



HEART GALLERY NORTH FLORIDA *ADOPT: Every Child is a Work of Art*

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Contact: Sherri Croom, (850) 321-6851
info@heartgallerynorthflorida.org

Heart Gallery North Florida Launched by Community Volunteers

Heart Gallery North Florida is dedicated to increasing awareness of the foster care children located in a 12-county area of North Florida who are in need of permanent and loving homes.

TALLAHASSEE – Today, the newly formed Heart Gallery North Florida (HGNF) launched its web site, www.heartgallerynorthflorida.org. Heart Gallery North Florida is a community-based organization that works with child welfare agencies in their areas and professional and student photographers to help recruit permanent and loving homes for children in foster care through museum-quality photographic exhibits. With the community's help, Heart Gallery North Florida will reach the goal of finding homes for all of North Florida's foster children who are available for adoption.

“These precious children live right here in our community and it is our goal to find them a forever family,” said Sherri Croom, Heart Gallery North Florida President and adoptive mother. “It is our hope that those forever families will see the individuality and spirit of the children, captured by top photographers in our community, who generously donated their time and talent.”

Heart Gallery North Florida creates traveling exhibits with compelling, personal portraits that capture the children's unique personalities and interests. The exhibit will tour local libraries, airports, malls, sporting events and other local venues, allowing all community members to experience the power of photography in telling a child's story and encourage people to explore public adoption.

The new web site allows community members to learn about Heart Gallery North Florida, view the online gallery of the children available for adoption in the Big Bend Area, and learn more about fostering and adopting children in state care.

“All children deserve a loving, permanent family and we want to make sure that happens for each child,” said Deborah Polston, Heart Gallery North Florida Board Member and adoptive mother of six. “Our gallery is 100 percent funded by community partners and 100 percent managed by volunteers.”

Currently, there are a total of 21 children available for adoption at this time in the Big Bend area. It is important to note that the number of children available for adoption can change daily. Heart Gallery North Florida covers 12 counties in the Big Bend area and is the largest of all 15 Florida Heart Galleries.

“Heart Gallery North Florida is the newest of Florida's 15 Heart Galleries. Florida is unique in that its Heart Galleries are regional and every county in the state is covered by a Heart Gallery,”



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said Florida's Chief Child Advocate and Honorary Heart Gallery North Florida Board Member Jim Kallinger. "The Heart Galleries of Florida are also a valuable partner of the Governor's *Explore Adoption* Campaign - a statewide campaign to raise the public's awareness of foster children in need of loving homes."

The Governor's Office of Adoption and Child Protection manages the *Explore Adoption* campaign, www.adoptflorida.org, which features children who wait the longest for adoptive families – older children and teens, sibling groups, and children with disabilities. The *Explore Adoption* web site outlines the state adoption process. The Office is assisting with the formation of Heart Gallery North Florida and Florida Association of Heart Galleries.

For more information and to view the online gallery, please visit www.heartgallerynorthflorida.org. Whether you're interested in adopting, fostering or volunteering, Heart Gallery North Florida is a photographic journey with links to resources filled with all the information you need to make an informed decision.

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