and it's amazing to see the changes."

Mobley, too, sees her sons' progress. Early on, the boys opened the car doors on the highway and threatened to jump out. On another occasion, the family had to leave Walgreens after one of the boys leaped over the counter and threw the money out of the cash register. "We still have a ways to go," Mobley acknowledges, but equipped with a consequence-based method of discipline and a new van that has child-safe locks, she has rapidly taught the boys, "Don't mess with Mom." And her enthusiasm for adoption cannot be dampened. "We're happily ever after!" she declares.

*To learn more, contact Diane DeLeonardo at 217-544-0254 or [leonardo@fgi.net](mailto:leonardo@fgi.net).* ✱

## Children's Clothing Stores Fund Interstate Adoption Project

Since 1976, agencies that belong to the Family Builders Adoption Network have shared policy and practice innovations, co-sponsored conferences, and offered one another encouragement. Thanks to the financial support of Children's Orchard, a national chain of children's clothing stores, the agencies are now joining forces to overcome jurisdictional barriers and match children with families across state lines.

"Our agencies have placed 16 special needs children with families this year through our pilot interstate program," says Maureen Heffernan, Family Builders executive director and first-ever paid staff member. She is quick to credit her new partner: "Children's Orchard funding has been vital in helping to develop our placement network."

### The Role of Children's Orchard

With 100 franchise stores selling new and re-sale children's clothing, Children's Orchard has been a beneficial partner. The company offers positive marketing of special needs adoption in general, and Family Builders in particular, both in their stores and to the press. To build backing from their franchise owners and customers, Children's Orchard also presents adoption success stories on its internet site.

While positive messages ultimately contribute to the recruitment of prospective adoptive families, Children's Orchard's financial support has had the most immediate impact on Family Builders. Not only does Children's Orchard make private donations, but in-store fundraising also benefits waiting children. The franchises encourage customers to round up their purchase price or leave cash in cans to benefit Family Builders' agencies. Children's Orchard also produced a coupon book which patrons can purchase. All proceeds are donated to Family Builders.

Walter Hamilton, Children's Orchard President, explains why the company participates in the project. "We've been searching a long time to align ourselves with an organization with similar values about children and families. Taking this value to a higher level more clearly defines Children's Orchard and what we're all about."

Recognizing that the corporate partner also must benefit from the collaboration is essential, says Heffernan. Her advice to others considering a corporate sponsor: "Realize it is a two-way partnership. For it to be successful, you must be as responsive to their needs as you expect them to be to yours."

Heffernan notes that cause-based marketing is a major reason for-profit organization choose to donate. Tracking reportable outcomes—standard practice in the business world—helps keep sponsors satisfied. Heffernan jokes, "One of the realities of working with a corporate partner is that they'd like to see 10,000 kids placed today." On a more serious note, she hopes that "With their funding used for systemic change, maybe tomorrow they can."

### Collaboration between Family Builders' Agencies

Family Builders uses Children's Orchard donations to break down interjurisdictional barriers, a timely mission embraced by the Adoption and Safe Families Act. Prior to the new funding, Family Builders agencies remained independent when it came to adoptive placements—each agency served only the children and families in its area. But with Heffernan's new funded staff position, she can facilitate closer interaction between Family Builders agencies. "What's unique about Family Builders," explains Heffernan, "is that all members are licensed agencies themselves. They can accept referrals of waiting children and already have or could recruit families for them."

One of the often cited barriers to placing children across state lines is the lack of trust in another agency's home study or ability to support a placement. Family Builders' agencies are less hesitant when working with one another because, says Heffernan, "As members they all must complete a self-certification process. There is an assurance of quality, as they all ascribe to certain practice standards."

Family Builders currently has 15 public and private agency members. Heffernan is thankful that "Children's Orchard made it possible for Family Builders to get where we are today," and looks forward to expanding the membership base to more fully implement their interstate goals.

To learn more or to become a member of Family Builders, contact Maureen Heffernan at 330-673-2680 or [msh627@aol.com](mailto:msh627@aol.com). ✂

## Exchanging Ideas

Tips from the  
Adoption Exchange  
Association (AEA)

*The Adoption Exchange, an AEA member based in Denver, Colorado, reports that they find recruitment partners in "unusual" places. For example:*

- An auto racing track sponsored an adoption recruitment party for waiting teens.
- Middle school students volunteered to frame pictures of children who had been placed. The school generated media coverage with a press release titled "Kids Helping Kids."
- During the grand opening of a new franchise location, a local restaurant donated a portion of its profits and displayed a photolisting book with information on adoption (Adoption Exchange staff were there to answer questions, too).
- At a community church each member vows to become a foster parent, become an adoptive parent, or financially support adoption-related agencies.
- Adoption Exchange board members and employees carry around laminated cards with waiting children's pictures then talk about the children on planes, at work, and at parties.



# “Ask the Expert”

Using a creative marketing style developed while she was selling cars, Shirley Tabb has raised hundreds of thousands of dollars from corporate sponsors as director of public relations for the District of Columbia's Child and Family Services. To learn more, call 202-727-2633 or e-mail [stabb@cfsa-dc.org](mailto:stabb@cfsa-dc.org).

**Q** Our community is full of resources that could help with recruitment, but we don't know how to start building a relationship with these potential community partners. Any suggestions?


**A** Everyone is willing to help children. The challenge lies in communicating your needs to the community. Identify key decision-makers in organizations with resources you need, then call them. Be specific. Tell them what their help will mean for a child, not for your agency. Solicit support in person to “get your foot in the door.” Drop by a prospect's business. Ask someone who knows the decision-maker personally to get you an appointment. Invite prominent business and civic leaders to an agency open house. It is harder to put off a request face to face.

**Q** We have written letters to corporations and other community organizations, but found little response. How can we get their attention?

**A** Letters are easily forgotten or discarded among other solicitations and junk mail. Make your letter stand out: package it so the recipient will be compelled to open it. Put a cuddly teddy bear in a big basket with photos of children. Include your letter, cover it with clear cellophane paper, and hand deliver it to the prospective sponsor. Be creative. The packaging should visually communicate your message. Home, family, kids, hearts, and balloon themes have paid off for me. Address your package to the decision-maker and follow up with a phone call. Asking prominent leaders to serve on your board of directors or recruitment advisory board is another great way of securing sponsors. If good prospects become part of your organization, they are more likely to share your vision and mission.

**Q** We ask the same sponsors to donate again and again. How can we develop these connections into real partnerships? What are some other creative places to turn?

**A** Recruitment is the responsibility of the entire community. Every public and private organization is a potential resource. Government agencies are also excellent sponsors for holiday activities, matching parties, and financial contributions. Ask up front if organizations can participate as ongoing sponsors. Always follow up to relate how successful the sponsored activity was; people like to hear they made a difference. Send all of your community friends your newsletters and even print their names, phone numbers, and short descriptions of their businesses in each publication.

Express appreciation to all of your supporters annually by hosting a luncheon or reception where they are honored. It does not need to be a lavish affair; just get people together so you can publicly recognize their efforts and solidify their commitments. This is also an opportunity to invite other resources from the community to visit your organization, see how well you treat community partners, and hear how they can join in. Among the numerous prospective resources are car dealerships, sports teams, church auxiliaries, beauty shops, health care facilities, real estate agents, mortgage brokers, lending institutions, banks, movie theaters, fraternities, sororities, and anyone else who does business in your community. 

## Next Up...

### Upcoming Trainings, Conferences, and Events

**FEBRUARY 16-18 • HARRISBURG, PA**  
REJOICE!, Inc. sponsors the African American Adoption/Foster Care Summit, *Saving the Present While Preserving the Past*, 717-221-0722 or [www.rejoice-inc.org](http://www.rejoice-inc.org).

**MARCH 7-9 • WASHINGTON, DC**  
*Children 2001: Creating Connected Communities* is presented by the Child Welfare League of America; Nicky Dixon, 202-942-0308, [ndixon@cwla.org](mailto:ndixon@cwla.org).

**MARCH 12-14 • ATLANTA, GA**  
The fourth National Roundtable on Innovative Community-Based Partnerships is sponsored by the American Humane Association; AHA Resource Center, 303-792-9900, [mickey@americanhumane.org](mailto:mickey@americanhumane.org).

**MARCH 20-24 • LAS VEGAS, NV**  
The Association of Administrators of the Interstate Compact on Adoption and Medical Assistance, Inc. presents its 13th annual conference; 202-682-0100, <http://aaicama.aphsa.org>.

# Bulletin Board

## RECRUITMENT ARTICLES AND FORUM AVAILABLE ONLINE

The North American Council on Adoptable Children (NACAC) offers a host of information to recruiters on the web at [www.nacac.org](http://www.nacac.org). Visitors to the "Recruiting Families" section can find an archive of past articles from *Recruiting News*. The site also includes a bulletin board where professionals can post recruitment-related questions or ideas for feedback from NACAC staff and others in the field. Other sections offer profiles of adoption subsidy programs in every state, index parent support groups in a searchable database, and share resources for planning National Adoption Awareness Month events. Come visit soon!

## NACAC SEEKS SUCCESSFUL ADOPTION MONTH IDEAS

Did one of your National Adoption Awareness Month events go over with a bang? Do you have an awareness building technique to share? NACAC is beginning work on the 2001/2002 *National Adoption Awareness Month Guide*. We want to compile and publish your best ideas on organizing activities, informing schools, engaging the public, working with the media, promoting cultural awareness, or involving various adoption communities. Please contact Marie Zemler at 651-644-3036 or [mariezemler@nacac.org](mailto:mariezemler@nacac.org) if you have something to share.

*"Being in foster care is like four people in a room, each in a corner. Being adopted feels like all the people in the middle of the room, all talking to each other. It's not just you and the wall."*

—Charles, age 15  
Adopted at age nine after five years in foster care

## Guidebook Offers Help with Contracting

In *Contracting for Child and Family Services: A Mission Sensitive Guide* (2000), authors Alfred Kahn and Sheila Kamerman discuss privatization, purchase of service, and managed care as part of the child welfare reform agenda. A guide for both contractors and providers, their book includes chapters on setting initial goals, developing Request for Proposals (RFPs), responding to RFPs, and shaping contractual agreements. The authors explain, "Departments, agencies, leaders, and managers have choices to make at each step of the way, and we seek to stimulate the contemplation, planning, and innovation with which they respond." For a free copy, contact the Annie E. Casey Foundation at 410-547-6600 or visit [www.aecf.org](http://www.aecf.org). ✕

## Book Examines Prenatal Substance Exposure

Designed as a resource for practitioners, policy makers, and researchers, *Adoption and Prenatal Alcohol and Drug Exposure: Research, Policy, and Practice* (2000) tells how prenatal substance exposure can impact children's immediate and long-term health. Authors Richard Barth, Madelyn Freundlich, and David Brodzinsky also discuss how to counsel prospective adoptive parents about the ongoing supports needed to maximize positive outcomes. To order, contact the Child Welfare League of America at 800-407-6273 or visit [www.cwla.org/pubs](http://www.cwla.org/pubs). ✕

## Researcher Considers Rural Social Services

Emilia Martinez-Brawley uses stories from the media, fiction, and non-fiction to address the realities of social work practice outside metropolitan areas in her book *Close to Home: Human Services and the Small Community* (2000). Her work unveils the strengths of small communities and provides a base for understanding the different approaches required for successful social service practice in this context. Contact the National Association of Social Workers at 800-227-3590 or visit [www.naswpress.org](http://www.naswpress.org) to order. ✕

## Author Discusses Parenting the Sexually Abused

*The Sexualized Child in Foster Care: A Guide for Foster Parents and Other Professionals* (2000) goes "beyond the basics," to give parents and professionals information, training tips, and copious references. Author Sally Hoyle recognizes the busy schedule of her audience and condenses much of her information—ranging from treatment methods to dealing with sexual aggression to taking care of the caretaker—into lists for easy reference. Contact the Child Welfare League of America at 800-407-6273 or visit [www.cwla.org/pubs](http://www.cwla.org/pubs) to order. ✕

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