



NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2011

# NEWSLETTER



Helping Our Foster Children Find  
**Forever Families**

## Board of Directors

- Wes Shelton, President
- Michael Boorum
- John Brennan
- Ryan Cronin
- Thomas Douglas
- Kerry Ferguson
- Bill Harley
- Jennifer Jones
- Danny Kanell
- Candace Kelley
- Charlie Levy
- Melissa Milroy
- Marta Prado
- Liz Trop Roberts

## Letter From The Executive Director



The Heart Gallery recently elected five new board members. We are pleased to welcome: Michael Boorum, formerly of MRB Acquisition Corp, which he recently sold; John Brennan of Oasis Development Corp; Ryan Cronin of PNC Bank; Jennifer Jones, who has extensive non-profit management experience and is now completing a PhD in social work; and Candace Kelley, who has been an extraordinary volunteer for the Heart Gallery for several years.

I'd like to thank all of the volunteers who helped to make the Wish Gallery a huge success and also Gina Castillo and Margaret Corder, who raised money for the Heart Gallery by holding a jewelry sale at Starbuck's in Pembroke Pines last month. Thanks also to the store manager, Maria DeLeon, who not only provided the venue, but also let us decorate the store with Heart Gallery photos.

Our big news this month is that the Heart Gallery is celebrating its 5th anniversary! We've come a long way in a short time! The children in

the masthead photos above are just a few of the over 70 Heart Gallery children who have found permanent, loving families in those few short years.

*Barbara*

Barbara Schechter

[Barbara@heartgalleryofbroward.org](mailto:Barbara@heartgalleryofbroward.org)



## Keerin Finds the Family She Has Been Waiting For!

Keerin's adoption story is about a long journey. She had been severely neglected before she came into foster care at age three, leaving her with developmental and behavioral issues and delays that would take years to address. A sweet, energetic child, she was anxious to find a family that would show her the love she had never experienced. The Heart Gallery photo of the cute eight-year-old that we took in 2008 graced the cover of our brochure and exhibit information panel. She was literally the Heart Gallery 'poster girl'. Many people fell in love with her photo and hundreds of inquiries came in over the next two years. Unfortunately, she had several adoptive placements that disrupted, i.e., did not result in finalization. Keerin still needed a lot of help to overcome her very rough start in life. "Families would be told what to expect beforehand, but hearing it and experiencing it were two different things", says Natalie Gomes, Assistant Director of Permanency at ChildNet.

Things changed when Keerin met Sherry and Robert, who traveled from another part of the state to meet her. Parents of a 22-year-old son, they had always wanted a girl. When they saw Keerin's photo on the Heart Gallery website, they thought that she would be a good fit with their family. Keerin immediately took a liking to her prospective family and home visits were enjoyable for all. There were some issues in the beginning, but commitment and patience enabled the new parents to work through them. Since moving into her 'forever' home, Keerin has made remarkable progress in putting her past behind her. "People say that she's another person", says Robert. Keerin has already moved out of special education classes and gets A's, B's and C's in a regular fifth-grade class. Natalie attributes much of the success



Adoption Day! L to R, mom Sherry, Keerin, Guardian and Litem Kathy Loughrey and dad Robert

to Sherry and Robert having realistic expectations before meeting Keerin. They took some extra training and extended the visitation and preadoptive home stay periods to make sure that everyone was prepared. They also gave Keerin a lot of the therapy she needed most: love.

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## STEP Program helps older foster teens develop job skills

STEP (Skills Training and Employment Program) is a new, two-day program for teens that have left the foster care system (or are about to). It helps to prepare them for employment through interactive workshops that review job applications, resumes and interview skills. The event was recently hosted by BankAtlantic and conducted by Pass It On, a nonprofit that is dedicated to helping youth develop into self-sufficient citizens and leaders through education, life-skills training and community involvement. The initial 10 participants found the program to be extremely helpful, as it provided very practical advice that was relevant to all education levels.

The success of STEP relies on participation from professionals in the community who volunteer to work with a small group of teens at each session and on representatives from companies who provide advice on the types of jobs available and how to be prepared to apply. Individuals who are interested in volunteering to help with STEP workshops in 2012 are encouraged to contact Pass It On at [contact@passitonnow.org](mailto:contact@passitonnow.org) or call 954-755-5543.

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2006

## How Many Photos Does It Take To Find A Family?

After more than four years and over 70 Heart Gallery adoptions, we regret that there are still children who do not get adopted. It's disappointing that we are now taking Heart Gallery photos of some children for the fourth time. They are almost always teens or children with disabilities. And it's heartbreaking to remove a photo from the Gallery because a

child turned 18 without ever finding a loving, permanent family to be there to offer love, support and guidance.

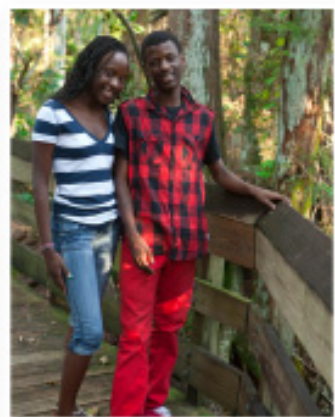
There are so many terrific teens in the Heart Gallery like Johnathan and Sheaundra (in the photographs above) who are wonderful, loving children that just want a family to give them a chance. Could that family be yours or someone you know?



2008



2009



2011

## Support the Heart Gallery at the Harbor Shops Walk of Charities on December 1st!

Flair Beauty and Boutique has adopted the Heart Gallery of Broward County for the Harbor Shops Walk of Charities on Thursday, December 1st. Flair is located at 1931 Cordova Road in Fort Lauderdale.



- 20% of the day's sales will be donated to the Heart Gallery. Flair has unique accessories, gifts, professional hair and skincare products, clothing, children's gifts, candles....
- The Flair window will be decorated with a Heart Gallery display.
- From 6 to 9pm, visitors to the Harbor Shops are invited to enjoy free food and refreshments while they stroll and vote for their favorite window display. The winning charity receives a cash prize! Nicole Hanaka and Jackie Barnett are decorating our window, so it is certain to be creative!

**Please come out to shop, eat and vote! For more information, call Flair Boutique at 954-530-5776.**

## Children of the Month

# Dorthy, Shangoria and Raynard

Eight-year-old Shangoria is friendly and greets others with a smile and a hug. She loves to sing and dance. She enjoys socializing and playing with her brother and sister.

Raynard is seven years old. He enjoys playing, singing, and watching television. He loves problem- solving by putting puzzles together. He enjoys riding his bike and playing sports.

Dorthy is six years old. She makes friends easily and she is very bubbly and animated. She enjoys receiving attention and praise from others.

This adorable trio will truly fill your home with the sounds and activities that say nothing but love. They've had a rough time of it in life, but we haven't given up hope on finding them a family.



Karen Ziemkowski, photographer



## The Wish Gallery Is A Big Success!

Our new Wish Gallery program has had a fantastic response from the community! We've had the Wish Gallery table at the last two exhibit locations, Westfield Broward Mall and First United Methodist Church, and between the two we've collected enough presents to give each child with an upcoming birthday two gifts plus a gift card (from online donations). We will take a break for the holidays and then bring the Wish Gallery back to exhibit sites in 2012. People who don't visit the table can also designate online donations to go to the Wish Gallery. Many thanks to those of you who contributed to help make a special birthday for a Heart Gallery child!

◀ **Jerrell receives a gift card from the Wish Gallery.**



# Where to find the Heart Gallery

**MONTH OF NOVEMBER**

**Broward County Courthouse**

**201 SE 6th Street Fort Lauderdale**

954.918.3008 • [www.heartgalleryofbroward.org](http://www.heartgalleryofbroward.org)