



**SUPPORTING  
EFFORTS  
TO RECRUIT  
PERMANENT  
FAMILIES  
FOR WAITING  
CHILDREN**

# Recruiting News

970 Raymond Avenue, Suite 106, St. Paul, Minnesota 55114-1149 • 651-644-3036 • fax: 651-644-9848 • e-mail: nacac@aol.com

## Recruiting Families for Teens

*Adapted from "Non-Traditional Recruitment for Teens & Pre-Teens," by Pat O'Brien, executive director of You Gotta Believe! The Older Child & Adoption Permanency Movement Inc.*

### "A Family Isnowhere"

"A Family Is No Where" or "A Family Is Now Here." This statement may be viewed as a family is "now here" in every teen's life, or that a family is "no where" for a teen. How this is read is largely a matter of personal choice. Whatever is in an individual recruiter's mind is really the only thing that matters. If someone really truly believes that a family is available for each and every teen who needs one, a family can be found. The attitude of the person who has the responsibility for finding a home for teens and pre-teens must be that a family can be found for a teen and is therefore "now here."

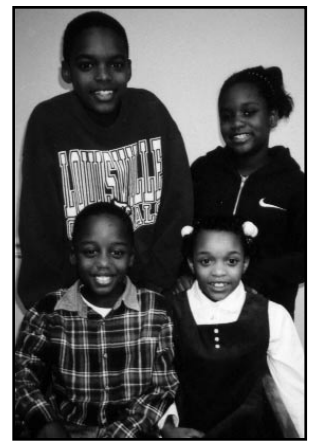
Once the person who is responsible for recruiting families for teens believes that there are families out there for teens, most of the recruitment is done. *You Gotta Believe!* is based on the philosophy that the work of recruiting homes for teens and pre-teens can't be accomplished without first believing that it can be done.

There is no question that many families are out there for any given teen; the only question is "where is just one of those families?" An answer to this question, more often than not, is that a family can be found right in the life cycle of the teen whom one is recruiting for. Involving teens in the process of finding their forever family helps to give them a sense of ownership in this process, and then teens can team up with their recruiter. All children in foster care have attachments. Recruiters are responsible for identifying and reaching out to those attachments in a child's life and exploring with these persons the possibility of learning what it might be like to parent the child on a long-term, permanent basis.

The question then becomes, "Who are these attachments?" Consider the following list:

## Waiting Children

*Daryl, Deala, Deacrit, and Darwin are healthy, energetic siblings from Kentucky. Thirteen-year-old Daryl, the oldest, likes to draw and play basketball. He also does well in school. Deala, who is ten years old, likes to play guessing games and enjoys going to church. Nine-year-old Deacrit's (everyone pronounces her name Deat-tra) favorite activities are putting together puzzles and playing games. The youngest sibling—eight-year-old Darwin—likes talking, giving and receiving hugs, and sharing his accomplishments with his family. He also gets along well with other children.*



**Daryl, Deala, Deacrit, and Darwin**  
*(clockwise from top)*

*This sibling group of four needs a loving family to provide support and to help them continue to overcome issues of abandonment. They are currently living in three separate foster homes, and their faces light up when they have a chance to visit with one another. To learn more about this engaging foursome, contact Jim Wilson, Special Needs Adoption Program, 908 W. Broadway, Louisville, KY 40203; 502-595-4303/fax 502-595-3068. ■*

- relatives;
- unexplored relatives, including, paternal relatives and distant relatives;
- the child's social worker;
- the child's child care workers;
- the child's therapist(s);

*...continued on page 2*

- volunteers at the facility where the child lives;
- administrative facility staff;
- support facility staff;
- chaplains or clergy;
- school teachers;
- school aides;
- other school personnel;
- child's guardian ad litem or CASA worker;
- former foster parents; and
- coaches.

All of these people have had interactions with teens and may have made an impact on them in some way, at some point in their life.

Also, consider people who might not be close to the teen, but whom they may have met or know a little:

- foster parents' neighbors;
- foster parents' relatives and friends;
- members of foster parents' churches; and
- parents of school friends.

These lists can go on and on. The teen can help create a list and add more people to it. There are dozens of people in a teen's life circle who have some attachment to the teen, who have a relationship with the teen, and who may be able to open their heart and provide a home. *You Gotta Believe!* has made adoptive placements with all of the resources mentioned above. A lot of this success is attributed to keeping an open mind and continuing to believe in what Henry Ford once said:

*If you think you can, you can! If you think you can't, you can't. You are always right!*

The next step after identifying resource families is approaching people who already are or have been a part of the teen's life. Simply asking each of these families if they would like to adopt the teen would invariably lead to "no" as the response.

To ensure that the response will be more positive or "yes," a person or family that has been identified as being a part of the teen's life circle needs to be approached with information about adoption and foster care. Consider what they might or might not know about the process.

They might *not* know that:

- the teen needs a permanent family;
- they are eligible to adopt or foster;
- there are subsidies available to help with the expenses of making a child a permanent addition to their family;
- there are pre-placement learning and preparation opportunities; or
- post-placement support is available.

Once a family has been given this information, they can begin to discuss several options:

- Would they consider attending an orientation to get more information about adoption or fostering?
- Would they consider becoming involved in the teen's life as a mentor?
- Do they know another family that might be appropriate for this teen?

Once resource families have information, they can better make informed choices about the level of involvement in the teen's life that might be appropriate for them both now and in the future.

Gwendolyn Townsend of One Church, One Child in the state of Washington believes that "everyone can do something." Not everyone can adopt a child, but a person may be able to become licensed to provide respite care or foster care, or recruit potential families in their own churches, schools, and communities. With this philosophy, all of the people identified as important in a teen's life are potential resources for support.

*You Gotta Believe!* has found that about half of the people from a teen's life circle that they approach are willing to learn more about the adoption process. The ultimate goal is to encourage families to become involved as a support network for the teen. This involvement may eventually lead to a permanent home, but in any case, the individual or family will at least be "now here" in the teen's life. ■

For more information about *You Gotta Believe! The Older Child Adoption & Permanency Movement Inc.*, contact Pat O'Brien, 1220 Neptune Ave., Suite 166, Coney Island, NY 11224; call 800-601-1779; or fax 718-769-0051.

# “Ask the Expert”

Q What are some ways of working with teens who have been in foster care for an extended period of time or have experienced multiple placements during the recruitment process?

A There is no single answer to this question. However, workers are a teen's link to the system and need to continue to provide the teen with positive support. Following are several suggestions for working with teens throughout the process: **1. Educate the teen about the entire recruitment and adoption process.** Explain that there are different types of recruitment, and allow the teen to be a participant in deciding which will be appropriate for him or her. **2. Be honest with the teen.** Let the teen know that it might take awhile (honestly explain what “awhile” means—six weeks or six months or longer). **3. Encourage other adults who are important in a teen's life to support him/her through the entire process.** Other teens who have been adopted through your agency and are willing to share their experiences could also provide insight about the recruitment and adoption process. **4. Keep the teen informed about the progress of the recruiting process** through a short phone call or letter. All of these strategies can help win the teen's support for recruitment and adoption, and can make the whole process easier on everyone—especially the teen. ■

## *Videoconferencing Finds Homes for Teens*

Typically, since children are their own best advocates when finding a family, the most effective recruitment events are those that give families a chance to meet and interact with children. Videoconferencing, a new recruiting technology, connects children and families through interactive television. The two-way transmissions offer a chance for people in different locations to see and speak with one another. According to Lisa Lumpe of The Recruitment Solution, “This is a good format for teens because it lets them be a part of finding their own family.” In addition to being in compliance with the geographic barriers provision of the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997, videoconferencing lets agencies and prospective families establish relationships which can lead to future matches.

Teens have a chance to introduce themselves and answer questions posed to them by prospective families from other locations. “Videoconferencing allows them to shine and gives them a chance to enjoy the spotlight and attention they deserve, if only briefly,” says Lumpe. Teens need the same preparation that they would for any recruitment event, and also must have the option not to be interviewed.

To learn more about videoconferencing, contact Lisa Lumpe, co-founder of The Recruitment Solution in Worthington, Ohio, by calling 614-436-8450 or sending an e-mail to [lumpe@magsinet.com](mailto:lumpe@magsinet.com). ■

## NextUp...

### Upcoming Trainings, Conferences, and Events

**SEPTEMBER 16 - 17**

New York, New York  
*Permanency Planning: Facing the Challenge of Children and Families with HIV/AIDS*, sponsored by the National Abandoned Infants Assistance Resource Center; 510-643-7018.

**SEPTEMBER 29 - OCTOBER 1**

Cape Cod, Massachusetts  
The Walker Trieschman Center's 8th annual information technologies conference—*Tools That Work: Information Systems to Measure Outcomes & Improve Services to Vulnerable Children, Youths, & Their Families*; 617-769-4009.

**SEPTEMBER 30 - OCTOBER 2**

Alexandria, Virginia  
ATTACH's 11th Annual International Conference on Attachment & Bonding—*From Discord to Accord: Composing New Harmonies in Family, Work, & Community*; 703-914-3928.

**OCTOBER 14 - 16**

Jacksonville, Florida  
daniel®'s 6th annual national foster care training conference — *Foster Care Training 1999*; 904-296-1055, ext.1013.

# BulletinBoard

## **ADOPTION 2002 EXCELLENCE AWARDS**

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services is accepting nominations for the Adoption 2002 Excellence Awards in recognition of Adoption Month, in November. Nomination forms are due August 30, 1999.

Call 202-205-8172 to learn more, or visit the web site ([www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/cb/special](http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/cb/special)) for background on the initiative and a list of 1998 award recipients.

## **INTERNET PHOTOLISTING**

The *FACES of Adoption* web site currently features 1,500 children, having added approximately 500 waiting children in the last several months. For more information, call 215-735-9988 or visit the web site at [www.adopt.org](http://www.adopt.org).

*"When I graduated from high school nobody came to watch me graduate. I went all by myself and cried all during graduation. I think even at 19, I am adoptable."*

*Sara - in foster care  
for 14 years*

## *Resources*

**Finding Our Place: The Inside Story on Foster Care** is a guide written by and for young people who are in foster care. This teenager-friendly, spiral-bound book targets young people in the foster care system. Everyone who works with children in the system will benefit from the perspective of these young writers. The guide features information about how foster care works, gives ideas for managing angry feelings, and offers suggestion on how to prepare for the future—life after foster care. "Everyone's in foster care for different reasons. Being in the system teaches you how to deal with things with words and not anger. It is pretty much a chance to start over. You can start here from complete scratch and not have to worry about anything. Say you messed up one place; you can go here and start over. Not many people get a second chance," says Charlie, age 17, in the guide.

For more information about the guide, contact Human Services Associates, Publications Coordinator, 336 N. Robert Street, Suite 1520, St. Paul, MN 55101, or call 651-224-8967. ■

**State Reforms to Promote Adoption Out of Foster Care** is a new booklet that summarizes states' efforts to move children into permanency. Written by Dan Burton, Andrea Kane, and the National Governors Association (NGA), this booklet discusses types of recruitment,

mediation, and subsidized guardianship as ways to help children find permanent homes.

For more information, contact NGA Center for Best Practices, 444 N. Capitol St., Suite 267, Washington, DC 20001; call 301-498-3738; or visit the online bookstore at [www.nga.org](http://www.nga.org). ■

**Deaf Adoption News Service (DANS)**, a special interest group of the World Federation Of The Deaf, provides a free internet listing service for deaf and severely hard-of-hearing waiting children. The text-only listing was launched in 1995 and features children from the U.S. and foreign countries. Families on a private e-mail list, comprised of approximately 400 subscribers, receive broadcasts about the waiting children. Also on the site is a discussion list for families who have or are in the process of adopting hearing-impaired children.

To register a child or for more information, e-mail Jamie Berke at [berke@erols.com](mailto:berke@erols.com), or visit their web site at [www.erols.com/berke/deafchildren.html](http://www.erols.com/berke/deafchildren.html). ■

---

*The Adoption 2002 Support Project is  
funded through a cooperative agreement with  
the Administration for Children and Families,  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
(grant # 90-CO-0865).*