

For Official Government Use Only

President's List

NATIONAL ADOPTION MONTH CEREMONY - Tuesday NOV 24 1998 - 1:30 PM White House - Business - East Visitors Entrance

Page 1

THE PRESIDENT AND FIRST LADY

REPORT DATE: November 23, 1998
REPORT TIME: 8:33 PM

Accepts and No Responses

Ms. Terri T. Alexander
Guest: Ms. Sarah Alexander

Ms. MaryLee Allen
Dir. Child Welfare & Ment. Health, Children's Defense Fund
Washington, DC

Hon. and Mrs. Max Baer
Judge, Allegheny County Juvenile Court, Family Division
Pittsburgh, PA
Guests: Mr. Benjamin Baer, Mr. Andrew Baer

Mr. Steven Bahls
Dean, Capital University Law School

Mr. and Mrs. Jeffrey Barnes
Guests: Ms. Deshawn Barnes, Mr. Tyshawn Barnes

Ms. Margie L. Barnes
Guest: Ms. LaTonya Barnes

Hon. and Mrs. Marion Barry
Mayor, District of Columbia
Washington, DC

Hon. Judith Bartnoff

Hon. Ronna Lee Beck
Judge, Superior Court of the District of Columbia
Washington, DC
Guest: Ms. Sharon Belinda Grabner

Ms. Carol Statuto Bevan
Staff, House Ways & Means Committee
Washington, DC

Hon. Anna Blackburne-Rigsby

Ms. Mary Bourdette
Deputy Assistant Secretary for Legislation, US Department of Health & Human Services
Washington, DC

Honorable Harold Brazil
Chairman, Council of the District of Columbia
Washington, DC

Ms. Noel Brennan
Deputy Assistant Attorney General, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice
Washington, DC

Mr. Emil Brolick
Board Member, Dave Thomas Foundation

Hon. Arthur Burnett

REPORT DATE: November 23, 1998
REPORT TIME: 8:33 PM

Accepts and No Responses

Mr. Forrest Burson
Director, Georgia Department of Human Resources

Ms. Vanessa Campbell
Guests: Ms. LaTonya Campbell, Ms. Sparkle E. Campbell

Ms. Ellen Wiggins Carey
Adoption Specialist, Children's Bureau
Washington, DC

Ms. Carla Carpenter
Senior Legislative Council, Office of Senator Mike DeWine
Washington, DC

Mr. David A. Catania
Councilmember, Council of the District of Columbia
Washington, DC

Mr. Leroy Chambers and Ms. Vanessa J. Chambers
Guest: Ms. Angel Lakisha Chambers

Honorable Kevin P. Chavous
Washington, DC

Ms. Barbara Clark
Staff, Department of Health & Human Services

Ms. Marianne Clarke
National Adoption Center
Philadelphia, PA

Mr. Thomas B. Clemens
Video Production Supervisor, Wendy's International, Inc.

Ms. Barbara Cohen

Ms. Frances A. Cowan
Guests: Ms. Shirlene Cowan, Mr. Gregory Cowan

Ms. Linda Susan Cox
Holt International Children's Services
Eugene, OR

Hon. Gregory B. Craig
Assistant to the President and General Counsel, The White House
Guest: Mr. Will Craig

Hon. Lynn G. Cutler
Deputy Assistant to the President for Intergovernmental Affairs, White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs
Washington, DC

Mr. Steven Dahls
Dean, Capital Law School

REPORT DATE: November 23, 1998
REPORT TIME: 8:33 PM

Accepts and No Responses

Hon. Pamela Diaz
Hearing Commissioner, D.C. Superior Court
Washington, DC

Mr. James Dukes and Ms. Alicia D. Smith
Guest: Ms. Constania Dukes

Ms. Jamila J. Larson (Substitute for: Marian Edelman)

Hon. (Gov.) and Mrs. James R. Edgar
Governor of Illinois (R), State of Illinois
Springfield, IL
Guest: Mr. Eric Robinson

Ms. Brenda Eheart
Executive Director, Hope for the Children, Inc.
Rantoul, IL

Mr. and Mrs. Albert Elmore
Guests: Mr. Evander Lee Elmore, Ms. Christina Elmore

Ms. Stehanie K. Eshelman
Guest: Mr. Wang Eshelman

Mr. Clarence Evans and Ms. Yvette Roberta Evans
Assistant Social Worker, Department of Health & Human Services, Kinship Care
Washington, DC
Guest: Ms. Nakia Evans

Ms. Maureen McCauley Evans
Executive Director, Joint Council on International Children's Services
Cheverly, MD

Ms. Traci Failla
Accountant Supervisor, Ketchum Public Relations

Ms. Laura Feig
Staff, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation

Ms. Sally Flanzer
Staff, Department of Health & Human Services

Ms. Susan Alexander Freivalds
Adoptive Families of America
Minneapolis, MN

Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Garcia
Guest: Mr. Everett Garcia

Ms. Sarah Gesiriech

Hon. Olivia A. Golden
Assistant Secretary for Children & Families, Department of Health and Human Services
Washington, DC

REPORT DATE: November 23, 1998
REPORT TIME: 8:33 PM

Accepts and No Responses

Ms. Michelle Grossman

Associate Account Executive, Ketchum Public Relations

Hon. Eugene Hamilton

Chief Justice, Superior Court of DC
Washington, DC

Mrs. Virginia Hamilton

Mr. Mark Hardin

Director of Child Welfare, Center on Children and Law, American Bar Association
Washington, DC

Ms. Barbara Harrison

Anchor, NBC 4
Washington, DC

Ms. Pam Hasegawa

Ms. Jann K. Heffner

Executive Director, The Dave Thomas Foundation
Dublin, OH

Mr. William J. Henderson

Postmaster General, Chief Executive Officer, U.S. Postal Service
Washington, DC

Ms. Gloria Hochman

The National Adoption Center

Mrs. Maureen Hogan

Executive Director, Adopt America
Washington, DC

Mr. and Mrs. Richard Honig

Guest: Ms. Saige Honig

Hon. Anita Isicson

Ms. Robin Jackson and Mr. Bernard Jackson

Guest: Ms. Naomi Jackson

Ms. Sondra Jackson

Child and Family Services Agency
Washington, DC

Mr. Azeezaly Jaffer

Manager of Stamp Services, U.S. Postal Service
Washington, DC

Hon. Charlene Drew Jarvis

Chairman Pro Tempore, Washington, DC City Council
Washington, DC

Mr. Randy Jenkins

REPORT DATE: November 23, 1998
REPORT TIME: 8:33 PM

Accepts and No Responses

Ms. Carolyn Johnson
National Adoption Center
Philadelphia, PA

Ms. Ernestine F. Jones
General Receiver, Child and Family Services
Washington, DC

Mr. Robert Kerns

Ms. Susan Kidd
Ch. 4 WRC
Washington, DC

Hon. Rufus King
Judge, D.C. Courthouse

Ms. Michelle Kramer
Senior Account Executive, Ketchum Public Relations

Mr. Joseph Kroll
Executive Director, North American Council on Adoptable Children
St. Paul, MN

Ms. Carolyn B. Lamm
White & Case

Ms. Madelyn Landrieu
American Trial Lawyers Association
Miami, FL

Hon. (Sen.) Mary L. Landrieu and Mr. E. Frank Snellings
D-Louisiana, United States Senate
Washington, DC

Mr. Howard Hill (Substitute for: Harriet Lange)

Hon. (Sen) Carl M. Levin
D-Michigan, United States Senate
Washington, DC

Mr. David Liederman
Executive Director, Child Welfare League of America
Washington, DC

Mr. Ernesto Loperena
NY Council on Adoptable Children
New York, NY

Ms. Abigail Lovett

Mr. Dennis L. Lynch
President, Dave Thomas Foundation

Mr. Kent Markus
Director, Dave Thomas Center for Adoption Law

For Official Government Use Only

REPORT DATE: November 23, 1998
REPORT TIME: 8:33 PM

Accepts and No Responses

Ms. Kristin Marshall
Program Coordinator, Dave Thomas Foundation

Honorable Hilda Howland Mason
D.C. City Council
Washington, DC

Mr. Jess McDonald
Director, Illinois Department of Children and Family Services
Springfield, IL

Ms. Maureen McGauley-Evans
Joint Council on International Children's Services
Cheverly, MD

Ms. Kathleen McHugh

Mr. and Mrs. Willis E. Miller
Guest: Ms. Pamela R. Miller

Mr. Thomas Henderson (Substitute for: Mark Mindel)

Hon. and Mrs. George Mitchell

Ms. Zinora Mitchell-Rankin
Washington, DC

Ms. Elba Montalvo
Executive Director, Committee for Hispanic Children & Families
New York, NY

Ms. Evelyn K. Moore
President, National Black Child Development Institute
Washington, DC

Ms. Kathleen A. Munger
Manager, Public Relations, Wendy's International, Inc.

Mr. Wendell Myers and Ms. Janet Meyers
Guest: Ms. Stephanie Myers

Ms. Jane Nast
Morristown, NJ

Hon. (Rep.) and Mrs. James L. Oberstar
D/Minnesota, House of Representatives
Washington, DC

Ms. Toni Oliver
Child and Family Services Agency
Washington, DC

Ms. Elizabeth Oppenheim
American Public Human Services Association

REPORT DATE: November 23, 1998
REPORT TIME: 8:33 PM

Accepts and No Responses

Ms. Caroline Brolick (Substitute for: Casey Ostercamp)

Ms. Jacqueline Parker

Hon. Evelyn Queen
Judge, DC Superior Court Judges

Mr. Timothy C. Reed

Mrs. Jestina L. Richarson
Executive Director, United Homes for Children
Boston, MA

Mr. Edward Hayes Ricks

Mr. and Mrs. David Robinson
Guest: Mr. Sean M. Robinson

Ms. Ann Rosewater
Counselor to the Secretary, US Department of Health and Human Services,
Washington, DC

Ms. Martha Ross
Executive Director, Three Rivers Adoption Council
Pittsburgh, PA

Mrs. Rochelle Ross-Mays and Mr. Edward Mays
Guests: Ms. Chardai Mays, Mr. Stephen Mays

Ms. Barbara J. Ruffin
Guests: Ms. Victoria Ruffin, Ms. Vivian Ruffin

Mr. David Sahr and Mrs. Lori Milstein
Guest: Mr. Joshua Young Joon Sahr

Judge Lee Satterfield

Ms. Jan Shafer

Mr. Frank Smith
Councilmember, Ward 1
Washington, DC

Hon. Evelyn Lundberg Stratton
Justice, Ohio Supreme Court
OH

Ms. Julie Ann Sullivan
Assistant Program Director, Child Welfare League of America
Washington, DC

Ms. Mary Eileen Sullivan
The National Adoption Information Clearinghouse
Fairfax, VA

REPORT DATE: November 23, 1998
REPORT TIME: 8:33 PM

Accepts and No Responses

Ms. Margaret Tarter Summers

Mr. Gary Talbott
Wendy's International

Ms. Kim A. Tenhor
Social Worker, DC Department of Human Services

Honorable Harry Thomas
Councilmember, Council of the District of Columbia
Washington, DC

Mr. and Mrs. Rex David Thomas
Founder, The Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption
Ft. Lauderdale, FL

Guests: Ms. Kathleen Ann Thomas, Ms. Molly Jo Thomas-Postlewaite, Ms. Melinda Thomas Morse, Mr. Sean David Thomas, Ms. Alyson Stephan Farber, Ms. Stephanie Rose Thomas, Mr. Charles Christopher Postlewaite, Ms. Amanda Allyn Morse
Ms. Sherry Thomas
Guest: Mr. Malik Thomas

Mr. James Tolbert
Manager of Stamp Development, U.S. Postal Service
Washington, DC

Mr. Mark McDermott (Substitute for: Samuel Totaro)

Mr. Darrick Tyson and Ms. Monique Tyson
Guests: Ms. LaShawn Tyson, Ms. Teonna Tyson

Dr. Dixie Van de Flier Davis
The Adoption Exchange
Denver, CO

Hon. Annice R. McBryde Wagner
Chief Judge, DC District Court of Appeals
Washington, DC

Mr. William Waldman
Executive Director, American Public Human Services Association
Washington, DC

Mr. Keith P. Warzyniak and Ms. Nancy Warzyniak
Guest: Ms. Kenika Warzyniak

Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Washington
Guests: Ms. Tasha Washington, Ms. Makayla Porter

Mrs. Linda Weir-Enegren

Ms. Ellen M. Wells
Guest: Ms. Jessica Wells

Ms. Ada White

REPORT DATE: November 23, 1998
REPORT TIME: 8:33 PM

Accepts and No Responses

Ms. Carol Williams

Associate Commissioner, Children's Bureau
Washington, DC

Mr. Jeffrey Woodburn and Ms. Elizabeth Lisk Woodburn

Concord, NH

Ms. Linda Woods

Honorable Jim Wright and Ms. Betty Wright

Fort Worth, TX

Honorable Nancy Wyman

State Representative, State of Connecticut
Hartford, CT

Hon. Joan Zeldon

Judge, Superior Court of D.C.
Washington, DC

Ms. Rhoda Zion

Guest: Mr. Dontae Zion

Ms. Joan Levy Zlotnik

Director of Special Projects, Council on Social Work Education
Alexandria, VA

4/20/99

Adoption going on line

U.S. government Web site to list kids nationwide by 2001

By Marilyn Ellas
USA TODAY

The federal government Monday announced plans to create a Web site with photos and descriptions of children awaiting adoption through public agencies across the nation.

About 8,000 youngsters need homes now. That number could double or triple by 2001, when the site is expected to be up, says Carol Williams of the Children's Bureau at the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

President Clinton in November asked HHS for a plan to expand use of the Internet to find adoptive homes.

The HHS report, submitted Monday, estimates the Web site will cost \$1.5 million to set up, then \$1.25 million per year to run. The funds will come from adoption-related programs already in the budget, with private-sector contributions expected.

States won't be legally required to list on the federal site, the report says, but a recent national survey suggests that many states regard the Internet as a good recruitment tool.

"The president supports the use of the Net in this way, and we're pleased to be making progress," says Bruce Reed, domestic policy adviser to Clinton. No White House approval is needed to get the plan moving, Reed says.

The number of U.S. children free for adoption is expected to soar in the next few years, primarily because of a 1997 federal law that shortens the length of time kids can remain in foster care before plans are made for a permanent home.

"A national Web site that could include all youngsters available in public adoptions will give these kids a much greater pool of families to draw from," says Joe Kroll of the North American Council on Adoptable Children, an advocacy support group.

Still, "it's not going to make children who are not there suddenly available," Williams says.

The "vast majority" of youngsters photographed and described will be over 3 years old, she says. Many will have handicaps — physical, intellectual or emotional. Some will be part of sibling groups to be adopted together. A significant number will be racial minorities, Williams says.

A pilot Internet adoption site called FACES (go to www.adopt.org and click on photo listings) has been offered by the National Adoption Center in Philadelphia since October 1995. The site opened with listings and photos of 40 children; now there are 1,600, executive director Carolyn Johnson says.

Interest has accelerated, she says. In March, 1,315 of the children listed drew e-mail inquiries from 380 potential families.

About 37 states have Internet adoption sites, but some are very limited.

Prospective parents always visit youngsters in person before adopting, Johnson says. Home studies and approval are required, just as they are in ordinary adoptions.

Many of the 76 adopted so far off the Philadelphia site "weren't likely to have ever found homes," Johnson says. "The Internet is the best tool we have."



THE SECRETARY OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20201

The Honorable William Jefferson Clinton
President of the United States
The White House
Washington, D. C. 20502

Dear Mr. President:

I am pleased to submit to you a Plan to Implement a National Internet Adoption Photolisting Service, the Department of Health and Human Services' response to your Executive Memorandum on "Using the Internet to Increase Adoptions," dated November 24, 1998. The Department has outlined, in this report, a series of policy and practice-related issues that need to be addressed in order to ensure smooth implementation of a national Internet photolisting service to find adoptive homes for children in the public child welfare system.

In preparation for this report, we assembled a small work group of child welfare professionals both within and outside the Department to collect information, identify important issues and make some initial suggestions for addressing them. The Department's implementation strategy will begin with focus group discussion in our Regional Offices. This will be our initial effort to consult the broader child welfare community for guidance on implementing the national Internet photolisting system.

We will then establish a standing work group comprised of State representatives and a variety of other stakeholders to address the issues raised in this report including any additional ones raised in the focus groups, and develop the initial specifications for the design of the system. Our goal is to award a contract next year for the design, development, maintenance and operation of the national Internet photolisting service.

The Department would like to thank the individuals who participated in the small work group discussions for laying the groundwork for a thorough, thoughtful study of the issues involved in the development and implementation of a national Internet photolisting service. In the coming months, the Department is fully committed to working in partnership with the States, child advocates, child welfare practitioners and others to implement this important project.

Page 2 -- The Honorable William Jefferson Clinton

We believe that this effort will lead to more timely adoption for America's waiting children.

Sincerely,

Donna E. Shalala

Enclosure

TAB - B

I. INTRODUCTION

The 1998 Executive Memorandum

On November 24, 1998, the President issued an Executive Memorandum to the Secretary of Health and Human Services on “Using the Internet to Increase Adoptions.” (See Appendix A for the text of the Executive Memorandum.) The memorandum directs the Secretary to “develop a plan for expanding appropriate use of the Internet as a tool to find homes for children waiting to be adopted from the public child welfare system.” It requests the Secretary to report back to him within 60 days on a plan to:

- carry out consultation with the States, courts and private agencies,
- identify the important issues and the strategies to address them, and
- build on promising existing efforts to create an effective national registry.

This report responds to the President’s Executive Memorandum. In developing the report, the Department of Health and Human Services (the Department) assembled a small work group which collected information needed for the report in the areas of foster care and adoption systems, the operation of the Internet, privacy and confidentiality, and the use of photolistings on the Internet. Broader consultation with a variety of stakeholders is planned over the next several months. The broader work group will fully address the issues raised in this report and provide the Department with recommendations for developing and implementing a national photolisting service for using the Internet to expand and facilitate efforts to find adoptive homes for children from the public child welfare system.

In preparation for this report, we also examined how the President’s internet initiative builds on a number of other significant activities that have focused attention on the public foster care system and on children who cannot return safely to their homes, especially children with special needs who are awaiting adoptive families. These related activities are discussed below.

Adoption 2002 and the Adoption and Safe Families Act

On December 14, 1996, President Clinton issued an Executive Memorandum to the Secretary of Health and Human Services and other cabinet and Federal officials to promote efforts to move children more rapidly from foster care to permanent homes and to increase the number of children who are adopted or permanently placed each year. In response to the December memorandum, the Department of Health and Human Services issued Adoption 2002, A Response to the Presidential Executive Memorandum on Adoption in February 1997.

Partly in response to this report and consistent with separate Congressional initiatives in both the Senate and the House, the Congress passed and the President signed the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) on November 19, 1997. This legislation represents the first major reform of Federal child welfare policy since 1980 and embodies a number of key principles that must be considered in implementing all child welfare services programs:

- **The safety of children is the paramount concern that must guide all child welfare services.** The new law requires that child safety be the paramount concern when making service provision, placement and permanency planning decisions. The law reaffirms the importance of making reasonable efforts to preserve and reunify families, but also now exemplifies when States are not required to make efforts to keep children with their parents, when doing so places a child's safety in jeopardy.
- **Foster care is a temporary setting and not a place for children to grow up.** To ensure that the system respects a child's developmental needs and sense of time, the law includes provisions that shorten the timeframe for making permanency planning decisions, and that establish a timeframe for initiating proceedings to terminate parental rights. The law also strongly promotes the timely adoption of children who cannot return safely to their own homes.

- **Permanency planning efforts for children should begin as soon as a child enters foster care and should be expedited by the provision of services to families.** The enactment of a legal framework requiring permanency decisions to be made more promptly heightens the importance of providing quality services as quickly as possible to enable families in crisis to address problems. It is only when timely and intensive services are provided to families, that agencies and courts can make informed decisions about parents' ability to protect and care for their children.
- **The child welfare system must focus on results and accountability.** The law makes it clear that it is no longer enough to ensure that procedural safeguards are met. It is critical that child welfare services lead to positive results. The law requires numerous tools for focusing attention on results, including an annual report on State performance; the creation of an adoption incentive payment for States designed to support the President's goal of doubling the annual number of children who are adopted or permanently placed by the year 2002; and a requirement for the Department to study and make recommendations regarding additional performance-based financial incentives in child welfare.
- **Innovative approaches are needed to achieve the goals of safety, permanency and well-being.** The law recognizes that we do not yet have all of the solutions to achieve our goals. By expanding the authority for child welfare demonstration waivers, the law provides a mechanism to allow States greater flexibility to develop innovative strategies to achieve positive results for children and families.

The ASFA legislation unequivocally established that our national goals for children in the child welfare system are **safety, permanency, and well-being**. The law also established policies and incentives for States that support the President's goal of doubling the number of children adopted from the public child welfare system by the year 2002. Specifically, the new law:

- * tightened the time frames for making permanent placement decisions for children,
- * created new financial incentives for States to increase adoptions,
- * required reasonable efforts to secure new permanent families for children who cannot return to their own homes, and
- * required that States initiate or join proceedings to terminate parental rights in specific circumstances in order to facilitate timely adoption.

The ASFA also reflected an understanding that assuring the timely placement of children in adoptive homes will sometimes require drawing on resources that cross State or other jurisdictional boundaries. The law contained two specific provisions intended to address geographic barriers to adoption

- A requirement that States develop plans for using “cross-jurisdictional resources” to facilitate adoptive placements, and
- A provision imposing severe penalties if a State denies or delays “the placement of a child for adoption when an approved family is available outside of the jurisdiction with responsibility for handling the case of the child.”

Other recent legislative actions have also promoted adoption by addressing financial barriers to adoption and discriminatory policies or practices that impede the timely placement of children. The Small Business Job Protection Act of 1996 provided a \$5,000 tax credit to families adopting children and a \$6,000 tax credit to families adopting children with special needs. The Multiethnic Placement Act of 1994 and the Interethnic Placement Provisions of 1996 bar discrimination on the basis of race or ethnicity in adoption and foster care placements and require that diligent efforts be made to recruit foster and adoptive families who reflect the racial and ethnic diversity of children in care

Together, all of these recent congressional and administrative initiatives have made important contributions toward assuring that children in foster care who cannot return home have a new chance to grow up in a permanent, loving, adoptive family. The President's Executive Memorandum on "Using the Internet to Increase Adoptions," identifies an additional tool to meet the needs of these waiting children.

II. CHILDREN AVAILABLE FOR ADOPTION, AND USING THE INTERNET TO PROMOTE ADOPTION

Nationwide, approximately 520,000 children are in State foster care systems. Of those who exit these systems, three out of four are reunified with their parents or other relatives. For children who cannot return home safely, it is important to find alternative permanent homes. This has been historically difficult to arrange because many of these children are school age, have physical or mental impairments, belong to sibling groups or are of minority heritage. In brief, they are children with special needs.

The latest information available from the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) indicates that there are about 110,000 children in the public child welfare system who have a permanency goal of adoption and/or whose parents' parental rights have been terminated. (See Appendix B for description of AFCARS.) State AFCARS data indicate that about 37,000 children are actually free for adoption. Of the children free for adoption, over 35 percent are teenagers and about 17 percent are between the ages of 9 and 12 years. Two-thirds of the children have been in care for two years or more and almost 30 percent have been in care for more than five years. African-Americans make up 48 percent of the population, 33 percent are white and 11 percent are of Hispanic origin.

Frequently, children in the child welfare system are adopted by either their foster parents or relatives. We estimate that approximately 64 percent will be adopted by their foster families and another 14 percent will be adopted by relatives. This means that of the

37,000 children who are free and available for adoption, 29,000 will probably be or are in the process of being adopted by their foster parents or by relatives, which leaves about 8,000 children who are legally free and available for adoption and for whom adoptive families need to be identified.

As the States implement the provisions of the Adoption and Safe Families Act over the next several years, many expect that more children will have a permanency goal of adoption and will become free and available for adoption more rapidly than before. Thus, the numbers of children for whom adoptive families need to be found will continue to increase. In order to find families for these children, the Internet will be a valuable tool.

Using The Internet for Adoption

Various studies and surveys estimate the current number of Internet users to be between 50 and 60 million while some projections indicate that there will be almost 150 million users by the year 2002.¹ Recent news releases indicate that within the next 3 to 6 months, the Internet will become even more accessible, without the burden of owning or learning how to use a computer. Users will be able to surf the web on home television via satellite dish or cable TV without needing or using the standard computer hookup. While there are no hard and fast data on which everyone can agree concerning the overall demographics of the population of Internet users, there seems to be consensus that racially and ethnically it mirrors quite closely the general population. Adult users tend to be somewhat better educated than the general population and have higher average earnings.² The number of actual and potential users together with the latest advances in the technology indicate the current and potential value of the Internet as a resource for providing information about adoption and for finding permanent homes for adoptive special needs children.

A recent survey indicates that 37 States have already developed their own adoption photolisting sites on the Internet that can be accessed by the general public. These

Internet sites can provide agencies with leads for follow-up activities with interested inquirers. One State indicates that most of the families who inquire about a child through the Internet are already approved to adopt a child or are in the process of approval, which makes it easier to move toward adoption.

III. CURRENT RECRUITMENT ACTIVITIES

Every State recruits families and places children for adoption. They have regularly used radio and television spots and advertisements, billboards, newspaper articles, special events, booths at fairs and other innovative activities. Most States place children on State, regional and national exchanges. Over time, additional methods of recruitment have been developed such as the Internet photolisting of children which extends recruitment efforts beyond States' geographical boundaries and has the potential to expand the pool of families available for the children. Finalizing an adoption requires myriad activities with major cooperation from both the public and private sectors. This section describes some current adoption activities.

Adoption Exchanges

An adoption exchange is an organized means of sharing information among agencies about children for whom an adoptive family is not immediately available and about potential adoptive families for whom an agency does not have a child waiting. Adoption exchanges operate at the State, regional (multi-State) and national levels, and occasionally at the local, county or multi-county level. They may be under public or private auspices. Policies and procedures governing exchanges vary. Exchanges operated by or under a contract with the State agency comply with that State's policies. State policies and protocols may not always be consistent with those of regional or national exchanges. This makes the linkage to other exchanges more difficult.

Exchanges have played a key role in informing the public about who the special needs children are and have also been involved in matching children with families. Exchanges, however, do not place children but work closely with State and local public agencies whose responsibility it is to make placements, and with the courts that finalize the adoptions.

The effectiveness of an exchange depends upon the cooperation of the public and private agencies which must provide accurate information about children available for adoption and prospective parents, as well as participate in recruitment, selection and placement.

National Recruitment Initiatives

During the past two decades a great deal of attention has been focused on finding permanent homes for children free for adoption in the child welfare system. The Federal Adoption Opportunities Discretionary Grants Program led the way to removing barriers to adoption of children with special needs and it continues to provide support to public and private agencies for adoption demonstrations. The private sector has also been instrumental in developing and implementing grants and providing other financial support to facilitate placements for children with special needs. The efforts of the private sector have for the most part utilized traditional methods of recruiting adoptive families such as photolisting books, adoption fairs, and broadcast and print media. However, some initiatives have utilized the technology of photolisting children on the Internet, such as the National Adoption Exchange and Faces of Adoption:

- The **National Adoption Exchange (NAE)** is a secure membership-based Internet system run by the National Adoption Center and funded by the Department since 1983. The grant to the Center is funded at \$500,000 per year and will be open for recompetition in September 1999. (See Appendix C for more information about the NAE) It uses the Internet for its exchange, lists both children who are available for adoption and registered families who have been approved to adopt. It allows exchanges, public and private agencies, adoption professionals, and adoptive parent

groups nationwide to work together via the World Wide Web. For the quarter ending October 1998, the NAE listed 700 approved adoptive families and 3,091 children from 42 States. The NAE is not available to the public.

- **Faces of Adoption (FACES)** is a national Internet photolisting service that brings children “online” through photographs and descriptions and offers a wealth of information on its website to assist potential adoptive parents. (See Appendix D for more information on FACES.) FACES, unlike the NAE, is open to the public, lists only children not families, and seems to be one version of the type of system the Executive Memorandum envisions. FACES was initially funded in 1995 by a Federal Adoption Opportunities grant to the National Adoption Center (NAC) and is now supported by the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption. According to a report from FACES, there has been a dramatic increase in States’ usage of the Center’s website since the passage of the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997. FACES’ experience in Internet photolisting technology provided valuable information for developing this report and is evidence that the Internet will provide a much wider audience with information on adoption and on children waiting for placement. FACES photolists an average of 1200 children. To date, 71 children have been placed with adoptive families as a result of photolisting children online.

During the latter part of December 1998, FACES and 26 States with Internet photolisting systems (of the 37 States known to have such sites) responded to an informal survey by the National Adoption Information Clearinghouse to learn about their experiences on using the Internet to photolist waiting children. (See Appendix E for further information on the Clearinghouse.) All but two States found the Internet photolisting to be a good recruitment tool. The other two States were non-committal. A large percentage of the respondents stated that the Internet expanded the pool of families who have approved homestudies and others viewed it as the best possible tool for public education on adoption. Every State saw an increase in the inquiries about adoption, but not necessarily about special needs children.

In sum, there is a solid infrastructure and significant activity available via the Internet for children waiting to be adopted. Thirty-seven States have their own photolisting sites on the Internet, 42 States participate in the National Adoption Exchange (NAE) and 35 States participate in Faces of Adoption (FACES). Of the eight States currently not listing with the NAE, four of them have plans to participate in the NAE, FACES or have their own photolisting sites on the Internet.

Thus, most of the States photolist children for adoption via the Internet and would not require any major changes to their systems to participate in a photolisting initiative. Most of the States' concerns focus on their abilities to respond to the volume of inquiries and homestudies, which the Internet listings could potentially generate. These issues will need to be addressed as more and more children are placed across jurisdictional boundaries. The question is whether the practice can keep pace with the technology.

IV. OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO INTERSTATE ADOPTIONS

Placing children in adoptive homes across State lines raises challenging issues and requires strong cooperation between States. Currently, two Interstate Compacts facilitate the placement of children in pre-adoptive homes and help assure continued medical coverage for children. Nonetheless, additional steps need to be taken to strengthen the effectiveness of the Compacts. In addition, a number of practice and capacity issues will need to be addressed if the number of interstate adoptions is to increase. Among the issues needing attention are the capacity of States to complete homestudies for families adopting from other States, the comparability of different States' homestudies, and the availability of post placement services for children adopted across State lines.

Interstate Compact on Placement of Children (ICPC)

Appropriate interjurisdictional placements should increase with the new interjurisdictional provisions of the Adoption and Safe Families Act and expanded use of the Internet. Critical to these placements is the agency staffs' knowledge about using the

Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC). The ICPC is a contract among the States to ensure that children placed across State lines for adoption or foster care receive appropriate and adequate protection and support services

The Compact outlines the steps necessary to place a child out of State. For example, the State the child is in (sending State) asks the State in which the child is placed (receiving State) to conduct a home study to evaluate a possible placement. When a placement is made, the receiving State must continue to supervise the placement [until finalized] while the sending State provides financial support. All States, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. Virgin Islands are members of the Compact ""

The compact increases placement options available for children as it makes the resources of all States available to each other. The child's safety is guarded through services and protections offered by the receiving States, such as homestudies and post placement supervision. It is a network that facilitates communication and cooperation between and among States concerning placement resources and ensures that the appropriate laws are followed before placement is made

The ICPC was instituted to facilitate the movement of children across State lines for purposes of placement in foster care or in pre-adoptive homes. Once an adoption has been finalized, reliance on the ICPC ceases and, for those States who are members, the Interstate Compact on Adoption and Medical Assistance goes into effect.

Interstate Compact on Adoption and Medical Assistance (The Compact)

The Compact is a formal mechanism designed to ensure that title IV-E eligible children continue to receive medical and other services when they move or are placed across State lines. It is administered by the Association of (State) Administrators of the Interstate Compact on Adoption and Medical Assistance (AAICAMA) under a cooperative agreement with the Department. The American Public Human Services Association (APHSA) acts as the Compact's Secretariat under subcontract with AAICAMA. The

Secretariat provides technical assistance to Compact members and helps resolve problems involving the provision of services and benefits for interjurisdictional adoption cases under the Compact.

Membership in the Compact is not mandatory. Currently, 35 States are members and two more States are awaiting approval by their State legislatures. Membership in the Compact assists the States in their efforts to maintain Medicaid eligible children's medical assistance (Medicaid card) when they move across State lines. When a Medicaid eligible child moves out of a member State, the Compact administrator verifies the child's Medicaid status and sends the appropriate paperwork to the new State of residence. When a Medicaid eligible child moves from one member State to another member State the transition can be completed by mail, and the family does not have to go to any Medicaid offices in either State. Member States have standard forms and instructions, the ability to issue timely Medicaid cards, a specific contact person and good coordination.

Barriers to Interstate Adoptions

To accelerate the path to permanency for all waiting children, it is crucial to identify and address the significant barriers to interstate adoptions, which include.

State Capacity and Resources to Complete Homestudies

Getting homestudies completed across jurisdictions in a timely manner is a major barrier to the timely placement of children. Interstate placements do not receive very high priority especially by agencies that have high caseloads. According to the ICPC, the preparation of homestudies that evaluate the proposed placement is the primary responsibility of the receiving State. When there are delays, it is usually because of agency case overload. This delay, however, creates burdens for the sending State as the child waits and the State continues to incur the costs of maintaining the child in foster care.

States with well-established purchase of service agreements (with a budget supported by the legislature) are more timely in getting homestudies and post placement services arranged for families who request them. A purchase of service agreement is generally used to contract for services when the agency itself does not provide the service or lacks the capacity to meet the service demand. However, the public agency may decide to provide some components of a service, but contract other components.

If the State does not have a fee agreement, the prospective adoptive parent can get the homestudy done by a private licensed agency. This fee is recoverable if the family adopts a child under the provisions of the Small Business Job Protection Act of 1996, which provided a \$5,000 tax credit to families for any adoption and a \$6,000 tax credit to families for the adoption of a special needs child. The tax credit begins to phase out for families with incomes of \$75,000.

Validity and Comparability of Homestudies from Other States

Because each State's laws are different and requirements vary from State to State there are problems concerning the validity, comparability and acceptance of homestudies from one State to the next. For example, requirements of State A may differ from those of State B, therefore, information gathered in State A may not be acceptable to State B.

There are efforts underway to address these issues. Questions on the validity and comparability of the homestudy process may be resolved by submitting to users of the photolisting service a uniform homestudy protocol. Recently the American Public Human Services Association (APHSA) established a task group, "The Geographic Barriers Task Force of APHSA to Identify Barriers to Placements across State Lines." This group will include State agency representatives in addition to all of the major adoption stakeholders and plans to develop a model homestudy protocol.

Availability of Post Placement Services

Post placement services are those services provided for a child while in an adoptive placement before finalization. A child generally stays in post placement status for at least

six months prior to finalization. The services include home visits to the family to assist with any problems and to check if the child is adjusting to the new environment. Other services that the child may need such as therapy or a special school program will also be provided.

Children placed within the State generally receive these services with little or no difficulty. However, in interstate placements, the receiving State must provide the post placement services to the child and the family, but may not have the resources available. Providing these services often presents extra burdens to agencies that already have heavy caseloads and inadequate staff.

The State from which the adoptive child is placed is ultimately responsible for post placement supervision. If that State perceives that services in the receiving State are not adequate or comparable, it is responsible for either negotiating the delivery of those services through the State of residence or contracting with a private provider for their provision. The function of the ICPC is to ensure that these services are provided.

Improving States' Capacity to Comply with the ICPC

Every State has one or more ICPC administrators who work toward making sure the adoption or permanent placement can be expedient and smooth. However, an upcoming OIG Report¹⁴ identifies some weaknesses in the ICPC's implementation. They include lack of knowledge about the ICPC among judges, attorneys and caseworkers.

Reportedly, caseworkers are reluctant to use the ICPC and judges often ignore it, therefore violating the ICPC rules that do not have the force of law. The OIG report suggests that the ICPC consider some mechanism to enforce public and private agency and court adherence to the terms of the compact.

Agencies' reluctance to use the ICPC may be attributable to the lack of training and education about its purpose and function. Also, agencies complain that the process takes too long. The OIG Report suggests that States make education and training about the ICPC available to local workers, judges, attorneys, placement agencies and parents. The

National Adoption Center is developing a handbook for workers on placing children across geographic boundaries. It will be a step-by-step guide for workers on using the ICPC. When this handbook becomes public, its wide distribution to States in conjunction with additional training could be valuable in educating the workers. Like the social workers, the judges also need training and additional guidance in appropriate use of the ICPC for interstate placements. The concept of developing a guidebook for them will be discussed at the Court Improvement Project's annual meeting in July. The Court Improvement Project was established in 1994 as part of the Family Preservation and Support Act and reauthorized in 1997 when the Act's title was changed to Promoting Safe and Stable Families Act.

Regarding the time it takes for a final decision by the ICPC, the Association of ICPC Administrators and the State agencies are currently discussing the implementation of border State agreements, which may be a method to reduce the time of the process.

V. ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

The following is a list of issues for consideration in implementing a national Internet photolisting service. They range from whether a national Internet photolisting service is necessary to whether such a system would have the capacity to be responsive to a large volume of inquiries from prospective adoptive parents. Resulting from discussions of the issues is a set of suggestions that are in *italics*. The initial work group that was formed to prepare this report developed these suggestions in their efforts to identify the important issues and strategies that need to be addressed. It will be the role of the consultation work group to further review and refine these suggestions, as they develop their recommendations for implementing the national photolisting service.

Necessity

Issue Is a national Internet photolisting service necessary?

Discussion: Information from the American Public Human Services Association (APHSA) indicates that 47 States are using the Internet as a cross-jurisdictional resource to find adoptive families for waiting children. This is being done through a combination of State and regional services or nationally through the NAE and FACES. The regional exchanges and the NAE list both children and prospective adoptive families, but these listings are only accessible to workers and adoptive parent groups in the member States. The social workers use the listings on the exchanges to look for prospective adoptive parents for the children in the custody of the State or agency in which they work; they spend little or no time looking for children who can be appropriately placed with a given prospective adoptive parent. Other than the staff of the NAE and Adopt America, there are probably very few individuals or social workers who actually look for special needs children for prospective adoptive parents. (See Appendix F for more information on Adopt America.) The State photolisting sites and FACES are available to the general public and therefore to prospective adoptive parents themselves to search for children they might adopt.

Response: *It is suggested that a national Internet photolisting service be implemented and that after a period of full operation, three to five years, its efficiency and effectiveness be fully evaluated* There are other Internet photolisting sites -- the National Adoption Exchange, FACES, and State and regional services. The NAE is, however, not accessible by individual prospective adoptive parents. FACES, the other national service, includes only 1,200 children. The backing, financial and organizational, of the Federal government would facilitate the creation of a larger Internet photolisting service open to the public. The Federal photolisting service could potentially include the 7,000 to 8,000 children who are now legally free for adoption and who will likely not be adopted by their foster families or relatives. Federal participation would be critical to assembling all the interested parties and building a consensus regarding potentially contentious issues such as privacy and time frames for responding to inquiries about particular children. A standardized format would be used for listing of these children on the Federal service, as opposed to the range of formats used for (and the variation in information provided by) the existing photolisting services.

The Federal government would work with States to ensure that the listing is updated frequently, to make the service of maximum benefit to prospective adoptive parents, as well as State and private agency social workers. Social workers currently use the NAE to recruit foster parents for children awaiting adoption; a Federal service would allow thousands of prospective foster parents to essentially recruit themselves.

Mandatory

Issue. If a national Internet photolisting service is established, should all States be required to participate in it?

Discussion. Such a system could only be made mandatory if there were some means of enforcing it, some penalty applied for non-participation. If it were made mandatory, a State might still refuse to participate in it or could destroy user confidence in the system simply by not keeping its share of the information on the network current.

Response. *It is suggested that the national photolisting service not be made mandatory for States.* After the adoption photolisting service becomes fully established, its effectiveness should be such that every State would want to participate in it. The most effective incentive to participation would be that non-participating States would lose some of their prospective adoptive parents to participating States while being unable to gain any out-of-state parents for their children. In an informal survey by the National Adoption Information Clearinghouse, 18 States with their own photolisting services indicated that they were delighted at the number of calls and inquiries from already studied and approved adoptive families from neighboring States who were interested in adopting children from their States. Additionally, the adoption incentive funds available to States under the Adoption and Safe Families Act (\$4,000 for each child over the State's base number and \$2,000 additional if the child is a title IV-E eligible child.), and the penalties for denying or delaying the placement of a child in an adoptive home based on geographic location, should encourage States to use every means possible and

on geographic location, should encourage States to use every means possible and appropriate to get their special needs children adopted, whether the adoption is intrastate or interstate.

Which Children Should be Listed

Issue: What criteria should be used in determining which children should be listed on a national Internet adoption photolisting service?

Discussion: Currently, States and adoption exchanges such as FACES list only children who are legally free and immediately available for adoption and who have special needs conditions which makes them harder to place. However, it should be noted that the majority of children who meet these criteria are not listed on the Internet because they are in the process of being adopted by their foster parents or by relatives, and therefore additional recruitment of families on their behalf is not required.

In identifying which children should be listed, other issues have been raised that might affect the above criteria. For example, some State courts are reluctant to free children for adoption until a family is located. Because States and courts have varying laws and policies on this, the consultation work group needs to explore whether consideration for listing on the Internet should be made for exceptions such as:

- when a petition for termination of parental rights is in the court system and close to resolution; or
- the court or birth family refuses to free the child unless an adoptive family has been found.

If these children are placed on the Internet, information about their circumstances must be included in the photolisting material.

Response: *It is suggested that children listed on the Internet should be those legally free for adoption, who will not be adopted by their foster parent(s) and for whom no possible relative placement has been identified. It is also suggested that criteria be developed to*

help States make decisions about any exceptions like the ones mentioned above. It is further suggested that, within the standards agreed upon for the photolisting system, each State should be the ultimate judge about whether any individual child should be listed.

Privacy and Confidentiality

Issue: The first concerns expressed by many hearing about this proposal are for the privacy, confidentiality and safety of the children.

Discussion: Newspaper and television news reports are carrying more stories each day indicating how computers and access to the Internet are facilitating undesired access to personal and supposedly private confidential information such as bank accounts, health information, drivers' license data, buying habits or other less obvious activities. Regarding the adoption photolisting initiative, specific concern has been expressed about a child's confidential or identifying information becoming accessible to the public, or to hackers or classmates or even, possibly, to child molesters.

Television programs such as "Wednesday's Child," the "Children Awaiting Placement" photolisting books used by States to feature children waiting for adoption, the States' own photolisting activities and the NAE's FACES have all been providing interested people with information about prospective adoptees. Each of these services is concerned about confidentiality and privacy and has developed procedures and conventions that are designed to provide information about prospective adoptees with minimal risk. A cursory review of their procedures does not indicate any misuse of the information or breaches of the systems. Some of their procedures include the following:

- Use first names only of children,
- Do not identify the child's locality of birth or residence,
- Do not give the child's specific birth date,
- Do not give any information about the child's parents,
- Keep descriptions about handicapping conditions generic, and
- Use a specific identifying number for referencing the child and tracking him/her back to the State agency.

Response *It is suggested that experts in the area of privacy and confidentiality both from within and outside the Department be included as members of the consultation work group. It is also suggested that there be in a thorough, detailed analysis of the privacy, confidentiality and safety impact – including technical, human, and organizational aspects – of placing information about children available for adoption on the Internet. It would include a study of past experiences to identify any types of possible misuse of information and estimates of magnitude of risk, and would evaluate the procedures and conventions now in use. Based on the results of this analysis, it is further suggested that national standards be developed about what types of information should be made available on the Internet to assure the privacy, confidentiality and the safety of the prospective adoptees. In addition, any definitions and terminology used should be consistent with the definitions used by the States for AFCARS reporting and with the Standards for Adoption Exchanges developed by the Adoption Exchange Association.^v*

Costs of Developing and Maintaining a Website

Issue: What will be the costs of developing and maintaining a national Internet photolisting service, and are Federal funds available for these activities?

Discussion: The actual costs of setting up a national photolisting service on the Internet will vary depending on how sophisticated the graphics and other appurtenances of the website would be as well as how up-to-date the information must be kept. The costliest part of the operation, however, is not the hardware or software but the effort required to keep the website timely both with respect to:

- Assuring that the information on the site is current, and
- Responding to inquiries and expressions of interest within reasonably established time frames.

This is a responsibility incumbent upon the national system as well as on any States that participate in it.

Response: *It is suggested that start up costs for developing a national system be funded initially by a contract under the Adoption Opportunities Program, and that efforts be made, both prior to and after development of the system, to develop partnerships with the private sector to provide long-term support.* Preliminary estimates indicate that Federal costs to establish and operate such a system would approximate \$1.5 million for the first year and about \$1.25 million annually thereafter. States that participate in the national system can be reimbursed for their expenditures and activities under the title IV-E Adoption Assistance Program at a 50 percent matching rate.

Centralized System

Issue: Should the proposed system be centrally controlled with photolisting updates being the responsibility of the website administrator, or should the website be only a link to give access to the individually run State systems?

Discussion: The way the Web currently exists, it is possible for anyone to establish a website and provide links to almost any other website—no permission or agreement is required. Currently, anyone who can access the Internet can access any State photolisting service through the National Adoption Information Clearinghouse.

Response: *It is suggested that the national system be centralized.* While links to State systems would be part of the centralized system, the national system would maintain its own photolisting site, have consistent standards about how a child is presented, and have a search capability which would encompass the entire system rather than one State at a time. A decentralized system would offer good basic information, but it would not facilitate a search any more than is now possible.

Specifications for a Centralized System.

Issue: How should a National Photolisting Service be designed?

Discussion: The Department would issue a contract for the design, development, maintenance and operation of the system. Although the specifications for the contract

need to be explored in-depth, the work group preparing this report made some initial decisions on the operation of the system. First, States would make the decisions on which children will be placed on the system and send the required information and the photo to the contractor. The information to be sent would be a short narrative describing the child and some of his/her outstanding traits. In addition, basic demographic information and other personal characteristics, such as physical, mental and emotional handicapping conditions, would also be sent in a standardized database format using definitions consistent with those used in AFCARS reporting and with the Standards for Adoption Exchanges developed by the Adoption Exchange Association. Lastly, no specifically identifying or confidential information about any child would be provided to the centralized system by States and therefore could not be accessed by the public.

Response: *It is suggested that the Department work closely with the Consultation Work Group to develop the specifications for the contract to design, develop, maintain, and operate a National Photolisting Service*

State Capacity to Respond

Issue: What can be done to assure that the information on the website remains current, and that responses to inquiries and expressions of interest are sent within reasonably established time frames?

Discussion A major responsibility in maintaining any website is keeping it current. With a range of 7,000 to 8,000 children to be listed on the website, it is possible that the status of 100 to 200 or more could be changing each week. In addition to the normal addition of new children to the listing and the removal of placed children from the listing, there are changes in the ages, looks and physical and mental conditions of the children who have been on the listing for months or even a year or more. It is unfair to the prospective parents and the children to continue to publish information that is no longer current and could in fact be misleading. Internet users seeking information will soon abandon a website if it is not up-to-date, if it is not responsive to their queries, or worse

yet, if it continues to maintain children on the listings after they have been placed for adoption

With a centralized system and sufficient staff, a contractor for the national system could be expected to update the listing every day, respond to all inquiries in a timely manner, relay information and requests to States on a daily basis, and follow-up with the States on contacts and referrals. However, the contractor's information is only as good as the input it receives from the States that provide the data. If that information is old, inaccurate or incomplete, then it does disservice both to the system as well as the public. State SACWIS systems, i.e., their Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information Systems, have the potential to be the basis for providing accurate and up-to-date information to the national photolisting service.

The real effort to keep the database current will reside with the States which must have staff capacity to keep track of the status of every one of their children on the Internet and forward changes, updates and removal notices as well as new listings to the website frequently. Additionally, they must be promptly responsive to families' inquiries about specific children, and be encouraging to those expressing an interest in adopting. According to an informal survey conducted by the National Adoption Information Clearinghouse of States that have Internet photolisting services, families expect and deserve a quick response when emailing a request for further information. They indicated that many inquiries received are not necessarily for waiting children, but frequently seeking information about adoption and the adoption process.

Response: It is suggested that the Department, in collaboration with the American Public Human Service Association (APHSA), conduct a survey of States concerning the feasibility of hiring sufficient workers to address issues such as out-of-State inquiries, arranging for, verifying or conducting homestudies and following up on activities to facilitate out-of-State placements. These workers would also facilitate coordination and cooperation between the States and the national adoption photolisting site.

VI. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

Plans for Consultation

The Department is pursuing a course of open and extensive outreach to and consultation with Federal and State officials and other partners to ensure the most effective implementation of this initiative. Since an Internet photolisting service is a relatively new concept as a recruitment tool for children with special needs, the Department will gather as much information as possible from a variety of perspectives as it develops plans to implement the national Internet photolisting service. To that end, the Department's consultation strategy will involve, among other tasks, organizing and maintaining a standing work group who can work together to address the issues raised in this paper, including any new issues that may arise from their work, and define feasible and appropriate recommendations.

Given the scope of the project, the Department plans to let a contract for the design, development, maintenance and operation of the national Internet photolisting service. The contractor also will provide qualified experts in the field of system design and child protection/child welfare practice to gather information, develop background materials and develop a plan for implementing the system.

The consultation strategy is three-pronged, and consists of: (1) conducting focus groups to initiate preliminary consultation with State officials, advocates and others on the issues raised in this paper and on additional issues that may impact the project, (2) establishing a standing work group of outside partners to be the source of in-depth discussion of critical issues surrounding the development and implementation of a national photolisting service, and (3) using focus groups or workshops at upcoming conferences of national organizations to advance the discussion in the broader child welfare community and build a consensual understanding of the critical issues involved in implementing the system.

Conducting Focus Groups

The Department's Regional Offices will conduct a series of focus groups with representatives of special needs adoption, the principal national child welfare and child advocacy organizations, court and judicial organizations, foundations, researchers and evaluators, selected key State and county child welfare leaders, technology experts and national Tribal associations. This will be our initial effort to tap experts in the child welfare community and beyond for guidance on implementation of the national Internet photolisting service. The focus groups will identify concerns and gather suggestions. Participants will receive copies of the Executive Memorandum and this paper prior to the focus group meeting. Participants also will be encouraged to submit written concerns that go beyond the scope of the issues raised in this report. The information collected and the issues identified will provide a framework to begin discussions with the standing work group.

Establishing a Standing Work Group

The Department will establish a standing work group, who can work together on a sustained basis through in-person meetings and telephone conference calls, to address each of the issues, barriers and suggestions made in this report and in the focus group discussions. They will develop the initial specifications for the national Internet adoption photolisting service. In addition, work group members will be responsible for maintaining lines of communication with others in their network of colleagues, so that ideas brought to the table in the work groups reflect, to the degree possible, the range of views held by major stakeholders/partners in the field of child welfare. They will play a central role in working with Federal staff to flesh out ideas and provide the Department with recommendations. Final decisions will be based on the work group's efforts.

The group will be made up of approximately 15 individuals, chaired by the Associate Commissioner of the Children's Bureau, or her designee, and have representation from among the following stakeholders and organizations:

- American Public Human Services Association and other intergovernmental organizations,
- Major child welfare and child advocacy organizations,
- State supervised-county administered child welfare agency,
- State supervised-State administered child welfare agency,
- County agency,
- Private agency under contract to a public child welfare system,
- State adoption specialists,
- Foster and adoptive parents, and
- Judges

Participating in Other Forums

The third part of the three-prong strategy calls for participation at focus groups and workshops at upcoming conferences of national organizations to obtain the input of a variety of sectors not represented on the standing work group and to convey/test ideas developed by that work group. There is a need to engage persons and organizations that have not had in-depth involvement in identifying and resolving issues related to the development and implementation of the national Internet photolisting service. They bring a fresh perspective, new ideas and a mix of experience in and knowledge of other systems and projects.

Timeline

The following timeline will guide the work group in its activities so that work on the actual system will begin no later than August 2000.

Completed by:

Regional Office Focus Groups

April 15, 1999

Appointment of standing work group

April 30, 1999

Complete consultation process	August 15, 1999
Develop contract requirements and specifications	November 30, 1999
Award Contract	August 31, 2000
Launch national system	September 1, 2001

This report has sought to lay the groundwork for a thorough, thoughtful study of the issues involved in the development and implementation of a national Internet adoption photolisting service. The report has reviewed issues that must be considered when studying the feasibility of developing the national system. It has highlighted many complexities and challenges that will be faced in designing such a system, and it has touched on some possible strategies for coping with those complexities. The Department is fully committed to working closely with the States on the development and implementation of the national photolisting service. In the coming months we look forward to working in partnership with States, child advocates, child welfare practitioners and others to implement this important and complex project. We believe that this effort will lead to more timely adoption for America's waiting children.

ENDNOTES

¹ Web Marketing Information Center, "Demographics of Web Users." From <http://www.wilsonweb.com/webmarket/demograp.htm>

² tngl, "The Average Netizen," RT-imes, December 15, 1997. From <http://www.wilsonweb.com/webmarket/demograp.htm>

³ OIG Report: "Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children: Implementation." (OEI-02-95-00044)

⁴ OIG Report: "Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children: Implementation." (OEI-02-95-00044)

⁵ See Standards for Adoption Exchanges, p.3. "Recruitment and Public Education."

Appendix A

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

November 24, 1998

November 24, 1998

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

SUBJECT: Using the Internet to Increase Adoptions

Technology will be an ever more important part of achieving our national goals as we approach the new millennium. New technological tools mean new opportunities for progress -- helping us to strengthen the global economy, bolster public education, and improve the health of American families. Technology can also assist our continuing efforts to meet our national goal of doubling, by the year 2002, adoptions and other permanent placements from our Nation's foster care system.

As we celebrate National Adoption Month, it is fitting that we reflect on the important steps we have taken to strengthen our child welfare system and, specifically, to improve the process of adoption. Through the Family and Medical Leave Act and tax credits, we have made it easier for families to adopt children. We have worked to eliminate discrimination and delay based on race and ethnicity. And, last year, I was proud to sign into law the Adoption and Safe Families Act, tightening the time frame for decision-making and affirming that the health and safety of children in foster care must always come first.

We are making progress but there is more work to be done. Because geographic and other barriers to adoption still exist, we must do a better job of informing America's families about the many children that wait in foster care for permanent, adoptive homes. To give those children the future they deserve, to give our families the opportunity to provide them with happy, healthy homes, we must infuse the public child welfare system with the power of technology.

Therefore, I am directing you to work with the States, courts, private agencies, and others to develop a plan for expanding appropriate use of the Internet as a tool to find homes for children waiting to be adopted from the public child welfare system. There are approximately 100,000 children in our country waiting in foster care for permanent adoptive homes. Sharing information through a national Internet registry about children legally available for adoption could shorten the time needed to find adoptive families for such children. To take full advantage of the Internet's potential to promote adoptions while also ensuring appropriate confidentiality safeguards, close consultation with the States will be necessary.

You should report to me within 60 days with a plan to carry out this consultation; identify important issues and strategies to address them; and build on promising existing efforts to create an effective, national registry.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

***Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) and
Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information Systems (SACWIS)***

The Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) is a mandatory data collection system, established under Section 479 of the Social Security Act, that collects automated case-level information on all children in foster care for whom the State child welfare agency has responsibility for placement, care or supervision. Information is also collected on children whose adoptions from the foster care system have been finalized. The AFCARS data are reported in six-month increments, twice a year. The first data collected under AFCARS were for the first half of fiscal year 1995 (October 1, 1994 - March 31, 1995). The most recent submission covers the second half of fiscal year 1998 (April 1, 1998 - September 30, 1998). Almost all of the States are now submitting AFCARS data. (Forty-nine States, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico submitted data in the most recent period.) All States are expected to be able to submit data in the near future. The AFCARS data will allow for a wide range of complex analyses regarding the numbers and characteristics of children in foster care and children who are adopted, the circumstances associated with children's removal from home, the length of time children spend in foster care, and many other factors.

As an incentive to the States to develop comprehensive child welfare information systems, the Congress, through the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1993, provided enhanced Federal financial participation (FFP) at the 75 percent rate for Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information Systems (SACWIS) to carry out the State's programs under titles IV-B and IV-E of the Social Security Act. This enhanced level of funding was initially authorized for the period October 1, 1993, through September 30, 1996, and was later extended through September 30, 1997. While the period of enhanced Federal financial participation has now expired, Federal funds continue to be available at the 50 percent rate. The Federal funds may be used by the States for the planning, design, development and installation of statewide systems. An integral requirement of SACWIS is that the systems be able to provide the required AFCARS reports. Thus far, 25 States have developed SACWIS systems that are either fully or partially operational. An additional 22 States are in the process of developing SACWIS.

Thanks to these major improvements in data reporting and the development of State information systems, the Department now has better information than ever before on the numbers, demographics, placements and handicapping conditions of children in foster care, available for adoption, and adopted. With constantly improving data, the States and the Department will be able to accurately track the numbers and characteristics of children in the public child welfare system and develop initiatives to find permanent homes for as many as possible, either through reunification with the family of origin, or through adoption or other permanent placements.

The National Adoption Exchange(NAE)

The NAE ONLINE is a private, secure membership-based Internet system run by the **National Adoption Center** and funded by the Department of Health and Human Services. It brings together children with special needs and minority children waiting for adoption with prospective families. It allows exchanges, public and private agencies, adoption professionals, and adoptive parent groups nationwide to work together via the World Wide Web.

The system has three components:

- **The Child and Family Databases** are a nationwide online registry of children awaiting adoption and families approved to adopt. Agencies working on behalf of waiting children can register their children on this database and search for a match from a listing of families with approved family profiles. Agencies and parent groups working on behalf of families seeking to adopt waiting children can search the database of children for a possible match.
- **AdoptionQuest Pro** allows adoption professionals to access and learn about up-to-date adoption trends, practices, and legislation.
- **Message Board** allows professionals to share information and ideas with their colleagues nationwide

NAE ONLINE is operated by the National Adoption Center and is the Gateway to **Faces of Adoption (FACES)**.

Faces of Adoption (FACES)

FACES of Adoption, a service of the National Adoption Center (NAC) and Children Awaiting Parents (CAP), established in April 1995, brings children “online” through photographs and descriptions and offers a wealth of information in a section called Adoption Quest.

Components of FACES are:

- Photos and descriptions of waiting children,
- Adoption Quest--an information and referral area featuring State adoption resources, information on how to adopt, adoptive parenting, special needs issues, financial assistance and more,
- Downloadable information packets,
- Direct contact with families via email.

Target Population: Children featured on FACES are:

- Generally over age 5, with one or more physical, mental or emotional impairments, often part of a sibling group of 3 or more,
- Eighty-eight percent are of minority racial or ethnic backgrounds,
- Legally free for adoption,
- Will not be adopted by their foster parents, and
- Have no adoptive family identified.

The National Adoption Information Clearinghouse (NAIC)

The National Adoption Information Clearinghouse was established by the Congress in 1987 to provide professionals and the general public with easily accessible information on all aspects of adoption—including infant and intercountry adoption and the adoption of children with special needs. NAIC maintains an adoption literature database; a database of adoption experts; listings of adoption agencies; crisis pregnancy centers; adoptive parent support groups and search support groups; excerpts and full texts of State and Federal laws on adoption; and other adoption-related services and publications. NAIC is a service of the Children's Bureau, Administration on Children, Youth and Families in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Adopt America Network

Adopt America is an adoption exchange which matches adoptive parents with children legally freed for adoption and in need of permanent loving homes. Adopt America only concentrates on special needs children, those who are considered hard to place because of medical or mental challenges, age, race or sibling status. Their goal is that no child shall have to wait for adoption, regardless of his/her circumstances. Adopt America Network was established in 1983 as AASK Midwest, Inc., to more effectively serve the needs of waiting children and families. Each year more than 100 special needs children are matched with loving, adoptive families because of Adopt America's networking. Their mission is accomplished through five functions: recruitment and public awareness, advocacy, family networking, matching, training and education.

PRESIDENT CLINTON ANNOUNCES EXPANSION OF THE INTERNET TO INCREASE ADOPTIONS

November 24, 1998

Today, the President will issue a new directive to the Department of Health and Human Services to expand the use of the Internet as a tool to find homes for children waiting to be adopted from foster care. The President will make the announcement with the First Lady at a White House ceremony marking National Adoption Month and celebrating new adoptions in the District of Columbia.

Creating an Internet Registry to Meet the President's Goals for Adoption. In 1996, President Clinton set a goal of doubling, by the year 2002, adoptions and other permanent placements from the public child welfare system. Since then, adoptions have increased; from 1996 to 1997 alone, adoptions increased by over 10 percent, from 28,000 to 31,000. Today, the President is directing the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to develop a plan to expand internet use to share information about children who are legally free for adoption in order to shorten the time needed to find them adoptive families. HHS estimates that approximately 100,000 children in our nation's foster care system cannot return to their birth families and need families to adopt them. An effective national registry will help break down geographic barriers to adoption and assist in meeting the President's adoption goal. HHS Secretary Donna Shalala will report to the President within 60 days on a plan to work with the states and other leaders to carry out this effort.

Building on a Strong Record. Today's announcement builds on a deep commitment by the President, the First Lady, and the Administration to facilitate adoptions and improve the child welfare system. Since taking office, President Clinton has championed efforts to make foster care work better for the children it serves, to find and assist adoptive families, and to break down barriers, including high adoption costs and complex regulations:

✓ **Achieving Landmark Legislative Reform.** On November 19, 1997, the President signed the Adoption and Safe Families Act, reforming our nation's child welfare system and making it clear that the health and safety of children must be the paramount concerns of state child welfare services. This landmark legislation was based in large part on the recommendations of the Clinton Administration's *Adoption 2002* report, which the President requested by executive memorandum on December 14, 1996, to meet his goals of doubling adoptions and permanent placements by the year 2002 and moving children more quickly from foster care to permanent homes. The Act tightened time frames for making permanent placement decisions for children and ensured health insurance coverage for all special needs children in subsidized adoptions. Also, it created new financial incentives for states to increase adoptions, and continued funding for services to keep families together when it is appropriate and safe.

✓ **Making Adoption Affordable for Families.** In 1996, President Clinton signed into law the Small Business Job Protection Act of 1996, which provides a \$5,000 tax credit to families adopting children, and a \$6,000 tax credit for families adopting children with special

needs. This provision has alleviated a significant barrier to adoption, helping middle class families for whom adoption may be prohibitively expensive and making it easier for families to adopt children with special needs. Since President Clinton took office, the number of children with special needs who were adopted with federal adoption assistance has risen by over 60 percent. In the Balanced Budget Act of 1997, President Clinton ensured more support for families who adopt children with the \$500 per-child tax credit.

✓ **Giving States Flexibility and Support.** To test innovative strategies to improve state child welfare systems, the Clinton Administration has granted waivers to 18 states, giving them more flexibility in tailoring services to meet the needs of children and families. In addition, the Administration has provided states with enhanced technical support and helped improve court operations. The President secured \$10 million in FY 1999 in new funds to support state efforts to implement the new adoption law, and has, through the Adoption Opportunities program, supported state and local innovative demonstration projects to promote adoption, provide post-adoptive services, and build new public-private partnerships. To prevent children from entering foster care in the first place, in 1993 the Clinton Administration enacted and secured federal funding for the Family Preservation and Support Program to help states, local governments, and service providers develop effective programs to serve children and families at risk.

✓ **Breaking Down Racial and Ethnic Barriers to Adoption.** New inter-ethnic adoption provisions, passed as a part of the Small Business Job Protection Act of 1996, ensure that the adoption process is free from discrimination and delays on the basis of race, culture and ethnicity by strengthening the Multi-Ethnic Placement Act which the President signed in 1994.

✓ **Providing Supports for Child Protection and Adoption.** In 1993, President Clinton signed into law the Family and Medical Leave Act, enabling parents to take time off to adopt a child without losing their jobs or health insurance. In addition, the welfare reform legislation signed by the President maintained the guarantee of child protection and adoption, and did not reduce funds for child welfare, child abuse, and foster care and adoption services.

###

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

November 24, 1998

November 24, 1998

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

SUBJECT:

Using the Internet to Increase Adoptions

Technology will be an ever more important part of achieving our national goals as we approach the new millennium. New technological tools mean new opportunities for progress -- helping us to strengthen the global economy, bolster public education, and improve the health of American families. Technology can also assist our continuing efforts to meet our national goal of doubling, by the year 2002, adoptions and other permanent placements from our Nation's foster care system.

As we celebrate National Adoption Month, it is fitting that we reflect on the important steps we have taken to strengthen our child welfare system and, specifically, to improve the process of adoption. Through the Family and Medical Leave Act and tax credits, we have made it easier for families to adopt children. We have worked to eliminate discrimination and delay based on race and ethnicity. And, last year, I was proud to sign into law the Adoption and Safe Families Act, tightening the time frame for decision-making and affirming that the health and safety of children in foster care must always come first.

We are making progress but there is more work to be done. Because geographic and other barriers to adoption still exist, we must do a better job of informing America's families about the many children that wait in foster care for permanent, adoptive homes. To give those children the future they deserve, to give our families the opportunity to provide them with happy, healthy homes, we must infuse the public child welfare system with the power of technology.

Therefore, I am directing you to work with the States, courts, private agencies, and others to develop a plan for expanding appropriate use of the Internet as a tool to find homes for children waiting to be adopted from the public child welfare system. There are approximately 100,000 children in our country waiting in foster care for permanent adoptive homes. Sharing information through a national Internet registry about children legally available for adoption

could shorten the time needed to find adoptive families for such children. To take full advantage of the Internet's potential to promote adoptions while also ensuring appropriate confidentiality safeguards, close consultation with the States will be necessary.

You should report to me within 60 days with a plan to carry out this consultation; identify important issues and strategies to address them; and build on promising existing efforts to create an effective, national registry.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

30-30-30

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

November 24, 1998

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
AT NATIONAL ADOPTION MONTH EVENT

The East Room

2:26 P.M. EST

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. I asked Charday if she was happy about being here, and she said, yes, but I'm a little nervous. (Laughter.) And I said, well, all these people are your friends, just remember that. And I thought she did a terrific job -- don't you think she did, I think she did. (Applause.)

Governor and Mrs. Edgar, Senator Levins, Senator Landrieu, Congressman and Mrs. Oberstar, Mayor Barry, thank you all for joining us here today. I'd like to thank the previous participants on the program -- Mayor-elect Williams, for the power of your example which speaks louder than our words; and Mrs. Williams, we're glad to have you here today and we wish you well in your new endeavors.

Judge Hamilton, thank you for your work and the power of your example. And, Dave Thomas, he said some very nice things up here about Hillary and me, but the truth is that no other citizen in the United States today or ever has done as much as a private citizen to promote the cause of adoption as Dave Thomas. And we are very grateful to him. (Applause.) Thank you, sir.

I'd like to thank Secretary Shalala, the longest

serving, and notwithstanding her voice today, the most effective Secretary of Health and Human Services in our history. (Applause.)

I want to congratulate all the families who are here today and thank them for coming. And I hope Judge Hamilton is right, I hope that the images of them that go across America today will inspire other parents to do the same. I want to also congratulate the Adoption 2002 award winners and thank them for the work they are doing in their states and communities.

I'd also like to say a special word today. Before we came in here, Dave Thomas said, well, you know, your administration has done more than any in history to promote adoption. And I told him that the real reason for that is because it has been a consuming passion of the First Lady for as long as I have known her. I remember when we were young and we hadn't been married long when she had a client -- a couple in Arkansas who were foster parents and who were in the foster system, and the rules then didn't permit them to adopt. And she waged a long and sometimes lonely legal battle through our courts to get that couple the right to adopt the child they loved very much and had already invested a great deal in. And it began to change things for a lot of families in our state.

I remember when she organized more than 25 years ago the Arkansas Advocates for Families and Children, and one of their missions was to improve the system of adoption, as well as the system of foster care in our state. So I can tell you that while many people have played a role in what we have been able to do -- especially the remarkable bipartisan cooperation we've enjoyed in passing these two important adoption bills. No one deserves more credit than Hillary for what has happened in the last six years, and I'm very grateful to her. (Applause.)

As all the speakers have said, we are working hard on making good on our commitment to find our foster children the homes and the futures they deserve. We do want to double the number of adoptions by the year 2002. We want to reform our nation's whole approach to this profoundly important issue, to make the system work better for the children and the families it should be serving. With pioneering efforts like those in the state of Illinois, we are getting closer to our goal of doubling the number of children adopted or permanently placed by 2002.

Between 1996 and 1997, the number of adoptions increased by 10 percent, from 28,000 to 31,000. We know, however, that that cannot be the sole measure of our progress. We also must ask ourselves whether our child welfare system always puts the health and safety of our children above all else; whether children have the chance to live out their dreams and fulfill their potential; whether families who open their arms can actually reach to embrace a child in need.

As we celebrate National Adoption Month, Americans can take pride in the progress we're making -- but we know there is much more work to be done. We know geographic and other barriers to adoptions still exist. We know we have to do a better job in informing America's families about the many children who wait in the foster care system for adoption.

To give those children the permanent homes they need, to give our families the opportunity to give them those homes, we must make technology a partner and propel the public welfare system into the 21st century. Today, therefore, I am directing the Secretary of Health and Human Services to work with the states, the courts, the private agencies, to report to me within 60 days on a plan for a national Internet-based registry of children waiting to be adopted everywhere in the United States. (Applause.)

As Hillary said, there are 100,000 children, just like those whom we clapped for today, in foster care still waiting for permanent adoptive homes. The Internet holds the potential to shorten their wait, to make an on-line link between foster care centers and families looking to adopt. Some states and private partners already are forging these connections, bringing together families in Alaska and children as far away as Pennsylvania, for example.

We want to build on these efforts to the extent that it is possible and appropriate, working closely with the states, supporting their efforts, learning from them. We can use the Internet to promote adoptions while protecting the confidentiality of children and families. Technology has given us an important tool and we should use it.

Again, Thanksgiving is approaching. Families across our nation will come together to express their gratitude for all the

things that matter most. We sometimes speak of the comforts of home as the small blessings. But when you look into the eyes of these children today, we remember that there are few greater blessings.

I'd like to encourage more families to follow the example of those we have honored here today, to open their arms, their hearts, to children who need them very much; to give them the futures they deserve, and to make sure that in all of the Thanksgivings to come, we will all be blessed as a nation as more and more of our children come into loving homes.

A very happy Thanksgiving to all of you. And now let me invite all of you to join us to celebrate this special day with a reception in the State Dining Room. Thank you very much. (Applause.)

END

2:36 P.M. EST

This was the press release before it was moved to the WH.



District of Columbia Courts
500 Indiana Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20001



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
November 4, 1998

Contact: Margaret Summers
Communications Officer
(202) 879-1219

**TWENTY-FIVE ADOPTIVE FAMILIES GOAL FOR
SUPERIOR COURT ADOPTION DAY**

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- A record twenty-five adoptive families may participate in the Superior Court's 12th Annual Adoption Day Ceremony on Tuesday, November 24, 1998, at 10 a.m. in the third floor atrium of the H. Carl Moultrie I Courthouse, 500 Indiana Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. Former District of Columbia Chief Financial Officer and Mayor-Elect Anthony Williams, who is himself an adoptee, will be a featured speaker. The event is co-sponsored by the District of Columbia Child and Family Services Agency. **TELEVISION NEWS VIDEO CAMERAS, PRINT NEWS STILL CAMERAS AND RADIO NEWS AUDIO TAPE RECORDERS WILL BE PERMITTED INTO THE COURTHOUSE TO COVER THE EVENT.**

Adoption Day is held every November during National Adoption Month, to encourage adoptions in the District of Columbia, and to call attention to the many children in the District who need a home, particularly special needs children. Last year, 16 families adopted children during the ceremony, the highest number of adoptive families in the history of the event. The Honorable George W. Mitchell, Presiding Judge of the Superior Court Family Division, and The Honorable Zinora Mitchell-Rankin, Deputy Presiding Judge of the Family Division, will preside over this year's ceremony. Superior Court Chief Judge Eugene N. Hamilton will speak at the event. Chief Judge Hamilton and his wife Virginia are the adoptive parents of four children, and have been foster parents to more than 40 children in 25 years, many of whom had special needs.

The Court is encouraging more adoptions in the District to help meet the national adoptions goal set by President Clinton in 1996 to double the number of adoptions and permanent placements for children to 54,000 by the year 2002. President Clinton is directing the Secretaries of Health and Human Services, the Treasury, Labor and Commerce, and the Director of the Office of Personnel Management, to promote efforts to increase the number of adoptions and permanent placements annually, and to move children in foster care more quickly to permanent homes. He also asked members of his Administration to work with the States, communities and civic leaders to meet the goal of 54,000 permanent placements for children by the year 2002.

Over the last few years, processing adoption cases at the Superior Court has improved significantly. In 1995, 176 adoption decrees were granted by the Court; by the end of September, 1998, the figure grew to 232, an increase of 32%, and it continues to climb. New adoption case filings also increased during that period. In 1995, new case filings totaled 297; as of the end of September, 1998, new case filings totaled 431, a 45% increase.

"This is due to an increased confidence in the community in the Court's ability to handle such cases," says Judge Mitchell. "It is also due to enhanced and improved recruitment efforts on the part of both the Court and the District of Columbia Child and Family Services Agency, and to the increased interest in adoptions generated by the annual Adoption Day event. And it is due in large measure to the work of former Superior Court Associate Judge Arthur L. Burnett, Senior, who recently retired from the bench. During the years he presided over adoptions cases, he was highly successful in decreasing the time it takes to adopt children in the District."

#

JUDGE MITCHELL IS AVAILABLE FOR INTERVIEWS REGARDING ADOPTION DAY. TO SCHEDULE A RADIO, TELEVISION OR PRINT INTERVIEW WITH JUDGE MITCHELL, CONTACT MARGARET SUMMERS, COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER, DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA COURTS, (202) 879-1219.

**REMARKS BY FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
AT NATIONAL ADOPTION MONTH EVENT
THE WHITE HOUSE
November 24, 1998**

Thank you. Thank you very much. Thank you, thank you so much and welcome to the East Room of the White House. We are delighted to host this event.

A few weeks ago, I received an invitation to attend a wonderful celebration at the D.C. Superior Court House, where a number of adoptions would be made final. I was so pleased to be invited to this event, but I thought to myself maybe there is a way that we could celebrate these adoptions -- that really represent all of the adoptions in our country -- during National Adoption Month, which is November, here in the White House. So we asked Chief Judge Eugene Hamilton if we could host it at the White House, and I was delighted when he said yes. And I want to thank the Chief Judge and I want to thank all the judges of the D.C. Superior Court for their commitment to adoption and the work that they have done, and I welcome all of them here.

So today in this room there are 30 children from Washington, D.C., who woke up this morning as foster children and will go to bed tonight as permanent members of families. I want to thank these 24 families for allowing us to share in their celebration. And I want to thank this year's Adoption 2002 winners, who were just introduced by Secretary Shalala, and all of the advocates and experts and policy makers and parents who are here, who work night and day to make these kinds of happy endings possible.

Secretary Shalala told us about what children think about love, and all of us are grateful for her leadership in making sure that they do have love in their lives, as well as good health and other kinds of supports. I'm also pleased to welcome Governor and Mrs. Edgar, Senator Levin, Senator Landrieu, Congressman Oberstar, Mayor Barry, and other distinguished guests. We are fortunate to have some special speakers as part of today's program.

Dave Thomas and Mayor Elect Williams are real experts in adoption. Not only because of the jobs they have and will have, but because of the fact that they were adopted themselves. You have already heard from Dave Thomas, who has reached out to the business community to demonstrate his corporation's commitment to adoption, and I hope that more companies will take up his challenge to include adoption benefits in the benefits they offer employees. He wants to ensure that all foster children have the same chance he did. We'll hear from Chief Judge Hamilton, who has adopted four children himself. What's more, in 20 years he and his wife Virginia have been foster parents for more than 40 children. We'll hear from Mayor-Elect of our nation's capitol, Tony Williams. At the age of 3 he was living in foster care and had not spoken a word. Now, Mayor-Elect, some of us who have heard you speak can not hardly believe that, but there were plans afoot by the state to institutionalize him. After the D.C. primary he said that

when his parents adopted him they gave him a second chance, and now the city has adopted him as well. We'll hear from Charday Mays. Charday's mother says she likes swimming, singing in the choir, and -- like most pre-teens -- talking on the telephone. She and her brother Steven are two of the 30 children who will, as of today, have a new permanent family.

Now, probably everyone in this room could have a similar story to tell, and I hope you do tell them. I hope you tell them to as many people as you possibly can to increase awareness, and acceptance, and enthusiasm about adoption.

You know, my husband just came from a traditional Thanksgiving pardon of a turkey. Now some of you may not be aware of this tradition, but each year starting with President Truman, one lucky turkey is picked out as the chosen one. So instead of being stuffed, dressed, and on your plate next to sweet potatoes, this turkey will go on living and being a symbol of the important power of the President of the United States.

And you know, each of us have many different traditions in our families about Thanksgiving. The food that we eat might somewhat vary from region to region, or ethnic group to ethnic group. The battles we have over the T.V. remote control between football and parades, and everything else that's on. But there is one tradition that runs through Thanksgiving, and that is family.

You know when you are a part of a family you are supposed to be able to know that there will be a seat waiting for you in good times and bad times. And then in both times the table will be filled with people who care about you. That is what all children want and deserve. And when Bill and I started working on behalf of adoption when he first came to the White House, we were struck by how many wonderful children of all ages there are waiting to have that opportunity to be a part of a family. We asked a young boy, who was with us at an adoption event a few years ago in the Oval Office, where he lived, he answered, "All over," which of course means nowhere. So when it comes to our children, the American family has a lot to be thankful for this holiday season. Children are better off because of the Family and Medical Leave Act, which allows parents to take time off to adopt a child. They're better off because we are ending discrimination in adoption based on race or ethnicity. They're better off because of tax breaks which make it easier for families to adopt children, especially children with special needs. They're better off because the Congress put politics aside, put children first, and came across party lines to pass the landmark Adoption and Safe Families Act. And when the President signed that bill a year ago, he helped fulfill a promise that he had made to try to put the health and safety of our children first and to move children more quickly into safe and permanent homes -- to reach our goal of doubling the number of children adopted by the year 2002.

This celebration brings us one step further down that road. We are seeing families who have opened both their homes and their hearts to children who need both. Some parents today are keeping brothers and sisters together by adopting them all. Some are adopting their own foster children. Others are welcoming children with special needs into their families. Many are

adopting across racial lines, but they are giving children what every child needs -- a place to call home.

But we can't sit on our laurels and celebrate the progress because we have a hundred thousand children in our country who are eligible for adoption in our foster care system, but are still waiting. We have to work harder to implement our new laws effectively, to help our courts as they make the difficult heart-wrenching decisions about children as quickly as possible. We have to support families, communities, states, and social workers in the only surefire way to stop child abuse and neglect, and that is to prevent it before it happens. I hope we remember that for every one of the wonderful children being adopted today there are one hundred more like them in the D.C. foster care system. And I know we can do better. We have to turn our nation's Capitol into a model of how to care for our most vulnerable children. For there is no greater test of a city, of a country, of businesses, for parents, for communities, for religious organizations, advocates, or anyone else than how we treat those most vulnerable children in our midst.

It is now my great honor to turn the program over to Chief Judge Eugene Hamilton. As I mentioned earlier, he brings to the courtroom every day, not only 28 years of judicial experience on the D.C. Superior Court, but a lifetime of personal experience as a foster parent and adoptive parent. He understands better than most of us the challenges that face every child and every adult who come into contact with the child-welfare system, and what all of us must do to meet those challenges. Please join me in welcoming Chief Judge Hamilton.

TALKING IT OVER

BY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON

RELEASE: WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 25, 1998, AND THEREAFTER

This week, I witnessed a miracle -- actually 30 miracles. On Tuesday, here at the White House, I met 30 children who woke up in the morning as foster children but went to bed that night as members of permanent, loving families.

I met 12-year-old Charday Mays. She and her brother, Steven, who is 11, have lived in many different foster homes. But on Tuesday, both children were adopted by Edward and Rochelle Mays. Charday says, "This Thanksgiving, Steven and I have so much to be thankful for. We are now officially part of a family. That makes me very, very happy."

Ellen Wells had tears in her eyes as she described how it felt to finally adopt 8-year-old Jessica. When she moved in with Ellen, Jessica had just turned 7 -- and had lived in seven foster homes. That first day, Jessica sat down at the table and asked, "So, after this house, where do I have to go?" Ellen was dumbstruck. She says, "I understood that I was forever. Jessica did not." On Tuesday, as Jessica happily munched cookies with the other children, her eyes told the story. Now, she knows that Ellen is her mother -- forever.

Jessica, Charday and Steven were at the White House as part of Washington, D.C.'s 12th annual Adoption Day, a day when the city's Superior Court judges invite a number of families to finalize their adoptions together in celebration of National Adoption Month and as an inspiration to others to consider adopting. I was pleased to host this year's event at the White House.

In addition to the new families, we were joined by Washington, D.C.'s Mayor-elect, Anthony Williams, and Dave Thomas, founder of the Wendy's restaurant chain, both of whom were adopted. Williams was 3 when his mother took him in. Foster-care officials warned her that, because he had not yet spoken his first word, he would be trouble and never amount to anything. Today, he says with a grin, "I was some trouble, but I did amount to something."

Thomas, adopted at 6 weeks, is one of this country's leading adoption advocates. This week, he challenged corporate America to extend maternity benefits to adoptive parents.

Judge Eugene Hamilton presided over the ceremony. He and his wife, Virginia, have cared for 40 foster children in their home over the past 20 years, adopting two of them. He noted, "I hope the commitment we see here today will inspire many others to come forward."

The President, who shares this hope, has set a national goal to double the number of adoptions and permanent placements in this country by the year 2002. A year ago, in order to move toward that goal, he signed the Adoption and Safe Families Act, which reformed our nation's child welfare system, making it clear that the health and safety of children come first.

The Act shortened the time it takes to make permanent placement decisions for children, guaranteed health insurance coverage for special-needs children, created new financial incentives for states to increase adoptions and funded services to keep families together when appropriate.

In addition, the President provided parents the opportunity to take time off to adopt a child by signing the Family and Medical Leave Act. And he has worked to end discrimination and delays based on race and ethnicity and created tax breaks to make it easier for families to adopt.

But although adoptions in this country have increased in the last year, there are still too many

children who don't have permanent and safe families. Our job is not done.

For each of the 30 wonderful children who were adopted on Tuesday, there are 100 more just like them still in D.C.'s foster-care system. Nationwide, there are 100,000 children waiting to be adopted.

So, this week, the President asked Health and Human Services Secretary Donna Shalala to devise a plan for a national, Internet-based registry of eligible foster children. Simply telling their stories and showing their pictures can go far in placing children in permanent homes. According to one advocate, this "is the single most important thing we can do to find homes for kids."

Every child deserves a safe and permanent family. At Thanksgiving, every child deserves to know that there is a seat waiting at the table -- in good times and in bad. And every child deserves to know that the table will be filled not only with food but also with laughter and with love.

I know that this Thanksgiving will be special for Charday, Jessica, Steven and every one of the other 27 children I met this week. As I celebrate the holiday with my family, I will pray that next Thanksgiving every other child who needs a permanent and loving family will have one.

Happy Thanksgiving, everyone.

To find out more about Hillary Rodham Clinton and read her past columns, visit the Creators Syndicate web page at www.creators.com.

COPYRIGHT 1998 CREATORS SYNDICATE, INC.

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

November 24, 1998

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
AT NATIONAL ADOPTION MONTH EVENT

The East Room

2:26 P.M. EST

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. I asked Charday if she was happy about being here, and she said, yes, but I'm a little nervous. (Laughter.) And I said, well, all these people are your friends, just remember that. And I thought she did a terrific job -- don't you think she did, I think she did. (Applause.)

Governor and Mrs. Edgar, Senator Levins, Senator Landrieu, Congressman and Mrs. Oberstar, Mayor Barry, thank you all for joining us here today. I'd like to thank the previous participants on the program -- Mayor-elect Williams, for the power of your example which speaks louder than our words; and Mrs. Williams, we're glad to have you here today and we wish you well in your new endeavors.

Judge Hamilton, thank you for your work and the power of your example. And, Dave Thomas, he said some very nice things up here about Hillary and me, but the truth is that no other citizen in the United States today or ever has done as much as a private citizen to promote the cause of adoption as Dave Thomas. And we are very grateful to him. (Applause.) Thank you, sir.

I'd like to thank Secretary Shalala, the longest serving, and notwithstanding her voice today, the most effective Secretary of Health and Human Services in our history. (Applause.)

I want to congratulate all the families who are here today and thank them for coming. And I hope Judge Hamilton is right, I hope that the images of them that go across America today will

inspire other parents to do the same. I want to also congratulate the Adoption 2002 award winners and thank them for the work they are doing in their states and communities.

I'd also like to say a special word today. Before we came in here, Dave Thomas said, well, you know, your administration has done more than any in history to promote adoption. And I told him that the real reason for that is because it has been a consuming passion of the First Lady for as long as I have known her. I remember when we were young and we hadn't been married long when she had a client -- a couple in Arkansas who were foster parents and who were in the foster system, and the rules then didn't permit them to adopt. And she waged a long and sometimes lonely legal battle through our courts to get that couple the right to adopt the child they loved very much and had already invested a great deal in. And it began to change things for a lot of families in our state.

I remember when she organized more than 25 years ago the Arkansas Advocates for Families and Children, and one of their missions was to improve the system of adoption, as well as the system of foster care in our state. So I can tell you that while many people have played a role in what we have been able to do -- especially the remarkable bipartisan cooperation we've enjoyed in passing these two important adoption bills. No one deserves more credit than Hillary for what has happened in the last six years, and I'm very grateful to her. (Applause.)

As all the speakers have said, we are working hard on making good on our commitment to find our foster children the homes and the futures they deserve. We do want to double the number of adoptions by the year 2002. We want to reform our nation's whole approach to this profoundly important issue, to make the system work better for the children and the families it should be serving. With pioneering efforts like those in the state of Illinois, we are getting closer to our goal of doubling the number of children adopted or permanently placed by 2002.

Between 1996 and 1997, the number of adoptions increased by 10 percent, from 28,000 to 31,000. We know, however, that that cannot be the sole measure of our progress. We also must ask ourselves whether our child welfare system always puts the health and safety of our children above all else; whether children have the chance to live out their dreams and fulfill their potential; whether families who open their arms can actually reach to embrace a child in need.

As we celebrate National Adoption Month, Americans can take pride in the progress we're making -- but we know there is much more work to be done. We know geographic and other barriers to adoptions still exist. We know we have to do a better job in informing America's families about the many children who wait in the foster care system for adoption.

To give those children the permanent homes they need, to give our families the opportunity to give them those homes, we must make technology a partner and propel the public welfare system into the 21st century. Today, therefore, I am directing the Secretary of Health and Human Services to work with the states, the courts, the private agencies, to report to me within 60 days on a plan for a national Internet-based registry of children waiting to be adopted everywhere in the United States. (Applause.)

As Hillary said, there are 100,000 children, just like those whom we clapped for today, in foster care still waiting for permanent adoptive homes. The Internet holds the potential to shorten their wait, to make an on-line link between foster care centers and families looking to adopt. Some states and private partners already are forging these connections, bringing together families in Alaska and children as far away as Pennsylvania, for example.

We want to build on these efforts to the extent that it is possible and appropriate, working closely with the states, supporting their efforts, learning from them. We can use the Internet to promote adoptions while protecting the confidentiality of children and families. Technology has given us an important tool and we should use it.

Again, Thanksgiving is approaching. Families across our nation will come together to express their gratitude for all the things that matter most. We sometimes speak of the comforts of home as the small blessings. But when you look into the eyes of these children today, we remember that there are few greater blessings.

I'd like to encourage more families to follow the example of those we have honored here today, to open their arms, their hearts, to children who need them very much; to give them the futures they deserve, and to make sure that in all of the Thanksgivings to come, we will all be blessed as a nation as more and more of our children come into loving homes.

A very happy Thanksgiving to all of you. And now let me invite all of you to join us to celebrate this special day with a reception in the State Dining Room. Thank you very much. (Applause.)

END

2:36 P.M. EST

For Williams, Influential Support

Mayor-Elect Meets With First Lady After Adoption Ceremony

By MICHAEL H. COTTMAN
Washington Post Staff Writer

Mayor-elect Anthony A. Williams emerged from the White House yesterday after a 30-minute meeting with Hillary Rodham Clinton, saying the first lady understands the needs of the District and supports his philosophical plan to invest in the District's education and human services.

"I was happy to have a meeting with the first lady. I do believe she is really committed to our city and she has a deep, rich understanding of its problems, its issues and its opportunities," Williams said.

Williams said he and the first lady discussed education, bringing accountability to the District and investing in the city.

The mayor-elect said that speaking with the first lady about issues that affect the District's residents amounts to more than simply a photo opportunity and could transform into tangible support.

"The White House can play a leadership role in the president's plan with the Congress in supporting investment in our city by the federal government," Williams said. "... This will help move us forward."

Williams and Clinton met after taking part in the 12th Annual Adoption Day ceremony in the East Room of the White House, where 24 families completed their adoptions of 30 children.

Eugene N. Hamilton, chief judge of D.C. Superior Court—who has adopted four children himself—signed papers that formally completed the adoption process for a roomful of smiling families just in time for Thanksgiving.

Williams, who was adopted himself and until age 3 could not speak, told the crowd that he would not be standing in the White House if two people had not taken a chance on him.

"Forty-four years ago, my parents brought me into their home, people from the institution telling my mother, 'You can bring Tony in, but you're always going to have trouble with Tony and he's never going to make it,'" the mayor-elect said. "... They brought me into their home and she did have trou-

Jovania Phillips, with daughter Donnisha 'India' Woodard, has earned a high school equivalency degree and a new job in recent months. The 21-year-old says she had to learn to be patient and to work hard for what she wanted.



PHOTOS BY SUSAN BIDDLE—THE WASHINGTON POST



Adoption Day at the White House united 30 children with their parents for good. One new adoptee, Charday Mays, 12, of Prince George's County, introduced the president and got a hug from the first lady. At right above is Dave Thomas, founder and chairman of Wendy's International, adoptee himself.

ble with me, but I did make it."

The District's child welfare system, with a history of turmoil, has been operated by a federal receiver since 1995, when a U.S. District judge ruled that the city government was not caring adequately for thousands of abused and neglected children. The nine-year-old legal fight continues, with the city filing court papers just yesterday to oppose the current receiver's strategic plan.

Adoptions of foster children increased to a record number in the year ending Sept. 30. The court-appointed monitor called the 168

adoptions a "spectacular accomplishment," although hundreds of children are still waiting.

Edward and Rochelle Mays attended the ceremony and were taking 12-year-old Charday and her brother, Steven, 11, home for good.

"It's something we've always talked about and something we've always wanted to do," said Rochelle Mays, 36. Edward Mays, 41, simply said: "We wanted to give something back to the community."

Staff writer Peter Slevin contributed to this report.

ointments for a local y. She then moved into , where she lives with of the youngest baby. Christmas.

rible year for me that I as, and my first thought apartment was to go out the things that they had id.

o that.

are not over yet, and I oney and pay some bills urch stuff," she said. urchased is stationery. rough for us, and I want tes," she said.

he has been thinking a ts that she and her ith the windows rolled keep warm. To show rom that, she gets down

bout where we will sleep coming from," she said py to be alive."

An opponent of physician-assisted suicide, N. Gregory Hamilton of Portland, Ore., said Kevorkian "is manipulating the legitimate press.... This videotape should not be shown anywhere except in a courtroom where Jack Kevorkian is being prosecuted for murder."

On the other side, Faye Girsch, director of the Denver-based Hemlock Society and an advocate of physician-assisted suicide, said *60 Minutes* "did a public service.... I think we need to see death more often on television" to help others understand the pain elderly and terminally ill patients endure. "We've kept it so sterilized."

Marvin Kalb, director of the Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy at Harvard, was especially critical: "To me, it is sad that death has become a form of news-entertainment."

Ben Bagdikian, retired dean of the journalism school at the University of California-Berkeley, questioned airing the segment in the early evening, when children were certain to be watching. "Young children would find it puzzling and frightening," he said, perhaps adding to the fear many youngsters have of vaccinations.

The show — which earned *60 Minutes* its highest ratings

ad for adver

The program opened with Kevorkian and *60 Minutes* correspondent Mike Walla watching a homemade videotape of Kevorkian's final interview with Youk. Youk, a accountant and classic collector from Waterford Township, Mich., was described as being in the final stages of Lou Gehrig's disease.

Kevorkian was shown presenting Youk Sept. 15 with consent form to sign. Youk signed it. Then the doctor asked Youk whether he had more time to think about his decision to end his life.

Two days later, Kevorkian

Internet registry to help adoption of foster children

By Bill Nichols
USA TODAY

WASHINGTON — President Clinton will announce today plans to create a national Internet registry for children in foster care who are eligible for adoption.

The goal, White House officials say, is to match people who want to adopt children with the 100,000 children in foster care nationwide who are legally eligible for adoption.

Adoption advocates applauded Clinton's instruction to Health and Human Services Secretary Donna Shalala to develop plans for the computer registry within 60 days.

"Anything we can do to help kids who need a loving home find a wonderful loving home goes in the right direction," says David Liederman, executive director of the Child Welfare League.

Several states offer their own in-state computer registries, and a few small nonprofit groups have national registries. But White House officials say the existing registries can handle only 1,000 children altogether, a fraction of those in foster care who are available for adoption.

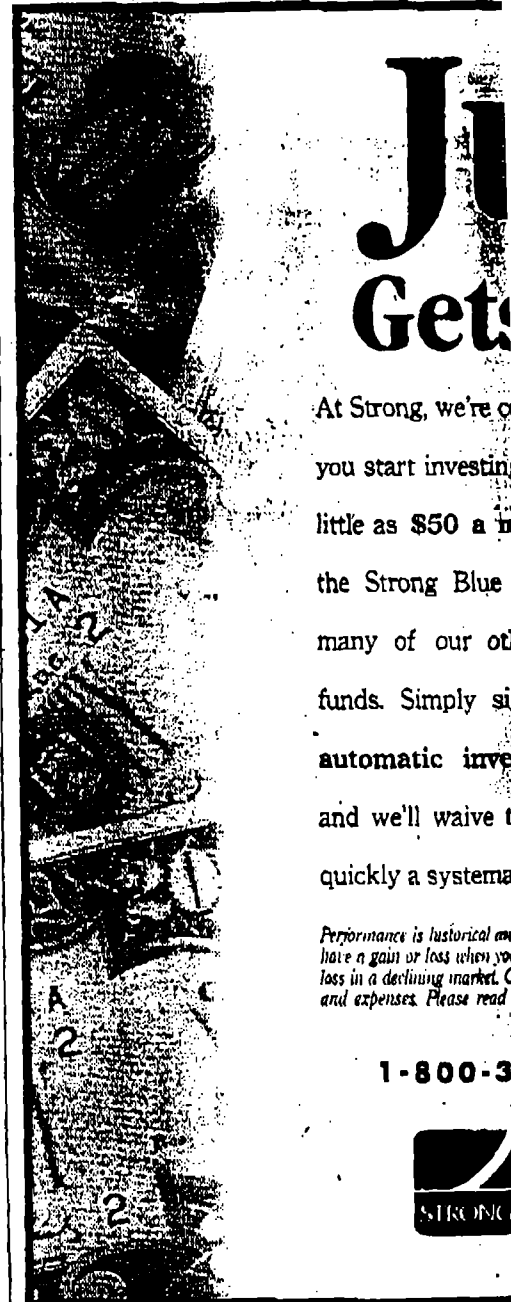
White House aides say a great appeal of the registry is that it would allow potential parents to see the faces of children they might adopt.

Prospective parents would have to meet state adoption requirements and any restrictions states might have on interstate adoptions.

White House aides and adoption advocates say there were several hurdles to be cleared before such a registry could be set up.

Shalala and the task force she creates would have to decide what sort of information to make available about each child while still maintaining his or her privacy. Also, before children could be put in the registry, all parental rights would have to have been terminated.

Another concern is that the registry could generate such a strong response that understaffed state agencies could be overwhelmed.



J Get

At Strong, we're o
you start investing
little as \$50 a m
the Strong Blue
many of our oth
funds. Simply si
automatic inve
and we'll waive t
quickly a systema

Performance is historical an
have a gain or loss when yo
loss in a declining market. C
and expenses. Please read

1-800-3

STRONG

The Washington Post
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 25, 1998

Web Site to List Foster Children for Adoption

By BARBARA VOBEDA
Washington Post Staff Writer

President Clinton announced yesterday a plan to create an Internet site that will carry photographs and information on as many as 100,000 children in the nation's foster care system in hopes of matching them with adoptive parents.

The president announced the initiative during a White House ceremony marking the first anniversary of the Adoption and Safe Families Act, which revamped the foster care sys-

tem to speed the placement of children in permanent homes after they are taken from abusive or neglectful parents.

The law established bonuses of \$4,000 to be paid by the federal government to states for every child who is adopted out of the child protection system, and \$6,000 for the adoption of a child considered hard to place because of age, handicap or other circumstances.

Clinton hopes the new Internet effort will enable the administration to reach its goal of doubling the

number of foster care adoptions by 2002. "We can use the Internet to promote adoptions while protecting the confidentiality of children and families," Clinton said. "Technology has given us an important tool and we should use it."

The ceremony also honored 24 families who adopted children yesterday through the D.C. Superior Court, an annual "Adoption Day" event traditionally held at the court but transferred to the White House at the request of first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton. Among the speakers was

District Mayor-elect Anthony Williams, who was adopted at the age of 3 [Details, Page B8].

Currently, 18 states—including Maryland—maintain their own sites on the World Wide Web to promote adoptions of children in foster care, while other states provide information to private social service agencies that have created similar sites. But the result is a cumbersome and haphazard system that makes it difficult for prospective families to learn about available children across the country.

Under the president's plan, Health and Human Services Secretary Donna E. Shalala will determine over the next two months the best way to create one Internet site that will link the other sites and essentially serve as a clearinghouse for interested parents. HHS officials said the site would protect the privacy of children by posting information only after permission is received from the children's legal guardians.

The nation's foster care system includes about 500,000 children, of whom 100,000 are available for adoption because social workers have determined that they cannot be returned to their birth parents. In the past, just a fraction of those children

have been adopted—the figure was 20,000 in 1995.

By creating financial bonuses and other incentives, the federal law was designed to increase that number. It also was intended to shorten the legal process for determining that a child is free for adoption and to shift the emphasis in cases of severe abuse away from attempts to reunite biological families.

Figures are not yet available to show whether the number of adoptions has increased since passage of the law. But from 1996 to 1997, the number of adoptions increased by more than 10 percent, from 28,000 to 31,000, according to federal statistics.

NATION

In Brief

N.Y. Bomb Plotter Gets 10 Months

NEW YORK—U.S. District Court judges sentenced one man involved in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing to 10 months in prison and another to eight years yesterday.

Judge Whitman Knapp passed the lighter sentence—amounting to time served—on Ibrahim Ahmad Suleiman, convicted in January on two counts of perjury for lying to the grand jury investigating the bombing, which killed six people.

Suleiman was led away in handcuffs to face what Assistant U.S. Attorney Michael Garcia said were immigration fraud charges in Texas.

Knapp criticized Suleiman's lawyer for having failed to persuade his client to invoke his Fifth Amendment rights against self-incrimination.

Suleiman denied traveling with convicted World Trade Center bomber Ahmad Ajaj despite extensive evidence that he had done so, and he denied handling a bombing manual even though his fingerprints were on it.

In a separate hearing, Judge Michael Mukasey sentenced Mohammad Abouhalima to eight years in prison. Abouhalima was convicted in May 1997 of driving his brother, Mahmud Abouhalima, to John F. Kennedy International Airport for a one-way flight to Saudi Arabia, knowing he had taken part in the bombing.

Another Released Gray Wolf Dies

PHOENIX—A week after the arrival of two more Mexican gray wolves to the Southwest, wildlife biologists found another one dead.

Only two of the original 11 reintroduced along the Arizona-New Mexico line early this year are still in the Apache National Forest. As of yesterday, none roamed free.

An 18-month-old male gray wolf was found dead Monday after radio collar signals indicated he had stopped moving for several hours, said Tom Bauer, spokesman for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Authorities were waiting for test results to determine how the wolf died. Its body was found near the White Mountain Apache Reservation, said Stephanie Hanna, spokeswoman for Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt.

The male wolf was one of just three Mexican gray wolves, or lobos, left among the original 11 released early this year. Four others were shot to death, three had to be recaptured and one is missing and presumed dead.

The remaining two male wolves were recaptured this week and paired with the two new females in pens, where they'll spend several weeks before they're set free, Bauer said.

Federal officials continue to look for the culprits in three of the wolf shootings. A fourth wolf was shot by a camper who felt threatened; he was not prosecuted.

Federal officials and environmentalists insist the program, which has been strongly opposed by ranchers, is not failing.

"All the problems that have come up so far are human-caused," said Craig Miller, Southwest representative for Defenders of Wildlife. "Wolves are very adaptable. All that needs to happen is people not shoot them."

Shark Kills Boy, 9, in Fla. Waters

VERO BEACH, Fla.—Authorities stepped up their vigilance and issued new warnings after a 9-year-old boy was killed by a shark as he swam about 40 yards from shore. It was the first fatal shark attack in Florida in a decade.

James Tellasmon was with his mother and a family friend Saturday when he was attacked near Ocean Beach at Jaycee Park, some 70 miles north of West Palm Beach along Florida's east coast.

"Witnesses said he started to flail, and then he was gone," police chief Jim Gabbard said Monday. "He just went under."

The body was found Sunday. A medical examiner said the boy was killed by a large shark, but he could not say what type of shark or exactly how large, Gabbard said.

Authorities recovered only the boy's torso and legs, Gabbard said.

"This is the time of year when the water temperature starts changing and the migratory fish begin to move through the area. There's lots of bait fish and they're close to shore," Gabbard said. "The predators . . . are all where the bait fish are."

Lifeguards in Vero Beach had been watching for sharks or other predators but saw none all weekend. When they see predatory fish, they close the beach to swimming.

Since the attack, Gabbard said, "We're certainly being more vigilant and telling people, 'Don't get out too far.'" He said helicopter flyovers to check for sharks from the air, which he called routine, were continuing.

"There's really not a lot we can do except educate people and make sure they're in these protected areas," he said.

The last confirmed fatal shark attack in the state was in 1988 along the Florida Panhandle. More recently, some investigators laid blame for the 1995 disappearance of a diver in the Florida Keys on a shark.

"Shark bites are fairly common," Gabbard said. "But most . . . bite and let go."

George Burgess, director of the International Shark Attack File at the University of Florida, said about 25 nonfatal shark attacks occurred in Florida last year, compared with 13 in 1996. He did not have figures for this year.

—From news services

Final 11/23/98 7:00pm
Jeff Shesol

**PRESIDENT WILLIAM J. CLINTON
REMARKS AT NATIONAL ADOPTION MONTH EVENT
THE EAST ROOM
November 24, 1998**

Acknowledgments: the First Lady; Sec. Shalala; Gov. Edgar and Mrs. Edgar; Sen. Levin; Rep. Oberstar; DC Mayor Marion Barry TBD; DC Mayor-elect Anthony Williams; Chief Judge of DC Superior Court Eugene Hamilton; Dave Thomas, head of Wendy's and the Dave Thomas Foundation; Charday [shar-DAY] Mays and parents, Edward and Rochelle Mays

First, let me congratulate the families who have opened their arms today to these special new members -- and for making this momentous occasion a public one, so other Americans can share their joy and, we hope, follow their example. I also want to extend my congratulations to this year's Adoption 2002 Award winners, and to offer you my gratitude for all the work you are doing in your states and your communities to encourage adoption. The First Lady, as all of you know, has been working on this issue almost as long as I have known her, and I want to thank her for leading our efforts to make sure all our children spend the holidays -- and every other day -- with families that love and care for them.

The families who join us here today have something new -- someone new -- to be grateful for in this season of Thanksgiving. The expressions you are wearing today make a powerful statement: when we give, we grow. To a child in foster care, there is no greater gift than a strong and loving family. There is no greater need than for a decent and orderly upbringing; and no greater desire than for a safe, healthy, and happy home.

That is why I have pledged my administration to help our foster children find the homes - - and the futures -- they deserve. As the First Lady and other speakers have said, we are making good on that pledge... reforming our nation's approach to foster care and adoption... making the system work better for the children and families it serves. With the pioneering efforts of states like Illinois, we are getting ever closer to our goal of doubling the number of children adopted or permanently placed by the year 2002. I am pleased to report that between 1996 and 1997, the number of adoptions increased by 10 percent, from 28,000 to 31,000.

We know, however, that the number of adoptions is not the sole measure of our progress. The real measure is whether our child welfare system puts the health and safety of children above all... whether children have the chance to live out their dreams and fulfill their potential... whether families who open their arms can reach -- to embrace -- a child in need.

As we celebrate National Adoption Month, Americans can take pride in the progress we are making. Still, we know there is more work to be done. We know that geographic and other

barriers to adoption still exist. We also know we must do a better job in informing America's families about the many children who wait in foster care for adoption. To give those children the permanent homes they need, to give our families the opportunity to provide them with happy, healthy homes, we must take technology as a partner -- and propel the public child welfare system into the 21st Century.

Today, therefore, I am directing the Secretary of Health and Human Services to work with the states, the courts, and private agencies, and to report to me within 60 days on a plan for a national, Internet-based registry of children waiting to be adopted. There are 100,000 children waiting in foster care for permanent, adoptive homes. The Internet holds the potential to shorten their wait -- to make an online link between foster care centers and families looking to adopt. Some states and private partners are already forging these connections, bringing together families in Alaska and children as far away as Pennsylvania, for example. We want to build on these efforts to the extent that it is possible and appropriate. Working closely with the states, supporting their efforts and learning from them, we can use the Internet to promote adoptions while protecting the confidentiality of children and families. Technology has given us an important tool. We should use it.

Thanksgiving, again, is approaching; and families all across our nation are coming together to express their gratitude for the things that matter most. We sometimes speak of the comforts of home as the "small blessings"; but, when you look in the eyes of these grateful children and their adoptive families, we remember that there are few greater blessings. I would like to encourage more families to follow the example of those who join us here today -- to open their arms, and their hearts, to children who need loving homes. When we resolve to give our children the futures they deserve, we are blessed not only as individuals, but as a nation. Thank you -- and a very Happy Thanksgiving to every one of you.

I would now like to invite all of you to celebrate this special day at a reception in the State Dining Room.

Good afternoon and welcome to the East Room. A few weeks ago, I received an invitation to attend a wonderful celebration at the D.C. Superior Courthouse, where a number of adoptions would be made final. I was so impressed by the event that I asked Chief Judge Eugene Hamilton if we could host it at the White House. And I was delighted when he said yes.

So today, in this room, there are 30 children from Washington, D.C. who woke up this morning as foster children -- and will go to bed tonight as permanent members of families. And I can think of no better way to celebrate National Adoption Month.

I want to thank these 24 families for allowing us to share in their celebration. And I want to thank this year's Adoption 2002 winners and all the advocates and experts, policy makers and parents here, who work day and night to make these kinds of happy endings possible:

Secretary Shalala told us what children think about love. And all of us are grateful for her leadership in making sure they all have love from their parents -- and good health for a lifetime. I'm also pleased that we're joined by Governor Edgar and Mrs. Edgar, as well as Senator Levin, Senator Landreiu, Congressman Obestar and Mayor Barry.

And we are fortunate to have some special speakers as part of today's program. They are the real experts in adoption -- not only because of the jobs they have, but because of the extraordinary homes they've lived in.

You've already heard from Dave Thomas, who is reaching out to the business community and others to ensure that all foster children get the same chance he did. We'll hear from Chief Judge Hamilton, who

has adopted four children. What's more, in 20 years, he and his wife Virginia, have been foster parents for more than 40 children.

We'll hear from the mayor-elect of our nation's capital, Tony Williams. At age three, he was living in foster care and hadn't spoken a word. There were even plans to institutionalize him. After the D.C. primary, he said that when his parents adopted him, they gave him a second chance, and that now this great city had adopted him too.

And, we'll hear from Charday Mays, a 12 year old, whose mother says she likes swimming, singing in the choir, and like most pre-teens, talking. She and her brother Steven are two of 30 children who will, as of today, have a safe, permanent place to call home.

I'm sure all of you have similar stories you could tell -- stories that are particularly meaningful this week.

In fact, my husband just came from pardoning the Thanksgiving turkey out in the Rose Garden. For those of you who have never seen this tradition: Each year, starting with President Truman, one turkey is picked as the chosen one...chosen to escape making the ultimate sacrifice -- being stuffed, dressed, and seated next to sweat potatoes, pies, and other foods they may have nothing in common with.

I was amazed to learn that the turkey pardoned today was three times the average weight...which is pretty much how all of us feel after Thanksgiving dinner!

Each family, of course, has its own Thanksgiving traditions...from the turkey sandwiches that children will be fed, every meal, every day, every week, until it's all gone...to the spirited t.v. remote control battles between the football caucus and the Parade caucus.

But there is one tradition that runs through every household's Thanksgiving tradition – and that's family.

When you are part of a family, you know there will be a seat waiting for you...in good times and tough times. And that, in both good times and tough times, the table will be still be filled not only with food, but also with laughter and love, year after year after year.

And that is what all children want, and what all children deserve - - whether they live in Pignon, Haiti, where I visited a few days ago or right here in Washington, D.C. I will always remember a little boy who came to visit Bill and me in the Oval Office a few years ago. When Bill asked him where in Virginia he was living, he answered "all over." Which means nowhere.

When it comes to improving our child welfare system for that child and every child, our American family have a lot to be thankful for this holiday season. Children are better off today because we passed the Family and Medical Leave Act, which allows parents to take time off to adopt a child. They are better off because we're ending discrimination and delays based on race and ethnicity. They are better off because of tax breaks which make it easier for families to adopt, especially children with special needs.

And children are better off because we put politics aside, put children first and came together across party lines to pass the landmark Adoption and Safe Families Act.

When he signed that bill a year ago, the President helped fulfill his promise to always put the health and safety of children first. To move children more quickly from foster care into safe and permanent homes. And to move all of us closer to his goal of doubling the

number of children adopted or permanently placed by the year 2002.

This celebration brings us one step further down that road. In the East Room – and at the courthouse – right now are families who “opened their homes and opened their hearts” to children who need both.

Some parents are keeping brothers and sisters together by adopting them together. Some are adopting their own foster children. Others are welcoming children with special needs into the family. Many are adopting across racial lines. And all of you are giving children a family to spend Thanksgiving with every year...in a place that will always be their home.

But it is my sincere hope that we celebrate this progress around the dining room table Thursday, not by sitting on our laurels, but by making a commitment to the 100,000 children who are still waiting for homes all across the nation.

We must, for example, work to implement our new laws effectively; help our courts as they make difficult, heart wrenching decisions about our children as quickly as possible; and support families, communities, states and social workers in the only surefire way to stop child abuse and neglect -- and that's to prevent it before it happens.

And as we're sitting around the dinner table in this city, I hope we remember that for every one of the wonderful children who were formally adopted today, there are 100 more like them still in the D.C. foster care system. I believe -- and I know you believe -- that we must do better.

We must turn the nation's capital into a model of how to care for

our most vulnerable children. For there is no greater test of a city...no greater test of country...no greater test for businesses, for parents, for communities, for religious organizations, for advocates, for government officials, for each and every of us.

I want to thank all of you for helping our country meet that test.

And now it is my great honor to turn the program over to Chief Judge Eugene Hamilton. As I mentioned earlier, he brings to the courtroom every day not only 28 years of judicial experience on the D.C. Superior Court, but also a lifetime of personal experience as a foster parent and adoptive parent. He understands better than anyone the challenges that face every child and every adult who come into contact with the child welfare system -- and what all of us must do to meet them.

Please join me in welcoming Chief Judge Hamilton.

FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
REMARKS AT NATIONAL ADOPTION MONTH/
D.C. ADOPTION DAY
EAST ROOM, WHITE HOUSE
NOVEMBER 24, 1998

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

November 21, 1998

ADOPTION EVENT

DATE: November 24, 1998
TIME: 1:45 pm - 2:15 pm
LOCATION: East Room
FROM: Bruce Reed

I. PURPOSE:

To mark National Adoption Month by announcing a new directive to facilitate adoptions by creating an Internet registry.

II. BACKGROUND:

You will be joining the First Lady in hosting a ceremony in honor of 24 new adoptions in D.C. The families will be present, along with 50 leading adoption and children's advocates and the eight recipients of this year's HHS Adoption 2002 Excellence Awards - including Illinois Governor and Mrs. Jim Edgar.

You set a goal in 1996 of doubling adoptions and other permanent placements from the child welfare system by the year 2002. Adoptions increased by 10 percent in the next year, from 28,000 to 31,000. But there are still about 100,000 children in our nation's foster care system awaiting adoption.

National Internet Registry:

In order to help meet your adoption goals and to facilitate adoptions, you will announce that you are issuing a directive to HHS to expand the use of the Internet as a tool to find homes for children waiting to be adopted from foster care. Specifically, you will direct Secretary Shalala to work with the States and others to develop a plan within 60 days for expanding the use of the Internet to share information about children who are legally free for adoption while ensuring appropriate confidentiality safeguards. An effective national registry will help break down geographic barriers to adoption and shorten the time needed to find adoptive families for children. (Draft directive is attached.)

III. PARTICIPANTS:

YOU

The First Lady

Secretary Donna Shalala

D.C. Superior Court Chief Judge Eugene Hamilton

Mayor-Elect Anthony Williams

Charday Mays, officially adopted immediately prior to event by Edward and Rochelle Mays of Prince Georges County, Maryland. She is 12 years old.

Dave Thomas, Founder of Wendy's Corp. and the Dave Thomas Foundation on Adoption

IV. SEQUENCE OF EVENTS:

- Secretary Shalala will make brief opening remarks and introduce Dave Thomas.
- Dave Thomas will make opening remarks and introduce the First Lady.
- The First Lady will make remarks and introduce Chief Eugene Hamilton.
- Chief Judge Eugene Hamilton will make remarks and introduce Mayor-Elect Anthony Williams.
- Mayor-Elect Anthony Williams will make remarks and introduce Charday Mays, a newly adopted 12-year old.
- Charday Mays will make remarks and introduce **YOU**.
- **YOU** will make remarks, and invite guests to a reception in the State Dining Room.

V. PRESS COVERAGE:

Open Press.

VI. REMARKS:

Remarks prepared by Speechwriting.

VII. ATTACHMENTS:

- Record of Accomplishment on Adoption.
- Directive to the Department of Health and Human Services.

PRESIDENT CLINTON'S RECORD OF ACCOMPLISHMENT ON ADOPTION

- ✓ **Achieving Landmark Legislative Reform.** On November 19, 1997, the President signed the Adoption and Safe Families Act, reforming our nation's child welfare system and making it clear that the health and safety of children must be the paramount concerns of state child welfare services. This landmark legislation was based in large part on the recommendations of the Clinton Administration's *Adoption 2002* report, which the President requested by executive memorandum on December 14, 1996, to meet his goals of doubling adoptions and permanent placements by the year 2002 and moving children more quickly from foster care to permanent homes. The Act tightened time frames for making permanent placement decisions for children, and ensured health insurance coverage for all special needs children in subsidized adoptions. Also, it created new financial incentives for States to increase adoptions, and continued funding for services to keep families together when it is appropriate and safe.
- ✓ **Making Adoption Affordable for Families.** In 1996, President Clinton signed into law the Small Business Job Protection Act of 1996, which provides a \$5,000 tax credit to families adopting children, and a \$6,000 tax credit for families adopting children with special needs. This provision has alleviated a significant barrier to adoption, helping middle class families for whom adoption may be prohibitively expensive and making it easier for families to adopt children with special needs. Since President Clinton took office, the number of children with special needs who were adopted with Federal adoption assistance has risen by over 60 percent. In the Balanced Budget Act of 1997, President Clinton ensured more support for families who adopt children with the \$500 per-child tax credit.
- ✓ **Giving States Flexibility and Support.** To test innovative strategies to improve State child welfare systems, the Clinton Administration has granted waivers to 18 States, giving them more flexibility in tailoring services to meet the needs of children and families. In addition, the Administration has provided States with enhanced technical support and helped improve court operations. The President secured \$10 million in FY 1999 in new funds to support State efforts to implement the new adoption law, and has, through the Adoption Opportunities program, supported State and local innovative demonstration projects to promote adoption, provide post-adoptive services, and build new public-private partnerships. To prevent children from entering foster care in the first place, in 1993 the Clinton Administration enacted and secured federal funding for the Family Preservation and Support Program to help States, local governments, and service providers develop effective programs to serve children and families at risk.
- ✓ **Breaking Down Racial and Ethnic Barriers to Adoption.** New inter-ethnic adoption provisions, passed as a part of the Small Business Job Protection Act of 1996, ensure that the adoption process is free from discrimination and delays on the basis of race, culture and ethnicity by strengthening the Multi-Ethnic Placement Act which the President signed in 1994.
- ✓ **Providing Supports for Child Protection and Adoption.** In 1993, President Clinton signed into law the Family and Medical Leave Act, enabling parents to take time off to

adopt a child without losing their jobs or health insurance. In addition, the welfare reform legislation signed by the President maintained the guarantee of child protection and adoption, and did not reduce funds for child welfare, child abuse, and foster care and adoption services.