



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

## **Calendar and Media Advisory March 2009**

### **Heart Gallery of Central Texas Traveling Portrait Exhibit Comes To Bryan/College Station with Kickoff Reception March 26**

***Portrait Exhibit highlights Foster Children waiting for a Forever Family;  
exhibit has produced 60% success rate for permanent adoptions***

**WHO/WHAT** : The **2009 Heart Gallery of Central Texas** brings its successful traveling portrait exhibit to Bryan/College Station from March 22 through April 6, 2009 at the Post Oak Mall, 1500 Harvey Rd., College Station, Texas. A kickoff reception will also be held March 26 from 4-6 pm at Post Oak Mall with the exhibit. Guests at the reception will include representatives from The Heart Gallery of Central Texas project, the Adoption Coalition of Texas partner agencies and Voices for Children - CASA of Brazos County, to help answer questions about foster care and permanent adoption. Refreshments will be served. This event is free and open to the public.

This special traveling portrait exhibit tours around Central Texas for eight months every year from September through April and has proven to be a unique and excellent way to inform the public about foster children needing permanent families. The Heart Gallery, since its inception four years ago, has produced a 60% success rate in permanent adoptions of the children featured in the portraits thanks to the community and nationwide support. The exhibit is made possible by over 59 Central Texas documentary and portrait photographers who volunteered their time and talents to capture the characteristics and individual personalities of more than 158 Central Texas children in 106 portraits who are

waiting for adoption, in hopes that their work will inspire people to open their hearts and consider adoption. At any given moment, there are 680 children waiting for adoption in the Central Texas foster care system, all removed from their natural family due to abuse or neglect.

This is a project of the Adoption Coalition, in partnership with six CASA organizations across Central Texas. The Adoption Coalition of Texas is a nonprofit organization created in 2003 to focus on finding forever families for children languishing in the foster care system.

**WHEN/  
WHERE:**

**The Heart Gallery of Central Texas (Portrait Exhibit)**

Post Oak Mall – 1500 Harvey Road, College Station, TX 77840  
Sunday, March 22, 2009 – Monday, April 6, 2009

**Kick off Reception March 26<sup>th</sup> from 4-6 pm at Post Oak Mall by the photo exhibit; the event is free and open to the public**

Smaller versions of the Heart Gallery tour will be present in local churches. Exact locations to be announced soon.

**WHY:**

To promote that there are children in foster care awaiting adoption and the adoption process. There are an estimated 523,000 children in foster care in the United States, and more than 150,000 of them are waiting to be adopted. In Central Texas alone, there is a daily average of 3,500 children in foster care with 500 waiting for adoption. Since 1987, the number of children in foster care has nearly doubled, and the average time a child remains in foster care has lengthened to nearly three years. Each year, approximately 20,000 children in foster care will age out of the system without ever being placed with a permanent family according to the *U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families Administration on Children; Interim Estimates for FY 2003.*

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For more information, please see our websites:

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

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

## **NOTE TO MEDIA:**

**The reception on March 26 will provide a special photo and video opportunity. Interviews will be available with foster children who are looking for a permanent home, representatives from The Heart Gallery of Central Texas, and parents who have adopted children from the Heart Gallery to talk about the process and feelings connected with the adoption. Call Michele Golden at 713-252-6464 for more information or to set up an interview.**

### **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 Project, Homes4Good, 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.

The mission of the Adoption Coalition of Texas is to work collaboratively to create adoption opportunities for foster children in Central Texas by finding permanent homes for those languishing in the foster care system. The mission is to be accomplished by engaging communities in a collaborative, integrated and proactive effort that includes community outreach and recruitment, training, matching, retention and continued support services. The Adoption Coalition of Texas is currently operating as a special project of the Austin Community Foundation.

### **About Voices for Children (CASA):**

The mission of Voices for Children is to advocate for the best interest of abused and neglected children under the court's jurisdiction until each is placed into a safe, nurturing, and permanent home and to ensure that each child's needs are addressed and fully met.