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For Immediate Release

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Children's Home Society Celebrates National Adoption Awareness Month

October 27, 2009- Each year, November is recognized as National Adoption Awareness Month. While all adoption-related issues are important, the particular focus of this month is the adoption of children living in foster care. In North Carolina, more than 3,000 children are awaiting adoption, and another 10,000 children are living in foster care. Many of them have spent most of their lives in this “temporary” situation and have moved within the child-welfare system several times.

These children are in need of a family to love, nurture, and protect them. They come from a variety of backgrounds. Some have special needs, some are part of a sibling group, and many are older children or teenagers. Just as there is no stereotype of a child awaiting adoption, there is no stereotype of an adoptive family. You do not have to be married, wealthy, own your home, or not have biological children in order to adopt. All you have to do is provide a safe, loving, and permanent home for a child in need.

Often the public is unaware of these children and the realities of adoption, so National Adoption Awareness Month provides organizations, including CHS, with a wonderful opportunity to raise awareness. CHS has several events and initiatives occurring throughout November that are helping raise awareness of adoption.

One key way CHS promotes adoption is through our website www.chsnc.org. Newly revamped and launched in August, the website contains information on adoption and foster care, training, support services, and more to help families decide if adoption or foster care is right for them. It provides detailed information on the needs of children in foster care and offers much needed advice for birth parents considering adoption. The website also contains multiple interactive forms that help families connect with CHS efficiently and effectively. In addition, the new CHS site offers a wealth of videos of children available for adoption and families who are hoping to adopt.

This initiative, called Adoption Chronicles is the result of an entrepreneurial partnership with Keen Innovations, a Greensboro-based video-production company. Through this partnership, they are producing and distributing Adoption Chronicles (video interviews of children available for adoption)

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and Family Chronicles (video interviews of families interested in adoption) in North Carolina. These videos are hosted online for access by prospective adoptive parents, birth parents, and placement agencies trying to find permanent homes for children in need.

Our objective is to build collaborations with state agencies with a goal of producing an Adoption Chronicle for every child available for adoption in North Carolina and as many interested families as possible. This approach is truly a unique method for recruiting families and presenting children available for adoption from a personal and unbiased perspective. Each video allows the child or family's unique personality to shine while they share their hopes and dreams for the future. The videos present children and families in a way in which no paper profile can compete.

CHS also uses Heart Gallery photo displays to raise awareness and recruit potential families. Photos of waiting children are an incredibly powerful tool for raising awareness and recruiting potential adoptive and foster families. CHS collaborates with professional photographers to produce beautiful images of children awaiting adoption. These images are used in permanent Heart Gallery exhibits in more than 40 locations in the state in venues ranging from businesses to places of worship to restaurants to malls.

Anyone who is interested in finding out more about adoption or providing foster care for a child in need, please contact CHS at 1-800-632-1400, or visit www.chsnc.org for more information.

About National Adoption Awareness Month

The first major effort to promote awareness of the need for adoptive families for children in the foster-care system occurred in Massachusetts. In 1976, Governor Mike Dukakis proclaimed Adoption Week, and the idea grew in popularity and spread throughout the nation. President Gerald Ford made the first National Adoption Week proclamation, and in 1990, the week was expanded to the entire month of November.

Activities and celebrations are launched nationwide with a Presidential Proclamation to help build awareness of adoption at the national level. At the same time, thousands of community-based organizations participate in local programs, events, and activities to promote positive adoption stories, challenge the myths, and draw attention to the thousands of children in foster care who are waiting for permanent families.

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CHS is a statewide, non-profit, non-sectarian private adoption and foster care agency serving children in families in North Carolina for over 100 years. CHS is licensed by the NC Department of Health and Human Services - Division of Social Services. CHS is accredited by the Council on Accreditation of Services for Families and Children. CHS is a member of the Child Welfare League of America, Children and Family Services Association of North Carolina, and Children's Home Society of America. For more information on CHS, please visit www.chsnc.org or call 1-800-632-1400.

Interviews are available from CHS staff, board members, and adoptive families upon request.