

ADOPTION INFORMATION CENTER OF ILLINOIS

OUR MISSION

The Adoption Information Center of Illinois is committed to facilitating the adoptive placement of children waiting to be adopted, and to helping sustain families created by adoption.



Helping
to
fulfill
dreams

2000 ANNUAL REPORT



A Message from Our Executive Director

Dear Friends,

Waiting children have very simple dreams and hopes. They dream of living in a safe place where they are secure and protected. They hope to find someone to love and nurture them and encourage them to try their skills and develop confidence. Waiting children want a family and a home.

But they can't turn their dreams into reality alone. Their voices are too small, their resources too few. They need help from someone bigger. And waiting children are the single reason that the Adoption Information Center of Illinois (AICI) exists—to help them realize their dreams of a family and a home.

Every one of our programs focuses on this goal. Last year we continued to add record numbers of children to our Adoption Listing Service (ALS) as a result of passage of the federal Adoption and Safe Families Act, Illinois permanency legislation, and the support of the court system. We added licensed adoptive parents to our ALS Matching Book mailing, and our Matching Services expanded. Our public awareness efforts were augmented by the introduction of the Wednesday's Child series broadcast on NBC 5 Chicago. Special thanks to the Freddie Mac Foundation and the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) for making this series possible. Our Information and Referral Services smoothed the way for thousands of individuals with adoption questions and provided information and advocacy for families already formed by adoption or guardianship. With funding from DCFS, we were granted the Foster Parent Inquiry System contract to respond to callers seeking information about foster parenting.

Last year we said goodbye to the Village Investment Project (VIP) created by the AICI in 1995. This project evolved rapidly during the years we coordinated it. As its programs and services expanded, it proved to be a good fit with the mission of the Illinois Action for Children, which now administers the Project. We wish the VIP continued success in its endeavors.

We're grateful to the media for generously supporting our public awareness efforts. And we thank the moms and dads of Illinois who make the hopes and dreams of so many waiting children a reality.

Sincerely yours,

Marilyn R. Panichi, A.C.S.W.



We help fulfill children's dreams of becoming part of a family.

In memory of
Reverend Charles Filson
who established the
Adoption Listing Service
in 1971 and
remained a friend to the
AICI throughout
his life



Adoption Awareness Services

Drawing public attention to waiting children is an essential part of our efforts to help children realize their dreams of a family and a home. The broadcast and print media provide invaluable assistance, and their contributions last year were enormous.

Last year, in all of our programs, we received

18,928

AICI inquiries.

Almost

25 percent

of those inquiries came because children were featured in the broadcast and print media, in publications, and on the Internet.



The media help children realize their dreams of a family and a home.

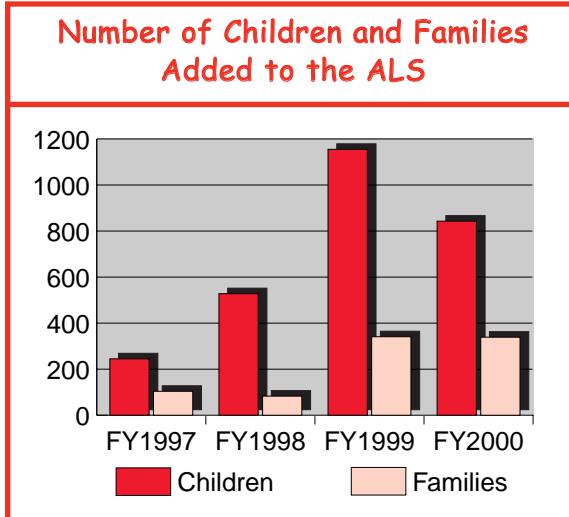
- Merri Dee highlighted waiting children on WGN-TV. Last year, as a public service, WGN-TV donated airtime to feature 111 children, prompting 940 inquiries. Twenty-three of the children have moved toward permanency. Since WGN-TV began supporting our efforts in 1992, it has featured 915 children, eliciting 6,013 inquiries and 369 adoption placements.
- Allison Rosati hosted the Wednesday's Child series on NBC 5 Chicago. In its inaugural year, it bolstered awareness efforts by featuring 58 children. The program prompted 427 calls, and 21 of the children have moved toward permanency. The Wednesday's Child program is a multi-state initiative of the Freddie Mac Foundation.
- Every Wednesday the Chicago Sun-Times column "A Family For Me" featured waiting children, resulting in 433 inquiries. The Sun-Times, a long-time friend, has been running a waiting child series for more than 30 years.
- Local print media throughout Illinois highlighted children regularly, generating 314 inquiries.
- *Adopt Me*, our bimonthly publication, prompted over 300 inquiries about featured children. Each edition of *Adopt Me* was sent to more than 20,000 agencies, adoptive families, professionals, and individuals who inquired about adoption.
- Over 70,000 people visited our web site, and we received 1,348 inquiries as a result of the Internet. In addition, AICI Wednesday's Child web page, added last year, engendered 179 inquiries.

Listing Services

Building awareness is only one step toward making dreams come true. We introduce many waiting children and families through the Adoption Listing Service (ALS).

Last year copies of the ALS Matching Book, featuring waiting children, were sent bimonthly to over 900 agencies and licensed AICI registered families. And more than 300 copies of the ALS Family Album, with listings of families waiting to adopt, went to agencies. As information about the children is time sensitive, AICI Listing Workers regularly visited agencies to ensure that listings were up-to-date.

The number of waiting children and families registered with the AICI has increased dramatically. In FY00 we added 843 children to the Matching Book and 339 families to the Family Album. In the last two years we added a total of 1,998 children to the Matching Book, representing an increase of 158 percent over the previous two years. Similarly, 680 families were added to the Family Album, representing an increase of 263 percent over the two preceding years.



Since implementation of permanency legislation has reduced the number of children in foster care, the continuing high rate of new listings in FY00 shows that we are featuring a greater percentage of the waiting children than ever. We will focus our future efforts on ensuring that every child needing a permanent family is listed.

Numerous hours of behind-the-scenes work go into the production of our ALS books. That's why we were very excited when our ALS Recruitment Book was selected by Printing Industries of America, Inc. as a winner in the 1999 Premier Print Awards.



Award Recipients - Steve Johnson, Copresco, Inc.; Marilyn Panichi, AICI Executive Director; and Jerry Piaskowy, Progressive Systems Network, Inc.

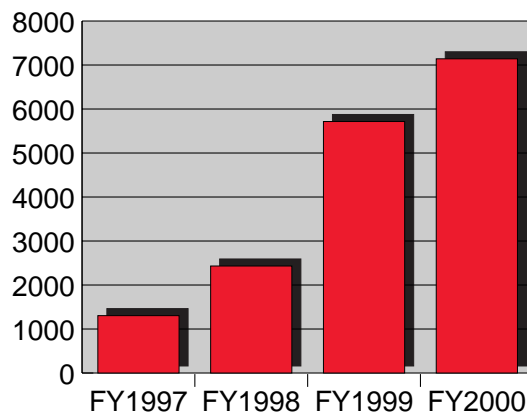
Of more than 5,600 entries, the AICI was chosen as one that exemplified the highest standards in the printing industry. We celebrated the achievement with our printing partners, Progressive Systems Network, Inc. and Copresco, Inc.

Matching Services

Our Matching Services reduce the time children wait for their dreams to be fulfilled. Through the ALS, our computer matching service, and our web site, we connect waiting children with families.

The ALS is the main catalyst in our matching program. Since FY99, when we began sending the ALS Matching Book to licensed AICI registered families, the number of inquiries about listed children has soared. Last year we received 7,141 inquiries on children and 251 inquiries on listed families.

Number of Inquiries about Children Resulting from the ALS



Our computer matching service links registered children and families through its extensive database. Weekly, as new children and families are registered, we make suggested computer matches and notify the family, the family's worker, and the child's worker by mail. If the match seems appropriate, the family's and child's workers exchange additional information to determine if the match will result in a permanent home for the child. Last year we nearly doubled our annual match rate with 4,946 suggested matches.

We work with the National Adoption Center (NAC) to feature waiting children on the Internet. Listings are created concurrently on the AICI and the NAC "Faces of Adoption" web sites. Under a federal grant, the NAC will expand its presence on the Internet with its National Adoption Internet Photolisting Service, to premier in April 2002. Correspondingly, we will enhance our web site to become a cornerstone of our Matching Services.



Last year, in all of our programs, we received **18,928** AICI inquiries.

Almost **40%** of those inquiries came through the **ALS Matching Book and the ALS Family Album.**



Information and Referral Services

The AICI Information and Referral Services, established to provide a single point of contact for adoption, foster care, and post adoption and guardianship information and services, helps to ensure that callers receive accurate information and/or referrals in a timely manner. Excluding inquiries on the ALS, our Information and Referral Services handled 11,536 requests last year. Knowing that each person has unique resources and needs, we endeavor to tailor our services to fit the individual.

Adoption Information and Referral Services

During the year we referred 1,336 families, who were ready to begin the adoption licensing process, to adoption agencies. Almost 50 percent of these families said the appearance of waiting children in the media and on the Internet instigated their calls. All referred families were recontacted by AICI Resource Workers to ensure that they were successfully connected with their referral agencies.

Eight hundred thirty-one licensed families contacted us because they saw a child in the broadcast or print media or on the Internet. We connected them to the child's worker who determined the appropriateness of the match.

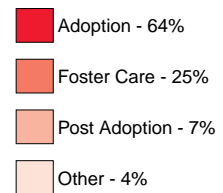
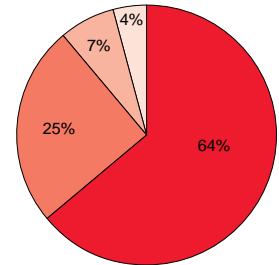
We received an additional 5,261 inquiries on a variety of adoption and adoption-related subjects. Most of the callers contacted the AICI to take the first step in learning more about waiting children. For other callers we provided assistance with questions related to adopting nonwaiting children, children from other countries, relatives, and stepchildren. Additionally, we handled calls concerning pregnancy counseling. All callers had their questions answered, were sent relevant information, and/or were referred to appropriate resources.

Foster Care Information and Referral Services

Of the 2,890 callers who requested foster care information, 1,569 were ready to begin the foster care process, and we referred them to agencies for licensing. All referred families were recontacted by AICI Resource Workers to ensure that they were successfully connected with their referral agencies. More than 50 percent of these families said agencies, friends, or relatives had led them to us. Callers with general questions about foster care had their questions answered, were sent relevant information, and/or were referred to appropriate resources.



Type of Information and Referral Services Requested



11,536 Requests for Service

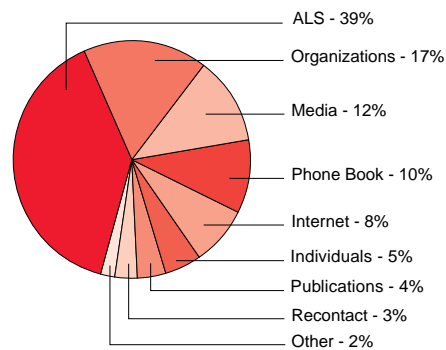
AICI referred more than 2,900 families to agencies to begin the adoption or foster care licensing process.

Post Adoption and Guardianship Information and Referral Services

Last year we provided information, referrals, and advocacy to more than 800 callers. The majority of the callers were adoptive parents requesting assistance with a variety of concerns, including adoption subsidies and accessing medical and mental health resources. We referred these families, depending on their needs, to adoption agencies, adoption preservation programs, therapists, or educational advocacy groups in their communities.

The remaining requests were from adult adoptees and birth parents seeking information about search and reunion services. We referred these callers to the Midwest Adoption Center (MAC) for assistance. The MAC is an Illinois organization providing search and reunion, as well as other adoption-related, services.

Source of All AICI Inquiries



18,928 Requests for Service

Last year, among all of our programs, we received 18,928 AICI inquiries. The ALS was responsible for the greatest number of inquiries. Another large segment came from people who learned about our services from organizations (e.g., an agency or the National Adoption Center) or individuals (e.g., a friend or relative). The print and broadcast media and the Internet elicited more inquiries than ever, partly as a result of increasing access to the Internet. Still other inquiries came from those who learned about our services from telephone directory advertising, publications, and previous contact with our office (recontact).

We are proud that so many people trusted us to answer their questions and address their concerns. And we worked hard to be worthy of their trust.

In the coming year, we renew our commitment to help fulfill the dreams and hopes of the waiting children.



**With deep gratitude we
acknowledge the organizations and
individuals who have helped make
the dreams and hopes of waiting
children come true.**



**Adoption Information Line 800.572.2390
Foster Care Information Line 800.624.KIDS
Se Habla Español
TDD Accessible**

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The AICI is administered by the Child Care Association of Illinois, an association of private child welfare agencies. The AICI is primarily funded by the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services.