



Faith Community Participation

Children are waiting. Waiting to be part of loving, permanent families. Loving, permanent families that every child deserves and there is a day dedicated to creating these very special families. It's National Adoption Day and it is a collective national effort to raise awareness of the 129,000 children in foster care who are waiting. On National Adoption Day 2009 – Saturday, November 21 – an unprecedented number of courts and communities across the nation will come together to finalize thousands of adoptions of children from foster care and to celebrate all families who adopt.

You can help. Below are just some of the many ways to get involved in National Adoption Day, National Adoption Month and all year long.

Host or Join a Local Event

- Host a National Adoption Day event of your own by inviting members of your congregation or parish to join you for a workshop, picnic, reception or other event in celebration of adoptive families and generate awareness of waiting children. To partner with a local foster care adoption agency, visit www.childwelfare.gov/nfcad. Be sure to let the world know of your efforts on behalf of children who need families by registering your event at www.nationaladoptionday.org.
- Join an already scheduled event by visiting www.nationaladoptionday.org and finding an event near you. There are events in communities all across the nation. Contact the event coordinator to volunteer your time or donate items for the newly formed families.

Support Adoptive Families

- Celebrate when members of your congregation make the choice to adopt. Recognize adoption as a valued way to build families.
- Establish support groups for adoptive parents. Learn how at www.nacac.org or www.AdoptAmericaNetwork.org.
- Host activities and outings for adoptive families.
- Raise funds for medical and educational needs. Donate clothing or other necessities for a growing family. Offer respite childcare.

Share the Message with Your Congregation

- Dedicate one worship service to focusing on adoption. The month of November is the perfect time.
- The weekend of National Adoption Day (November 20, 21 and 22) would even be better.
- Show the 5-minute National Adoption Day video on the urgent the need for families to consider foster care adoption and shares the joy of National Adoption Day celebrations. (For your free DVD, order by emailing carrie_boerio@davethomasfoundation.org or calling Carrie at 614-764-6740.)
- Hang a National Adoption Day banner in your place of worship. (They are free. Order by emailing carrie_boerio@davethomasfoundation.org or calling Carrie at 614-764-6740.)
- Offer your members the booklet *A Child is Waiting: A Step by Step Guide to Adoption*. (Order online free from at www.davethomasfoundation.org or 1-800-ASK-DTFA.)





- Display adoption posters throughout your place of worship. (Order online free from at www.davethomasfoundation.org or 1-800-ASK-DTFA.)
- Dedicate a sermon or message to the topic of adoption. (Visit www.childrensdefense.org for copies of the Children's Defense Fund online and print *Multi-faith Resource for Year Round Child Advocacy and the National Observance of Children's Sabbaths® Weekend*. Examples for Christian faiths can also be found at www.shaohannahshope.org.)
- Allow an adoptive family to give their story during worship or time of fellowship.
- Bring all members who were adopted or did adopt forward for closing worship/prayer. Include a National Adoption Day insert in your service bulletin (artwork available at www.nationaladoptionday.org.)
- Consider establishing an adoption ministry.

How to Effectively Speak About Adoption

Foster Care Adoption Facts

- Children enter foster care through no fault of their own as victims of child abuse, neglect or abandonment. They are removed from their biological families for their own safety and left without a permanent, loving home.
- More than 26,000 foster youth age out of the system each year with no one to call family and no place to call home.
- 46% of foster youth who age out of the system have not completed high school; 48% were unemployed in the first 12-16 months; 25% experienced homelessness within four years after leaving care; 84% became parents outside of wedlock; and 30% became dependent on public assistance.
- Foster care is designed to be temporary, yet the average time in care is almost 21 months, and 33% of children ages 9 and older did not have case plans that included permanency goals for living with a family, but rather include plans for long-term foster care or emancipation.
- 65% of former foster children and youth experienced 7 or more school changes while living in the foster care system.
- The average child waits for an adoptive family for more than 3 years; 19% spend 5 years or more waiting for a family.

Why Encourage Adoption?

- Today in America, 129,000 children in foster care are available for adoption because parental rights have been terminated; however, only 51,000 children are adopted each year.
- Each year, 28% of children and youth who exit foster care leave without a permanent home or belonging to a family, not returning to their biological family or without being adopted.
- 48 million Americans have considered foster care adoption, more so than any other form of adoption. However, they lack awareness and information to move through the adoption process. More needs to be done to connect these families with waiting children.
- 78% of American adults think more should be done to encourage adoption.
- Nearly 40% of American adults have considered adopting a child, if just 1 out of every 500 of these adults adopted, every child waiting in foster care would have a permanent family.
- Many Americans have misperceptions about the foster care adoption process and the children waiting for adoption. They need to know that these children did not enter foster care as juvenile delinquents, that foster care adoption is affordable and that the biological parents cannot try to take the child back.



How to Make Your Presentation More Personal

- Reach out to adoptees or youth currently in foster care to gain insight from their perspective and learn more about their experience. Organizations that work directly with foster youth are wonderful resources; the following can be reached at FosterClub (503-717-1552), Foster Care Alumni of America (703-299-6767) or Orphan Foundation of America (571-203-0273)
- Share true family stories of people who have directly benefited from adoption. The National Adoption Day Coalition maintains a database including the stories of approximately 300 families who have directly benefited from adoption. To get more information about these stories, contact carrie_boerio@davethomasfoundation.org.
- Share information about a foster child waiting to be adopted. Google "Heart Gallery <Your State>" for stories and pictures of children waiting in foster care for their forever families or visit <http://www.adoptuskids.org/Child/ChildSearch.aspx>.
- Use state-specific data on the number of children in care, the length of stay in the care, the number waiting to be adopted, the number of foster youth who age out of care, and other relevant facts. Visit www.kidsarewaiting.org/publications/statefacts or www.kidscount.org/datacenter/databook.jsp for more information.