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February 5, 2015

6th Annual Regional Adoption Exchange

Each January, for the past six years, the Council of Government's Wednesday's Child committee hosts a regional adoption exchange which provides the committee with the opportunity to receive information on dozens of families who are licensed to adopt teenagers, sibling groups, and children with special needs. At this year's 6th Annual Regional Adoption Exchange, the agenda was quite unique. In addition to the parent presenters, members of the committee from more than 10 child-placing agencies had the opportunity to then exchange information on



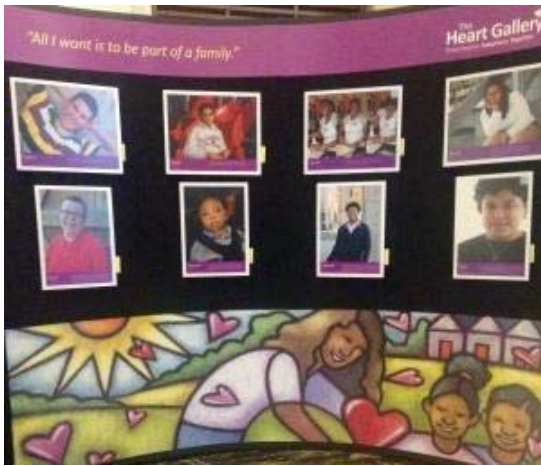
children waiting for a forever family. This year's exchange was also different in that public agencies in association with the Council of Governments were invited to come present some of their families along with returning private agencies. Presenters included:

- Adoptions Together's Adoption Works Program
- Barker Foundation's Project Wait No Longer Program
- United Methodist Family Services of Virginia
- Howard County Department of Social Services
- Montgomery County Child Welfare Services
- Prince George's County Department of Social Services
- District of Columbia Child and Family Services Agency
- Fairfax County Department of Family Services
- City of Alexandria Department of Community and Human Services

This addition to the annual exchange was done in hopes that the information exchanged would lead to long lasting adoption connections. By the end of the meeting, we were one step closer to reaching this goal. Both parent and child presenters were able to discover interests on behalf of their children and families.

As the meeting came to a close, presenters connected with one another in regards to their sparked interests, and exchanged more information. Moments like these encourage the hope of finding forever families for children who desire a loving home.

The Heart Gallery Presented by Adoptions Together



The Heart Gallery is a traveling photo exhibit of children in foster care that are waiting for a forever family. On January 7th, The Heart Gallery chose COG as its home for two weeks. The Heart Gallery displayed some new and familiar faces, all of which brightened the lobby with their heartwarming smiles. Two thirds of the children featured in the Gallery were also featured on Wednesday's Child. Over the course of those two weeks, all employees and visitors of the building, were able to see why child welfare seeks diligently to recruit potential adoptive parents for children who need families; families like yours. To view children of the Heart Gallery

presented by Adoptions Together, who reside in the DC, Maryland, and Virginia areas, please click [here](#).

Jurisdiction Spotlight: Arlington County

During the holidays, many are motivated to be cheerful givers, especially to those in need. This past holiday season, Arlington County received an abundance of generous donations from local patrons.

Over 100 attendees enjoyed a holiday party given by the Arlington County Foster Care/Adoption Program with seasonal decorations that were provided by Macy's. Guest entertainment included: a performance by Yorktown High School Choir, arts and crafts, raffles, and gaming stations provided by Microsoft.

It didn't end there. Every child and youth in attendance was able to receive a holiday gift and one of the 190 winter coats that were donated by Arlington County firefighters.



Story contributed by: Erica Serrano

Recent Wednesday's Child Features



Hadriana, or Haddie as she prefers to be called, is a young lady who loves hugs and sharing her beautiful smile with the world. Haddie is on the brink of transitioning from foster care into adulthood and needs a loving family or individual who can commit to being her lifelong support system. To learn more about Haddie, please call 88-TO-ADOPT-ME, or click [here](#).

Photo credit: Shelley Miller

Nahif (left) and Niashown (right) share a sibling bond that provides them with similar interests. Both boys enjoy sports, especially football, seeing new place, and going out to eat. While Nahif also loves music, Niashown has dreams of one day meeting a professional football player, particularly of the Ravens. To learn more about Nahif and Niashown, please call 88-TO-ADOPT-ME, or click [here](#).



Photo credit: Shelley Miller

Donald is a chocolate milkshake lover. He also



enjoys high activity, such as walking and playing ball. Donald would like to be a professional football player or policeman when he grows up. To learn more about Donald, please call 88-ADOPT-ME, or click [here](#).

Photo credit: Shelley Miller

In Other News...

The White House has been planning initiatives for improving the outcomes of our nation's foster youth before they age out of the system. Those who age out of the foster care system often lack the tools necessary to flourish as an adult in the "real world". The Administration of the White House and its partners has announced new steps they are taking to further support the youth of foster care. These new steps involve:

- Ensuring access to healthy meals
- Protecting the welfare of Native youth
- Building financial security
- Keeping young people in their homes and out of the justice system
- Creating clear pathways to employment
- Supporting educational success and
- Developing public service and private investment opportunities

In addition to these steps, the White House hosted an event featuring Vice President Joe Biden, followed by the screening of the new film Annie, for foster youth and alumni from around the country.

To read more on how the White House has planned to support the foster youth of our nation, please click [here](#).

