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“Virginia Adopts: Campaign for 1,000” Exceeds Goal

Social Services recognized by Governor McDonnell for significant contributions

RICHMOND – Governor Bob McDonnell announced today that 1,008 children from Virginia’s foster care system, in calendar year 2013, have been adopted or matched with a family who is going through the process of adopting. Bristol City, Campbell County, Fredericksburg, Henrico County, Henry/Martinsville, Louisa County, Petersburg and Virginia Beach were among the local departments of social services recognized for contributing greatly to the success of the “Virginia Adopts: Campaign for 1,000”.

This past May, from the steps of the Governor’s Mansion, Governor McDonnell, joined by former first lady Anne Holton, launched the “Virginia Adopts: Campaign for 1,000” initiative to match 1,000 children in foster care in Virginia with 1,000 families. In mid-summer, the Campaign held informational rallies in nine localities across Virginia where potential adoptive parents learned more about children waiting for adoption and the adoption process. The Campaign also featured two innovative social media campaigns: “100 Kids, 100 Days” and “#IHeartAdoption.” The first campaign “100 kids, 100 days”, used Facebook to share the stories of 100 children in the foster care system waiting for a family, over the period of 100 days. #IHeartAdoption encourages adoption supporters to share photos, along with the hashtag, to voice support of adoption on Facebook and Twitter.

Just days ago, on December 16, Governor Bob McDonnell, along with Governor-Elect Terry McAuliffe, recognized individuals and local agencies whose demonstration of passion and perseverance directly contributed to the success of the “VAdopts: Campaign for 1000”. Private adoption agencies and personnel, along with local departments of Social Services and selected staff, earned a special award of recognition at the Governor’s capstone event held at the Patrick Henry Building in Richmond, VA.

“To date, we have successfully matched 1,008 children in foster care with adoptive families. This is a tremendous achievement,” said Commissioner Margaret Ross Schultze. She continued, “Having exceeded our goal speaks directly to the efforts of our local partners and the mobilization of the many state and local departments of Social Services employees.”

Even having exceeded the goal of matching more than 1,000 children in foster care in Virginia with 1,000 adoptive families, the ground work continues. “An average family entering the foster care system with the purpose of adoption will have done so only after they have been approached about foster care adoption an average of eight times, “ said Paul McWhinney, Director of Family Services at VDSS. “That requires a great deal of grass roots efforts,” he continued, “Each individual involved with this initiative has been instrumental in heightening the awareness of adoption and foster care in Virginia.”

In 2013, Governor McDonnell secured in the state budget \$1.5 million in new funding dedicated to extreme recruitment, general recruitment, and post adoptive services. Governor McDonnell announced last week his biennial budget will include \$27.7 million in new funding for four initiatives targeted at improving foster care and adoption in the Commonwealth.

Award recipients:

Local Departments of Social Services: Bristol City, Campbell County, Fredericksburg, Henrico County, Henry/Martinsville, Louisa County, Petersburg, Virginia Beach

Private Agencies: DePaul, FACES, Casey Family Programs

Local Workers: Brianne Gregg- Bristol City

Crystal Mullins- Wise County

Pam Piero- Richmond City

Mary Coleman- Henrico County

Alva Enoch and Tamar Wood- Roanoke City

April Evans- Henry/Martinsville

Jana Green- Louisa County

Alexis Zoss- City of Virginia Beach

Shawn Larue- Fauquier County

5 Regional Consultants (Tammy Francisco, Dawn Caldwell, Lisa Tully, Tammy Curl, & Jane Joyner) - VDSS

Private Agencies: DePaul, FACES, Casey Family Programs

Adoption Agency Workers:

Liz Nelms – DePaul

Cassandra Graham – Once Church One Child

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