



NEWS FROM The Adoption Tour 2006

Presented by
The Adoption Support and Preservation Program
In conjunction with
Tennessee's Department of Children's Services

For Immediate Release
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Adoption Tour 2006 Scheduled Oct. 9-13

MARYVILLE, Tenn. – During the week of Oct. 9-13, hundreds of bicyclists will travel all or portions of a 450-mile route across the State of Tennessee to celebrate adoption, to draw attention to the need for adoptive parents, and to pledge support from the state's Adoption Support and Preservation (ASAP) program.

Approximately 30 cyclists will gather in Memphis at 9:00 a.m. on Monday, Oct. 9, at Chancery Court, where several adoptions will be finalized. Following a brief reception, the cyclists will begin the first leg of their trek that reflects many children's journey to a "forever home."

Currently, approximately 9,000 children are in state custody. Of those children, about 1,400 children have a sole goal of adoption, and about 850 are in full guardianship. Many of these children will be adopted by their resource parents, but there are approximately 300 who have an immediate need for an adoptive home. Over the past 10 years, the number of children who have been adopted has increased significantly each year, and so far this fiscal year (October 1, 2005 through August 31, 2006), 835 adoptions have been finalized statewide.

"The Adoption Tour event has grown tremendously and the Tennessee Department of Children's Services has provided excellent support and welcome enthusiasm. It's heartening to see so many people who care about the futures of these children," says Pam Wolf, executive director of Harmony Adoptions, which provides ASAP services. She and members of the ASAP office in Maryville organized the first Adoption Tour in 2005.

“With this event, we want to celebrate our children who have been waiting for adoption and these wonderful families who have given them a place to call their own,” said Viola Miller, commissioner of the Tennessee Department of Children’s Services. “And we want people across the state to know how much we need loving families to take children into their homes and into their lives.”

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In 2004, AGAPE Child and Family Services in Memphis, and Catholic Charities of Tennessee in Nashville were awarded the ASAP project by Tennessee’s Department of Children’s Services (DCS). Motivated by the needs of families and children in all stages of the adoptive process, ASAP offers services like crisis intervention, support groups, counseling, mentors and individualized care.

“ASAP provides the necessary support for Tennessee’s adoptive families,” says Michael Yates, ASAP project director and a participant in The Adoption Tour. “We want families to know that there is a continuum of support when they adopt a child who has been in state custody that does not end when the adoption is finalized.”

“When a Tennessee family joins the community of adoptive families, they find hope, understanding, acceptance, encouragement and real help,” Yates says, noting that more than 1,000 people have already accessed the services.

Yates will ride the entire 450 miles of The Adoption Tour 2006, along with several employees of ASAP and DCS. The tour departs Jackson on Tuesday, Oct. 10; travels through Nashville for a lunchtime celebration on Wednesday, Oct. 11; departs Lebanon on Thursday, Oct. 12; and travels from Crossville to Knoxville on Friday, Oct. 13.

Also on Friday, two additional legs of the Adoption Tour have been added: one from Kingsport to Knoxville and one from Cleveland to Knoxville. The three legs will convene at the Department of Children’s Services on Middlebrook Pike in Knoxville around 3:30 p.m., where local cyclists will join the final two-mile segment into Knoxville’s World’s Fair Park.

There, they will find a celebration already underway with adoptions finalized earlier in the day and a public celebration that includes local celebrities, children’s activities and refreshments. The public is invited to attend the party, which is scheduled from 2:00 to 5:00 p.m.

Wolf notes that November is National Adoption Awareness Month, a time when governments, communities, businesses, families and others celebrate adoption as a viable, positive and proactive way to build families. The Tennessee Department of Children’s Services holds a series of event throughout the month and spotlights children currently available for adoption on its website at www.state.tn.us/youth.

She notes that many families in Tennessee often serve as resource families for children in state custody prior to becoming permanent adoptive families, and a vast support network also exists to support those who are committed to foster children.

For more information about the children who are available for adoption, please call

1-877-DCS-KIDS. For more information about services available to adoptive parents, please call 1-888-848-2727 or visit www.tnasap.org.

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