

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**“SC Heart Gallery To Be Recognized as an *Angel in Adoption*[™]
at National Event in Washington, D.C.”**

Columbia, SC – August 25, 2015 – The Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute (CCAI) will honor the South Carolina Heart Gallery (SCHG) as an *Angel in Adoption*[™] at an awards ceremony on October 6 and gala on October 7 in Washington, D.C.

SCHG is being honored for changing the lives of hundreds of South Carolina’s legally free children and youth, who were and still are waiting for forever families. The SCHG uses the power of photography to find homes for children and youth lingering in foster care. Volunteer photographers take beautiful portraits of the children and youth that are then displayed in public venues across the State of South Carolina. The portraits, which capture the spirit and personality of the children, are what moves families to open their hearts and homes to the children. The SCHG portrait displays also raise public awareness about the need for adoptive families.

The SCHG started in 2005, as a volunteer effort by Millie Qualls, and has flourished under her leadership. Over the past ten years, 1,167 children were photographed and 155 photographers donated their time and talent. With the addition of video interviews in 2014, 87 children were videotaped so the children and youth may be featured in television ads and on social media. The SCHG has featured children and youth in 1,547 exhibits and venues. 465 children have been matched with families (51% of children photographed). Additionally, the SCHG has expanded to assist prospective adoptive families by responding to inquiries, completing intakes, and completing home studies. The SCHG has received and responded to 8,431 inquiries, completed 311 new family intakes, and completed 93 adoptive home studies. The SCHG is maintained by the Department of Administration’s Foster Care Review Board (FCRB). For more information on the SCHG or the FCRB, please visit www.scheartgallery.org or www.fcrb.sc.gov.

The *Angels in Adoption*[™] Program is CCAI’s signature public awareness campaign 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 150 “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. Since the program's inception, over 2,200 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 singer Rachel Crow. Former National Angels include Korie and Willie Robertson, Deborra-Lee Furness Jackman, First Lady Laura Bush, Patti LaBelle, Jane Seymour, Muhammad Ali, the late Dave Thomas, Steven Curtis Chapman, Bruce Willis, Alonzo Mourning, Rhea Perlman and Kristin Chenoweth.

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 these 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.ccaainstitute.org or www.angelsinadoption.org.

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