

NEWS



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Department of Human Services

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Eighteen adoptions finalized at National Adoption Day event

Philadelphia--The adoptions of 14 foster youth were finalized at a ceremony and celebration recognizing National Adoption Day and sponsored by the Philadelphia Department of Human Services and Family Court. Four private adoptions were also finalized. The adoption proceedings were followed by a celebratory lunch, featuring remarks by the Honorable Kevin Dougherty, Administrative Judge of Family Court and DHS Deputy Commissioner Vanessa Garrett Harley and guest speaker Vai Sikahema from NBC 10. An award was also presented to the family of the late Gena Dantzler, who worked in DHS' adoption unit for 18 years. The luncheon featured circus themed entertainment for the children including a magician, face painting and a balloon artist.

“Finalizing an adoption, and helping a foster child become part of a loving permanent family, is perhaps the most gratifying work we do in Family Court” said Kevin Dougherty, Administrative Judge of Family Court.

“Children in foster care are often referred to as ‘children in waiting,’ because they are waiting for what every child deserves--a permanent and loving home,” said DHS Deputy Commissioner Vanessa Garrett Harley, “At DHS, helping youth in placement achieve timely permanency is one of our top priorities. I am thrilled that for these children, and many others who have been helped by our dedicated staff and provider agencies, the wait is over.”

DHS is involved in several partnerships aimed at raising awareness about the need for adoptive families including Wednesday's Child, a television segment hosted by NBC 10's Vai Sikahema, and Monday's Child, a feature in the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, both of which spotlight children in care; and the Heart Gallery, a traveling photography exhibit featuring professional portraits of children available for adoption.

These efforts are paying off. According to Garret Harley, during each of the last two fiscal years, more than 40% of the children served by DHS' Adoptions Section were adopted. Additionally, Philadelphia continues to lead the state in finalizations.

Dougherty encouraged all families considering adoption to find out more by calling the National Adoption Center at 215-735-9988.

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The Philadelphia Department of Human Services (DHS) is the City agency charged with protecting children from abuse, neglect, and delinquency; ensuring their safety and permanency in nurturing home environments; and strengthening and preserving families by enhancing community-based prevention services. In partnership with community organizations, DHS provides services to strengthen the overall well being of Philadelphia children, youth, and families using a customer focused approach that is responsive to evolving community needs.