



*A project of the Adoption Coalition of Texas and CASAs across Central Texas*

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**Special Photo Exhibit Celebrates Five Years of Success In Getting Foster Children Into Permanent Homes and Unveils New Portraits at 2009 Gala**

***The Heart Gallery of Central Texas Photo Exhibit Premiere and Gala to be held September 17<sup>th</sup> with unveiling of new portraits featuring foster children in Central Texas***

(Austin, Texas – September 7, 2009) – Permanent adoptions and forever families for the foster children in Central Texas are more of a reality with the help and success of the special photo exhibit, The Heart Gallery of Central Texas. This special portrait exhibit, now celebrating its fifth year, features foster children in Central Texas that are available for adoption, and acts as an educational tool for the community as well as an awareness effort showing the faces and personality of these children.

The Heart Gallery has created awareness for over 500 foster children who were featured in the portraits over its five year span, and has a tremendous 60% success rate of getting the kids into permanent homes. With national recognition and enormous support from the community, the Heart Gallery of Central Texas photography exhibit will unveil 110 portraits for the fifth anniversary at its Premiere Gala on September 17, 2009 at 6:30 p.m. at SPAZIO by Lytle Pressley in Austin, Texas. The event is open to the public and tickets are \$25 each. The exhibit will be on display at SPAZIO from September 17<sup>th</sup> through October 2nd, and then travel around Central Texas for the next eight months.

Dr. Tracy Eilers, Chair for the Heart Gallery of Central Texas and the Executive Director for the Adoption Coalition of Texas stated, "The Heart Gallery is celebrating its fifth year now and we are thankful for the success of the program due to the enormous support from the community and from families across the U.S who want to help give these children a permanent home. These portraits help humanize the children and inspire people to learn more about adopting from the foster care system."

The Heart Gallery of Central Texas is both a traveling portrait exhibit and unique approach to community outreach which offers a special opportunity for individuals to learn more about children in the foster care system and the adoption process. The exhibit is made possible by 60 Central Texas documentary and portrait photographers who volunteered their time and talents to capture the characteristics and individual personalities of these 144 children waiting for adoption, in hopes that their work will inspire others to open their hearts and consider adopting. The photography exhibit also helps show the variety in age and ethnicity of the children, and the sibling groups awaiting adoption, all who need families. Kara Price of Kara Price Photography is one of the dedicated photographers for 2009 and stated her feelings about working on the project, "working on The Heart Gallery project has been an eye and heart opening experience. I wanted to capture their sole so that

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when people viewed the pictures of these precious children, they would see more than a smiling face. I want people to see the human, the individual, with so much to share and offer- stories of great loss, redemption, hope, and courage. All of these children have a past but it's all of our responsibility to make sure they don't miss out on their future".

At any given moment, there are 700 children waiting for adoption in the Central Texas foster care system, all removed from their natural family due to abuse or neglect. The Heart Gallery helps educate the public about adoption and children available in their area, and helps break down common misconceptions regarding adoption.

The photo exhibit and Heart Gallery Gala will be held on Thursday, September 17, 2009 at SPAZIO by Lytle Pressley, 1214 W. 6<sup>th</sup> Street, Austin, Texas at 6:30 p.m. This is a project of the Adoption Coalition of Texas, in partnership with six CASA organizations across Central Texas. The Adoption Coalition of Texas is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization created in 2003 to focus on finding forever families for children languishing in the foster care system.

[www.heartgallerytexas.com](http://www.heartgallerytexas.com)

[www.adoptioncoalitiontx.org](http://www.adoptioncoalitiontx.org)

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About the Adoption Coalition of Texas:

The Adoption Coalition of Texas (ACT) is a coalition of Child Protective Services and nonprofit child placing agencies whose mission is to find families for children languishing in the foster care system. This is accomplished through community awareness and education about kids in foster care, recruitment of families, and systemic change with the goal of ultimately increasing the number of kids who get adopted. The Adoption Coalition of Texas partner agencies include: The Arrow Child and Family Ministries, Lutheran Social Services of the South, Marywood Children Family Services, Pathways Youth and Family Services, and Child Protective Services. The Heart Gallery of Central Texas is one of its several recruitment projects. These children are living in foster care, many for extended periods, and are waiting for a permanent family – a life of stability and love. If you would like more information on the Adoption Coalition of Texas, The Heart Gallery of Central Texas, or to find out ways to help, visit [www.adoptioncoalitiontx.org](http://www.adoptioncoalitiontx.org), [www.heartgallerytexas.com](http://www.heartgallerytexas.com) , or call Dr. Tracy Eilers at 512-301-2825. The Adoption Coalition of Texas operates as a special 501(c)3 project of the Austin Community Foundation.