

NEWS from the North Dakota Department of Human Services 600 East Boulevard Avenue, Bismarck ND 58505

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Families and Individuals Recognized at Adoption Celebration

BISMARCK, N.D. – Over a dozen individuals including adoptive families, birth parents, children, advocates, and others were recognized on Saturday, Oct. 29, 2011, during the 2011 Adoption Celebration held at the First Evangelical Free Church in Bismarck. The N.D. Department of Human Services and licensed child placing agencies co-hosted the event to present recognition awards and to remind people about the impact adoption has on children who need permanent loving homes.

Honorees included two families who received the *North Dakota Foster Care Adoptive Family Award*: **Denise Folston and Greg (Eddie) Edmundson of Bismarck**, and **Emmanuel and Amy Nojang of Fargo**.

The Folston Edmundson family adopted two children from foster care in the last year and a half. The children have thrived because of the daily structure, consistency, love, and nurturing they receive. Denise and Eddie are strong advocates for their sons and are committed to preserving their children's heritage.

The Nojangs have always desired to have a family. They started the process by becoming a licensed foster care provider. Three years ago they adopted four children, including twins, who are now all under the age of five. A sibling to their children was placed with another adoptive family, but the Nojangs consider her a part of their family. They are committed to keeping the siblings connected through open communication with her adoptive family.

Mike and Stacy Sweeney of Williston received the *Multicultural Award* for their efforts to nurture the cultural heritage of five children they adopted from Ethiopia in 2009 and 2010. The Sweeneys are also parents to biological triplets and another child adopted from foster care. The family continues to travel to Ethiopia to participate in mission work and other volunteer endeavors.

Kalob How of Fargo received the *Youth Excellence Award*, which is presented to young adults formerly in foster care who have excelled and are contributing to their communities. How was adopted in 2009 after spending three years in foster care. This highly motivated teenager is in the ninth grade and has excellent leadership skills. When he turned 14, he aggressively pursued a job and continues to balance both work and school.

Jammy and Leslie Ryckman of Fargo, and birth mother **Becky Brown of Mandan** shared the *2011 Adoption Triad Award* for maintaining an ongoing, open relationship following their son's adoption as an infant. The Ryckmans knew they wanted an open adoption, and Becky selected them to raise her child. The parents stay in touch with one another.

Event organizers also honored three individuals with the *Adoption Advocate Award* for their dedicated work on behalf of children and families.

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Adoption Award Recipients Announced – page 2

Linda Jaeger of Argusville is a regional supervisor at the Department of Human Services' Southeast Human Service Center in Fargo. She has over 25 years of experience in child welfare and adoption. Jaeger is also a trainer for the Infant Adoption Training Initiative educating nurses, school counselors, county social workers, and other professionals on infant adoptions.

Charley Joyce of Bismarck has been a licensed social worker for 35 years. He is the co-author of a book titled "Behavior with a Purpose," and is a contributing author to "Assessing Youth Behavior." On a part-time basis, he teaches at the University of North Dakota in the Master of Social Work program and develops online and DVD training through the Foster Parent College in Eugene, OR. Joyce also provides annual training opportunities for foster-adopt parents and child welfare professionals.

Berta Soper of Webster was also honored with the *Adoption Advocate Award*. Soper has been closely involved in adoption work for over 40 years. She and her husband, Ron, adopted three children from foster care in 2001 and 2002, and are now proud grandparents of three grandchildren. Before retiring in 2010, she was an Adults Adopting Special Kids worker with PATH ND.

In addition to the state awards, **Bill and Julie Jahner of Hettinger, Tim and Tana Johnson of Dickinson, and Judge Joel Medd of Grand Forks** were also recognized for the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute's *2011 Angels in Adoption Award*. The Jahners were nominated by Congressman Rick Berg, the Johnsons were nominated by Senator Kent Conrad, and Judge Medd was nominated by Senator John Hoeven.

Last year, 285 adoptions took place in North Dakota. Of the adopted children, 108 had been in foster care prior to adoption; 14 were from foreign countries; 33 infants were voluntarily relinquished for adoption through a private licensed child placing agency; and 130 were adopted by their stepparents.

Families and individuals interested in exploring adoption can contact one of the following licensed child placing 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, and All About U Adoptions. Agency information is online at 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, toll-free 1-800-245-3736, ND Relay TTY 1-800-366-6888, e-mail dhsdfs@nd.gov, or visit www.nd.gov/dhs/services/childfamily/adoption.

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