

DHS, Council on Black Minnesotans and partners promote adoption

Written by

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During Black History Month, February, the Minnesota Department of Human Services, the Council on Black Minnesotans, and several nonprofit and community organizations are working together to encourage families to adopt children waiting in the foster care system, particularly African-American children who are disproportionately represented in the child welfare system.

Throughout February adoption-specific events include:

The Minnesota Heart Gallery is featuring foster children in need of adoptive families in its large lobby display at the East Side Neighborhood Services Building, 1700 Second St. NE, Minneapolis. The Heart Gallery is a community outreach program of Ampersand Families, which raises awareness about older youth waiting in the foster care system and helps recruit adoptive families for these youth.

Hennepin County, HOPE Adoption and Family Services, and MN ADOPT adoption experts will present on foster care and adoption, and staff an information table Feb. 22 at the Greater Friendship Missionary Baptist Church's Empowerment through Education's Ninth Annual African Heritage Month Observance in Minneapolis. More information is on the church's website.

The MN ADOPT website is featuring African-American youth and sibling groups waiting for adoptive families. MN ADOPT, an adoption service array provided by the Minnesota Adoption Resource Network under grant contract with the Minnesota Department of Human Services, manages the State Adoption Exchange and information on Minnesota's waiting children. It also supports and sustains families who adopt these children by providing resources and referrals.

MN ADOPT is also working with the Star Tribune on its monthly "waiting child" feature, with KSTP-TV on its "Thursday's Child" weekly feature and with KMOJ radio to promote adoption of children from the foster care system

The Minnesota Department of Human Services is contacting county social service directors to urge them to engage communities in focusing on adoption during Black History Month.

As of Jan. 1, 2014, 140—approximately 30 percent—of the 467 children in the foster care system waiting to be adopted immediately are African American. Only 95—18 percent—of the 524 children adopted from the foster care system in 2012 were African American.

"All children need safe, stable, loving homes to thrive," said Human Services Commissioner Lucinda Jesson. "During Black History Month, we are celebrating the African-American families who have adopted and encouraging other families to consider adoption. We, along with our community partners, are here to provide support before, during and after adoption."

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Added Edward McDonald, executive director of the Council on Black Minnesotans, "As we celebrate the rich history of African-Americans during the month of February, let us also use the month to begin doubling our efforts for the remainder of the year encouraging more African-American families to adopt and provide foster care for children who are wards of the state, especially the disproportionate number of African-American children. The greatest historical remembrance an African-American child, or any child, can have is one that is highlighted by the love and care of a family."

The Council on Black Minnesotans, said McDonald, encourages people throughout the state to learn more about African-American culture and accomplishments at these Black History Month events listed on the council's website:

- "History HiJinx: Black History Month," Minnesota History Center, St. Paul, Feb. 1 to 23 select dates
- "The Ballad of Emmett Till," Penumbra Theatre, Minneapolis, Feb. 6 to March 2 select dates
- "The Racial Divide during the Harlem Renaissance," Open Book, Minneapolis, Feb. 18
- "Miss Anne in Harlem: The White Women of the Black Renaissance" reading and book signing by Carla Kaplan, Common Good Books, St. Paul, Feb. 19
- "Renewing Hope in the Promise of Minnesota's Youth," Youthprise, Minneapolis, Feb. 26 to 27

For more information about adopting:

Call the county social service agency or one of the licensed, private adoption agencies under contract with the state to provide adoption services: Ampersand Families, Bethany Christian Services, Children's Home Society of Minnesota, Family Focus, HOPE Adoption and Family Services International, Kindred Family Services, Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota and North Homes. Counties and private adoption agencies under contract with DHS do not charge fees to parents adopting children under state guardianship.

Visit the MN ADOPT website at www.mnadopt.org .