

and I don't get away as much because it is hard to find quality caregivers," Thelma explains. Because of their commitment to family, the Conklins have witnessed emotional and physical changes in their children. Thelma says, "What things we had the power to change, we changed and they have mastered. What could not physically change has not."

Thelma encourages other families to follow through on their desire to adopt or parent a child. "If you feel called to adoption, really pursue it, advocate for yourself. If a worker is not looking for you enough, advocate for yourself," she advises.

Melanie Marciano, Wendy's Wonderful Kids Recruiter



Executive Director's Message

For thirty-seven years Children Awaiting Parents has advocated on behalf of foster children free for adoption and waiting for families. If you are reading this newsletter, then you have in some way been connected with these children.

- Perhaps you are an adoptive parent or child.
- Perhaps you are involved in child welfare in this country
- Perhaps you just want to help connect the thousands of waiting children with waiting families.

Whatever your involvement is, WE THANK YOU!

Over the years, this organization has served children and families in different ways. When there is a need for national advocacy, we are there. We assisted in crafting local and federal legislation supporting adoption and foster care. We were the first national photolisting of waiting children. This practice has been duplicated successfully by states, agencies and others in an effort to make these children visible. Like most nonprofit organizations we dream about the day that our services are no longer needed. We envision days when the hundreds of thousands of children free for adoption not only have homes but those becoming free wait a short time in the system. As we all know, those days are not upon us. Children continue to wait, families continue to wait, and the system and workers continue to deal with the reality of too many children and often competing priorities.

Children Awaiting Parents has an incredible and dedicated staff. I am certain that your contact with this organization has left you with that same impression. We know you have many demands on your time and resources. Children Awaiting Parents receives no federal dollars to do our work. We do it with the help of people like you. Again, we thank you for your generous support and for sharing our vision.

Mark Soule, Executive Director



595 Blossom Road, Suite 306
Rochester, NY 14610

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A Family's Love

Thelma and Michael Conklin say their "plain parenting" and commitment to their five adopted children and two birth children allow each child to blossom and far exceed initial expectations.

The Conklins connected with Teddy, whose adoption was finalized in June of 2007, through the Children Awaiting Parents and AdoptUsKids websites. Children Awaiting Parents is a national adoption photolisting based in Rochester, NY.

Adoption workers in Teddy's home state of Florida originally believed him to be in far worse physical condition than he actually was. After moving in with the Conklins in Pennsylvania, his health and abilities improved dramatically. The Conklins invested their energy in Teddy, now 3 years old, and made sure all his medical needs were met. They soon realized that all Teddy needed to thrive was a family who could love and advocate for him. As his family, they are committed to providing permanence and advocating for the services necessary to help him reach his full potential.

Since being adopted, Teddy has learned 30 words in sign language with the help of intensive physical and sign language therapy. "It's like he's a totally new little boy," Thelma says. Teddy's future achievement is uncertain, but the Conklins are hopeful and believe that he will one day be able to communicate fluently through sign language or actually speak. "We love him dearly and he has come a long way," says his mother.

Thelma says adoption came naturally to them, "We never understood why some people were so shocked," said Thelma. The Conklins get tired of hearing "Oh my!", "You've got your hands full" or "You're such a saint". Thelma responds, "No, I'm a mother, I enjoy being a parent. If people ask 'why would you want to adopt again? You already have seven!' I say, because there are more. There is a desperate need for good, loving, committed parents."

Through adoption, the Conklin family has become multiracial with four Caucasian members and five African-American family members. Thelma says the siblings view each other as family, not

in terms of "birth" or "adopted". The children have yet to experience difficulty with racial issues. "When we said, your new sibling is black, our children asked 'what does that mean?', Why is that an issue?," Thelma tells CAP. She is prepared for the day when her children realize they are black and their parents are white, but so far the entire family has adjusted smoothly to all the new aspects of adding children to the family. Teddy has far surpassed expectations in interaction with the other children in the home and he loves to play with them.



Teddy Conklin

Caring for children with disabilities never scared the Conklins, who are willing to advocate for their children's needs. However, they acknowledge that it isn't all easy. The Conklin children range from having mild mental retardation and fetal alcohol syndrome to being highly gifted. One of their children is in the process of dealing with Reactive Attachment Disorder and emotional struggles. Another was described as "having no brain" but is now able to run and interact with others. Another infant experienced drug withdrawal for months when the Conklins first cared for him, yet they persevered, held him constantly and didn't let him cry. One day he woke up and it was over. Thelma says the family deals with issues day by day, moving forward, and accessing counseling or services when needed, "There's no 'What if we didn't'".

Having a large, diverse family prompted the Conklin parents to make changes and adapt to the special needs of their children. "We changed our priorities; I'm a stay at home mom. My husband

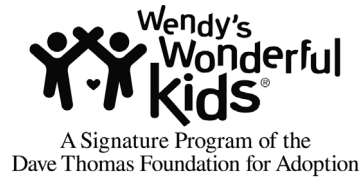
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Meet One of Our Waiting Children



Photographer - Jocelyn Mesiti & Laura Mesiti

Rasheema is a vivacious teen with an outgoing personality! She makes friends easily and enjoys being involved in many activities. Rasheema loves sports, especially track and basketball and is also fond of singing in the school choir. Rasheema enjoys attending church and participating in youth group. Rasheema is in 10th grade and is enrolled in special education classes, where her emotional needs are addressed. She is working at grade level in her subjects, and hopes to attend college in the future. She would like to pursue a career in either modeling or teaching. Rasheema is looking forward to being adopted by a loving, permanent family who can offer her support and security. She would like her family to be active and hopes that they will encourage and nurture her many interests. This dynamic teen will make a great addition to a committed family that can offer her the support that she needs to achieve her goals.



Happy 100th Birthday, Erna Bowman

A wonderful friend of Children Awaiting Parents (CAP) recently celebrated her 100th Birthday! Erna Bowman of Brockport, New York was honored at a birthday celebration hosted by her son in April 2009. In lieu of gifts, Erna asked that friends and family consider making a donation to Children Awaiting Parents to honor her centennial.

As Erna approached her 100th birthday and had no family or children living nearby, she was on the verge of feeling sorry for herself. Then she remembered Children Awaiting Parents, whom she helped create in the 1970s, and imagined being a lonely, abandoned child or teenager wishing to belong to a "real" family. Thoughts of her own loving family came to mind.

The idea to have contributions benefit Children Awaiting Parents gave her joy on this happy occasion. "A gift to CAP might be seen as a kind of memorial gift to the family that gave me such a promising start 100 years ago," said Erna. "The idea brought new life to my birthday plans."

Gifts in Erna's honor totaled more than \$4,600. We are grateful to Erna Bowman for her kindness and generosity and all of us at CAP wish her the happiest of birthdays!



Interested in helping children for decades to come?

Everyday Children Awaiting Parents strives to find homes for the thousands of children that wait in foster care for a loving and supportive family of their own. This is possible due to your support. While we wish that we could see an end to the need for our services, this is simply not the case. In our thirty-seven years of existence, we have helped bring together more than 6,000 children and families.

You can help to ensure that we are here to help lonely, abandoned children by including Children Awaiting Parents in your estate planning. By including Children Awaiting Parents in your will, you can make a true difference in the lives of future generations of children in need. For more information on including Children Awaiting Parents in your estate planning, please consult your attorney or financial advisor.

If you do consider including Children Awaiting Parents in your estate planning and would be willing to share that information with us, we would welcome the opportunity to acknowledge your commitment to the organization.

Children Awaiting Parents wants to connect with you! We invite you to befriend us on Facebook. Call or e-mail us with feedback or questions at 888.835.8802 or news@capbook.org



Please plan to join us on Saturday, September 26th for our fabulous Family Walk at Ontario Beach Park in Rochester, New York! If you do not live in the Rochester area, do not fret, you can still help. Everyone is welcome to participate in the Family Walk by visiting www.ChildrenAwaitingParents.org and clicking on the Family Walk information to register for the event. Make your pledge in support of finding families for waiting foster children.

If you do live in the Rochester, NY area, please create your own fundraising page, gather your friends and family to form a team and compete to raise the most money to help children that have been waiting too long for a home of their own. This is a terrific day filled with food and fun right on the shore of Lake Ontario.

If you would like more information on the Family Walk, please visit www.ChildrenAwaitingParents.org. We are currently seeking sponsors for this popular event as well. For more information contact Gretchen Wood at gretchen@capbook.org. We hope to see you there!



Cousin's Liam McGuire & James Viggiani-Cole show their painted hands at the 2008 family walk.

Heart Galleries Renamed

In recognition of his lifelong dedication to advocating for children, Children Awaiting Parents is dedicating all Heart Galleries in the Rochester, NY area in honor of Judge Robert H. Wagner. In his eighteen years as a New York State Judge, he worked tirelessly on behalf of the children served by his court. We are so proud to dedicate Heart Galleries as a tribute to his commitment to serve the children that need us most.

In the Rochester, NY area, Children Awaiting Parents has had the opportunity to feature our Judge Wagner Heart Gallery of waiting children in so many wonderful locations in 2009. Rochester area Starbucks have been particularly generous with their gallery space and we have had the opportunity to have our beautiful photographs of these terrific waiting children in five Starbucks already this year.

If you would be interested in hosting a Heart Gallery in your area, or if you would like more information on Heart Galleries, please contact Pat Burks at patb@capbook.org or call (888) 835-8802. We would welcome the opportunity to make even more of our children visible to potential families.



Maryjane Link presents Judge Wagner with a Heart Gallery plaque.

The following is a testimonial from a family who has contacted Children Awaiting Parents. If you would like to share your experience, please e-mail news@capbook.org.

"I've only bothered you all about 3 times but every time, I have gotten a live person and – this call was about 3 minutes but I got my questions answered and, I just love you guys." Charlie Hackney