



**November 1, 2009 – For Immediate Release**

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## **AdoptUsKids Names Anne Ashton Caseworker of the Month**

(Anchorage, AK) – AdoptUsKids announced today that Ms. Anne Ashton, a Social Worker II/Permanency Planning with the Anchorage Department of Health and Human Services, is the November recipient of its Caseworker of the Month award. This award is part of AdoptUsKids' national initiative which celebrates caseworkers for their dedication to children and families. More information about Ms. Ashton and excerpts from her nomination can be found along with this month's award announcement on [www.adoptuskids.org](http://www.adoptuskids.org) and [www.adopte1.org](http://www.adopte1.org).

Thousands of foster, adoptive and kinship families across the United States rely on their caseworkers every day to connect them to vital services, offer support and guidance, and ensure the safety, permanency and well-being of children in the foster care system.

Nearly 300,000 children in the United States enter the foster care system each year. Over half of these children will return to their parents, while the remainder of them will stay in the foster system awaiting identification of an alternate permanent family. Currently there are 496,000 children in the foster care system; approximately 130,000 are waiting for permanent families. Over 20,000 children "age out" of the system each year without being adopted. About half of the children in foster care are children of color, with older African American boys waiting the longest for adoption.

In nominating Ms. Ashton, the Smith family wrote, "In November 2008, we were able to celebrate National Adoption Day by finalizing the adoption of our two sons. It was especially touching to be able to celebrate the day with not only our social worker, but our friend, Anne Ashton. Through this whole process Anne has been a source of constant support and encouragement. She always takes the time to return calls and emails and shows a deep concern for all the children whom she places. Even now we love to keep in touch with pictures and emails and are excited that our sons will be able to know her and the role she played in bringing our family together."

Reflecting on this recipient of the Caseworker of the Month initiative, AdoptUsKids' Project Director, Kathy Ledesma said, "Anne Ashton's work with families is a shining example of the excellent work that public and private child welfare agency caseworkers do everyday across the United States."

After being nominated for this award, Ms. Smith stated "Sonnet and Andy Smith have adopted two of the children with whom I was working. It has been wonderful meeting their extended family and I go out to the village often to visit with the families. Even though the kids have been adopted, the families still send me pictures. Other extended families in Anchorage have also adopted a child on my case load. This family is a wonderful family; I found a gold mine when I found them."

### The Collaboration to AdoptUsKids

The Collaboration to AdoptUsKids is a multi-faceted, five-year, federally funded project. Its mission is to assist States and Tribes in their efforts to recruit and connect foster and adoptive families with waiting children throughout the United States. The Collaboration is managed by the Adoption Exchange Association (AEA) based in Baltimore, Maryland, through a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Children's Bureau. For more information, call AdoptUsKids at 888.222.4005.



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Anchorage Department of Health and Human Services

DHHS enhances the quality of life for the people of Anchorage by promoting good physical and mental health, preventing illness and injury, protecting the environment, and providing helping services to people in need. For more information, call 907-343-6718.



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