

**EMBARGOED UNTIL
3 P.M., November 9, 2006**

Contacts: Julie Hoffman, Adoption Services Administrator, Children and Family Services Division, N.D. Dept. of Human Services, 701-391-4692 or 701-328-4805; Leanne Johnson, AASK Director, Catholic Charities ND, 701-356-7986, or Heather Steffl, Public Information Officer, N.D. Dept. of Human Services, 701-328-4933 or 701-527-7445.

Individuals Honored at Adoption Celebration

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Human Services presented awards to 13 individuals at the 2006 Adoption Celebration held from 3 to 5 p.m. today at the Metropolitan Baptist Church in Fargo. North Dakota Licensed Child Placing Agencies and the department co-hosted the joyful event to recognize exemplary individuals, to raise awareness about adoption and foster care, and to highlight North Dakota foster children who are waiting to be adopted.

“Foster and adoptive families truly deserve recognition and our ongoing support because of their extraordinary commitment to children,” said department adoption services administrator Julie Hoffman.

According to Hoffman, 119 children were adopted from the public foster care system in North Dakota last year, and about a dozen foster children are currently ready for adoption, but do not have identified adoptive families. There is a need, she said, for more foster and adoptive families.

Event honorees included **Greg and Jenn Knopp of Wildrose, N.D.** The Knopps received the *2006 Special Needs Adoptive Family of the Year Award*. They have been providing foster care in Williams County for several years and adopted two foster children through the Adults Adopting Special Kids (AASK) Program. The Knopps have devoted themselves to helping their sons achieve their potential.

John and Rona Pfund of Fargo, N.D., and birth mothers Megan and Jenna shared the *Adoption Triad Award* in recognition of their efforts to maintain an ongoing, open relationship following the adoption of their children as infants.

Philip and Laurie Kraemer of Grand Forks, N.D., received the *Multicultural Family Award* honoring international adoptions. The Kraemer’s and their five biological children are dedicated to learning about the culture of their adopted daughter who was born in China. The family is currently in the process of adopting another child from China.

Andrew Baker of Ray, N.D. received the *Adopted Youth Excellence Award*, which is presented to former foster children who excel personally, academically, and socially, and also contribute to their communities.

- MORE -

Individuals Honored at Adoption Celebration – page 2

To recognize their dedicated work on behalf of children and families, event organizers presented the *Adoption Advocate Award* to **Bill Willis**, a social worker at **Cass County** Social Services, and **Laurie Gotvaslee**, the regional supervisor of children and family services at the department's North Central Human Service Center in **Minot**.

Adoptive parents **David and Deana Overmoe**, of **Hawley, M.N.**, received a *Special Recognition Award* for the amazing way they parented a special infant from North Dakota during her short 11 months of life.

In addition, organizers acknowledged **Patrick and Michelle Beyer** of **Fargo, N.D.**, who earlier this year received the *2006 Angels in Adoption Award* from the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute. Congressman Earl Pomeroy nominated the Beyers, who have been foster parents for PATH ND for seven years.

Families and individuals interested in exploring adoption can contact the AASK Program, which provides adoption services exclusively for children in the foster care system, or one of the other state-licensed child-placement agencies in North Dakota. AASK Program information is online at www.catholiccharitiesnd.org/AASK.htm. Placement agencies provide a variety of services including family recruitment, preparation and assessment; child preparation and placement; and post-placement supportive services.

Adoption information is available on the Department's Children and Family Services Division Web site at www.nd.gov/humanservices/services/childfamily/adoption/ or by calling 701-328-2316, or 1-800-245-3736, or e-mailing dhscfs@nd.gov.

The Frank O. Becker Endowment Fund, a component of the North Dakota Community Foundation, and REACH, a program of PATH (Professional Association of Treatment Homes) that focuses on rural adoption recruitment, provided the funding for the celebration.

###