



Newsletter

January 2012

A Publication of the Alabama Foster & Adoptive Parent Association

AFAPA SPECIAL "WAITING CHILD" EDITION



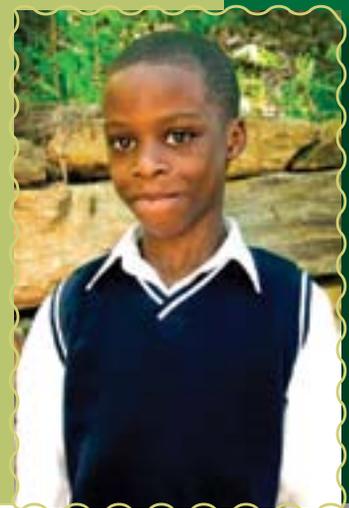
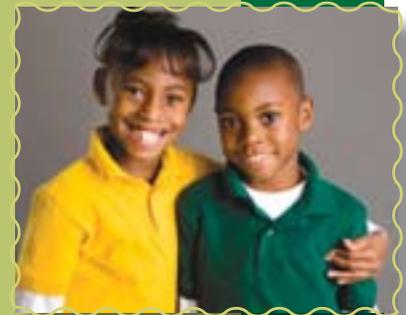
As you will notice this edition of *The AFAPA* newsletter focuses on Alabama's Waiting Children. The features in this newsletter are only a portion of the children that are available for adoption from Alabama's foster care system. You can see more children by visiting the following web sites www.heartgalleryalabama.com and www.dhr.alabama.gov (once on this page, click on "adoption", and go to the bottom of the page and click on "waiting children" and then click on "browse".) From the child or sib group's profile on these sites you can complete and submit an inquiry form. The inquiry forms are electronically transmitted to the staff with the recruitment response team that will respond and follow-up on the inquiries as indicated by your current home study/approval status. If you don't have access to the Internet, you may call 1-866-4AL-Kids (1-866-425-5437) and talk to a member of the recruitment response team.



We want you to know that these children are available for what is typically referred to as a "state-placed" adoption. Although changes to the foster family home approval policies this past year created a "foster family/adoptive resource home" dual-approval status, families wishing to be considered for children not already placed in their home as foster children must have their home studies complete, current and approved by the State DHR Office of Permanency. If you are not sure if you have an approved adoptive home study on file with State DHR, you can call 1-866-4AL-Kids (1-866-425-5437) or send an e-mail to Familie4AKids@dhr.alabama.gov and ask a member of the recruitment response team to check on this for you.

FOSTER PARENT LICENSING REQUIREMENTS

- You must be 19 or older
- Criminal background checks are required for all household members 19 and older
- Clearance of State Central Registry on Child Abuse and Neglect for all household members 14 and older
- You must have family stability
- Statement from physician stating physically able to care for children
- Character references
- Regular source of income that meets your family's financial needs
- Successful completion of a home safety inspection
- Preparation training with homestudy and family assessment
- First Aid and CPR for adults, infants, and children
- If married, must be married at least one year (you do not have to be married)



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A Message from the President of AFAPA

Hope everyone had a wonderful Christmas and a Happy New Years Day.

AFAPA has made a New Year resolution to put forth more effort to find homes for children waiting for a forever home. 2011 saw more than 500 children adopted from foster care in Alabama and around 90 percent of these were by foster parents. This is a good number which can be improved upon in 2012. There are around 300 children who have had TPR and don't have an adoption resource. There are also many children today in group homes who have been in foster care several years who are not included in this number because TPR has not taken place for them for one reason or another. AFAPA recently worked with SDHR and helped find a home for 2 of these children in time for Christmas. A home that welcomed a 17 & 18 year old into their home for Thanksgiving and Christmas and now they are looking to make it a permanent situation. This does not have to be an isolated case I know there are families today willing to do the same thing. These children don't need to go through another Christmas or New Year without a forever family. Permanency is a child's hope, dream and right. I hope you have had a chance to view ads on TV about adoption, you know the ones that say you don't have to be perfect to be an adoptive parent. There are no perfect parents and there are no perfect kids, but together they just might make a perfect family. Please take a look at those listed in this

newsletter and also check the website for more pictures and stories. Heartgalleryalabama.com or adoptuskids.org/states/al/browse.aspx.

AFAPA will also be putting more effort into finding new foster and adoptive homes. The retention of current homes will always remain a priority however. It takes a lot of time and resources to go from recruitment to actual placement of children in a home. We will work to avoid many of the reasons foster parents quit. We will offer more training, more advocating, and more information.

Since the last newsletter we have had some good foster parent training at the mini conferences. The one held in Madison had around 80 folks in attendance. As I write this we are preparing for one in Auburn January 14th and we are expecting a good turnout there. Hopefully you will receive this before the training scheduled for Greenville at the Walnut Street Church of Christ on February 11th.

AFAPA's structure has changed in the past few months. Please see the Regional Map in the back of newsletter for more information on who to call in your region and also to see what region you live in.

My hope is that every child featured in this newsletter finds a forever home before the next newsletter is printed. I hope to be able to publish how many were adopted between now and then.

Buddy Hooper
President

WHEN CHILDREN "AGE OUT" OF THE FOSTER CARE SYSTEM

These stats are a few years old but sad to say they are not getting any better. In 2007, only 26 percent of the waiting children in the US who were over the age of 9 would ever be adopted. This from the AFCARS Reporting system. With the help of those reading this the statistics can be changed for the better. Other statistics 20 percent will be homeless, 25 percent will be in jail for a crime, and over 50 percent will not graduate High School. How old is too old to be adopted? When does a child outgrow the need for love and the need for a family? How old is too old for the experiences that make up normal family living? Just look into the eyes of a teenager who has been waiting and you will find the answer. There is no such thing as too old. Sandy left foster care at the age of 18 to live on her own. She spent many years looking for a family she could call her own. Marrying an older man with children she thought she had found it but after several years of physical and verbal abuse she left. When she met Ben and moved in with him it was more for convenience than anything. Later when she found out she was pregnant she again yearned for a family for herself and her unborn child. So reaching out to a former foster family she asked if they would be grandparents to her baby and of course they agreed. Now at age 30 she has found someone to call Mom and Dad and that forever family for her and her child even if it not in writing. So when is someone too old for a forever family, never.

REMINDERS FROM STATE DHR

Foster Parents filing for mileage reimbursement for foster children are requested to turn this in on a monthly basis to avoid delays in payment. Please check with your worker for more information about what is covered for mileage reimbursement. If you have any questions you may call AFAPA.

Foster Parents are reminded that they should not disclose or post information and or photos of foster children on social networking websites such as facebook or twitter, ect.

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ADOPTION LICENSING REQUIREMENTS

- You must be 19 or older
- Criminal background checks are required for all household members 19 and older
- Clearance of State Central Registry on Child Abuse and Neglect for all household members 14 and older
- You must have family stability
- At least one parent must be United States citizen
- Reasonable good health as verified through completed medical forms;
- Character references
- Regular source of income that meets your family's financial needs
- Successful completion of a home safety inspection
- Preparation training with homestudy and family assessment
- First Aid and CPR for adults, infants, and children (for some kinds of adoption only)
- If married, applicants must be married for at least three years (you do not have to be married)

If a particular family does not meet all qualifications, but appears to have considerable attributes for parenting children with special needs and is willing to accept such children, a request for exception may be made to the Office of Permanency prior to proceeding with the application. Said request must come from the county or child-placing application that is processing the application. The request should include narrative and applicable documentation to support why the County Department is recommending the exception.

No exceptions will be granted to the criminal history check requirements.

COSTS TO FOSTER AND ADOPT

FOSTER FAMILIES

- Assessment of a family's capacity to meet their own financial needs is a part of the homestudy process. The family will incur costs of medical examinations. Additionally, there may be a time, especially at the beginning of the foster process, when the foster family will have to spend their money to meet the needs of the child.

ADOPTIVE FAMILIES

- If a family is licensed to adopt through the Alabama Department of Human Resources, no fees are charged to parents who wish to adopt a child who is in foster care in Alabama or another State's foster care.
- Private agencies are also available to license families to adopt. Private agencies will probably charge fees. Please ask each individual agency if they charge fees.
- Fees are usual and customary for legal and court costs. These fees are assessed by the court and attorney.
- Families adopting children who qualify for a subsidy and are in foster care may be eligible for reimbursement of limited nonrecurring adoption-related costs, including legal and court costs. This would be available through the child's state or federal options.
- If your health plan or doctor charges you a fee when you receive the mandatory medical examination from your doctor, you will have to pay that fee to your health plan or doctor.

TAX CREDIT FOR 2011

For adoptions finalized in 2011, there is a federal adoption tax credit of up to \$13,360 per child. The 2011 adoption tax credit is refundable, which means taxpayers can typically get the credit refunded regardless of what they owe or paid in taxes for the year. Even people who have no income can qualify for a refundable credit.

The credit is paid one time *for each adopted child*, and should be claimed when taxpayers file taxes for 2011.

To be eligible for the credit, parents must:

- **Have adopted a child other than a stepchild**
- **And be within the income limits** — How much of the credit parents can claim is affected by income. In 2011, families with a federal modified adjusted gross income below \$185,210 can claim the full credit. Those with incomes above \$225,210 cannot claim the credit; families with incomes between \$185,210 and \$225,210 can claim partial credit.

THE AMOUNT OF CREDIT TO BE CLAIMED

Families who finalize the adoption of a child with special needs in 2011 (see *details below*) can claim the full credit of \$13,360 whether or not they had any adoption expenses.

Example — A grandparent adopts three of her grandchildren from foster care and the state agency paid for all of the fees. However, all three children receive monthly adoption assistance benefits and thus are considered special needs. The grandmother earns less than \$185,210 so can claim the full credit of \$13,360 per child for a total of \$40,080.

Other adopters can claim a credit based on their qualified adoption expenses, which are the reasonable and necessary expenses paid to complete the adoption as long as those expenses are not reimbursed by anyone else. If the expenses are less than \$13,360, the adopters claim only the amount of the expenses. If expenses exceed \$13,360, the maximum credit to be claimed is \$13,360 per child.

Example — A couple adopted two children from China and had \$40,000 in legal fees, travel expenses, and agency fees. They received a grant of \$20,000, leaving them with \$20,000 in qualified adoption expenses. They can claim only the \$20,000 (not the full \$26,720 they might have been eligible for).

WHEN TO CLAIM THE CREDIT

Parents who adopt a child with special needs and are not basing their refund request on expenses claim the credit the year of finalization. Parents who adopt internationally also cannot claim the credit until the year of finalization. Parents who are adopting from the U.S. and claiming qualified adoption expenses can claim the credit either the year of finalization or the year after they spent the funds.

Example — A family begins the process of adopting a U.S. infant in 2010 and incurs \$7,000 in expenses that year plus \$4,000 in 2011, but will not finalize the adoption until 2012. In 2011, the parents can claim the \$7,000 for the 2010 expenses but not the \$4,000 spent in 2011. In 2012 when the adoption is final, the parent can claim the 2011 and 2012 expenses up to the maximum credit.

QUALIFYING AS SPECIAL NEEDS

Families who adopted a child who has been determined to have special needs can claim the full credit of \$13,360 without having any adoption expenses. The credit for all other adopted children is based on the family's qualified adoption expenses.

Basically, a child with special needs is a U.S. foster child who is adopted and receives adoption subsidy or adoption assistance program benefits. The instructions for the 2010 tax credit explain that to be considered a child with special needs, the child must meet all three of the following characteristics:

1. "The child was a citizen or resident of the United States or its possessions at the time the adoption effort began (US child).
2. A state (including the District of Columbia) has determined that the child cannot or should not be returned to his or her parents' home.
3. The state has determined that the child will not be adopted unless assistance is provided to the adoptive parents. Factors used by states to make this determination include:
 - o The child's ethnic background and age,
 - o Whether the child is a member of a minority or sibling group, and
 - o Whether the child has a medical condition or a physical, mental, or emotional handicap."

Just because a child has a disability does not mean the child is considered special needs under the tax credit. Not even every child adopted from foster care is considered special needs (about 10 percent of children adopted from care do not receive adoption assistance support). Those who do not receive any support from the adoption assistance program are likely not to have been determined to have special needs.

Bottom line, if your child does not receive adoption subsidy/adoption assistance benefits, you will likely have to have qualified expenses to claim the credit.

CLAIMING THE CREDIT

Taxpayers should review 2011 Form 8839 instructions ([download PDF](#) • [view HTML](#)) very carefully to be sure that they apply for the credit correctly. Taxpayers are required to file taxes by mail rather than electronically and have to submit certain documentation with the return.

Taxpayers will complete a 2011 version IRS Form 8839 ([download PDF](#)) and submit it with their Form 1040 when they file 2011 taxes. On Form 8839, those who adopted children determined to have special needs can write \$13,360 on line 5 where it asks for qualified adoption expenses. Other adopters should enter their qualified adoption expenses.

IRS Review

In 2010, the IRS reviewed the vast majority of adoption tax credit applications. The review process was often lengthy, with many parents waiting months to hear from the IRS and even longer before they received their refund. In many cases, parents had to resubmit documentation of the adoption and either proof of expenses or special needs determination.

Parents will need to prove the adoption by providing the IRS with a copy of the adoption decree with the official seal visible. Families who adopted a child with special needs must also provide a copy of one of the following: (1) the adoption assistance agreement, (2) a letter certifying that the child has been approved for adoption assistance, and (3) a letter from the state or county child welfare agency stating that the child has been determined to have special needs.

Families who incurred expenses are likely to be asked by the IRS to verify those expenses during the review process. Proof of expenses included copies of receipts, canceled checks, and credit card statements.

WHAT IF I HAVE ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS?

If you have additional questions on the adoption tax credit, contact the North American Council on Adoptable Children at 651-644-3036 651-644-3036 or taxcredit@nacac.org.

CLAIMING FOSTER CHILDREN AS A DEPENDENTS

Dependents who meet a four part test may be claimed as exemptions and listed on the front page of the tax return. The exemption is worth \$3700 for each dependent and can make tax payer eligible for other benefits such as the Earned Income Credit, Child Tax Credit, ect.

1. The child must be your son, daughter, stepchild, eligible foster child, brother, sister, half brother, half sister, stepbrother, stepsister, or a descendant of any of them.
2. The child must be under age 19 at end of 2011 or under age 24 at the end of 2011 and a full time student or any age if permanently and totally disabled.
3. The child must have lived with you for more than half of the year (183 days)
4. The child must not have provided more than half of his or her own support for the year.
5. An eligible foster child is an individual who is placed with you by an authorized placement agency or by judgment, decree, or other order of any court of competent jurisdiction.
6. Note that temporary absences for summer camp, school, or even institutional care do not disrupt the child's residence. In addition, a child born during the year and placed in a home for the balance of the year meets the living arrangement requirement.

To view the full text of the 2011 tax guide for foster parents you can visit the National Foster Parent website www.nfpaonline.org and become a member to view the members only section which has a 26 page guide for foster, adoptive, and kinship caregivers on the 2011 tax laws.

AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRICS ISSUES UPDATED PRACTICE GUIDELINES

The American Academy of Pediatrics issued new practice guidelines for evaluating and treating ADHD in children and adolescents during the month of October, 2011.

The new guidelines update the 2001 guidelines in several key areas, including:

1. Expanding the age for diagnosis from ages 6 - 11 to ages 4 - 18.
2. Diagnosis should follow the established guidelines in DSM-IV, and symptoms should persist over a period of time and across multiple environments and locations.
3. The evaluation should include assessment of other conditions which commonly co-occur with ADHD.
4. ADHD should be seen as a chronic conditions requiring long-term treatment.
5. Treatments should be differentiated by age group.
6. Medication should be titrated if prescribed to find the optimal dosage.

For more information see the [NRC's web page on the AAP's Practice Guidelines](#).

COUNTRY MUSIC STAR JIMMY WAYNE'S WALK ACROSS AMERICA FOR FOSTER YOUTH

Jimmy Wayne (Barber) was born on October 23, 1972 in Kings Mountain, North Carolina. His biological father abandoned him at an early age. He and his sister were sometimes raised in foster homes or were left with other people when their mother would leave them to go off. Wayne ran away and lived with his mother for a brief time before living on the streets and with his sister, Patricia, for a short while. He eventually moved in with an elderly couple, after being hired to mow their lawn. After finishing high school, he worked as a guard at the Gaston Correctional Facility, where he took songwriting advice from an inmate. He earned an associate's degree in criminal justice at a community college. Afterwards he worked as a corrections officer for 4 years before moving to Nashville, Tennessee to pursue his musical interests.

New Year's Day 2012 marked the second anniversary of Jimmy Wayne's start from Monroe Harding youth home in Nashville, Tenn. heading on foot toward Phoenix, Ariz. for his project Meet Me Halfway solo-walk across America, raising awareness for teen homelessness. Jimmy walk for 7 months to help bring awareness to the needs of foster youth

The amount of awareness raised by Jimmy's effort exceeded everything he could have ever wished to have happen. "I think if we accomplished one third of what we accomplished in 2010, it was a success. We accomplished what I set out

to do in the first month. I said if there's one kid helped, it's worth the whole walk. That happened within the first month.

The walk concluded in Phoenix, Ariz. at HomeBase Youth Services August 1, 2010. Although he didn't anticipate it taking seven months to complete, looking back he wouldn't change a thing. "I'm glad I did it," he says. "Every single thing about the walk was perfect to me. It's like I still haven't come down off of the high of it. It's the biggest thing that I've ever done. We raised so much awareness. I could have played music for another 20 years and still wouldn't have raised that much awareness.

"A lot of people ask me why I chose to walk instead of playing a show or something like that. I don't know why, but I do know this; I look at it like fishing. Some of us can sit on the bank and fish or some of us can go deep-sea fishing. There's a big difference. Sitting on the bank is fun and it's safe, but going deep-sea fishing, you've got some challenges going on, but you may catch the bigger fish."

Jimmy is focused on keeping the awareness going strong. Although, he does admit that he misses many aspects of walking the backroads of America. "I think the part I miss the most is the people," he says. "I miss those people out there on the road who cherished one another."

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Alabama Foster & Adoptive Parent Association Sponsored a 5K Walk for foster care May 1st, 2011 in Montgomery, Al at Huntingdon College. There were around 100 who attended and either did the Walk or just came to enjoy the fun. The Walk was just part of the happenings that day as volunteers had games for the kids to play and even a little music and singing by the Smith Family. This was also in celebration of May as National Foster Care Month. Many from SDHR attended along with foster parents and workers from all over the state. The highlight was seeing the kids dressed in their little Walk Me Home shirts playing and having a good time. The plans are for this to be an annual event but local associations don't have to wait, you can plan a walk in your area just about any time of the year. Walk Me Home is Sponsored by the National Foster Parent Association and the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption. Money raised from this event helped AFAPA give out 44 youth scholarships in the year 2011.

Walk Me Home is planned again for Montgomery, Alabama. We would like to have a Walk in Huntsville, Birmingham, and Mobile also, these could be on the same date or another date anytime up to November, 2012. If you are interested in helping with a walk or having a walk in your area please contact your regional representative listed in this newsletter or call 1-888-925-5634.



Alabama Pre/Post Adoption Connections (APAC), a collaborative program of Children's Aid Society and Alabama DHR, would like to invite your family to be a part of our **9th Annual Camp APAC**.

This wonderful event is for adopted children ages 9 to 18, along with their siblings (birth and foster siblings living in the same household). Children in permanent custody of DHR with a plan of adoption by their current placement are also eligible to attend.

This year's camp will be held **June 19-22** at Camp ASSCA in Jackson's Gap, Alabama.

Learn more about Camp ASSCA by visiting their website.

You may apply online for your camper(s). To request a paper application to be mailed to you, please contact Camp APAC Staff at campAPAC@childrensaid.org.

NEW IN 2012: *This year, we do not require a family to submit medical information as required by Camp ASSCA until a camper is accepted to attend.*

Application Deadline February 23

Camper Acceptance

Camp APAC camper acceptance is prioritized by several factors. They include consideration of camp budget constraints and a balanced population; ratio of age, gender, county of residence, type of adoption (public/private) and racial diversity. Camp APAC is designed for children with AND without special needs. Children with physical, mental or educational difficulties are encouraged to apply. However, consideration for acceptance is given when one-on-one special care or attention is not required.

2011 Waiting List Families

2011 Waiting List Families will be given priority consideration for acceptance as long as an application is received by the February 23 deadline.



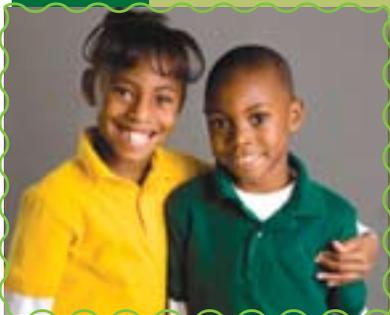
Quintisheyia (nick name "Tish"), born July 1996, is often found to be a leader with children her age and younger. She enjoys music, dancing, singing, reading, puzzles, fixing hair, church activities and being in the spotlight.

She wants to be a hair stylist when she gets older and dreams of owning her own shop.

She is very guarded and does not let others in easily. As with any adolescent, she attempts to find her boundaries and assert her independence. She is a strong advocate for herself and is tenacious in getting her needs met. She enjoys playing sports, talking on the telephone and spending time with family and friends. She is a HUGE University of Alabama fan.

She has shown a caring and nurturing spirit, especially when it comes to her brother. She loves her younger brother and is very protective of him. Tish needs a forever family who is willing to fight for the privilege of being her family and show her trust and understanding as she struggles to realize that she deserves such a family.

Photo provided by www.heartgalleryalabama.com



These two children are part of a wonderful sibling group of six children who were placed in three separate foster homes. Some of the children were recently placed for adoption and one recently passed away. Twins Jermeko and Jermeka remain in foster care and are still available for adoption

Jermeko and his sister **Jermeka** are twins born in February 2004.

Jermeko is very quiet and enjoys sitting back and watching others. He loves to watch TV and would sit in his room all day alone watching TV if allowed to do so. He also likes to play with his toy cars and play computer games. His speech was delayed and he has received speech therapy. Due to his speech delay he is behind in school but is improving in every area with assistance from his foster parents.

Jermeka has a lot of energy and is always busy. She frequently moves from task to task whether is playing with her toys, watching TV, or playing with her siblings. She demands a lot of attention from adults and does not like to be isolated from others. She loves to play with her baby dolls, she draws, and enjoys coloring. She also likes to play outside and ride her bicycle.

Photo provided by www.heartgalleryalabama.com



Victor needs a permanent, structured home with a two-parent family who can support his academic pursuits and help guide him through their secondary and post-secondary years, but more importantly will provide a great deal of love and understanding.

Victor, born January 1998 is quiet, polite, reserved and humour. He appears younger than his stated age. He is very intelligent, is an excellent student and loves school. He considers mathematics to be very easy, requires challenging academics and should be tested for the gifted program. He interacts well with other children and is described as a "model child" and a "good role model" and is attentive to the needs of others.

Victor is in 8th grade in the 2011-2012 school year and earns very good grades. He especially enjoys P.E., lunch and mathematics. He has no health issues and does not take any medication. He enjoys bikes, playing video games (although these need to be limited) and playing outdoors. He currently attends a Methodist church.

Victor deeply desires an adoptive family. Victor has spent several years working through past issues regarding anger towards his birth mother and is remorseful for previous behaviors (displays of anger and unkind comments). He needs a home with a strong male role model and a nurturing mother that will love him unconditionally and help him to achieve his potential. He also loves home-cooking and cornbread!!!

Photo provided by www.heartgalleryalabama.com

Donterius, born in November 1996 and for school year 2011-2012 he is in the 8th grade. He is a handsome young man who has a shy, quiet demeanor. Donterius has a half sister and half brother with whom he still communicates. It is important that Donterius maintain these relationships with his siblings. Donterius likes to listen to music, fish, swim and play computer games. His foster father has taught him to play chess which he seems to enjoy. Donterius likes football and his favorite team is the University of Alabama. He has also recently shown an interest in golf. Donterius enjoys attending church with his foster family. He receives special education services and typically performs well academically. Donterius often needs redirection in the classroom, as he can be easily distracted. Due to past experiences, Donterius tends to be reluctant to open up to adults. He needs a forever family that will be patient, loving, consistent and committed to helping him learn to trust others.





Dustin, born in February 1999 is the oldest of this sibling group of three boys. He is in the 6th grade (2011-2012 school year) and has an open IEP in place for academics if needed. Dustin's grades are average and he maintains passing grades. Dustin enjoys watching TV, playing video games and reading. He likes the Harry Potter Books. He prefers the indoors and enjoys playing by himself. Dustin is physically healthy. He does wear glasses to help him see the black board in the classroom.



Ricky and Daniel are twins born in February 2003. They both like to play outside. They both enjoy watching TV, playing Video games and playing with others. Both Rickey and Daniel have an open IEP for Special Education if needed for academics. Daniel receives services for a speech impediment. Rickey's grades in school are average. Daniel is a straight A student. The boys are both physically healthy. The twins are in the second grade (2011-2012 school year). Daniel and Rickey are very energetic.



These boys all have current therapeutic needs and are placed together in a therapeutic foster home. They are very close and supportive to one another. They look forward to being placed together in a permanent adoptive home.

A Special Thank You to our friends at Heart Gallery for supplying us with photos of the children in need of adoption.



Julian, born September 1993, is currently a junior in high school (2011-2012 school year). He prefers to be called "Chip". Chip is very friendly kid and enjoys entertaining others and making them laugh. He can often be observed singing and writing songs. He enjoys participating in choir performances and talent shows. His favorite type of music is country. He is very interested in continuing his involvement with music and acting. Chip spends a lot of time bowling with friends on the weekends and he truly enjoys this sport. Chip is very socially inclined and enjoys talking to almost anyone who will listen. He finds it easy to make new friends wherever he goes. Chip enjoys school and his favorite subject is history. Chip takes pride in his appearance and is always dressed and groomed well. He is extremely well-mannered and polite. He desires to find a loving family and develop close, lasting relationships.



Michael, born in September 1999, needs a special family to help him grow and strive to be the best that he can be. He needs a forever family that will be able to love him and to care for his special needs. Michael needs a family that will be willing to work with him to adjust to changes in his life. He is on medication for ADHD, which helps him to focus and not be so impulsive in behaviors. Michael is currently in the 5th grade for the 2011-2012 school year and he has an IEP to address specific educational needs. Michael does like to be the center of attention at school. He can be very friendly, but at times needs help in relating to his peers. Michael also needs help in school on following directions and rules.



Michael enjoys watching television and playing video games and will sometimes forget to do homework so that he can continue to enjoy the excitement of games. He does like to relax when he is not in school and likes basketball. Michael admits that he is not good at basketball would enjoy the opportunity to learn.

It is expected that Michael will do better in a home where he is the only child or at least the youngest child. He is the third child in a family of six. Four of his siblings are with relatives but he has no contact with them. He has a younger brother that has been adopted and he maintains contact with that family. He would like a family where there is a father that will be supportive and involved in his activities.

Photo provided by www.heartgalleryalabama.com



Jaquavious, born August 1999 is a very active and out-going person. He is very verbal and communicates well. Jaquavious would rather play with other children than to play alone. He does admit to having problems sharing at times. He is very handy in building things and he does like to try and fix electronic things. He can be very entertaining when he desires to be and likes to make people laugh. Jaquavious is a lover of pasta and eat it for lunch and dinner.

Overall Jaquavious can be a good student. Because of dyslexia he needs extra help reading, but with proper encouragement he can be a good student. He is at time eager to lean and likes to be the teacher's helper. He has a competitive nature and wants to be the best at all that he does. His challenges have been identified as being impulsive in his response and being slightly aggressive when he feels that he is not being heard.

Jaquavious has had a lot of disappointments in his life and he needs a family that can help him to grow and strive to be the best person he can be. He needs a family who is willing to accept and help him to address his special needs. He does take medication and participates in counseling. He wants a family that will love him and encourage him, a family where he will be a valued member and have a sense of belonging.

Photo provided by www.heartgalleryalabama.com



Justin, born in September 2004, is in the first grade (2011-2012 school year). His favorite subject at school is P.E. and he says he likes to play outside on the monkey bars. He enjoys playing outdoors, playing baseball and video games. He likes to go out to eat and isn't a picky eater. He

can be shy at first until he gets to know you. He thrives on structure and affection. He likes to be the center of attention when in a group setting where he feels comfortable. His favorite restaurant is any Chinese restaurant and his favorite food is ice cream. He and his sister have a strong bond with each other. He and his sister are both involved in the Church children's choir. Justin struggles with inattentiveness for which he takes medication. Justin needs a forever family that can help work with him on ways to cope in stressful situations appropriately.

Kayla, born in September 2005, is in Kindergarten for the 2011-2012 school year. She's described as a "bright and bubbly little girl who never meets a stranger". Her favorite restaurant is Pizza Hut and her favorite food is mac-n-cheese. She is active in church and enjoys performing in children's choir. She prefers to play indoors with her dolls, play video games and watch television. She interacts with others and isn't as shy as her brother. She, like her bother, wants to be the center of attention.

Photo provided by www.heartgalleryalabama.com

Kayden and Ashton are fraternal twins born in February 2005. They desire a loving home where they can grow up together. Kayden is an energetic, talkative child. He is also very friendly, outgoing, and funny. Kayden was born with a cleft palate and receives speech therapy and comprehensive services from a children's cleft palate clinic to address communication problems associated with the condition. Even though Kayden and Ashton are twins, Kayden is quite a bit taller than Ashton.

Ashton is a friendly, quiet child. He is more introverted than his brother but gets along well with others. He is very artistic and his teachers have encouraged him to develop his talent. Ashton has difficulty concentrating on his schoolwork at times, but tries hard.

Both boys enjoy participating in Cub Scouts, soccer, basketball, baseball and their Saturday morning bowling league. They like enjoy going to the movies, playing outside, and playing video games. An active family who encourages extracurricular activities would be ideal for Kayden and Ashton.

Dustin born April, 1998 is a loving and compassionate child. He is a very helpful young man who loves to work. Dustin enjoys helping around the house; he enjoys cleaning the house and helping prepare meals. He enjoys being outdoors an taking care of animals. Dustin also enjoys playing sports such as baseball and basketball but is not playing any organized sports at this time. Dustin enjoys attending church weekly. He gets along well with children his own age. He enjoys being around adults and loves to please others. Dustin would prefer to be the only child in the home, if possible; it would be alright if there are older children in the home. Dustin is learning to be positive regardless of the challenges in his life. Dustin is very expressive and talks openly about his problems. Dustin takes responsibility for his actions and apologizes when he does something wrong.

Dustin loves school. He gets upset if he has to miss school. Dustin gets extra help at school and has an adjusted curriculum. He completes his homework without being told. Dustin works independently.

Dustin enjoys eating out and is very sociable. Dustin is very polite and respectful to adults and to older children. He does not like to have a lot of interaction with younger children.

Dustin appears to be able to adjust to any parent type home; however he does need to be in a home with a parent (or parents) who have lots of patience and can tolerate the fact that he exaggerates. Dustin needs to be placed with a family who will allow him to maintain contact with his half-sister.

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Caitlyn, born in May 1998, is in the 6th grade (2011-2012 school year). She has an older sister, Kayla. Caitlyn says that her favorite subject in school is English because she has the best teacher ever. Caitlyn enjoys going to church, playing volleyball, texting her friends and playing with baby dolls. Caitlyn's favorite holiday is Christmas because it's God's birthday. Caitlyn says that if she were an animal she'd be a dog because they are pretty. Caitlyn's favorite food is chocolate and she enjoys spending time with family and friends. Caitlyn says that the thing she likes about herself is that she is nice. She says that the thing other people like about her best is that she is funny. Caitlyn says that adoption means to have someone to keep her safe and to love and know that person is there for her. Caitlyn wants to be a teacher when she grows up because teachers are nice and that are happy all the time.

Kayla was born in April 1997 and is in the 8th grade (2011-2012 school year). She has a younger sister who is 13 years old. Kayla says that her favorite subject in school is math, because she is good at it. Kayla enjoys going to church, texting her friends, cheerleading, playing softball and basketball, being on the drama team at church and fishing. Kayla's favorite holiday is Christmas because she gets to be with family giving presents to one another. Kayla says that if she were an animal she'd be a bunny because they are cute and cuddly. Kayla's favorite food is chicken casserole and her favorite restaurant is Caasadores. She enjoys spending time with friends and says that the thing she most likes about herself is her hair. She says that the things other people like best about her is that she is sweet, kind, pretty and she loves to help people. Kayla says that adoption means she will finally have a family to love and care for her forever. Kayla wants to be a nurse when she grows up because she loves to take care of the babies in the nursery.

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Cody was born November 1996. He is in the seventh grade for the 2011-2012 school year. Cody receives specialized education services in reading, math, and writing and his favorite subject is spelling. He likes to play video games, listen to his MP3 player, work on puzzles, and play basketball and football. Some day he would like to try out for a major league team.

Cody is described as "very sweet, helpful, creative and neat". He likes to help with chores around the house and puts others needs before his own. He loves animals and would like to have a family that has, or would allow him to have a dog. Cody's favorite food is pizza, but he also likes to eat pancakes. Cody hopes that some day he can visit Walt Disney World.

To Cody, having a forever family means caring about each other. Cody needs a family that will provide structure and help him reach his goals in life. He is working on dealing with losses and impulse control. Cody would do best in a home as the only child or with one other child. Cody has three siblings that he would like to maintain contact with.

Joey, born December 1999, is a very outgoing young man. He is in the sixth grade the 2011-2012 school year. Joey's favorite subject is science because he likes the experiments. He also likes to read and play outdoors.

Joey's foster mom describes him as very loving, caring, and friendly, and says that he always tries to find the good in a person. He likes to make people laugh which he says helps them to have a good day. Joey likes to attend church and says his favorite part is the singing. Joey also enjoys listening to music, rapping and writing his own songs. Joey likes to play basketball and wants to be a professional basketball player someday. His favorite food is pizza and he likes to eat out a pizza restaurants.

Joey needs a forever family that would provide structure, consistency, and help him deal with losses and understand the importance of making right choices. Joey also has siblings whom he needs to maintain a connection with.

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Thank you to



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Alexis is a cute, active girl. She is very smart and can have an intelligent conversation with you. She does well in school when she chooses and has been tested as gifted. Alexis has a very charming and friendly personality. She can appear shy when first meeting someone but is usually fairly outgoing, especially when comfortable. She is a very "girlie girl" and enjoys feminine pursuits like dolls, make-up, playing dress-up, etc. Alexis often needs encouragement to maintain daily personal habits.

Alexis has a younger brother that she needs to be allowed contact with on an ongoing basis. Though she sometimes needs reminders about requirements for his special needs, she is loyal and protective of him.

Alexis has endured much in her young life. She has a difficult time with trusting people and will continue to need ongoing skilled therapy as well as medication management for her diagnoses and difficult behavior at this time. Alexis needs to know and experience a family that will be there for her on a permanent basis no matter what. She craves and requires much individual attention by a caretaker, and jealousy or feelings of rejection can be an issue for her without it. Positive attachment to a new family, utmost tolerance and patience by someone who will stick with her through any challenge would be essential keys to a successful placement.

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Terri, born November 1998, has red hair and light blue/gray eyes and is of average height and is a real girlie girl. Terri is a very outgoing, a social butterfly and a joy to be around. Terri is also a devoted Justin Bieber fan who loves to sing. Terri makes average grades. Her favorite subject is science and she likes playing soft ball. Terri's favorite color is pink and she enjoys shopping, riding her bike, reading books and watching television. Terri loves eating wings and fries but her favorite restaurant is Stix.

Terri has expressed that she would like to reside in either the country or city lifestyles, but prefers country living with a family who loves dogs.

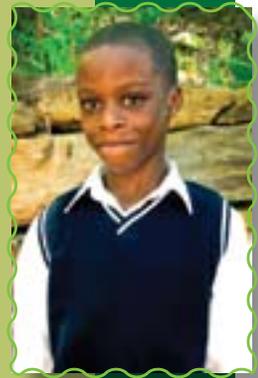
Photo provided by www.heartgalleryalabama.com

Demetrius, born January 2003, is a very caring energetic and smart young boy. He enjoys going to school where he receives special service. His favorite subjects are reading and math. He is a very good reader and his favorite book is "Green Eggs and Ham".

In his spare time Demetrius likes to have fun by going to the park, riding his bike, playing with remote control cars and playing games on the computer or his Playstation PSP. He enjoys playing sports such as baseball, basketball, football, and soccer. He is interested in becoming a police officer when he grows up.

Demetrius understands that being adopted means having a forever family. He needs a family who will have patience and provide him with lots of love and encouragement. He has siblings who are not being placed with him. Demetrius' adoptive family will need to be able to facilitate contact between him and his siblings.

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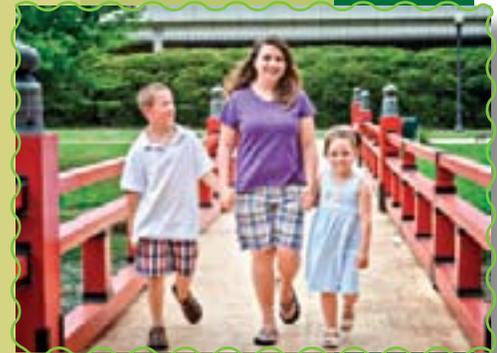
Kimberly was born in July 1994. She is the oldest of a sibling group of six. Kimberly is a very loving and sweet child. She enjoys reading, writing, riding horses, spending time with friends, and doing arts and crafts. She is very creative and enjoys hands on activities. She struggles and

needs extra help in school. Kimberly has an Individual Education Plan that allows her extra time for test taking and assignments. Kimberly wants to be part of a "real" family and reside in the home with her siblings, Sarah and Samuel. Kimberly is very good with younger children and enjoys spending time with her siblings.

Samuel was born in November 2002. Sam enjoys reading, playing baseball, watching television, and drawing. He also loves dogs. He is a very intelligent child. He does well in school and has been described as an overachiever. He is also sweet, affectionate, and likes to help around the household.

Sarah was born in September 2005. She enjoys coloring, dancing, singing, and playing with other children. She also loves all types of animals. Sarah is a loving child and is full of energy. She craves attention and likes to be read to by adults.

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Jacob born in May 1998 cares about and enjoys interacting with others. He is a neat dresser and strives to be the center of attention. And, although Jacob gets pleasure from dining at Chuck E. Cheese and McDonald's, he also delights in eating soup and carrots and celery sticks with ranch dressing.

Jacob enjoys attending church and learning about Jesus. He collects yu-g-oh cards and wishes that he could secure a GOD card in the mix. One of his favorite sports is basketball. Jacob wants to travel to Hollywood one day.

During his free time, Jacob plays with toy transformers, watches cartoons, draws characters and makes up stories and plays involving this characters. Jacob hopes to become employed in the production of games and movies after graduation from high school.

Jacob desires a permanent home with a stable and nurturing family who also has with an abundance of love, understanding, and patience in their heart. He is not opposed to older siblings in the home that will aid him in enhancing his socialization and communications skills as well as give him a sense of belonging.

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Brian born January 2000 is in the 5th grade (2011-2012 school year). He receives extra help in math and reading services. Brian is small for his age. He is very well-mannered and polite. He is a huge Auburn fan and loves anything to do with electronics. Brian is on the swim team and enjoys swimming. Brian also likes video games and singing. He is talkative and loves to help others. His favorite sport is football and his favorite food is pizza. Brian enjoys attending church every Sunday and being involved in the youth activities.

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Kayla, born in March 1996, is a beautiful, bright young lady with an eye for fashion and an ear for music. Kayla loves singing and dancing. She enjoys sports including softball and volleyball. Kayla also has a heart for animals, ESPECIALLY horses! She has experience taking care of horses and helping to train them. Kayla strives academically when she is encouraged to stay focused. She also has lots of dreams for her future. Kayla says she wants to be a lawyer, an animal cop or a photographer when she grows up.

Kayla needs a home that is structured and active. Her brother was recently adopted by his foster parents. The adoptive family for Kayla needs to be willing/able to facilitate/maintain connections between the children. She also has an older brother and sister whom they love very much and would want to stay in contact with.

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Janet "**Michelle**", born in December 1993, prefers the name Michelle. She is a very beautiful young lady with dark blonde hair, blue eyes and a glowing smile. Michelle likes to wear her hair long. She is in the 10th grade (2011-2012 school year). She continues to be optimistic about her future and hopes that one day she will have a permanent family.

She receives special help at school such as modified testing and help with home work. She is currently doing work on a 2nd grade level. She does well with the work she is given. Michelle has only minor behavior problems. Despite her cognitive limitations she has made remarkable progress towards independent living. She can bathe and dress herself and she has recently learned to cook.

Michelle has a younger sister that has been adopted and she sees her whenever possible. Michelle loves animals and enjoys taking care of them. Michelle is shy and it takes time for her to warm up to people

As with most teenagers she may have to be given instructions to something more than once but she follows instructions when given by adults.

Michelle is very well-mannered and loves to help people. She is on some medication for mild depression. She participates in soccer and cheer leading. She also likes to play volleyball and basketball for fun. Michelle also likes to swim and has recently overcome a fear of the water.

Michelle attends church on a regular basis. She likes to go out to eat and likes to watch television. She is very interested in having a forever family that she can love and will love her in return.

Michelle is a lovely and bright child that wants a family to call her own more than anything else.

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Heather was born in June 1997. She is small in stature and wears glasses. Heather is a very loveable child who enjoys being around family. Heather is currently in the 9th grade (2010-2011 school year) and her favorite subject is science and her least favorite subject is math. She receives tutoring in Math after school twice a week. Heather has dreams after graduating from high school and joining the military or going to college to become a mechanic. Heather enjoys being outside playing softball or just running around. She enjoys spending time with her friends or being on the computer. Heather although petite she has a very healthy appetite and is not a picky eater. Her favorite food is pickles, corn bread, putter butter and syrup. Heather enjoys listening to country and new age music. She is a huge Georgia Bulldog Fan. Heather is excited about the possibility of a forever family who is willing to make her a part of their family. She would like a family that will let her be herself and allow her to have contact with her younger sibling.

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Martavis was born October 2002 and is in the 5th grade for the 2011-2012 school year. He likes to be called by his nickname 'Tay'. He is in regular classes but sometimes requires extra help with math and reading. He has a partial hearing loss but it has no impact on his speech or learning. Martavis loves to run, play video games, and play sports. Football is his favorite sport and he dreams of playing in the NFL one day.

Martavis is described by his foster mother as "a very loving boy who cares about what others are feeling". He loves animals and would like to work with animals on a farm. He is easy to please when it comes

to food, and likes everything and anything; he cannot name a favorite food.

To Martavis, having a forever family means "not having to move again and having someone who will always love me". Martavis needs a family that will provide support, structure and encouragement. He continues to work on managing his anger and dealing with past experiences. Martavis would do best with parents that will allow him opportunities to stay active and who will participate in his activities with him. He needs a home that can provide him with structure and positive attention, reinforcement, and one which will advocate for his educational success. Martavis would do best in a home where he is the only child or the youngest child in the home. Martavis has a younger brother and it would be important that his adoptive parents be able to facilitate contact between the siblings.

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Rodricka (preferred name "Rod"), born in May 1994 attends high school and is in the 11th grade for the 2011-2012 school year. He has an IEP and receives specialized services at school. He reads below grade level and is allowed extra time for class work, including taking test (when needed). He needs extra help in math and reading. He enjoys playing football, running track and weight lifting; however, he is not participating in any extra curricular school activities at this time.

Rod is currently placed in a group home setting and has been in this home since 2011. He is doing well and has adjusted to this placement.

Rod responds well to one-on-one interaction with adults. He has a pleasing personality and says he makes friends easily. He is polite and sometimes very quiet.

Rod is open to adoption and wants to have a loving adoptive family. He has expressed an interest in a two-parent household. Rod has also said he would like to have a family that attends church. Rod just wants a family that will love, nurture and care about him forever. Rod said he is interested in having a pet after he is adopted. He would benefit from being in a home where there is structure and activities to keep him occupied.

Rod enjoys playing video games during his spare time as well as hanging out with his friends. Pizza is one of Rod's favorite foods. His favorite restaurant is Ruby Tuesdays and Rod also has a sweet tooth.

Dejour was born June 2002. He is in the 4th grade for the 2011-2012 school year. Dejour likes to be called by his nickname Boadie. Dejour receives special education services and is doing very well this year with his teacher. He states his favorite subject is reading. He is currently reading the series, "Diary of a Wimpy kid." Dejour enjoys all sports and skating. He loves to play football and basketball. Dejour states that basketball is his favorite sport and he plays through the Upward program at his church.

Dejour is described by his foster mother as "a very loving boy who wants to please others". Dejour loves animals and is doing well at learning to take care of his dog. He states he is easy to please when it comes to food, but would like to eat pizza every day if it was his choice. Dejour enjoys church activities and enjoys skating on Friday's nights with his church friends.

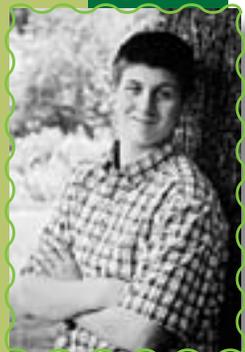
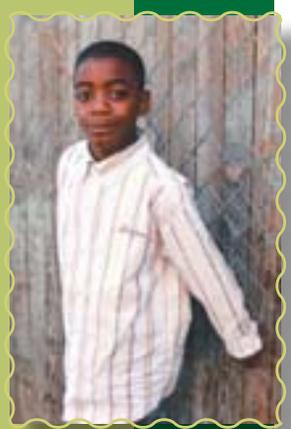
To Dejour, having a forever family means "living with a mother who will love me and not hurt me". Dejour stated it is very important to him to have contact with his brother, Martavis. Dejour needs a family that will provide support, structure and encouragement. He continues to work on managing his anger and dealing with past experiences. Dejour would do best with parents who are active and will participate in activities with him. He needs to be allowed access to play sports through school, church and/or community leagues. He needs a home that can provide him the structured environment he needs; positive attention and who will advocate for his educational success. He currently lives in a home with another child his age and does very well with sharing attention and getting along with his foster brother.

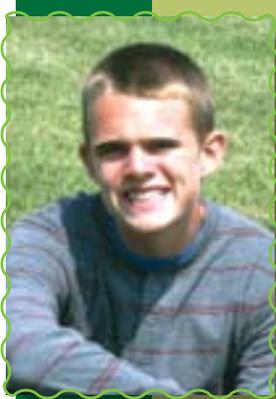
Photo provided by www.heartgalleryalabama.com

Gavin, born in April 1998, enjoys hunting and fishing and is very proud that his grandfather is the one that taught him these activities. He also enjoys comic books, playing video games and most outdoor activities and sports. Gavin also has a great love for animals and is described as being very gentle and very good with them. Those close to him say that his demeanor changes when he cares for animals.

Gavin receives special education services in school as he is behind his peers in Reading, Language and Math. He will need a loving family ho can implement firm rules and structure. He will also do best with a family with few additional children. Gavin is a very resilient child and has managed to endure a lot of grief and loss throughout his young life. He has a sister who has already been adopted with whom he would like to maintain contact.

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Brandon, born November 1996, has a unique personality. He is a very lovable and loving child who does his best to please. He can be very helpful around the house with such tasks as setting the table and vacuuming. He is a sweet child. He is also very creative and like to make things, he enjoys drawing and painting. He also enjoys interacting with adults and playing games.

Although Brandon has no specific learning disabilities, he needs special emotional supports at school which are provided in a self-contained classroom that has a smaller number of children allowing for more one-on-one time with each child.

Brandon and his brother get along well the majority of the time. They continue to visit each other although currently placed separately.

Brandon has the ability to make good decisions and good judgment; he needs adults in his life that can help him do this on a more consistent basis. Brandon needs help with managing his anger.

Brandon says he'd like to be sheriff when he grows up. He enjoys running and playing soccer. His favorite subject in school is math and if he could visit anywhere in the world, he'd like to visit Disney World.

Brandon enjoys playing computer games, board games and spending time outside. Brandon has a very good sense of humor, he appears quiet at first, but is a "chatter box" when he opens up. Brandon is eager to do well, he likes to succeed.

If you believe your family can help Brandon mature and become emotionally stable, please let us know.



Aquarius, born October 1998, is a charming young man who is full of personality. Some of his favorite things to do are to play basketball, play with his game boy and ride his bike. He makes friends easily and enjoys playing outside after school with other children in the neighborhood.

When speaking to Aquarius, he has so much to say and he speaks as if he were an adult. He cannot wait to tell you about his day and all of the new things that he learned at school or about a new experience he's had. He also loves to sing and knows all the words to almost any song on the radio.

Aquarius is very smart and makes good grades in school. He needs some direction in regards to staying focused and being respectful to his teachers while in the classroom. He has been known to throw a tantrum when he didn't get his way. He takes medication to help him focus throughout the day.

Aquarius loves to give and receive hugs and kisses. he wants a permanent family and to know that he is loved. He needs a family that is active as he enjoys being on the go.

The sibling group being recruited for includes two bothers: Jesse born April 1998 and Cameron, born April 1999. They have a sister who was recently placed for adoption in our state. Therefore, we are particularly interested in finding permanent family for Jesse and Cameron in Alabama.

The children are very creative, imaginative and outgoing. Each child is full of enthusiasm and a joy to be around. Both Jesse and Cameron have expressed that they would love to live in the "country" in a home with lots of land and grass where they can explore nature and get dirty.

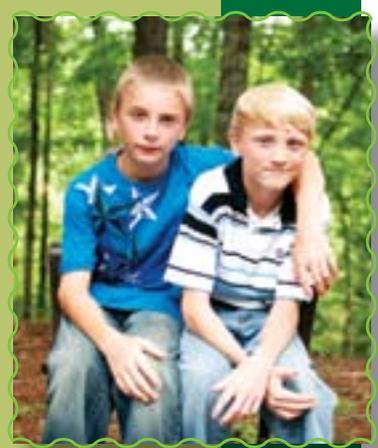
Jesse is average height, brown hair and eyes, enjoys new things like cars. Jesse is also athletic and loves Alabama football. Jesse is very knowledgeable on his interest and will take out time to research interesting and unique facts about them; He is an average student in the 7th grade for the 2011-2012 school year.

Cameron on the other hand, average height, has blonde hair, blue eyes likes animals and exploring the outdoors more. Cameron has had a fish, hermit crab and guinea pig as pets. Cameron is an overall academic achiever; he is in the 6th grade for the 2011-2012 school year. Cameron also enjoys photographing nature and fishing.

This sibling group is very attached to each other, have a strong sibling bond and desire to be placed together in the same home. Jesse and Joseph have a maternal great grandmother who has been a constant in their lives whom they would love to remain in contact with.

Photo provided by www.heartgalleryalabama.com

Armani, born in May 2000, is a tall, energetic attractive child. He loves to read. He wants to write children's books when he grows up. He is athletic. He enjoys basketball, football and riding his bike. He can be playful and full of fun. His favorite hero is Spiderman because "Spiderman puts bad people in jail and saves the city". Armani has the academic ability to be a great student because he likes to read, can read at grade level. Due to Armani's past experiences he is slow to trust adults. At times, he appears that he is not listening and he does from time to time exhibit some attention-seeking behaviors. Armani needs to get to know an adult before he will open up but once he opens up, he is loving, kind-hearted and a good helper. With proper guidance, Armani has the potential for improvement and growth. He is eager to learn and wants to help others.



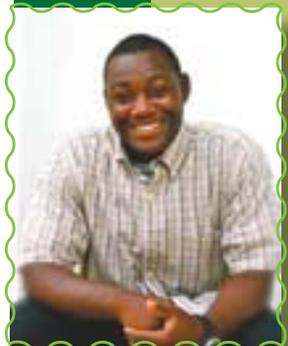


Joanus, born in March 2000, is a very handsome little boy. He loves to sing, dance and go to church. Joanus needs special help in school including the area of speech. Joanus is eager to learn new things in school. He likes to play soccer and to be outside. His favorite place to eat is Burger King. Joanus would like to be a policeman when he grows up. Joanus needs a lot of individual love and attention.

Joanus is very close to his two sisters who have been adopted by other families. Joanus' adoptive family will need to be able to facilitate contact between Joanus and his sisters. His ideal family will be a mom, dad and an older brother.

Joanus needs a family that can provide structure, stability, patience, consistence and positive attention.

Photo provided by www.heartgalleryalabama.com



Justin, born in January 1997, is a handsome and charming young male who greets everyone with his contagious smile. Justin enjoys playing many sports, but his favorite is football. He also enjoys listening to his favorite music, movies and actually enjoys most chores and lawn care.

Justin receives individual counseling and medication services through a local provider. His target goals consist of: Respecting adult authority, obeying rules, making good choices, appropriate boundaries with others and preparation of adoption.

Justin is in the 8th grade for the 2011-2012 school year. He repeated the third grade. He was recently referred to an alternative school due to his disruptive behavior and repeated school violations. It appears that Justin continues to display these behaviors mostly because he is ashamed of his very poor reading level.

Justin has been in care since May 2007 and is eager to have a family that is willing to be patient and understand his needs and work with him to improve in those areas. He has a strong desire for family and would like to continue contact with his maternal cousin. Justin has a friendly personality and is a pleasure to know. He has a sense of humor and likes to tell jokes. He also takes pride in his appearance. Justin would benefit most from a two parent family and a home where he is the only child in the home and where his parents will be committed in providing guidance, educational services and independent living skills training needed in order to be successful.

Photo provided by www.heartgalleryalabama.com

Mark, born November of 1999, is the youngest of 3 children. He has a sister that is 4 years older than he, and a brother who is 2 years older. Because of their individual needs, adoptive recruitment is being handled separately for each child. Mark has a strong tie to his siblings although does not currently live with them. He expresses pride in his older brother because he makes such good grades. The plan at this time is for Mark to be placed with a forever family without his siblings, but it will be important that communication with the siblings be maintained.

Mark lives in a therapeutic foster home and gets along well with all family members. He is in the 6th grade (2011-2012) and makes good grades. His favorite subject is math, and he especially loves multiplication. He also enjoys P.E.

Mark is full of energy and enjoys being physically active. He is an avid fan of wrestling, and enjoys watching wrestling, playing wrestling videos, and playing with his wrestling figures. He plays basketball at home and loves it when he scores points! He is interested in playing soccer. Mark also helps with chores around the house.

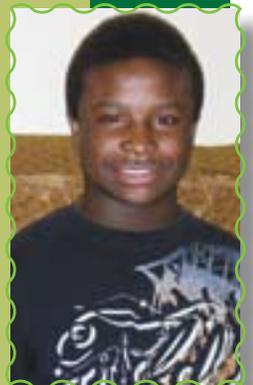
Mark has a refreshing way of looking at situations and has a great sense of humor. He attends church services and enjoys listening to all the sermons. Mark needs a family that will be nurturing and loving, and will appreciate his many positive qualities, while providing understanding and guidance to him when he gets frustrated.

Bernard, born September 1998 is a sweet child that loves hugs. He enjoys playing outside and playing with the foster family's pet, Max. Bernard also enjoys video games and TV shows that have a lot of action. He presents himself in a charming manner when speaking with new acquaintances and friends. He enjoys going fishing with his foster father and helping him in the yard.

In the home, community and school settings, Bernard requires constant supervision and intervention in the management of his aggressive outburst. At times when responding to the foster mother, Bernard becomes argumentative. In relations to the foster father he tends to be more cautious and responds more favorable.

In the school setting Bernard's educational needs are met in a special classroom setting based on his education and behavioral challenges. In effort to achieve normalcy for Bernard, he requires ongoing supervision and intervention.

Bernard needs a two parent family with a strong male figure that is patient and will provide him with lots of love and attention and continue to provide periodic management planning with guidance and support of professional staff.





Brooke, born July of 1997, is a beautiful young lady. She is academically successful in her 8th grade class (school year 2011-2012). Brooke is a very smart child, who attends advanced (AP) classes.

She enjoys activities such as shopping and having her nails done. She also enjoys participating in school activities such as Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD) and pursuing elected positions in the club. Brooke thrives on attention from others. Brooke is obedient and follows rules. Brooke can be very responsible with personal possessions and items she may want.

Brooke needs motivation for positive behaviors to receive the attention she desires. Brooke needs to maintain communication/contact with her current foster family as she has formed a significant relationship with them since she entered into foster care. Brooke deserves a "forever family" that will be committed to her and love her unconditionally.

Photo provided by www.heartgalleryalabama.com



Arianna, born June 1994 is a talkative teen with an unforgettable personality who likes being the center of attention. She enjoys reading, writing, socializing and listening to music. She also enjoys shopping at Bath and Body Works and Books-A-Million.

Arianna says she would like to be an actress later on in life. She is an outstanding student who's favorite subject in school is English.

Arianna is an exceptional teen who is looking for a family that will accept her. She is a caring, loving teen who needs a family that is willing to listen, spend time with her and give her a chance to open up.



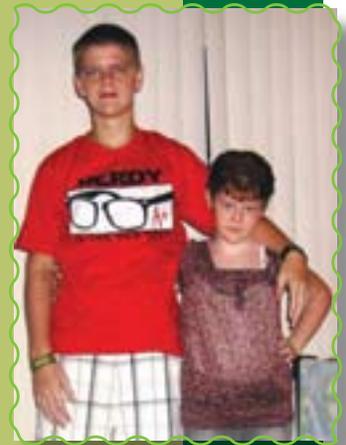
Brendan was born in January 2001. He loves to eat but can be a picky eater. Brendan loves to have space to walk around. He is a pleasant child to be around. He is very observant and pays attention to every thing and everybody.

Brendan needs a forever family that can help him reach his fullest potential and can attend to his lifelong special needs. Brendan has several special needs diagnosis included autism, a seizure disorder and he functions intellectually in the moderate range of

intellectual disabilities. He receives special education services to assist him academically and he is currently in a classroom setting for 5th graders. He enjoys watching television and one of his favorite shows is Spongebob. He loves the sunshine and likes to spend time outside. Brendan's primary method of expressive communication is through pointing and showing what he wants and responds well to picture cards when completing tasks.

Brendan would benefit from having a two-parent family with siblings as he interacts well with smaller children.

Justin, born October 1996 has a younger sister and two older brothers. He currently resides in the same home with his sister and we are recruiting for an adoptive home for them together. Justin does not currently have a great deal of contact with his other siblings. For the 2011-2012 school year Justin is in the 9th grade and so far he enjoys high school and has had no behavior problems. His favorite subject is English. Justin is a healthy child.



Justin is a delightful teen, who enjoys video games, basketball, swimming and other outdoor activities like camping. Justin is active in his church's youth group. He has traveled with the youth on out-of-state trips and has been able to use his life experiences to help others his age. Justin is well behaved and well-mannered. He is willing to help out around the house, especially with yard work. Justin demonstrated responsibility by keeping his room clean, helping out with meal preparation and household duties like laundry.

Madison, born December 2000, is the youngest of the sib group of four. She and her brother get along well for the most part, with only the expected sibling rivalry. For school year 2011 – 2012 Madison is in the 3rd grade and although she enjoys school, she has trouble staying on task. Madison likes to socialize with other children and is difficult to motivate at times. Madison's foster parent has been able to work on school-related issues at home and they are being addressed through Madison doing extra work and studying.

Madison enjoys swimming, playing outside and camping. Madison also likes to make beaded jewelry, help out with cooking, especially baking cookies. Madison is responsible for household chores like keeping her room clean and putting dirty clothes where they belong. Although this is a struggle sometimes, she has improved with taking responsibility. Madison does have some minor behavior issues that respond well to appropriate discipline as evidenced by decreases in behavior.

Madison is a healthy child. She enjoys reading, and especially likes the "Junie B. Jones" book series. Madison attends counseling every other week in order to help her understand the adoption process and address behavior issues as they arise. Madison is able to work on taking responsibility and being held accountable for school work.



Daniel, born October 1997 is a very intelligent young man who is in the 9th grade for the 2011-2012 school year. He is on the A/B honor roll and has not allowed his therapeutic needs and challenges interfere with his willingness to achieve his academic goals in the classroom. Daniel loves to play football and his number one team is The Alabama Crimson Tide.

Nathan, born in October 1993 is also very intelligent and has therapeutic struggles that have not stopped him from academic achievement and progress in the classroom.

Nathan and Daniel are currently roommates in the group home where they are placed. They are very loving boys and want nothing more than to become a part of a loving family that will adopt them into their home.



Lakeitha born in November 1996 and is 9th grade (school year 2011-2012) and has potential to make A's and B's. However, Lakeitha has not been motivated this school year and her grades reflect this. Lakeitha says she enjoys school, but her grades tend to fluctuate. Perhaps she enjoys the socializing aspect of school more so than the academic aspect.

Lakeitha is a sweet girl and will help her friends when needed. Lakeitha shows affection toward her foster family by doing things for them, such as cooking breakfast or helping out around the

house. Lakeitha has attended church with previous foster families and has enjoyed it. Lakeitha has been active in church youth groups in the past. Lakeitha likes to sing, but does not want anyone to hear her. Lakeitha needs a structured home where she can be monitored daily to ensure she takes her medication in order to help Lakeitha maintain a healthy mental health status.

Photo provided by www.heartgalleryalabama.com

A Special Thank You to our friends at Heart Gallery for supplying us with photos of the children in need of adoption.



Pressish, born in August 1995, is in the 10th grade during the 2011-2012 school year. She loves to talk and interact with her peers. She enjoys singing and has sung in a church choir before. She has a beautiful singing voice and an ear for music. She has attempted to write her own songs to sing. Pressish enjoys talking on the telephone with her friends and shopping. She loves fashion and keeps up with the latest styles. Since she has turned 16; Pressish has begun to wear light makeup and lip gloss. Also, she likes to experience with different hair styles; and as with every young lady, she loves shoes and the latest styles in sneakers. She enjoys television, journaling, and going to the movies.

She receives Special Education Services Pressish needs extra help math and reading. She tries very hard but she has had to have extra tutoring in math. Although Pressish has trouble in these important subjects; she has her heart set on being a scientist or a professional singer. Pressish can be very emotional and she does require supervision and continuous encouragement from adults to help her remain on task.

Destiny, born in April 2003 is in the 2nd grade during school year 2011-2012. She loves to skate, play with her friends and is just now becoming interested in sports. Destiny loves to be the center of attention with her darling smile and contagious personality. Destiny has a deep love for God and loves going to church. Destiny has sustained numerous significant losses during her short life and has special behavioral and emotional needs as a result.

Amber, born in July 1999 and for the 2011-2012 school year is in the 7th grade. She is a beautiful girl with a face full of freckles. She loves to go to church and is active in her faith. Amber cares about animals and would love to have a dog. Amber recently became interested in sports. She has a circle of friends and love being with them. Amber has also sustained significant losses and has special behavioral and emotional needs as a result. Amber is a middle child and feels unloved and unwanted and seeks attention through both positive and negative behaviors.

Both girls needs a family that will love them and help them work through their feelings of loss and provide them with the forever families they yearn for.

Photo provided by www.heartgalleryalabama.com





Michael, born in February 2003 needs a permanent, structured home with a two parent family who can help him work through his timidity and instill confidence and self-assurance into this delightful young man. Michael needs parents who will provide love, nurturing and be involved with activities and sports. Michael is a soft-spoken, timid, yet active child with a ready smile. He is intelligent, but needs guidance and structure to improve study skills. He recently had difficulty with a mathematics test, but was afraid to ask his teacher for clarification on a question that he had,

resulting in a poor grade. He interacts well with other children and enjoys playing baseball, riding bikes and playing outdoors.

During the 2011-2012 school year he is in the third grade and earns average grades. He was born prematurely and was not expected to live. He has no health issues and does not take medication. He has an older half-sister, who is an adult, and an older half-brother, but he has been separated from his siblings and has not had contact with them in years. He currently attends a Baptist church.

Michael desires an adoptive family and would like to be a "regular" kid. He is eager to please and has a wonderful disposition. He needs a home with a strong male role model and a nurturing mother that will love him unconditionally and help him to achieve his potential.

Photo provided by www.heartgalleryalabama.com



G. Nathan, born November 1998 is a quiet young fellow with a bright smile. He enjoys listening to music, playing video games, spending time outdoors, and playing with animals. Nathan makes average to above average grades. He frequently attends church. He has an older sister with whom he has contact on a monthly basis. Nathan's ADHD is managed with medication. He is healthy and appears to be developmentally on target. He wears glasses to correct his vision. He's currently working on basic living skills such as meal preparation, doing laundry

and other housekeeping skills. He's also working on money management and other essential life skills. Nathan would be a great addition to a loving family that will provide him with nurturing, love, structure and guidance. Nathan would fit in well with an active family. He would do well with pet owners and people who love the outdoors. He desires to be adopted and to find his own forever family.

Photo provided by www.heartgalleryalabama.com

Robby, born June of 1995, is a very smart, active sixteen year old boy. He enjoys spending time with his siblings, hanging out with friends, and participating in church activities. He also enjoys helping with the school band and is currently involved in the robotics club. Robby attends church regularly and is heavily involved with the youth group.

For school year 2011-2012 Robby is in the 10th grade and is currently taking classes geared towards health care. He plans on going to college to become a trauma nurse or anesthesiologist.

Robby has three siblings that he is very close to. They have been separated for the last two years, but visit on a regular basis. Robby needs to be in a home that would support continuing contact with his siblings.

Robby was born with a medical condition called Ectrodactyly which resulted in severe deformities in his hands and feet. Robby has overcome the disability and is able to do most things normal teenagers do.

Robby would do well in a home with or without other children. He interacts well with his younger siblings and is a positive role model. He also has experience working with children with special needs. He spent the past summer volunteering with a program for children with special needs. He stated that he enjoys teaching the children that their disability doesn't have to stop them from doing the things they want to do.



Mizaus, born March 2009, is a sweet and loving boy. Although he has some severe disabilities and struggles in his life, nothing can put a damper on his smile. He has Spina Bifida, He has a shunt to assist with draining excessive fluids from his brain and Tracheostomy to help him breathe.

His health is stable and he responds very well to stimulus. For example, he is visually able to track anyone who interacts with him and can move his eyes toward sounds and visual cues. He likes to be read to and will give you his undivided attention. He is not mobile or verbal but can show you his contentment with a great big smile. Mizaus thrives when his environment is consistent and he is comfortable with familiar faces. Mizaus desires a family to love, support, and most importantly, advocate for his needs.



This sibling group of three enjoys playing together and have typical sibling arguments sometimes.



Jenny, born in September 1999, works hard to focus on her school work and has made the A/B honor roll several times. She is well-liked by her teachers and enjoys socializing with her friends. She enjoys playing basketball and taking dance lessons. She is placed with her two younger brothers, Michael and Ty.



Michael, born in September 2000 is in the 4th grade (2011-2012 school year). He needs extra help at school and is trying to do better. His focus is improving with the help of medication. Michael enjoys basketball and baseball



Ty, born in June 2003, is in the 3rd grade (2011-2012 school year). He enjoys reading and is at the top of his reading group in his class. He is an A-honor roll student and participates in the gifted program. Ty enjoys playing baseball. He is very active and sometimes has to work at sitting still when required.

These children have been together since they were placed in foster care. They are of Native American heritage and enjoy attending gatherings of other Native Americans when possible.

Danny, born in July 1994, is a quiet and polite young man. He is currently in the 11th grade (2011-2012 school year) but functions on a 3rd grade level. He receives special education services and has an IEP. His favorite subject in school is science because he enjoys doing the projects. He wants to be a firefighter when he completes high school.



Danny enjoys playing video games, doing puzzles, and putting together Legos in his spare time. He also enjoys playing card games with his friends. Danny's favorite sport is Auburn football. His favorite food is steak from Logan's Roadhouse. Danny's favorite holiday is Christmas.

Danny maintains phone contact with his birth mother and wishes to remain in contact with her after adoption. He requires a structured setting with constant supervision. Danny desires a family that will take care of him and love him. Danny needs a family that can set clear guidelines and boundaries with him and will also be understanding of his behaviors that stem from past experiences.

Jonathan, born in September 1996 is currently in the 8th grade (2011-2012 school year). He is passing all of his classes at this time. He does have an IEP but his teachers feel that he will be able to pass the graduation exam and receive a high school diploma.



He currently hopes to be adopted by a loving family. Jonathan is an energetic teenager that requires a lot of attention from his caregivers. He has a sociable personality and enjoys the company of any one he meets. Jonathan also enjoys playing sports and video games.

Behaviorally Jonathan is younger than his biological age. He enjoys playing with toys such as action figures and cars. He also can sometimes misbehave by arguing with authority figures and needs a family that can keep him on track and give him the right direction in life. Jonathan has a brother and sister that he enjoys having visits with every month. Family is important to Jonathan and he would like to belong to a forever family.



Yoban born in January 2008 is a fun loving child. He has a significant medical history that includes episodes of aspirating food, respiratory issues, and a tracheotomy. Yoban's trach was removed in July 2010. He continues to use a G-tube for nutrition although he has recently began tasting and swallowing some food.

Yoban exhibits significant delays in all areas of development however; he is making good progress. Yoban receives Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy and Educational (Speech and Sign Language)

therapy. Yoban receives speech and language services due to an expressive and receptive language delay. He is nonverbal but has recently began imitating sounds and saying "mama and dada." Yoban uses facial expressions to communicate and knows some sign language such as "more" and "thank you." Yoban's fine motor skills are improving. He is able to use a pincher grasp to pick up and stack 6 wooden blocks on top of each other.

Yoban is sweet and affectionate. He likes to walk/run and plays well with other children. Yoban needs a family that can help him continue to progress developmentally and maintain his medical appointments.



Devontae, born in August 2000 is a handsome young man. He loves sports especially basketball. Devontae has played baseball in the past and excelled at the sport. During school he receives special services to help him learn despite a learning disability and he excels every year. Devontae's ADHD is controlled by medication. He also takes medication to control high blood pressure. Devontae is a bright young boy who needs someone to provide him a forever family. He enjoys going on outings and playing at the park. He likes to laugh, have fun, play with cars and color. Devontae struggles

some socially but is maturing with age. Devontae would benefit from a family that has time to give him the one-on-one attention that he needs.

Photo provided by www.heartgalleryalabama.com

Josie, born in September 1996, is very personable and enjoys meeting new people. She does very well in school. She is in the 9th grade (2011-2012 school year). Her favorite subject in school is math. When not in class she spends the majority of her time reading and watching movies at the local theater. Her favorite books are the Twilight Series. She has recently become a member of her school's basketball team. She looks forward to practices and playing games with her peers. Although she admits that she isn't the best at the sport, she enjoys learning about basketball and spending time with peers that enjoy the sport as much as she does. Josie is very passionate about animals. She hopes to have pets one day. Josie is very excited about the adoption process and hopes to be adopted by a loving family.



Michael, born in October 2003, is a very handsome little boy. Michael needs special help in school in all areas. Michael is eager to please and always wants to look his best. He loves Sponge Bob and Toy Story. His favorite places to eat are McDonald's and Taco Bell. In fact, he would like to work there when he grows up. Michael needs a lot of individual attention and a daily routine. Michael will also have to have continued follow-up with counseling services as well as a psychiatrist.



Michael enjoys drawing, playing outdoors, and playing electronics. He also enjoys playing/interacting with other children but he must be closely monitored as he becomes overwhelmed easily.

lakeem, born October 1996 is currently in the eighth grade (2011-2012 school year). He has an IEP to address specific issues surrounding his education. He enjoys living with his current foster family but would love to have a forever family. lakeem is a very charismatic and charming young man. He is well behaved and rarely is a trouble to his foster parents. His grades are below average but lakeem has the potential to make good grades if he applies himself. He does not participate in extra curricular activities but is athletic. lakeem

enjoys visiting with family and friends. He has two sisters and a brother that he enjoys having regular visits with. Family is important to lakeem and he would like to stay in contact with his family as much as possible. lakeem does have some reservations regarding moving from his current community but is open to the possibility of being adopted.



PARTNERSHIP WITH CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY

APAC works with a sense of urgency to locate prospective "forever families" for Alabama's foster children that have no identified adoptive family. APAC (Alabama Pre/Post Adoption Connections) is a program of Children's Aid Society, working in collaboration with the Alabama Department of Human Resources. The APAC Pre-Adoption Services team holds adoption orientations and training classes statewide throughout the year to make getting information and getting started on the adoption journey easier. What makes the APAC services so unique is its ability to follow a family throughout their adoption journey as long as the family desires support. To find out when the next orientation for your area will be, contact us via email at families4alkids@dhr.alabama.gov or through the toll-free phone line **(866)4AL-KIDS**.

Because APAC understands that the journey does not end at adoption finalization, the APAC Post Adoption Support team are dedicated to supporting adoptive families for life. Unique services such as free adoption family counseling, adoption support groups, lending library, and educational trainings on adoption related topics are just a few of the services provided to adoptive families, as well as foster families and prospective adoptive families. All services are free. If you would like more information on APAC's post adoption support services, call 1-866-803-2722.

Children's Aid Society also partners with the Department of Human Resources to provide certain **Independent Living Services** for foster teens and social service staff that work with these youth. This last year, 3 one day youth conferences were provided across the state, and a 3 day camp was enjoyed by 14 and 15 year old foster teens. This year it is anticipated that all older teens (14-21) will be able to attend a 3 day camp to supplement their independent living skills and also develop a network of friends and communication with other foster teens! If you have foster teens in your home, stay tuned to Children's Aid website (www.childrensaid.org) for future independent living activities and resources!



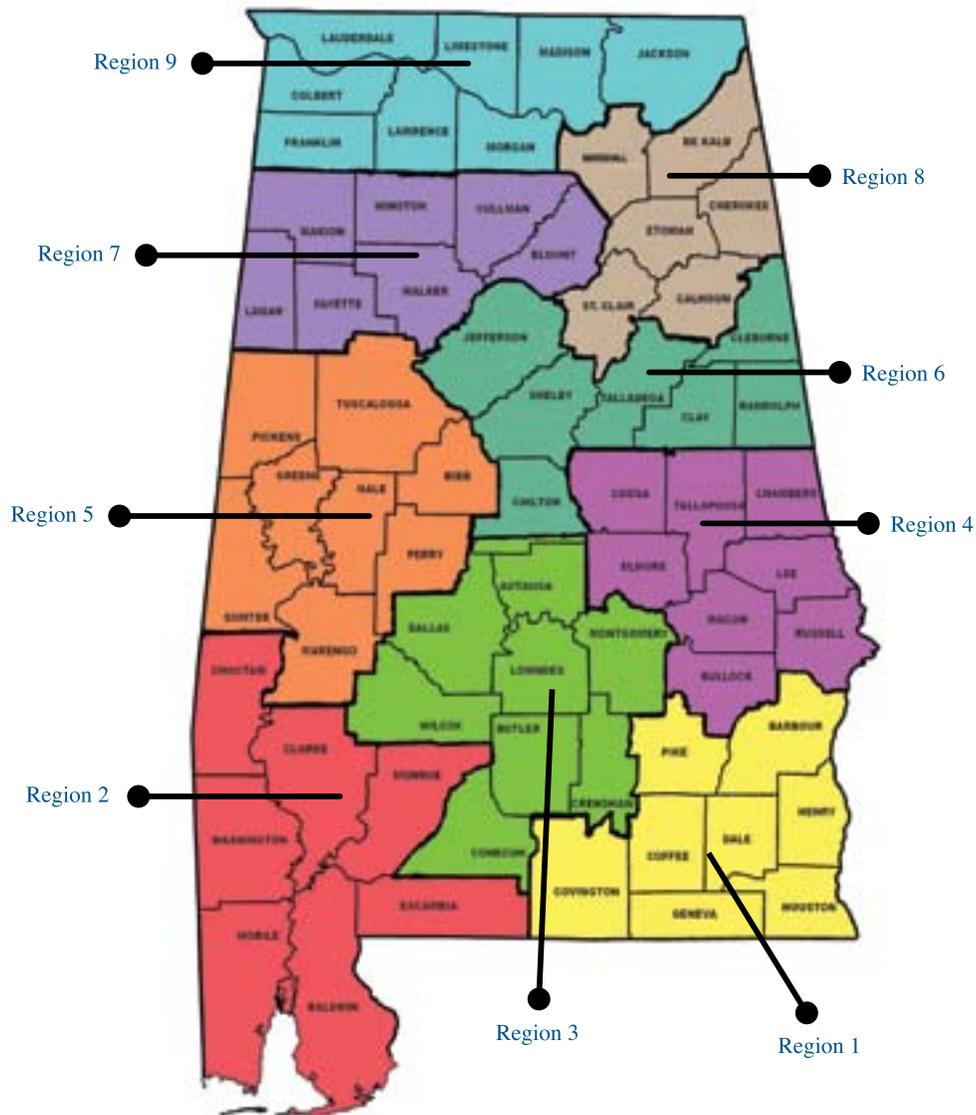
Heart Gallery Alabama, is a statewide non profit whose mission is to promote adoption of Alabama's foster children. We fulfill our mission by recruiting professional photographers to take unique portraits of each child who is waiting for their forever family. We also create short videos for each child to place on our website. Heart Gallery AL partnership with the State Office of Adoption, Children's Aid Society's APAC program and AFAPA allows us to be successful in fulfilling our mission. Heart Gallery was started by a group of local child advocates in 2005 and has blossomed to a small staff and large group of dedicated volunteers. We have photographed close to 600 available children and have had over 60% of those children placed in adoptive homes. Heart Gallery is located in Birmingham and has recently moved to a new location to accommodate our growing agency. We have a permanent exhibit at our office location (716 37th Street South, Birmingham, AL 35222). Please take a minute to visit our website at www.HeartGalleryAlabama.com to learn more about the Heart Gallery and our children. The exhibit travels the state of Alabama. If you are interested in having it visit your community, please contact us at 205.445.1293 or info@heartgalleryalabama.com.

Michelle Bearman-Wolnek, LCSW, PIP
Heart Gallery Alabama Executive Director



AFAPA Board members Mary Smith and Shirley Merrills recently met with the Wilcox County Director and Staff for Foster Parent Appreciation meeting.

AFAPA REGIONS



Who's Your Regional Rep?

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Why contact your Regional Representative

- For latest info on where and when Education & Training Meetings will be held
- For assistance on who to call for guidance on specific problems/ issues you are facing
- To invite to your county association meetings to help with training and information.
- To learn more about training opportunities through out the state.



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AFAPA NEWSLETTER INFO:

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.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Training Opportunities

AFAPA will host a mini conference at the Walnut Street Church of Christ in Greenville, AL on February 11th, 2012. This is just off I-65 exit 128 or 130 near downtown Greenville 306 Walnut Street. The Training will begin with registration at 8:30AM and will last until 3:00PM. Lunch will be provided. Please register by calling 1-888-545-2372 or email buddy@afapa.org by February 7th in order for us to have enough meals and handouts for those attending. Child care will not be provided.

Alabama Foster & Adoptive Parent Association Annual Conference Shocco Springs, Alabama.

The annual foster & adoptive parent conference will again be held at Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center May 10, 11, and 12. All training will be on the days of May 10th, and 11th.

The Annual Student Scholarship program will be the night of May 11th.

Conference will end after breakfast on May 12th. More information will be available in next newsletter. Registration will again be done by Shocco Springs and you will need to call them to register 1-800-280-1105.

We are working on giving the option of spending the nights of May 9th and 10th or May 10th and 11th.

There will be no cost for rooms or food while at the conference. Registration will be \$35 per person. Details are subject to change and any changes will be posted on afapa.org website and in the next newsletter.

National Foster Parent Conference

The National Foster Parent Conference will be held near Chicago, Illinois June 15th – 18th, 2012. More information can be found by visiting the NFPA website nfpaonline.com.

North American Council on Adoptable Children Conference (NACAC)

This conference will be held July 26th – 28th in Crystal City, Virginia just outside Washington DC. For more information visit the NACAC website nacac.org.