



A Publication of the Alabama Foster Adoptive Parent Association

Connections

Fall 2007

AFAPA BOARD

William "Buddy" Hooper,
President

Grace Wood,
VP, Foster Care

Mary Smith VP,
Adoption

Libby Gay,
Treasurer

Brenda Caudle,
Secretary

Members At-Large:

Martha Hooper
Julia Ann Hyde
Barbara Lawrence
Leroy Smith
Cheryl Anthony
Joette Vick
James Wood
Gina Nixon
Linda Williams

SDHR
Liaisons:
Connie Rogers
Marie Youngpeter

Regional Reps:

Joe Anthony Region 1
Dollie Mims Region 2
Shirley Merrills Region 3
Mary Smith Region 4
(acting)

Ida Ellis Region 5
Chris Handley Region 6
Sue Thomas Region 7
Christy Kendrick Region 8
Doris Wise Region 9

NATIONAL ADOPTION DAY 2007 – NOVEMBER 17

ABOUT NATIONAL ADOPTION DAY

National Adoption Day is a collective national effort to raise awareness of the 114,000 children in foster care waiting to find permanent, loving families. For the last eight years, National Adoption Day has made the dreams of thousands of children come true by working with courts, judges, attorneys, adoption professionals, child welfare agencies and advocates to finalize adoptions and find permanent, loving homes for children in foster care.

National Adoption Day is celebrated every year on the Saturday before Thanksgiving. For the first time in 2006, National Adoption Day was celebrated in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. In total, more than 250 events were held throughout the country to finalize the adoptions of more than 3,300 children in foster care, and to celebrate all families who adopt.

We will be celebrating National Adoption Month here in Alabama on November 15th at the Hoover Public Library at 5:30 PM. Come join us to help celebrate. This will be a collaboration celebration between State DHR, The Heart Gallery, Alabama Post Adoption Connections, and The Alabama Foster & Adoptive Parent Association. Last year there were more than 30 adoptions finalized state wide on this day.

In addition to this celebration there will be many other celebrations in various counties across the state. November 4th at Tuscaloosa DHR 2-4. November 8th an Adoption Awareness Fair at Madison County DHR 5-7. November 10th Randolph County DHR will have an adoption information booth at a local health fair. November 27th an Adoption Fair at Bethel Church in Walsboro from 2-8.

To wrap up the month of Adoption Celebrations the Alabama Foster and Adoptive Parent Association will host a celebration in Montgomery November 27th on the Capital Steps. Please come join us to help celebrate Adoption in Alabama.

EVENTS TAKING PLACE IN ALABAMA

BIRMINGHAM

Jefferson County Department of Human Resources Ado

Jefferson County Probate Court
716 Richard Arrington Blvd.
November 16 • 1:00 p.m.

Event Details:

The Jefferson County Department of Human Resources will give the gift of permanency to local children at it's second annual adoption event. Jefferson County DHR in partnership with Jefferson County Probate Court Judges will finalize 16 adoptions on November 16, 2007. On November 17, 2007 these families will be recognized at Jefferson County DHR 1st annual Adoption Month Field Day.

MOBILE

APAC Region III National Adoption Month Celebration

857-B Downtowner Blvd
November 1 • 11:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Event Details:

APAC's National Adoption Month Kick-Off Event held Saturday October 27, 2007 will offer children's health screenings, displays by Wendy's Wonderful Kids, displays by local Dept. of Human Resources and other adoption-related organizations. Emergency Vehicles- Fire truck/fire safety, local police/safety, clown, puppet shows on diversity, live radio broadcast with food and prizes.

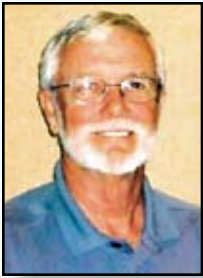
MONTGOMERY

National Adoption Month Appreciation Conference

Capital Heights United Methodist Church 2000 Winona Avenue
November 9 • 10:00 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.

Event Details:

Alabama Post Adoption Connections (APAC) is hosting a mini conference for foster and adoptive families and professionals that work with these families. We are going to have a session on "Behavior Management" and a session called "Families and Social Workers Answering the Call." Lunch will be provided.



From the President of AFAPA

It is hard to believe it has been 3 months since our last newsletter. It is also hard to believe that I have driven more than 8000 miles since the first of July attending meetings for AFAPA and have made 3 out of

state trips meeting with other states concerning foster and adoptive parents. Many of these instate trips were to attend local foster parent association meetings to share with them what AFAPA is about and how we can work with them to provide training and advocacy for the foster and adoptive parents in their area. One of the trips I made recently was to sit on a GPS Panel in Morgan County. There were 2 GPS Classes who brought friends and relatives to hear questions asked of a panel consisting of myself, a judge from Morgan County and foster and adoptive parents from Morgan County. There was also lots of good food. Here are a few pictures from that night. There about 40 people in these 2 classes.

As we travel more and meet more foster parents the more we are hearing back from them. Just this last month we received 113 calls with a total of 543 minutes on our 888-545-2372 number. Some of these calls were simply to get more information on fostering or adopting and some were foster parents requesting an advocate. We also either made or received 411 (more than 20 hours total) calls on the AFAPA cell phones specifically to foster or adoptive parents or DHR offices. From my home phone there were also 42 calls made long distant for advocacy calls. I don't have the number of calls

made to my regular home phone with questions about AFAPA, I would estimate it to be at least 2 a day or 60 a month. So you can see we are hearing from you and hopefully you are hearing back from us. If you do make a call and leave a message please call back if you haven't heard from us within 2 days. Sometimes because of bad connections the message on the voice mail is hard to understand so we are not able to return the call.

Now for the emails, over the past 4 months I have received more than 500 emails from foster and adoptive parents, National organizations, other advocacy groups, and inquiries about how to become a foster or adoptive parent. Some of these are easy to answer others require help from other board members and advocates.

I want to take this time to thank everyone who had a part in the planning for the September training meeting in Cullman, and Greenville. We consider both a huge success with more than 200 foster and adoptive parents attending. Some said this was some of the best training they have ever received. Thanks to the workshop presenters and the training committee for making this possible. We will be planning more of these type meetings in the future in addition to our annual conference. **Please mark the date May 9th & 10th, 2008 for our annual conference which again will be held at Shocco Springs Conference Center.**

Again my contact numbers are 888-545-2372 or 256-507-3273. My email is buddy@afapa.org. Please visit our web site for more information.



AFAPA \$1000 STUDENT SCHOLARSHIPS

Frequently asked questions about AFAPA Student Scholarships

Who's eligible?

All graduating seniors & college-age (22 years old or less) children in care as well as birth and adopted children of foster parents are eligible to apply for an AFAPA scholarship.

Could the scholarship be used for trade school?

Most definitely!

Can the funds be used for books?

Yes, the scholarship funds can be used for tuition, books, lab fees, or supplies purchased thorough the school account.

When should I apply?

The deadline for applications is normally mid-February. Please check back for a specific deadline for 2008 on afapa.org web site or call 1-888-545-2372

Do my grades matter?

AFAPA scholarships are not based on academic achievement. Rather, our review committee will be looking at each individual's needs and goals.

What if I decide not to attend school this year after I am granted the scholarship?

You would not be able to use the scholarship, you would be able to apply for another scholarship when you did start back to school if you are under age 22.

Where can I get an application?

Call the AFAPA office to have one mailed to you 1-888-545-2372. The applications are also on the www.afapa.org web site.

How long has AFAPA been awarding scholarships?

The AFAPA awarded its first two scholarships in the spring of 1999.

Important things to know about AFAPA Scholarships

If chosen to receive scholarship, provide proof of acceptance into a college/university/trade or vocational school is required.

Submit application with (3) three letters of recommendation. Letters can be from foster parents, case workers, teachers, principals, guidance counselors, employers, pastors ect.

A letter giving permission to publish name and photo if chosen for scholarship must be submitted with application.

On a separate sheet of paper and in your own handwriting, make a brief statement of why you are applying for this scholarship. Include your hopes for the future and what you expect to contribute to society.

Be no older than 22 years of age.

Unused portion or appropriate percentage of funds must be returned if recipient withdraws or does not report to school as scheduled. Applies also if student does not maintain grade point average required by institution to remain in school.

Scholarships funds are paid directly to the college/university or vocational school and are deposited into students account. Funds are not paid directly to student and may not be used for personal items.

Scholarship funds may be used for tuition, maintenance fees, books, and or school supplies.

Policy for scholarships

Information should be place in Connections Newsletter closest to the beginning of the New Year. Deadline to be set by Scholarship Committee.

Scholarship Committee will collect applications and check for correct information. Attempts will be documented to contact students with missing or incorrect information .

Three Judges reflecting diversity will be selected by the Scholarship Committee. Judges will use scoring sheets supplied by the Scholarship Committee to judge each application.

Judges will send scoring sheets back to the Scholarship Chair. Scholarship Committee will then select winners.

All applicant names and contact information will be given to AFAPA Secretary. Secretary will send letter of congratulations or regrets to each applicant.

Time permitting winners names and pictures will be printed in the AFAPA conference brochure and Connections Newsletter.

Treasurer will send checks to appropriate schools after receiving information from students.

Foster & Adoptive Parent Scholarships available for the National Foster Parent Conference in Atlanta, Georgia May 13th, 14th, and 15th, 2008 To receive an application call the AFAPA toll free number 1-888-545-2372

Policy for AFAPA Scholarships to National Conferences

- Confirmation that applicant is a regular member of AFAPA must be documented on application.
- Application must include name, address, phone number, and email address of applicant.
- AFAPA board members are not eligible for AFAPA scholarships.
- A scholarship recipient must wait 2 years before submitting another request.
- Only one family member may receive a full scholarship. If a couple are accepted the amount of scholarship may be increased for added expenses such as registration fee.
- Any person who is being paid or reimbursed to attend the conference for which they are applying (such as workshop presenters ect.) are not eligible to receive a scholarship from AFAPA.
- Amount of scholarships will vary depending on location of conference and the number of scholarships awarded.
- Scholarship recipients must sign up and attend all workshops unless special permission is given prior to the conference. Check for scholarship will only be given after proof of attendance is presented to designated AFAPA board member.
- The Scholarship committee after conferring with the AFAPA board will publish which national conferences will be eligible for scholarships each year and how many scholarships will be awarded for each conference. In the event more applicants are received than there are scholarships available a random drawing will be held to choose the winners.
- To be considered for the National Foster Parent Scholarship applicant must be willing to become a member of NFPA so as to receive the discounted registration fee. The cost of joining NFPA is \$35 annually and will be reimbursed to chosen applicants after proof of membership. NFPA members are also eligible for a scholarship from NFPA.

"WALK ME HOME, TO WHERE I BELONG"

NFPA Announces Nation Wide Event to help Foster Families

Walk Me Home will be a 5K/3.2 mile walk conducted throughout the US and throughout Alabama. It is an event that is patterned after the American Cancer Society's Relay for Life event. The ACS now conducts their Relay for Life event internationally and they have over 4,800 locations within the US, raising several hundred million dollars annually. While I don't expect our event to raise that kind of money, I know it will generate more money than any other event we have ever done.

This event is being sponsored by the National Foster Parent Association and currently 26 states including Alabama have signed up to participate. More information will be in the next issue of connections. There will be training by NFPA on how to conduct this event in Alabama and we will be sharing that with our local associations as time permits. 70% of the money raised will stay here in Alabama to help our foster families with 30% going to the National Foster Parent Association to help with projects that also help foster families all over the nation including families in Alabama. We are willing to work out agreements with local associations who would like to help set up events in their county with part of the proceeds going to the local associations.

This event will take place on different dates in May and we may even try to have one coincide with our May 9th & 10th conference at Shocco. There will be one main event day on May 3rd that will be taking place the same day all over the US. This May 3rd event will be held in Montgomery.

AFAPA and SDHR sign new contract for 2007-2008

Funds from the State DHR Contract will be used for the following purposes.

The Alabama Foster and Adoptive Parent Association in contract with the State Department of Human Resources shall provide the following during the contract period.

- AFAPA will meet Quarterly with the Office of Permanency to discuss and strategize solutions in addressing issues facing foster and adoptive families and the children currently in the foster care system.
- AFAPA will partner with the Office of Permanency through participation and coordination of events and awareness during National Foster Care Month in May and National Adoption Month in November.

HITTING THE M.A.R.C.

Establishing Foster Care Minimum Adequate Rates for Children

Dear Colleague,

On behalf of Children's Rights, the National Foster Parent Association and the University of Maryland School of Social Work, I am pleased to announce the release of a new report, **Hitting the MARC: Establishing Foster Care Minimum Adequate Rates for Children.**

This report provides the first-ever nationwide, state-by-state calculation of the real expenses of providing for the basic needs of children in foster care and proposes a new standard rate — called "the Foster Care MARC" — for each state to use in fulfilling the federal requirement to provide foster parents with payments that cover children's needs.

The report reveals widespread deficiencies in reimbursement rates across the nation and major disparities among the states. Only Arizona and the District of Columbia are currently hitting the MARC; 23 states must raise their rates by 50 to 100 percent to reach it, and five states must more than double their rates to comply.

To read the entire report and see Alabama's standing go to the web site www.childrensrights.org.

Sincerely,



- AFAPA will host an annual conference each year during the period of the contract for up to 500 participants, the majority of which include foster and adoptive parents. In addition, invitations will be extended to county and state staff as well as Alabama Post Adoptive Connections (APAC) to participate and have opportunity for developing and supporting partnerships.
- AFAPA will provide two regional one day training sessions to be held in the North and South Regions that supports and enhances the capacity of foster and adoptive families.
- AFAPA will have Regional Representatives to serve 9 regions through attendance at local County foster and adoptive parent association meetings upon request by either the local association or county DHR staff. This participation will involve

strengthening communication between the county office and the association as well as ongoing training that support the association's capacity to serve children.

- AFAPA will work in partnership with the Department to have trained advocates to support foster and adoptive families through their attendance at ISP meetings, meetings involving grievances and as a support for foster and adoptive parents as additional needs are identified.
- AFAPA will provide access to information and referral for families interested in fostering or adopting as well as for current foster and adoptive families through maintaining a website, a toll free telephone number and through distribution of quarterly newsletters.
- AFAPA will provide a minimum of six and a maximum of ten \$1000.00 scholarships to eligible foster children for expenses associated with college through an equitable selection process.
- AFAPA will provide scholarships for foster and adoptive parents to attend National meetings and Conferences held out of state, to include the National Foster Parent Association, and the North American Council on Adoptable Children as funds permit.

Attention all pre-adoptive parents. In order to be considered for these children or other children in state's custody you must have your home study on file at the state DHR office of Permanency. Contact your social worker if you are not sure it is.

MEET DUSTIN

Dustin, born June 1992 is a mellow child who is in the 7th grade (2007-08 school year). His favorite past time is drawing and collecting car paraphernalia. He is usually pretty quiet but does need occasional assistance with his temper and social skills. He is making steady progress in these areas. Dustin is a smart child that could easily succeed in his educational endeavors given a stable home environment. His relationship with peers at school are average and again, he is making great improvements in this area.



Dustin enjoys being with others. He needs a family that will provide him assurance that he will be their son forever. Dustin needs a supportive, nurturing family to help him grow into a well-adjusted young man. He needs a family that will understand his anxiety about his past and his future and can assure him he deserves a loving, stable home life.

Foster Parent Bill of Rights & Legislative Update

Linda Williams Chair of AFAPA Legislative Committee

In 2004 the Alabama Foster Parent Bills of Rights was written into law.

Act, 2004-257

We have worked hard in getting this law followed, but still see a serious need of strengthening the Foster Parent Bill of Rights through the state legislature. We need everyone's help in being a voice for foster parents across this state, so they can be a voice for their foster children.

We need every foster parent to make their legislatures in their district a part of their family. There is so much going on during the session our children are the last thought of on any agenda. We need to write letters letting our legislatures know about our families, invite them to dinner and our home. You can use first names of your children and tell of your daily life the fun, the stress. We have to put our children in front of our state leaders.

Mail your letter to their homes, wives are more child friendly and will help inspire their husbands. You can email or call and I can give you your legislators address and name. If number one were taken serious, we would not lose so many foster parents and would be able to better recruit foster and adoptive families.

(1). The right to be treated with dignity, respect, trust, value and considerations as a primary provider of foster care and a member of then professional team caring for foster children. This is common sense, but we must do more training to let all people concerned that this is a law and not just words on a paper somewhere.

AFAPA is more than happy to go anywhere and train on the Foster Parent Bill of Rights. We now have mouse pads with the law written down so it is there to help remind all of us to respect each other and follow the law.

Linda Williams
Legislative chair
205-655-7658 • Email lw52linda@aol.com

There is also a push for a National Foster Caregiver Act. This will include foster, adoptive and kinship parents. It is almost like the foster parents bill of rights other states have, but they are having the same problem of being ignored or no accountability.

This Federal law will be tied to federal dollars going to each state. The National Foster Parent Association and its committees are working with HHS to make sure everyone is respected and a professional part of the team.

There will be more to follow.

National Foster Parent Association Code of Ethics for Foster Parents

The Code of Ethics is a public statement by the National Foster Parent Association that sets clear expectations and principles to articulate basic values and to guide practice. Family foster care is a public trust that requires foster parents, with essential supports from their agencies, to be dedicated to service for the welfare of the children in their care. Each foster parent has an obligation to maintain and improve the practice of fostering, constantly to examine, use and increase the knowledge upon which fostering is based, and to perform the service of fostering with dignity, integrity, and competence.

Context

A Code of Ethics for Foster Parents must be viewed within the context of the service delivery system in which individual foster parents are affiliated. Foster Parents recognize that while they have the solemn responsibility for the 24 hour care of the children placed with them, their abilities and resources are influenced by caseworkers, the role reciprocals. The National Foster Parent Association urges social work professionals to view the Code of Ethics for Foster Parents within the code of Ethics for Social Worker, promulgated by the National Association of Social Workers: competence, dignity, and integrity, importance of human relationships, service, and social justice (National Association of Social Workers, 1996,p.1).

Principles:

Successful family foster parenting includes competencies in the following domains:

- Principle 1: Providing a safe and secure environment.
- Principle 2: Providing a loving, nurturing, stable family care environment.
- Principle 3: Modeling healthy family living to help children, youth, and families learn and practice skills for safe and supportive relationships.
- Principle 4: Providing positive guidance that promotes self-respect while respecting culture, ethnicity, and agency policy.
- Principle 5: Promoting and supporting positive relationships among children, youth, and their families to the fullest possible extent.
- Principle 6: Meeting physical and mental health care needs.
- Principle 7: Promoting educational attainment and success.
- Principle 8: Promoting social and emotional development.
- Principle 9: Supporting permanency plans.
- Principle 10: Growing as a foster parent, skill development and role clarification; participation in training, professional or skill development, and foster parent support organizations and associations.
- Principle 11: Arranging activities to meet the child's individual recreational, cultural, and spiritual needs.
- Principle 12: Preparing children and youth for self-sufficient and responsible adult lives.
- Principle 13: Meeting and maintaining all licensing or approval requirements.
- Principle 14: Advocating for resources to meet the unique needs of the children and youth in their care (National Commission on Family Foster Care, 1991, p. 17).
- Principle 15: Collaborating with other foster parents and child welfare team, building trust and respecting confidentiality.
- Principle 16: Promoting decisions that are in the best interest of the child/youth, promoting safety, well-being, and permanence.
- Principle 17: Supporting relationships between children and youth and their families.
- Principle 18: Working as a team member.

PLANNING IN THE OFFICE OF PERMANENCY

By Marie Youngpeter, Program Manager

As many of you may already know in March 2007 the Office of Adoption and Office of Foster Care were merged to form the Office of Permanency. Within the Office of Permanency there are now four units that provide focus to improving permanency outcomes for children in care. They include Adoption, Foster Care/ILP, Recruitment/Retention and the Policy/Training units.

The decision to bring the offices together was the result of the Department recognizing the need for a more consistent and integrated approach toward timely achievement of permanency for children and youth in care.

Since this reorganization, Alabama has had a Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) conducted by the federal government. This involved Federal, State and County staff and stakeholders involved in a series of record reviews, interviews and debriefings across the state. This was to help provide a picture of how the system was responding to the needs of children and families. As a result, the review findings revealed a system which has improved and is functioning well in many areas while also acknowledging that work around timely achievement for permanency continues to need ongoing focus. This did not come as a surprise to anyone, as this is an area where nationally State child welfare programs are challenged.

In the upcoming months the Department will be developing program improvement planning (PIP) that addresses the review findings while continuing to identify strategies to address barriers impacting timely achievement of permanency. Several of you may have already been approached about participating in these efforts.

Some of the areas to be addressed include:

- Timely Achievement of Permanency
- Needs of Teens in Foster Care
- Moving Cases through the Legal System
- Concurrent Planning
- Involvement of Relatives and Fathers
- Recruitment/Retention of Resources

As the manager for the Office of Permanency I am excited about the opportunities that are available as we plan our work for the next several years. In doing so I would like to encourage and invite you to share your ideas or thoughts toward improved outcomes for Alabama's children, youth and families with our office.

You may contact: Marie Youngpeter, Program Manager
Office of Permanency (Email) Marie.Youngpeter@DHR.Alabama.gov
(Tel.) 334-242-9500

MEET ADAM



Adam, born May 2001, is very bright, makes friends easily and doesn't see his disability as a "negative." Adam uses a motorized wheelchair to get around and has a classroom aid who helps him out at school.

Adam's foster mother tells us he loves Thomas the Train and cars of most any kind -- especially small ones so that he can handle them. He enjoys videos and

singing along, using a microphone if there is one nearby. He likes to push buttons and is very good at video games. Thomas is very smart. He does well with oral games where you ask the questions and he gives the answers.

Adam is loving and polite. he can smile and melt your heart. He loves to be held close. He likes for his foster mother to put him in his gait trainer and give him a comb or brush and let him comb her hair.

Adam is in Kindergarten at school. His favorite subject is art because he likes to cut and paste. He goes to church and particularly enjoys his Sunday School class. He plays baseball in the Miracle League. His most proudest moment was when he stood for the first time along -- for 18 seconds. When he grows up he says he'd like to be truck driver, "because my Paw Paw drives a big truck".

If he had three wishes that could come true, they'd be
(1) Go BACK to Disney World
(2) Feed himself
(3) Be able to walk someday

He'd also like to meet Ronald McDonald one day.

Adam needs a forever family. We are looking for an approved adoptive family in Alabama who are also approved as foster care providers because his placement has a legal risk associated with it.

MEET THE FOUR OF US



Javaris is a likeable, intuitive, young man born August, 1995. His favorite subject in school is history because he likes talking about things that happened long ago. He is a football fan and dreams of becoming a rookie receiver, like Terrell Owens! He enjoys playing and being outside. His favorite food is pizza and he has a keen understand-

ing of what adoption means. He defines it as "a person taking you in as their own". Javaris loves his siblings, is concerned for their well being and also wants to inform if they misbehave. He is trying his best in school and is doing well at this time.

Orlando is a handsome, energetic, boy, born August 1997. He too has a love for pizza and football. Orlando says that his favorite subject in school is math and that he loves Christmas holidays. He wants to be Spiderman when he grows up because "He can save the day!"

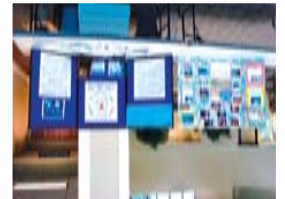
Orlando needs some special attention in school and learns better in a smaller classroom. He is working hard in the areas of math and science and makes average grades overall.

Demetrius is a cute, lively, born November 1998. He continues the theme with the love of pizza like his older brothers and he also likes to go to McDonald's. His favorite subject is math and says that his teacher helps him a lot with multiplication. He wants to be a policeman when he grows up because they save people and he wants to do the same. He enjoys video games and Thanksgiving is his favorite holiday. He says that adoption is when "someone keeps you forever". Demetrius is a good student and is making A's and B's.

Beatrice, otherwise known as BB, is a princess at heart! Born in October, 2000 she loves Disney Princesses and Barbie Dolls. She likes to wear crowns and wants to take cheer leading. She loves, Easter, Christmas and Spaghetti. She enjoys playing with her stuffed animals and baby dolls. She is working hard at school and is in need of special attention in the areas of reading and writing. She is soft spoken most of the time and likes getting her picture taken!

Articles can be submitted to Buddy Hooper, Editor. E-mail submissions should be addressed to afapa@afapa.org. Otherwise, mail to AFAPA 1091 County Road 1659 Cullman, AL 35058. Deadline dates fall the first of the month in February, May, August, & November.

CONNECTIONS INFO:



1091 County Road 1659
Cullman, AL 35058
1-888-545-2372
www.afapa.org



NON-PROFIT
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
Huntsville, Alabama
Permit #780