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The Heart Gallery of Illinois is administered by Adoptions Unlimited, Inc., a 501(c)(3) non-profit guided by a collaboration of volunteers and organizations including:



Illinois Lt. Governor Pat Quinn

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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***Heart Gallery of Illinois* takes unique, interactive approach to adoption at state's first exhibit of its kind**

CHICAGO – On Friday, November 4, 2005 at 6:30 p.m. at Chicago Children's Museum on Navy Pier, the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services, Adoption Information Center of Illinois and the Office of Lieutenant Governor Pat Quinn will join together to unveil the first-ever *Heart Gallery of Illinois*.

The *Heart Gallery of Illinois* will showcase foster children from across the state that are currently waiting to be adopted. The children range from ages 6 to 17. Although most are individually looking for a "forever family," a number of the photographed children come from sibling groups.

Illinois has never seen anything like the *Heart Gallery of Illinois*. The exhibit started as an idea at first, after a number of soon-to-be committee members read newspaper articles about Heart Galleries around the country. Creativity, volunteerism and dedication soon became the backbone of this project.

"Our exhibit is designed to be a voice for the Illinois foster children who dream of being an essential part of a loving family," said *Heart Gallery of Illinois* co-chair Lynn Goffman. "We are trying to reach out to families who want to offer a child a comforting sense of security and to make a difference in the lives of these hopeful children."

DeAudey Davis, *Heart Gallery of Illinois* co-chair and Director of Adoption Information Center of Illinois said, "It has been exciting to see how all of the entities have partnered for one common cause -- to get children adopted. Just as it takes a village to raise a child, it also takes one to get children adopted."

One unique aspect of the *Heart Gallery of Illinois* is photography. Not only do the pictures capture the child's spirit and personality, the photographers working with the children are offering their time and talent for free. *Heart Gallery of Illinois* photographers come from all across the state and have spent hours preparing for the shoots.

The mission of the *Heart Gallery of Illinois* is to increase public awareness about Illinois' "waiting children" and to also encourage more families to consider adoption.

"The Illinois Department of Children and Family Services is pleased to be included in this significant initiative that will make a difference in the lives of many Illinois children," said DCFS Guardian D. Jean Ortega-Piron. "Adopting a child is a big commitment. But it's the kind of commitment that offers the most rewards and personal satisfaction. We are looking for parents who are patient, kind, funny and know how to listen. Ultimately, these children need families that will provide them with a life that is rich in love and acceptance."

The Heart Gallery was founded by the New Mexico Children, Youth and Families Department in 2001 as a way to help foster children in protective custody who are waiting for adoptive families step from the shadows into the light. As a result, many children have been adopted, including older children and sibling groups.

The *Heart Gallery of Illinois* is free and open to the public on November 4. The exhibit will remain at Chicago Children's Museum on Navy Pier through November 6. After the Chicago debut, the *Heart Gallery of Illinois* will travel to a number of museums, galleries and public spaces throughout Illinois.

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