



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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Helping children and youth find their forever families

Adoption is an option for over 8,000 children and youth in Ontario

TORONTO – The Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies (OACAS) and Ontario's Children's Aid Societies are spreading the message throughout Adoption Awareness Month, that all children and youth deserve to have forever families and lifelong connections they can count on.

What is a forever family? It's a lifelong, permanent connection to an adult through adoption, legal custody, kinship care (care by a relative or someone known to the child), or customary care. Having this connection is extremely important as it provides an adult to turn to through all of life's celebrations and challenges, it's a safe place to come home to, and a sense of stability all of which are so important to the development of a child. Last year, more than 830 children were connected to their forever family by adoption through the public system. Over 3,000 children found permanency through legal custody, adoption, kinship care, or customary care.

There are more than 8,000 children and youth in the care of Ontario's Children's Aid Societies who are looking for their forever family. The majority of these children and youth are between the ages of 13 and 18, yet they represent a small percentage of those being adopted. Last year, children between 13 and 18 represented 61% of the 8,000 children needing permanent families, yet only 3.6% of these children were adopted through Ontario's public adoption system. Regardless of their age or situation, all of these children need a permanent connection. To help support these children and youth, the government of Ontario announced subsidies to families who adopt or become legal custodians to sibling groups, and/or youth over the age of ten years in June. Visit <http://bit.ly/SVRE9z> to read more about the announcement.

Some of the children needing forever families are siblings looking to stay together. For Farion and Tracy they knew they wanted to grow their family but didn't know how special the connection to their children would be. "Although we are grateful to have each other, somehow we felt that something was missing from our lives. Like a puzzle that isn't quite complete without the last piece. That is until we met siblings Katie and Barry."

"Having these children to share our lives with is such a great gift. At the end of the day we want our children to know that they will always have a place where they feel safe and loved. We've found the piece that was missing from our puzzle," said Farion and Tracy.

Other children needing forever families are children with special needs. For Becky and Mitchell*, adoption came as an unexpected surprise. "One of the students in a special needs class I came to work at was living in a foster home, the same home he had been living in since he was a year old. When the placement suddenly became disrupted he was abruptly moved to a new home, and his world turned

upside down. David returned to school after this a very scared and confused little boy. He would make comments about just wanting a family to love him, and didn't want to go "home". Mitchell and I knew David had to be a part of our family."

"Later we met Sam who has cerebral palsy. Of course, Mitchell and I couldn't resist falling for Sam as well, and we started making inquiries about adopting him in the fall of that year. We wouldn't change the path that let us to be the parents of these amazing people. They are happy, healthy, secure, and loved with us, and that makes all the difference to them and us."

Help find forever families for Ontario's children and youth. Visit www.useyourvoice.ca to find your local Children's Aid and more information on adopting through Ontario's public adoption system.

**Names have been changed to protect privacy*

- 30 -

About the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies: OACAS is the trusted voice in child welfare in Ontario. Since 1912, OACAS has represented Ontario's Children's Aid Societies in Ontario and provided service in the areas of government relations, communications, information management, education and training to advocate for the protection and well-being of children.

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Download the public awareness kit - <http://www.oacas.org/newsroom/publicawarenesskit/index.htm>