

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **Families and Individuals Recognized at Adoption Celebration**

BISMARCK, N.D. – Stitch by stitch, families are created much like a hand-made quilt. This year's Adoption Celebration 2010, "*Every Stitch Tells a Story*," recognized over a dozen individuals including adoptive families, birth parents, children, advocates, and others for their exemplary support giving children permanent loving homes through adoptions. The event, sponsored by the N.D. Department of Human Services and licensed child placing agencies, was held Nov. 6, 2010, at St. John's Lutheran Church in Fargo.

Honorees included two families who received the *2010 Foster Care Adoptive Family Award*: **Tim and Tana Johnson** of **Dickinson**, and **Cameron and Danielle Mickelson** of **Rolla**. The Johnsons are the proud parents of two children. A son joined their family through adoption. They are committed to maintaining family connections with their adopted son's biological family.

The Mickelsons have always desired a large family. After their four children began elementary school, the Mickelsons explored the idea of further expanding their family through adoption. In December 2009, they were matched with a sibling group of four children, and in July 2010 the adoption became official.

**Dennis Bier and Wendy Cater** of **Fargo** received the *Multicultural Award* for their efforts to nurture the cultural heritage of their three children who were born in China. The Bier Cater family adopted a daughter in 2007, a son in 2008, and another son in 2010. They have worked hard to ensure their children's heritage by incorporating traditions into their everyday life. The family continues to travel to China so their children can experience positive reflections of their heritage.

Brothers **Gordon and Jordan Machipiness Fandrck** of the **Belcourt** area received the *Youth Excellence Award*, which is presented to young adults formerly in foster care who have excelled and are contributing to their communities. The brothers were adopted by their foster parents. After high school, Gordon joined the North Dakota Army National Guard and recently returned from Kosovo. He would like to earn a degree in music and one day open a music store. Jordan is a member of the United States Army and is currently serving in Afghanistan. He earned a bachelor's degree in biology while serving in the military and will be applying to attend medical school after he completes his military service.

Four individuals were honored with the *Adoption Advocate Award* for their dedicated work on behalf of children and families.

**Pat Doty** of **Fargo** is an adoptive parent and a local adoption advocate. She has been employed by Garass Law firm for 37 years and has assisted in the preparation of legal documents related to about 450 adoptions.

**Michele Lovehaug, MSW**, of **Fargo** has worked with youth in foster care since 1999. She specializes in working with traumatized youth, children and families in the foster care/adopt system, children with behavioral difficulties, depression and anxiety; and couples who struggle with infertility.

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**Charles Pospishil** of **Minot** is the third recipient of the *Adoption Advocate Award*. Pospishil is a child and adolescent counselor with the Department of Human Services' North Central Human Service Center in Minot. He also provides clinical services to children in nearby counties including outreach services to the Fort Berthold Reservation and other rural areas.

**Naomi Erkenbrack** of **Fargo** is a therapist who works primarily with children and families on attachment issues. She coaches parents in establishing stronger attachments with their children to help them overcome traumatic experiences.

In addition to the state awards, **Ron and Billie Jo Nelson** of **West Fargo** and **Paul and Leila Ptacek** of **Wyndmere** were also recognized for the *2010 Angels in Adoption Award*. The Nelsons were nominated by Congressman Earl Pomeroy, and the Ptaceks were nominated by Senators Kent Conrad and Byron Dorgan. Both families received the award from the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute.

Last year, 267 adoptions took place in North Dakota. Of the adopted children, 98 had been in foster care prior to adoption; 12 were from foreign countries; 42 infants were voluntarily relinquished for adoption to a private licensed child placing agency; and 115 were adopted by their stepparents.

Families and individuals interested in exploring adoption can contact one of the following licensed child placement agencies in North Dakota: Adults Adopting Special Kids (AASK), Catholic Charities ND, Lutheran Social Services of ND, The Village Family Service Center, Christian Family Life Services, God's Children Adoption Agency, Inc., LDS Family Services, PATH ND, Permanent Family Resource Center, and All About U Adoptions. Agency information is online at [www.nd.gov/dhs/services/childfamily/adoption/agencies.html](http://www.nd.gov/dhs/services/childfamily/adoption/agencies.html). Placement agencies provide services including family recruitment, preparation and assessment, child preparation and placement, and post-placement support.

For adoption and foster care information, contact the Department of Human Services' Children and Family Services Division at 701-328-2316, 1-800-245-3736, e-mail [dhscfs@nd.gov](mailto:dhscfs@nd.gov), or visit [www.nd.gov/dhs/services/childfamily/adoption](http://www.nd.gov/dhs/services/childfamily/adoption).

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