

## **MEDIA ALERT:**

### **The Heart Gallery of New Jersey Focuses on “100 Waiting Children”**

**WHAT:** The HEART GALLERY OF NEW JERSEY is launching its newest project to focus attention on local children who are in danger of aging out of the foster care system and at risk of losing their last opportunities to become members of loving, stable families. This Saturday, June 16<sup>th</sup>, nationally published photographers will volunteer their time to take portraits of New Jersey’s children who have been in the foster care system the longest and are legally free for adoption. The HEART GALLERY hopes these compelling portraits will draw attention to the children who need permanent homes the most.

The children, representatives from NJ’s Department of Children and Families, the HEART GALLERY and the volunteer photographers will be available for interview during the day as the photo shoots occur.

**WHY:** Without the benefit of a stable home, children who “age out” of foster care are an extremely vulnerable group. Just four years after leaving foster care:

- Twenty-five percent of “aged out” youths are homeless
- Forty-two percent have become parents themselves
- Only forty-six percent have graduated from high school
- Fewer than twenty percent are able to support themselves

These young adults are also at higher risk for substance abuse, domestic violence and poverty. The one thing that they do share with other “normal” children is the desire and need for a safe and supportive environment and a home of their own.

**WHEN:** Saturday, June 16, 2007

**WHERE:** Newark, NJ

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**About the Heart Gallery:** The HEART GALLERY OF NEW JERSEY is based on a simple idea that has already made a huge impact across America: Photographers, all of them professionals volunteering their time, take compelling portraits of children hoping to be adopted, and the results are exhibited in a gallery format. In New Jersey’s 2005 Heart Gallery, portraits of 346 “hardest to adopt” children were put on display. Within six months of the initial exhibit, the web site [www.heartgallery.org](http://www.heartgallery.org) received 23 million hits, garnered world wide press, DYFS inquiries rose by the thousands and already 92 of those children have been adopted. Another 34 children will have their adoptions finalized in the coming months and more adoptions will follow.

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