

Adoptions Unlimited, Inc.

Annual Report FY2008



Every Child Deserves a Loving Family

Message from the Chairman and Executive Director



Dear Friends,

FY08 has been a successful year for Adoptions Unlimited. Sixty-six children who were registered with our Adoption Listing Service achieved their federally-mandated goal of adoption, guardianship, or other permanent living arrangement.

During FY08, we also developed innovative ways to serve foster youth. Through our multimedia project, we helped them produce online video and PowerPoint presentations about themselves, so they could better reach out to potential adoptive families. We began an intensive outreach to child welfare professionals, holding meetings throughout the state to explain how our Adoption Listing Service can help find loving families for children and youth. We also began work on a theater play, written and performed by foster care alumni, that communicates a vital lesson to workers, families, and youth still in care: that all foster youth need long-term connections in their lives.

We believe that the changes brought about by these new efforts will not only help today's foster youth, but tomorrow's as well. We thank all of our friends – including agency partners, donors, volunteers, and media associates – for their assistance in making these programs a reality. And we look forward to working with you again in the coming year.

Sincerely,

John O'Donnell

John O'Donnell
Board Chair

Marilyn Panichi

Marilyn Panichi
Executive Director

In Memory of Rose Marie Showers Love

This annual report is dedicated to the memory of Mrs. Rose Marie Showers Love, who passed away in March 2008. She served Illinois children for decades, first as an employee of the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services and then with Adoptions Unlimited. Countless children have lived happier lives as a result of her work. Her kindness, professionalism, and commitment to putting children first will not be forgotten.





AUI Mission

The mission of Adoptions Unlimited, Inc. (AUI) is to secure and support adoptive families for children in need of permanent homes. AUI is motivated by the belief that every child deserves a loving family. We use our professional expertise and technical resources to be a leader in:

- recruiting families for adoption and foster care;
- linking interested families and waiting children;
- providing both pre- and post-adoption support;
- disseminating information about emerging adoption issues to adoptive families, child welfare agencies, and the public.

AUI Programs

Adoptions Unlimited administers three programs:

1. The Adoption Information Center of Illinois (AICI), which operates:
 - the Adoption Listing Service for DCFS,
 - the Illinois Response Team for the AdoptUsKids Recruitment Campaign,
 - the Response Team for the Foster Kids Are Our Kids Campaign, and
 - the Heart Gallery of Illinois.
2. The Illinois Infant Adoption Awareness Training Program
3. The Family Connections Project

FY08 Adoption Success

Listing Service Links Zeanna with Special Family



Mr. and Mrs. Day
with Zeanna

Zeanna entered foster care at age fourteen. She is a happy, upbeat young lady who loves Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck, and all things Disney.

Because Zeanna was diagnosed with autism, her caseworkers knew they would need to find a special family to care for her. They found this family – Paulette and Keith Day – through the AICI’s Adoption Listing Service (ALS).

The ALS maintains lists of children who need adoptive families and families who want to adopt. Then it promotes matches between the two.

Paulette and Keith Day registered with the ALS when they decided to add another child to their family. They are parents who have been caring for children with special needs for more than 20 years, first as foster parents and then as adoptive parents. They have experience with challenges that range from Down syndrome to muscular dystrophy and fetal alcohol syndrome.

One day, as Mrs. Day was looking through the listings of waiting children, she came across Zeanna. “As soon as I saw her little picture, I knew this was the right girl for us,” she said.

Mrs. Day called the AICI and was put in contact with Zeanna’s caseworker, who recognized that the Day family could be a great match for Zeanna.

The Days made several trips to visit with Zeanna, and then she came to stay with them for a weekend. The other Day children got along really well with her. “The whole family loved her,” said Mrs. Day. Soon after, Zeanna came to live with the Days, and her adoption was finalized.

Mrs. Day said she was pleased with how the Adoption Listing Service helped her in the search for a child. She found it very empowering, since she didn’t have to wait for a worker to call her, but instead could be proactive. “We like that we can look over the listings of children, read about them, and see their pictures. We know our family’s chemistry and can make a good decision about which child might be a good fit.”

Today, Zeanna is enrolled in school and doing well; she’s the only one in her class who can read. And the Days are planning a vacation to Disneyland so Zeanna can meet her favorite Disney characters in person.

“Our experience with adopting Zeanna has been wonderful,” said Mrs. Day. ■

FY08 Adoption Success

“Outstanding” AICI Worker Helps Girls and Mom Connect

Lynette and Lisa* are bright young sisters who needed help. They had been in several different foster homes when the courts decided they needed a “forever family.”

In an effort to find one, their caseworker registered them with the AICI’s Adoption Listing Service (ALS). And before 60 days had passed, we helped link them with a loving adoptive mother, Ms. Raylanda O’Neal.

While the girls’ listing with the ALS was relatively straightforward, Ms. O’Neal’s route to getting connected with the girls included a little personalized help from AICI.

Ms. O’Neal had always liked the idea of adoption but wasn’t sure how to pursue it until she saw a public service announcement from the AdoptUsKids family recruitment campaign. She called the number on the TV and was connected with the Illinois Recruitment Response Team Member and AICI Resource Worker Olga Dotson-Landingham.

Ms. O’Neal said she had trouble phrasing her questions, but Olga always understood. Olga helped her sort out if she was ready for adoption, and then helped her get licensed. When the licensing process ran into bumps, Olga helped overcome them. “There are no words for Olga,” said Ms. O’Neal. “She was more than outstanding.”

When licensing was complete, Olga proposed matches with children who were listed with the ALS. That’s how Ms. O’Neal found out about Lynette and Lisa.

Ms. O’Neal called the girls’ caseworker and was pleased to learn that a one-parent family would be considered to meet the girls’ needs. When she had called workers about other children, they had been seeking families with two parents.

Lynette and Lisa’s worker liked what she learned about Ms. O’Neal and thought she could provide a good home. After a series of successful pre-placement visits, the girls have moved in with Ms. O’Neal.

Now it’s simply a matter of waiting on court dates and paperwork for the adoption to become a reality.

Ms. O’Neal said she and the girls are happy. She’s working to give them opportunities they’ve wished for, such as dancing and gymnastics lessons. The family recently celebrated six months of living together by having a pizza party that included many of their extended family members.

Ms. O’Neal said she would recommend AICI’s services to anyone, especially if they get to work with Olga, who not only provided lots of expertise but personal support when things became difficult or frustrating. “She was with me every step of the way, through all the joys and the tears.” ■



Ms. Raylanda O’Neal

* not their real names

The Adoption Information Center of Illinois



Through the Adoption Information Center of Illinois, we create adoption awareness, list and match children and adoptive families, and provide information and referrals.

In FY08, the AICI served 4,579 children and families. We answered 4,209 inquiries

from families who wanted to know more about individual waiting children, adoption, foster care, or post-adoption/guardianship services.

The AICI administers four programs: the Adoption Listing Service, the Illinois Response Team for the AdoptUsKids national recruitment campaign, the Response Team for the “Foster Kids Are Our Kids” Illinois campaign, and the Heart Gallery of Illinois.

Adoption Listing Service

We have operated the Adoption Listing Service for the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) since 1981. Through the service, we work with agencies to facilitate waiting child adoptions and provide information and referrals to families who want to foster or adopt.

Facilitating Waiting Child Adoptions

The AICI maintains listings of children who are waiting to be adopted. In FY08, we completed, maintained, and reviewed listings for 370 children and families registered with the service. We received 572 inquiries from licensed families wishing to adopt children featured in the media or the

Adoption Listing Service book. Sixty-six foster children registered with the service achieved one of their permanency goals through adoption, guardianship, or reunification with birth parents.

In FY08, we pioneered a program that uses video interviews and PowerPoint presentations of waiting youth to help recruit adoptive families for them. These materials are posted on our web site. Also in FY08:

- We listed children on our AICI web site and the national AdoptUsKids web site.
- Each quarter, we distributed 700 copies of our photolisting book, which profiles waiting children, and distributed the book to ALS-registered, licensed families.
- We suggested 109 matches between waiting children and licensed families.
- We promoted adoption in 26 community newspapers across the state.
- We made more than 4,000 supportive calls to families and workers regarding child inquiries and possible adoptive matches.

We also began an intensive outreach program to educate caseworkers about the listing service and the ways it can help them place children with adoptive families. AICI staff traveled to agency sites across the state to perform these training sessions.

Information and Referrals

An integral part of the Adoption Listing Service is answering families’ questions about adoption, foster care, and post-adoption/guardianship services. In FY08, we responded to 3,260 requests for assistance in these areas, which came in through our toll-

free telephone line, the Internet, face-to-face meetings, and other sources. We connected 374 families to agencies for adoption or foster care licensing, and we made more than 2,600 supportive calls to these families to ensure the licensing process was moving forward and their needs were being met.

Recruitment Response Team

For the fifth year, DCFS designated AICI to serve as the Illinois Response Team for the AdoptUsKids national family recruitment campaign. AdoptUsKids is managed by the Adoption Exchange Association through a cooperative agreement with the Children's Bureau of the Administration for Children and Families of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

During FY08, 603 Illinois families responded to the campaign's public service announcements, which were created by the Ad Council and appeared in English and Spanish. For each inquiry, our bilingual resource workers contacted the family to answer their questions and connect them with an agency. We also stayed in touch with them on a regular basis to confirm their needs were met.

In addition, for FY08, we responded to blog questions posted on the Adopt-

UsKids web site, to help ensure families received correct information about adoption and foster care in Illinois.

'Foster Kids Are Our Kids' Campaign

For the third year, AICI responded to callers from the "Foster Kids Are Our Kids" social marketing campaign, which is conducted in partnership with Voices for Illinois Children and WGN-TV. The campaign's goal is to encourage community members to volunteer at private child welfare agencies, make donations, and devise other creative ways to help the children and families in the foster care system. WGN-TV promotes this message through an ongoing series of public service announcements.

As a result of this effort, we received 529 inquiries and linked each Illinois caller with an agency in his or her community. The agency and caller then worked together to determine the best way the caller could become involved with the agency's services.

In FY08, we implemented a zip code matching database that streamlines the linking of callers and local agencies. This new matching system also helps ensure that agencies receive an equitable distribution of the volunteers who step forward.



The Adoption Information Center of Illinois has been helping to connect children with loving adoptive families for more than 27 years.

Heart Gallery of Illinois

FY08 marked our third year of recruiting families for waiting children through the Heart Gallery of Illinois. For this project, professional photographers take pictures of waiting children, and the images are displayed at public venues across the state.

In FY08, the Heart Gallery was displayed at Chicago's Harold Washington Library during National Adoption Month. Alpha Kappa Psi fraternity featured the gallery at DePaul University and, for the second year, donated the proceeds of a charity fashion show to the gallery. The photos also attracted interest while on display in the lobby of AICI's offices in December 2007. During the year, more than 500 people expressed an interest in adoption as a result of Heart Gallery displays.

We administer the gallery in partnership with DCFS, photographers, volunteers, and the Office of Illinois Lt. Governor, now Governor, Pat Quinn. The gallery is entirely supported by private funds. ■



In FY08, the Heart Gallery was displayed at several locations, including the lobby of our offices at 120 W. Madison (above).

Infant Adoption Awareness Training Program

For the third year, Spaulding for Children of Michigan chose Adoptions Unlimited to administer the Infant Adoption Awareness Training Program (IAATP) in Illinois.

The program targets health care and other professionals who work with women who have unplanned pregnancies. It teaches them to present adoption as an option in an objective, non-directive way. In FY08, we coordinated the training of 779 professionals through our eight partner adoption agencies. This number vastly exceeded our target for the year.

One of the highlights of FY08 was the training of 237 Chicago Public School nurses at four locations around the city on

April 11, 2008. Chicago Public Schools Nurse Manager Onna Ford-Kendrick helped coordinate the training and said it was very well received.

"It really engaged the participants," said Ms. Ford-Kendrick. "They enjoyed the interactive aspects and the role playing. When they were playing the pregnant mother, they had to examine how they really felt about adoption themselves. Some of them hadn't considered this before."

"The next day, a girl who was pregnant came to talk to one of the nurses, and the nurse was able to apply some of the lessons she'd just learned," said Ms. Ford-Kendrick. "So the training came in handy right away." ■



Chicago Public Schools
Nurse Manager
Onna Ford-Kendrick

Family Connections Project

FY08 marked the third year of our work on the Family Connections Project (FCP), a five-year cooperative agreement with the Children's Bureau/Administration for Children and Families/US Department of Health and Human Services. The project's goal is to help foster youth achieve permanency while maintaining connections to the important people in their lives.

In the first two years, FCP served youth referred from DCFS and Lutheran Social Services of Illinois. In FY08, we began working with the child welfare agency Hull House as well. Our number of referrals increased, and by year end, we were serving 54 youth.

Some project youth entered college last year, and we created our "Care Package Project." Monthly, the youth in college receive helpful items and notes from staff. This endeavor is totally supported by AUI staff and Chicago employees of Mercer.

In FY08, we continued to train youth, parents, and workers on the importance of maintaining past connections while achieving permanency. At a grantees meeting in Dallas, we distributed the training curriculum that we developed for attorneys and judges, so other grantees could benefit from what we'd learned.

We continued to distribute our "Family Connections" DVD to workers and families. This educational film, produced last year, features adoptive families who maintain contact with birth families and foster care alumni who describe the importance of maintaining their relationships with birth family members. We've sent more than 300 copies of the DVD throughout the US.



The Family Connections Project helps foster youth remain connected to birth siblings and other significant people in their lives.

FCP began work with Chicago-based Still Point Theatre Collective to create a theater troupe of foster care alumni. These youth are writing their stories to be compiled into an original play describing their journey through foster care. We believe the play will have a strong impact on workers, families, and the general public, and it will help these parties realize the importance of helping foster youth maintain their significant connections.

With great sadness, we share the news that FCP Assistant Project Director Rose Love passed away in March 2008. It was a major loss to the project and to Adoptions Unlimited. This annual report is dedicated to her (see page 2).

In June 2008, we welcomed Mr. Darryl Clayton as the new Assistant Project Director. He brings extensive child welfare experience, especially in working with teens and young adults. He has been a co-trainer of the youth curriculum since year one. ■

Statement of Revenue/Support and Expenses for Year Ended June 30, 2008

Revenue/Support

Illinois Department of Children and Family Services' Grants and Contracts	\$ 905,285
Infant Adoption Awareness Training Program (IAATP) No Cost Extension	4,328
Infant Adoption Awareness Training Program (IAATP) State Replication	169,846
U.S. Department of Health & Human Services Family Connections Project	251,862
Adoption Exchange Association, Inc. AdoptUsKids	39,402
Donations	66,982
Interest Income	+ 28,986
Total Revenue/Support	\$ 1,466,691

Expenses

Program Services	
IAATP No Cost Extension	\$ 4,328
IAATP State Replication	157,283
Adoption Exchange Association, Inc./ AdoptUsKids contract	40,275
Family Connections Project	300,222
Adoption Listing Services	+ 769,258
	1,271,366
Management and General	+ 157,546
Total Expenses	\$ 1,428,912

Net assets

Beginning of year	139,248
Increase in net assets	+ 37,779
End of year	\$ 177,027

Complete financial statements for fiscal year ended June 30, 2008 are available upon request by writing Adoptions Unlimited, Inc.



Note that the IAATP, AdoptUsKids, and Family Connections Project operate on a federal fiscal year, rather than the state fiscal year shown here. As a result, their total revenue and expenses reflect three months of one federal fiscal year and nine months of another federal fiscal year.

Adoptions Unlimited Staff FY2008

Marilyn Panichi, *Executive Director*
 DeAudrey Davis, *AICI Director*
 Margaret Burke, *Grants Director*
 Greta Tafat, *Finance Manager*
 Dawn Dixon, *Resource Manager*

Aminah Armour, *Information Services Assistant*
 Sandra Casillas, *Resource Assistant*
 Darryl Clayton, *FCP Assistant Project Director*
 Olga Dotson-Landingham, *Resource Worker*
 Penelope Ford, *Permanency Specialist*
 Darryl Harvey, *FCP Mentor Coordinator*

Mark Lichodziejewski, *Communications Coordinator*
 Kimberly Mathis, *Reception Support Assistant*
 Kim Parker, *Recruitment Coordinator*
 Nydia Sanchez, *Resource Worker*
 Phyllis Tidwell, *AUI Executive Assistant*
 Joanne Zolomij, *IAATP Assistant Project Director*

Adoptions Unlimited Board FY2008

Merri Dee
AUI Chair Emerita

*Former Director, WGN-TV Community Relations;
President & CEO, Merri Dee Communications*

John M. O'Donnell, Ph.D.
AUI Chair

*Professor (Retired), University of Illinois;
Child Welfare Consultant*

Leona Green
AUI Vice-Chair

*Associate Professor of Law, Northern
Illinois University; Adoptive Parent*

Susan Osborne
AUI Secretary
*Foster Parent
Early Childhood Educator*

Cindy Davenport
AUI Treasurer
*General Manager,
C & T Concrete*

Nadine Johnson
*First Midwest Bank
Cash Manager*

Lynn Goffinet
*Retired Vice-President and
Director of Adoptions,
Lutheran Social Services of Illinois*

Adoptions Unlimited Contributions FY2008

\$1,000+

Alpha Kappa Psi - Tau Chi Chapter
for Heart Gallery of Illinois
Anonymous
Harry E. DeFreese Foundation
Sedia Mathis
for Heart Gallery of Illinois
Dr. and Mrs. John O'Donnell
Edgar Retzlaff

\$500+

Bruce and Susan Osborne
Employees of Mercer's Chicago office
Marilyn Panichi

\$200+

Dave and Alice Auer
in Memory of Margaret Daniels
Bloomingdale's
Rev. and Mrs. Robert Burke
James Petrone
Barbara Weiner

\$100+

Reuben Casillas
C & T Concrete
Mahyar Izadi
Randy Nixon
Joanne Zolomij

Up to \$100

Myrna Adams
Anita Alms
Lisa Arger
Themis Askounis

Mary Augello
Antonia Barrera
Ed Bergstrom
Cheryl Breslin
Vince and Debra Bridgeforth
Kim Clancy
Sara Curry
Linda Daehler
Cindy Davenport
Edward Ellis
Andrew and Karen Finn
Dorothy Giles
Hilda Gomez
Robert Gragnani
Jeanne Howard
Nadine Johnson
Jody Konopinski
Steve Kuhn and Cynthia Hammond
*for the Heart Gallery
in Honor of Stuart and Mary Kubn*
Dianna Lugo
Martin Financial Management
Anna Margellos
Luisa Medrano
Diane Micenko
Cindy Montry
Connie Norman
Laura O'Rourke
Kathy Osberger
Haremia Parry
Yordanka Pankova
Mary Ann Potenzo
Beth Ragsdale
Martha Rode
Sylvia Ruiz

Norberto Salgado
Connie Steinke
Jessica Streightiff
Yolanda Torrez
Nancy Tunberg
Chris Wilson
Linda Williger
Katie Wilcox

**Donations
Received in Memory
of Rose Love**

Rev. and Mrs. Robert Burke
*for the Family Connections
Theater Project*
Marilyn Panichi
Joanne Zolomij
*for the Family Connections
Theater Project*
Jeanne Howard



Rose Love

Adoptions Unlimited, Inc.

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Web: www.adoptionsunlimitedinc.org

Email: info@adoptionsunlimitedinc.org

Se Habla Español

Business Hours:

Weekdays: 8:30 AM to 5:00 PM

Adoption and Foster Care Information Line:

800-572-2390

TDD/TTY: 800-401-7740

Web: www.adoptinfo-il.org

Email: aici@adoptinfo-il.org

Adoptions Unlimited

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The Adoption Information Center of Illinois,

which operates: Adoption Listing Service for DCFS, the Illinois Response Team for the AdoptUsKids Recruitment Campaign, the Response Team for the Foster Kids Are Our Kids Campaign, and the Heart Gallery of Illinois

The Illinois Infant Adoption Awareness Training Program

The Family Connections Project