

News Release

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Senator Dianne Feinstein Celebrates Voices for Children as an Angel in Adoption® To Be Recognized at National Event in Washington, D.C.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CCAI Contact: Allison Coble, Senior Director of Programs Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute allison@ccainstitute.org (202) 544-8500

(August 29, 2016) San Diego, CA—Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) will celebrate Voices for Children as a 2016 Angels in Adoption® awardee for their outstanding advocacy of foster care issues in San Diego and Riverside Counties. The Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute (CCAI), which orchestrates the Angels in Adoption® Program, will honor Voices for Children at an awards ceremony on September 20 and gala on September 21, 2016, in Washington, D.C.

Voices for Children is being honored for its 36 years of service in recruiting, training, and supervising Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs) to advocate for the best interests of foster children in court, in schools, and in the community. Voices for Children has grown to be in the top five of all 960+ CASA programs in the United States, and now annually serves over 3,000 foster children with nearly 1,600 CASAs on a budget of \$6 million.

Senator Feinstein commented, “For the past 36 years, Voices for Children and its 1,500 Court Appointed Special Advocates have acted with compassion and care on behalf of foster children in San Diego County. They do the critical work of ensuring that someone speaks up on behalf of children who have experienced abuse or neglect, and ensure that their best interests are represented in court. I am also proud that within the past year they have extended their footprint to other parts of California by assisting children in Riverside County. This outstanding organization is changing the lives of our most vulnerable children and I sincerely commend them for this work.”

Voices for Children is a nonprofit organization that is 96% privately funded and depends on the generosity of individuals, corporations, and foundations to provide its

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services. Chair of the 27-member Board of Directors is Jill Skrezyna. The President/CEO since 1997 is Sharon M. Lawrence, Esq.

Ms. Lawrence remarked, “We at Voices for Children are so honored that Senator Feinstein nominated us for this important award. She and her staff have done a remarkable job in raising the issues of foster care to a national level of concern and policy. Our CASAs are indeed “angels” who help bring stability, transformation, and consistency into the lives of abused children living in foster care. Now serving thousands of boys and girls in San Diego and Riverside Counties, we are proud to accept this award on their behalf and especially on behalf of the nearly 1,600 CASAs who are the heart and soul of Voices for Children.”

The Angels in Adoption® Program is CCAI’s signature public awareness event and provides an opportunity for all members of the U.S. Congress to honor the good work of their constituents who have enriched the lives of foster children and orphans in the United States and abroad. This year, more than 140 “Angels” are being honored through the Angels in Adoption® Program.

“The Angels in Adoption® Program is a unique annual opportunity in the nation’s Capital to shine a well-deserved spotlight on the power of adoption and the unspoken heroes who have made the dream of a family a reality for children, including Court Appointed Special Advocates—the CASAs who play such an important role in the foster care system nationwide. Since the program’s inception, over 2,500 Angels have come to Washington to share their firsthand adoption experiences with Members of Congress, highlighting its joys, as well as the barriers encountered in the process,” said Becky Weichhand, Executive Director at CCAI. “Members of Congress are then able to use their new experiential understanding of these issues to create policy improvements that better support these children and the families that open their hearts and homes to them.”

In addition to the more than 150 Angels from around the country, National Angels in Adoption® honorees will be recognized at the gala for their dedication and commitment nationally and internationally to child welfare on a grand scale. This year’s National Angels in Adoption® honoree is the Minnesota Vikings. Former National Angels include Korie and Willie Robertson, Shonda Rhimes, Deborra-Lee Furness Jackman, First Lady Laura Bush, Patti LaBelle, Jane Seymour, the late Muhammad Ali, the late Dave Thomas, Steven Curtis Chapman, Bruce Willis, Alonzo Mourning, Rhea Perlman, and Kristin Chenoweth.

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ABOUT THE CONGRESSIONAL COALITION ON ADOPTION INSTITUTE (CCAI)

CCAI is a 501(c)3 nonpartisan organization dedicated to raising awareness about the tens of thousands of orphans and foster children in the United States and the millions of orphans around the world in need of permanent, safe, and loving homes through adoption. CCAI was created in 2001 by the active co-chairs of the bicameral, bipartisan Congressional Coalition on Adoption, one of Congress' premiere caucuses. The goal of the caucus is to eliminate policy barriers that hinder children from realizing their basic right of a family and more effectively raise Congressional and public awareness about adoption.

The Angels in Adoption® Program was established in 1999 as a Congressional press conference to honor outstanding individuals. Since then, the program has developed into a yearlong public awareness campaign, culminating in an extraordinary awards gala and celebration in Washington, D.C.

CCAI does not receive any government funding and relies on the generous support of foundations, corporations, and individuals to accomplish this mission. For more information, visit www.ccainstitute.org or www.angelsinadoption.org.

ABOUT VOICES FOR CHILDREN

Voices for Children (VFC), founded in 1980, transforms the lives of abused children by providing them with volunteer Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs). Voices for Children, operating in San Diego County and Riverside County, believes that every child deserves a safe and permanent home, and strives to provide a CASA volunteer to every child in the foster care system who needs one. During the fiscal year that ended June 30, 2016, VFC provided advocacy to 3,050 foster children in San Diego County and reviewed the case file of every one of the 5,000+ children in San Diego County's foster care system. In addition, Voices for Children and its CASA volunteers in Riverside County provided advocacy to 140 children since taking on and rebuilding the CASA program in that County in 2015.

By monitoring their Court cases and through the advocacy of trained volunteer CASAs, VFC ensures that the Judge on each case has current and pertinent information when making vital decisions about a foster child's living situation, visits with siblings, medical and educational needs, and other services. Much more than "mentors," VFC's volunteer CASAs go through extensive training before being sworn in by a Judge, and are in many ways the Court's eyes and ears for the most difficult foster cases. For more information or to inquire about becoming a CASA volunteer in San Diego or Riverside county, visit www.speakupnow.org.

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