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Contact: Michele Golden/Golden & Co.
281-759-2404 work
713-252-6464 cell

SPECIAL SONG CREATED BY AUSTIN ARTISTS TELLS GRIPPING STORY OF FOSTER CHILDREN LOOKING FOR FOREVER FAMILIES

Song Donated to Adoption Coalition of Texas To Help Provide Awareness Of Foster Children Waiting To Be Adopted

(Austin, TX. – March 12, 2007) –A compelling new song, ***“My Forever Family”*** was produced in Austin last week by known local artists/songwriters, and donated to the Adoption Coalition of Texas (ACT) to help create more widespread awareness and recognition for children languishing in foster care who are waiting for a permanent home. Two Austin songwriters, Tommy Byrd and Ande Rasmussen, were touched by the goals of the Adoption Coalition of Texas and its’ Heart Gallery project after Rasmussen met the executive director of the organization, Dr. Tracy Eilers. She told them a special message needed to be told about the hope these kids have for a permanent home, and Byrd and Rasmussen agreed to work together to create this special song.

“We were searching for a way to communicate how a child in foster care really feels while waiting for a permanent home. Many of the children are older children or sibling groups, and have a harder time getting adopted, so this song reflects their hope for that forever family”, said Dr. Tracy Eilers, Executive Director for the Adoption Coalition of Texas and Chair for The Heart Gallery of Central Texas. The song will be used throughout the year at events, in marketing materials, and with promotions for the Adoption Coalition and its projects.

Tommy Byrd of *Byrd & Street* wrote the music, lyrics, performed vocals, and produced the song; with origination and co-writing from Ande Rasmussen. Byrd is a musician/songwriter, and Rasmussen a songwriter. Both are longtime area residents who have been involved in the Austin music scene and recognized for their talents. ***“My Forever Family”*** tells of hope, speaks from the heart, and conveys a special story of how a foster child feels while waiting for a permanent home. The song is available now on CD from the Adoption Coalition of Texas for those wanting to help share this unique and special story. The CD includes three cuts of the song: a full vocal track, an instrumental track, and one of the original demo versions of the song.

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The Adoption Coalition of Texas focuses on community awareness and education about kids in foster care, recruitment of potential families and systemic change with the goal of ultimately increasing the number of kids who get adopted. The Heart Gallery of Central Texas is one of several recruitment projects of the Adoption Coalition of Texas. It is both an art exhibit and community education effort that features professional portraits by renowned documentary and portrait photographers of children in foster care who are waiting to be adopted.

The Adoption Coalition of Texas (ACT) operates as a special 501c3 project of the Austin Community Foundation and is a partnership of other nonprofit agencies and Child Protective Services - all working together to find forever families for older children, sibling groups, and children with special needs, often referred to as forgotten children. These children are living in foster care, many for extended periods, and are waiting for a permanent family – a life of stability and love. At any given moment, there are 500 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 of Central Texas is an annual project of ACT, and serves as both a traveling portrait exhibit and innovative approach to community outreach which provides a unique opportunity for individuals to see children in the foster care system waiting for adoption and provides awareness for the adoption process. The exhibit is made possible by over 45 Central Texas documentary and portrait photographers who volunteer their time and talents every year to capture the characteristics and individual personalities of more than 140 children (in 95 portraits) waiting for adoption, in hopes that their work will inspire people to open their hearts and consider adoption. The first two years of the Heart Gallery exhibits have seen a huge success, with an overwhelming 55% of the children featured in the last two exhibits having been adopted. The goal is to feature a new Heart Gallery every Fall, and have it move around Central Texas for its 6-month exhibit until all of the children are adopted.

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*.

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, www.heartgallerytexas.com, or call Dr. Tracy Eilers at 512-301-2825.

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