

A CHALLENGE FOR THE CHALLENGE

BY LAURI MCNIGHT

Generating community awareness for the 125,000 kids waiting for adoption through new “Foster to Forever” challenge

For nearly 50 years, Children Awaiting Parents (CAP) has been advocating for youth in foster care in need of a forever family. For the 125,000 children and young adults who have navigated years in the foster care system—and await being chosen by a family—challenge is a word they understand well. These children face challenges every day of their lives in the foster care system—struggling to understand why they are no longer part of their birth family, feeling unwanted, unloved, longing to be part of a family, dealing with mental health problems, or the separation of their sibling and all they knew. Even greater is the challenge they face when a foster family chooses not to adopt them, or when what seems to be a good adoption possibility falls through. And they are left unwanted. Again.

To the list of “unrequested” children in care, add the challenge for providers to find permanent homes and families for older youth, sibling sets, or children with behavior diagnosis and/or disabilities. Families seeking to adopt the “perfect child” to fit into their family, often scroll by the

“difficult” children, or decline to move forward if they are a challenge during the visitation process.

Veronica Black, Adoption Specialist at Children Awaiting Parents, prepares families for the types of children waiting for adoption. With every family she trains and certifies for foster and adoption, she is adamant that “there is no such thing as a perfect child. These children have experienced trauma and they will NOT be perfect. But there is a perfect child for you!



They need love, a family, and the sense of belonging to someone.” If, by age 18, a youth is not adopted, or at least is under the guardianship of a family, they will age out of the system with no resources or supports, destined to attempt to try and live independently but without the critical skills to succeed.

Then there is the challenge of creating awareness in communities, states, churches, and organizations tasked

with providing permanency for waiting children. The numbers cross our desks all the time, but have we truly internalized them? Nationally, there are 440,000 children in foster care. Of these, 125,000 are waiting to be adopted. Looking at New York State, there were 3,100 waiting children in 2019.

CAP is passionate about our kids, and equally passionate about matching a child for our regional and local families. But more awareness is needed.

Attention must be given not only to the numbers, but also to the faces and stories, as displayed on our website.

So, CAP is challenging the community to don their workout clothes, grab their sneakers, skis, swimsuits, dance videos—whatever it is that moves

and motivates—and help rack up the miles for the 125,000 kids in America waiting to be somebody’s child.

On March 1, 2021, CAP begins its 90-day FOSTER TO FOREVER CHALLENGE for community awareness, and to honor and recognize all those waiting children. We encourage everyone locally and regionally to move their bodies and track their steps, miles, laps, minutes,





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kicks, dance moves and more—then submit those to CAP—as we convert movement into miles to reach our community goal of 125,000 miles by the end of May, National Foster Care Month.

Groups, organizations, or teams are a fun and competitive way to participate and increase our collective miles. In addition, the challenge will encourage some of us to get moving toward our spring health and fitness!

While there is no fee to join the challenge, we welcome any donations or pledges. CAP is excited to gather our communities together, and, as we move our bodies and consider the challenges faced by children in care, we can raise the awareness of the need for children to move from foster to forever.

At the completion of the FOSTER TO FOREVER CHALLENGE in May, CAP will host a virtual celebration to thank all community participants,

reveal our total community mileage, and award the top 5 Movers with a small gift of appreciation.

To join the challenge please contact us in the one of the following ways:
Our website: www.childrenawaitingparents.org
Our office number: (585) 232-5110
Our email: info@capbook.org



Help Us Find Forever Families for Children Waiting the Longest in Foster Care.

At Children Awaiting Parents we provide:

- ♥ Pre- and post-adoption services
- ♥ Support services for youth aging out of foster care
- ♥ MAPP training for prospective adoptive parents
- ♥ Support groups

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