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Hamilton County Sets Adoption Record Through Increased Recruitment Efforts and More Public Awareness

Cincinnati (Dec. 17, 2007) Hamilton County's Department of Job and Family Services set a new record for adoptions today when three children were adopted by a Cleveland-area couple, bringing the number of county adoptions to 127 in 2007.

"That's 127 children who can lay their heads on their pillows tonight with a sense of safety and the overwhelming feeling of being loved," said Todd Portune, president of the Board of County Commissioners. "We wish we weren't in the business of abused and neglected children, but, if we must, these are the outcomes we cherish. When a family steps up and says, 'I will open up my home and my heart to this child,' the whole community wins."

The adoption that helped the county set the record involved siblings – a 10-year-old boy and 7-year-old girl -- who spent five years in either foster care or residential treatment. They were adopted by a Cincinnati Public School teacher who met the young boy while he was in her class.

The county attributes this year's record pace – the previous record was 124 in 1997 – to more intense and focused recruitment efforts and an increase in public awareness.

"Our adoption workers have really worked hard this year to make sure our children have a place to call home," said Moira Weir, director of the Department, which has about 250 children available for adoption. "They banged on a lot of doors, organized many recruitment events, followed up on every lead ... they did everything possible to find a permanent situation for our available children. Also, child welfare has drawn a lot of attention this year and we think many members of the community stepped up to answer what is a very prominent community challenge."

The county conducts targeted community recruitment efforts that concentrate on groups of available children, as well as general recruitment efforts to create awareness. Among the tactics used to promote adoption:

- trips to Bengals games and "spa" days where prospective parents meet children
- advertisements on the sides of Metro buses
- monthly media releases about specific children available for adoption
- a mass adoption day to increase awareness of adoption

Also, the county hired six new recruiters and one new manager this year and assigned most of them recruiters to focus on child-specific recruiting, which is the search for someone with a connection to an available child.

Hamilton County investigates approximately 6,000 reports of child abuse and neglect a year. When intensive services, such as drug treatment and parenting education, fail and a child can no longer remain safe in a parent's care, the county will seek permanent custody of the child and attempt to find a safe and loving adoptive home.

That's sometimes a tough task. The children often suffer the physical, psychological or behavioral effects of abuse or have other special needs that require therapy and other substantive care many parents are unable, or unwilling, to provide.

"The angels who take a chance on our children often find a little love can overcome a lot of barriers," Weir said. "They uncover loyal, loving children who are willing and waiting to surrender their hearts to someone whom they can trust."

Those interested in adopting or becoming foster parents can learn more at www.hcadopt.org or www.hcfoster.org, or by calling (513) 632-6366 or e-mailing adoption@jfs.hamilton-co.org.

About Hamilton County's Department of Job and Family Services

The Department of Job and Family Services administers federal, state and local programs for those in need. The Department helps with local child protection, adult protection, child care, tuberculosis control, child support enforcement, workforce development, cash assistance, food stamp disbursement and Medicaid disbursement. Servicing Hamilton County since 1947, the Department helps hundreds of thousands of residents each year. The Department of Job and Family Services is accredited by the Council on Accreditation, an international, independent, not-for-profit child and family service accrediting organization.