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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

AMERICANS CALLED ON TO ‘CHANGE A LIFETIME’ FOR OVER HALF A MILLION U.S. YOUTH IN FOSTER CARE

May is National Foster Care Month; Partnership Marks ‘20 Years of Caring’

Over 513,000 American children are in foster care because their own families are in crisis and unable to provide for their essential wellbeing. Like all young people, youth in foster care deserve and benefit from enduring, positive relationships with caring adults. Now is the time to get involved.

This May, National Foster Care Month will serve as a platform for connecting more of these vulnerable children with concerned, nurturing adults. Join America’s leading child welfare agencies, advocates, experts, and more than 12 million foster care alumni as they come together to address the needs of young people in foster care. Their message is simple: **No matter how much time you have to give, you have the power to do something positive that will “Change a Lifetime” for a young person in foster care.**

Many of these formerly abused or neglected children and teens will either safely reunite with their parents, be cared for by relatives, or be adopted by loving families. But others are less fortunate. Every year, more than 20,000 older youth “age out” of foster care and are left alone to face life’s challenges. No matter their age, all young people in foster care need a meaningful connection to a caring adult who becomes a supportive and lasting presence in their lives. Research shows that foster care alumni are far more likely than their peers in the general population to endure homelessness, poverty, compromised health, unemployment, incarceration and other adversities after they leave the foster care system.

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Across the nation, caring individuals are helping foster children build brighter futures by serving as their foster parents, relative caregivers, mentors, advocates, social workers and volunteers. ***But much more help is needed.***

If nothing changes by the year 2020:

- *Nearly 14 million children will be confirmed as victims of child abuse and neglect;*
- *22,500 children will die of abuse or neglect, most before their fifth birthday;*
- *9,000,000 more children will experience the foster care system;*
- *More than 300,000 children will age out of the foster care system, most with inadequate support to build successful adult lives; and,*
- *99,000 former foster youth, who aged out of the system, can expect to experience homelessness.*

“In 2008, we celebrate an important milestone. Twenty years ago, then Senator Strom Thurmond introduced a resolution proclaiming May as National Foster Care Month. This helped draw more attention to the urgent needs of so many young people in out-of-home care,” says Candice Douglass of Casey Family Programs and the campaign’s chair. “Today, we call on all Americans to do something positive that will *change a lifetime* for a youth in foster care in their own community.”

The National Foster Care Month campaign is presented by 17 of the nation’s foremost child welfare organizations and is led by Casey Family Programs. For more information about National Foster Care Month, planned community events, and the many ways in which you can make a lasting difference for America’s children and youth in foster care, visit www.fostercaremonth.org or call **888-799-KIDS** (5437).

National Foster Care Month is a partnership of Casey Family Programs; the Annie E. Casey Foundation/Casey Family Services; Black Administrators in Child Welfare; Children's Bureau, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; Child Welfare League of America; Foster Care Alumni of America; FosterClub, Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative; APHSA/National Association of Public Child Welfare Administrators; National Association of Social Workers; National Association of State Foster Care Managers; National CASA; National Foster Care Coalition; the National Foster Parent Association; National Indian Child Welfare Association; and the National Resource Center for Family-Centered Practice and Permanency Planning at the Hunter College School of Social Work, a Service of the Children's Bureau.

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