



-- Biographies --

Local Austin Artists Who Created Song "My Forever Family" for the Adoption Coalition of Texas

Tommy Byrd –

Long-time Austin resident, Tommy Byrd has been involved with the Austin music scene for more than two decades. As a self-taught guitarist for most of his life, Tommy Byrd has written, produced and performed his songs, combining his talent with other songwriters and singers to create an impressive collection of Americana and folk music that appeals to fans of all generations. His Austin band, **Byrd & Street**, performs in Austin, around the State of Texas, and in Arkansas.

He began his musical career in 1964 and has been repeatedly recognized for his songwriting talent. In 1986, Tommy Byrd wrote the winning song in the Official Song of Austin contest sponsored by the Austin Chamber of Commerce. He was a top finalist in a national songwriting contest sponsored by TNN in 1998 and his songs have been recorded by Austin band *Stop the Truck* and Austin singer Mady Kaye. In 2001, Kids' Acting used three of his songs in the production *The Emperor's New Shows*. Piano Press included a song that he co-wrote called "All of Us Together" for their CD called *KidTunes*. More recently, in 2006, Tommy Byrd's *Love Broke the Fall* won 1st in Country in the Austin Songwriters 2006 contest, as well as placing 2nd in the Inspirational music category. His *Kisses and Conversation* placed 1st in the Jazz category. *Zig Zag*, co-written with Kathy Street, placed 3rd in the Jazz category.

For his most recent song, "*My Forever Family*", Byrd wrote the music, lyrics, sang vocals and produced the final versions (one version is an instrumental version and one with full vocals). The song was the brainchild of fellow musician Ande Rasmussen who co-wrote the lyrics. The song was written for the Adoption Coalition of Texas to help them provide the story about children in the foster care system looking for a permanent forever family.

Ande Rasmussen -

Another familiar name in the Austin music scene is longtime Austinite and award winning songwriter, Ande Rasmussen. His songs have been recorded by John Arthur Martinez, Tommy Byrd, Steve Brooks, Abi Tapia, and many others. He served on the Austin Songwriters Group board from 2001-2004 and was president in 2003. Currently, he is a Governor for the Texas Grammy Chapter, and is a member of the Austin Rotary Club. Rasmussen has been in Austin since 1977; he currently works in Austin and lives in Martindale, Texas. He graduated the University of Texas at Austin and presently works full-time at Merrill Lynch. He is married and has 2 children.

Rasmussen invited Dr. Tracy Eilers, Executive Director for the Adoption Coalition of Texas (ACT), to be a guest speaker at the Austin Rotary Club meeting where she spoke about ACT, its goals, and involvement with foster children and adoption. Rasmussen agreed to attempt to write a song about the "story" that needed to be told, about children in foster care looking for a permanent forever family. Rasmussen originated the idea for the "*My Forever Family*" song, and co-wrote it with Tommy Byrd.

Adoption Coalition of Texas –

The Adoption Coalition of Texas (ACT) is a public/private partnership of five nonprofit agencies and Child Protective Services, working together to find forever families for older children, sibling groups, and children with special needs, often referred to as forgotten children. **The Heart Gallery of Central Texas** is a special project of ACT featuring a traveling annual photo exhibit for Central Texas of over 100 children in foster care who are waiting to find a forever family. These children are living in foster care, many for extended periods, and are waiting for a permanent family – a life of stability and love. The Adoption Coalition of Texas partner agencies include: The Arrow Project, Child Placement Center, Lutheran Social Services of the South, Marywood Children Family Services, Pathways Youth and Family Services, and Child Protective Services. For 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.