

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**HILLARY CLINTON AND TOM DELAY SHARE ORPHAN FOUNDATION OF  
AMERICA'S 2000 HUMANITARIAN AWARD**  
*OLIVER Dinner Highlights Accomplishments and Challenges of Twelve Former Foster Kids  
Who Have Aged Out of System, Gone on to Higher Education*

WASHINGTON, D.C. – First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton and House Majority Whip Tom DeLay were honored for their work on behalf of foster children at the Orphan Foundation of America's (OFA) annual OLIVER Awards Dinner on June 12. "Our choice of honorees reflects OFA's belief that the needs of foster kids transcend political differences," explains Eileen McCaffrey, OFA Executive Director. "Mrs. Clinton and Mr. DeLay viscerally understand that teens transitioning from state care to independence need quality programs that teach life skills such as goal-setting and time and money management, and provide ongoing, family-like guidance. The future of young people aging out of foster care is brighter thanks to the tireless work of Mr. DeLay and Mrs. Clinton."

Congressman DeLay has been a major player in improving the lives of children in foster care. He co-sponsored the Foster Care Reform Act of 1999, and was instrumental in pushing the bill through the House and Senate. President Clinton signed the bill into law last year. By extending benefits and increasing provisions for adolescents aging out of foster care, this legislation aids the 20,000 adolescents each year who are left without a home, medical care, skills or financial independence when they are "emancipated" out of the foster care system at age 18 or upon graduating from high school. Mr. DeLay's dedication to children's issues is equally visible outside of Washington. He was the featured speaker at this year's American Professional Society's national conference on the abuse of children and ChildHelp USA's National Day of Hope. In February 2000, he chaired a child welfare summit in Houston entitled *Kids at Risk: Working Together to Protect America's Youth*. Mr. DeLay and his wife have been foster parents to three adolescents over the past five years.

First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton began working on foster care issues as a student at Yale Law School 30 years ago and has continued to champion this important cause ever since. For the past seven years, Mrs. Clinton has led the Administration's efforts to streamline and improve the nation's foster care and adoption systems. She has been particularly outspoken about breaking down barriers to adoption and ensuring that children receive the assistance they need as they make the transition from foster care to independent life as young adults. Her voice and expertise were instrumental to winning passage of the Adoption and Safe Families Act, which the President signed in 1997. This landmark legislation expedited permanent placement decisions for children, ensured health insurance coverage for all special-needs children in

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subsidized adoption, and created bonuses for states to increase adoptions of children from the foster care system. From 1996 to 1998, the number of adoptions from foster care nationwide rose 29 percent -- from 28,000 to 36,000 -- the largest increase in the history of the program.

The OLIVER Awards Dinner was truly a bipartisan event, co-chaired by Virginia Congressmen Tom Davis (R) and James Moran (D). Emceeding the dinner was OFA Honorary Chairman J.C. Watts (R-OK). The 12 young people honored as participants in the 2000 OLIVER project were selected for their leadership and scholarship qualities. They spent the 10 days prior to the dinner in Washington meeting with members of Congress and business leaders and participating in leadership training workshops. The former foster youth will receive \$7,500 OLIVER scholarships to help defray the costs of their studies.

The 2000 OLIVER scholarship recipients are: Jackie-Lynn Baker, Missoula, MT; Arlene Goltz, Medford, OR; Curtis Mays, Pasadena, CA; Michael Olsen, Fairfax, VA; Lisa Piccolo, Levittown, NY; Marvla Robinson, Oakwood, OK; Joey Smallwood, Marion, KS; Teresita Tolbert, Parkesburg, PA; Jeff Wilcox, Pueblo, CO; Curtis Wilson, Melbourne, FL; Araceli Santander, Waxahachie, TX; and Sima Patel, Chicago, IL.

The OLIVER Dinner was sponsored by the Freddie Mac Foundation. Additional support was provided by the Mortgage Insurance Companies of America, Oracle, The Limited, Inc./Intimate Brands, Inc. and many other companies including AT&T, American Bankers Association, United Parcel Service, General Dynamics, American Society of Association Executives, and EmediaMillWorks.

The Orphan Foundation of America was founded in 1981 by an unadopted orphan, and is the only national organization solely dedicated to helping older foster youth achieve successful adulthood. OFA's goal is to provide scholarships, teen leadership training, mentoring support, and independent living skills training to older foster youth so they can become productive, self-reliant adults. OFA's funding comes from the Combined Federal Campaign, donations from private citizens and the corporate community. OFA receives no government funding.

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## **Hillary Clinton: A Leading Advocate for the Nation's Neediest Children A Record of Accomplishment Adoption and Foster Care**

As the Administration's most prominent advocate on foster care and adoption, Hillary Clinton has worked on behalf of the over 500,000 children who live in foster care, and has led this Administration's unprecedented record of promoting the well-being of children in foster care and providing them with permanent, loving homes. Hillary Clinton has promoted the adoption of children living in foster care, worked to break down racial and ethnic barriers to adoption, worked for passage of the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997, and worked to provide additional resources to children aging out of the foster care system through the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999. These two pieces of landmark legislation reformed our nation's child welfare system by putting considerations of children's health and safety first.

### **Background**

**Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997:** The Adoption and Safe Families Act helps thousands of children waiting in foster care move more quickly into safe and permanent homes. This overwhelmingly bipartisan legislation was based in large part on the recommendations of the Administration's "Adoption 2002" report, which had the central goal of doubling the number of adoptions to 56,000 by the year 2002. Already, the total number of adoptions rose to 36,000 in 1998 from 28,000 in 1996, on track to meet Administration's goal. This 29 percent increase is the first significant increase in adoptions since the national foster care program was established nearly 20 years ago.

The Adoption and Safe Families Act makes clear that the health and safety of children must be the paramount concerns of state child welfare services. It sets swifter time frames for making permanent placement decisions and terminating parental rights for children. For the first time, states have financial incentives to increase adoptions. Children with special needs and ongoing medical needs are ensured health care coverage. Federal funds continue for programs that work to keep families together when it is appropriate and safe to do so.

**Foster Care Independence Act:** Nearly 20,000 young people leave foster care each year when they reach age 18 without an adoptive family or other guardian. Without the emotional, social and financial support that families provide, many of these youth find themselves inadequately prepared for life on their own. Studies show that within two to four years of leaving foster care, only half have completed high school, fewer than half are employed, one-fourth have been homeless for at least one night, 30 percent do not have access to needed health care, 60 percent of the women have given birth, and less than one in five are completely self-supporting.

The Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 provides additional funding to the Independent Living program which offers older youth in foster care educational, vocational and employment training, daily living skills, substance abuse prevention, and connections to dedicated adults as mentors. The bill based on the Administration's plan, enables the program for the first time to include support for room and board, and provide states with the option to offer these young people Medicaid until their 21<sup>st</sup> birthday. In addition, the bill increases the asset limit and allows youths to have \$10,000 in savings and still be eligible for foster care payments, so that they can save for college, an apartment or other needs that are critical for successful independence. Finally, the bill establishes accountability for states in implementing their programs by requiring data collection and evaluation.

**A RECORD OF ACCOMPLISHMENT FOR FOSTER CARE AND ADOPTION.** With the signing of the new Foster Care Independence Act, the Administration adds to an unprecedented record of promoting the well-being of children and providing them with permanent, loving homes. In 1998 there were a record 36,000 adoptions from foster care, the first significant increase in the history of the program. From 1996 to 1998, the number of adoptions nationwide rose 29 percent -- from 28,000 to 36,000 -- and is on a pace to meet the President's goal of 56,000 adoptions in 2002. Among the President's other steps to improve child welfare and encourage adoption:

**Increasing the Transitional Living Program.** In the last budget, the Administration secured a 40 percent increase in the Transitional Living program, which provides funds to local community-based organizations for residential care, life skills training, and other support services to homeless adolescents. The program will now be funded at \$20.7 million.

**Enacting the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997.** Based on the Administration's Adoption 2002 report, this landmark law made the health and safety of children a clear priority, provided the first-ever financial incentives for states to increase adoptions, tightened the time frames for making permanent placements of children, and removed other barriers to adoption.

**Making Adoption Affordable.** In 1996, the President enacted a \$5,000 tax credit for families adopting children, and a \$6,000 tax credit for families adopting children with special needs. In the Balanced Budget Act of 1997, the Administration provided more support for families who adopt with a \$500 per-child tax credit. And under the Family and Medical Leave Act, parents can take time with a newly adopted child without losing their jobs or health insurance.

**Breaking Down Racial and Ethnic Barriers to Adoption.** New inter-ethnic adoption provisions signed into law by the President ensure that the adoption process is free from discrimination and delays on the basis of race, culture and ethnicity.

**Giving States Flexibility and Support.** This Administration has given 25 states waivers to test innovative strategies for improving state child welfare systems. The Administration has provided states technical support to improve court operations and grants to support local adoption projects, and has also secured federal funding for the Promoting Safe and Stable Families program to serve at-risk children and families.

**Using the Internet to Promote Adoption.** In November 1998, the President issued a 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. HHS will develop a national Internet site by the year 2002.



Jason H. Schechter  
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Subject: Statement by the President: Foster Care

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

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For Immediate Release

May 13, 1999

**STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT**

Hillary and I are pleased that Representatives Nancy Johnson and Ben Cardin today introduced important legislation to assist the approximately 20,000 young people who leave our nation's foster care system each year at age eighteen without an adoptive family or other permanent family relationship. Today, federal financial support for these young people ends just as they are making the critical transition to independence. Without the emotional, social, and financial support that families provide, many of these youth are not adequately prepared for life on their own.

I believe that we have a responsibility to ensure that these young people have the tools they need to make the most of their lives. That is why my budget request includes significant new investments to provide them with access to health care and help them to earn a high school diploma, further their education or vocational training, and learn daily living skills such as budgeting, career planning and securing housing and employment. Today, Representatives Johnson and Cardin have moved this issue forward. I am committed to working with them and other members of Congress in the months ahead to enact meaningful and fiscally responsible legislation to enable these young people to live up to their God-given potential.

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