The Heart Gallery of New Mexico Foundation was created to raise funds necessary to expand the Heart Gallery of New Mexico as well as to improve upon and support other New Mexico initiatives which encourage adoption through foster care. The Heart Gallery of New Mexico Foundation is a registered 501c(3) organization. To find out how you can help or donate, contact Judy Richardson at (505) 982-2426 or visit www.heartgallerynm.org.

Helping adoption-available kids find their ‘forever families’
The Heart Gallery began as an idea in response to the question: “How can we better help foster children find their forever homes?” The inspired answer: capture the personalities of these waiting children in professional portraits, allowing potential parents to see a bit of their hearts and spirits, and experience a sense of who they are.

Birth of a nationwide movement

The Heart Gallery concept was born in New Mexico in March 2001. Diane Grantz, a recruiter for the New Mexico Youth, Children and Families Department (CYFD), brought the idea to life for the nation’s first Heart Gallery exhibit in Santa Fe. Expanding on the suggestion of Cathy Monet Callanan, a photographer and adoptive mother, Diane gathered dozens of volunteer professional photographers to take portraits of available children. Christened “The Heart Gallery,” the awareness-raising exhibit opened at Santa Fe’s Gerald Peters Gallery. It drew a capacity crowd to view the stirring portraits of children in CYFD custody who were dreaming of finding their “forever families.”

Since then, the Heart Gallery of New Mexico events have helped find homes for many children who were considered “hard to place” due to their age or the fact that they were members of a sibling group. One of the happiest endings came in June 2005, when a special portrait inspired a couple to adopt five teenaged siblings. Two photographers even “clicked” so well with the children they were photographing that they went on to adopt them!

Caring hearts across America respond

Thanks to media coverage and technical support from CYFD, the Heart Gallery spread to several other states. At first the message spread slowly; then, in January 2005, an insightful article about the project by Rosemary Zibart appeared in Parade magazine. It was as though the nation had been waiting to learn about the children and how they could help. Hundreds of e-mails and phone calls poured into CYFD asking for guidance. As more groups sprang up, the Heart Gallery became the focus of extensive national media attention, at one point achieving a media milestone when it was featured on the Today Show and in the New York Times and in the same week.

Other coverage followed with OKW Magazine, USA Weekend, Woman’s World, ABC World News Tonight, The View, 20/20 and the CBS special, A Home for the Holidays, all doing stories on the Heart Gallery. Each time a piece appeared, more people were inspired to step up and help. Nearly every state now has a Heart Gallery and some have many. Florida has thirteen groups, California has eight, and Texas has Heart Galleries that cover as many as 40 counties.

CYFD continues to be a conduit for the positive energy of these dedicated planners. The US Children’s Bureau initiative, The Collaboration to Adopt Us Kids, has also been a strong supporter of the project, naming the Heart Gallery a “best practice.” On November 1, 2005, the Heart Gallery of America, Inc. opened the Post National Heart Gallery exhibit at Union Station in Washington, D.C.

With 46 states currently hosting or planning Heart Gallery openings, the range of talent, generosity and caring is breathtaking. Each area’s group of volunteers, organizers and photographers create a special setting to show these deserving children in their best light. Though each Heart Gallery is unique, creativity, dedication and lots of hard work are evident in all of them. They have inspired people to cry, to smile, and to act – the number of Heart Gallery-inspired placements will soon number in the thousands. Individual children and sibling groups of three, four and five have found families... because their new parents saw a Heart Gallery portrait and wanted to make their dreams of “home” come true.

national news+notes

Matthew Straats, of the Heart Gallery of Broward County Florida, has joined CYFD and Diane Grantz in a new initiative co-founded by Heart Gallery of America, Inc.

With an experienced and enthusiastic board, successful and involved members, this national nonprofit will support the work of Heart Gallery organizations which, in turn, support our foster children in their dream to become part of a loving family.

Santa Fe

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New Jersey

The year before their first Heart Gallery, the Division of Youth and Family Services received 81 adoption inquiries in the month of June. In the first three weeks of the June following the New Jersey Heart Gallery opening, 466 inquiries were received, 2/3 of whom said they were inquiring about a Heart Gallery child within ten weeks of its launch. Heart Gallery of NJ had found prospective adoptive families for 73 of the state’s hardest to place children. www.heartgallerynj.com

Tampa Bay, Florida

Heart Gallery Tampa Bay has matched 40% of the foster children from our 2007 gallery with potential families since we opened in February, with 3 adoption finalizations already! Jesse Miles Director, Tampa Bay Heart Gallery.

We could not imagine our home without Jessica in it. We are truly blessed by having been given this opportunity! The Heart Gallery was our first awareness of the foster care system in Hillsborough County so please keep it going! Please don’t ever stop believing in what you do each and every day for these children and for families like ours. A note from 15-year-old Jessica’s new adoptive mother.

San Diego, Nevada

Second opening event held May 2007. 37 children featured, 10 placed so far this year. First year, 58 children featured, 55 have adoption plans, 32 are ready to go to finalization. The direct results from Heart Gallery would be 60 - 75%. Sherry Kenny, Las Vegas Heart Gallery.

Jetpack, Orange, California

Addams Family: – Jetpack Hawaii 11/05 - 1/06.
Additional families have been matched after our opening at Jetpack Hawaii.

Only 9% of all children are seen by contractors for a second trainer at each class to assist with the large class size.

Heart Gallery of America, Inc.

The Heart Gallery has been responsible for generating over 600 inquiries in Orange County since November 2005. We have already been the most successful adoption outreach program in Orange County’s history!

Thanks from the heart: Adoption Means Love – Adopt Us Kids A.D. Design Christian Community Foundation of South Florida – Sebastian Darttavlù Sherry Huray/Uly’s Light – Rebekah Negrete/Mrs. International – The Piccione Family – Matthew Straats – Randy & Elizabeth Trues – Ela Zamar...

and all those who have embraced The Heart Gallery and its dream, to find a loving family for each of the 118,000 waiting children in America!