



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Adoption Rhode Island Reflects on a Year of Life-Changing Work Made Possible by Compassionate & Generous Community Partners

*Continued community support plays an integral role in the agency's ability to provide critical programs and services for foster and adopted children as the state of Rhode Island works toward transforming the child welfare system to better serve one of the state's most vulnerable populations.*

**Providence, RI** (February 16, 2016) After celebrating its 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2014 and having made a difference in the lives of thousands of children since its inception, Adoption Rhode Island's life changing work continued to be felt in every corner of the state in 2015. In a year marked with transformation of Rhode Island's public child welfare system, Adoption Rhode Island is proud to have contributed to the on-going improvements to systems and services, reaching 60 percent more children and families in 2015 than the previous year. At the heart of this success is the agency's culture of private/public partnerships, commitment to excellence and best practices, and an outpouring of support from the Rhode Island community.

"We were able to make an enormous difference in the lives of so many children in Rhode Island last year because of how the community supports our efforts and truly cares about the children we serve," said Darlene Allen, MS, Executive Director of Adoption Rhode Island. "That commitment from our supporters has been and will continue to be instrumental in our success, even in this time of immense changes in public child welfare."

Serving as the hub in Rhode Island regarding adoption and permanent families for children, Adoption Rhode Island's staff dedicates themselves to finding families for children in state care and supporting those children and families throughout the adoption process. Additionally, the non-profit provides child, youth and family support services, clinical counseling, education, training, advocacy and other opportunities and initiatives to improve the lives of children and families impacted by foster care and adoption.

According to Allen, despite the agency's pride in finding forever families for more than 1,500 children in its history, they understand that there is still more work to be done.

"Every day, at any given time, there are hundreds of children right here in Rhode Island who need a family," she states. "For more than 30 years, we've really been at the center of changing these kids' lives. We really get to know the children and build special relationships with them. The pre- and post-adoption support programs we offer are so crucial to the success of adoptive families."

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Understanding there is no ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach, all of Adoption Rhode Island’s initiatives are individualized and flexible to meet the unique needs that foster and adopted children, youth and families face. Adoption Rhode Island is also concerned about youth who exit foster care without a permanent family and how service providers and policymakers can work together to better meet their needs for a successful, and independent, future.

Delivered by a specially-trained team of caring and competent professionals, the agency met many successes in the last year:

- **Finding Forever Families:** Adoption Rhode Island provided family recruitment, placement support, and outreach for more than 200 children and families in 2015 and expanded innovative and evidence based best practice, including family search and engagement and child-focused recruitment. Adoption Rhode Island was able to locate many extended family members of children in foster care and promoted and supported sibling relationships, visits, and placements. More than 350 members of the adoption and foster care community celebrated National Adoption month at the Rhode Island State House and viewed the unveiling of the 11<sup>th</sup> annual Heart Gallery.

- **Family Support & Stabilization:** More than 300 children, adults and families benefited from supportive counseling and specialized services that assist with the unique challenges that foster care and adoption present. These services, funded through DCYF, private insurance, and support from community donors, are helping children heal from the traumas they have experienced and prepare them and their adoptive families for the road ahead. Though 100 percent of the families in our Preserving Families Program were at risk for adoption disruption in 2015, 90 percent regained stability through the program’s clinical support services, minimizing the need for adopted children to be returned to state care.

- **Brightening Kids’ Futures:** Adoption Rhode Island continues to maintain hope, empowerment, and positive youth development through its varied programs and partnerships. Groovy Girls, an enrichment and empowerment program for girls in foster care, provided workshops and distributed 190 prom dresses in 2015. First Star URI Academy, a partnership between Adoption Rhode Island, URI, DCYF, Hasbro, Inc., and other community partners helped over 20 teens work towards their college goals and improve their high school grade point averages.

- **Innovative Community Partnerships:** Adoption Rhode Island strengthened and expanded its reach in the community through various partnerships including the Together Forever Project, which brought together child-focused recruitment and trauma treatment through Trauma Systems Therapy and the Bridges to Hope Project, a partnership between Adoption Rhode Island, Family Service of RI, House of Hope CDC, Lucy’s Hearth and others to address the needs of youth exiting foster care who are at risk of homelessness and other negative outcomes.

- **Giving Kids a Chance at a Better Childhood:** Thanks in large part to support from community businesses, organizations, and individuals, hundreds of youth and families enjoyed PawSox games, more than 50 children are enjoying new bicycles, and 25 children spent time at Gillette Stadium with the New England Patriots during Summer Training Camp and the Patriots Holiday Party. More than 60 children had the chance for professional portraits, including photos with siblings from whom they’ve been separated while in state care. And, more than 50 children had the chance to attend summer camp with their siblings, equipped with bags full of essential items, while more than \$25,000 worth of holiday gifts were collected and distributed to nearly 300 children.

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“Every child deserves a childhood, with a family, in a safe environment. That will always be the foundational value that guides every aspect of our work,” says Allen. “It is the community’s support that enables us to put our values into action. Together, as a community, we have been part of improving the outcomes for children in our state and advocating for child welfare reform across the country. That’s something I feel we can all be proud of.”

### **About Adoption Rhode Island**

Adoption Rhode Island is a private non-profit organization whose mission is to facilitate, promote and support the permanent placement of children waiting for adoption and to improve the well-being of foster and adopted children and their families. We provide services to children and families, and educate and advocate for a child’s right to a safe environment, and increase public awareness of the unmet needs of children and families impacted by foster care adoption. To learn more, and to find out how you can help, visit [www.adoptionri.org](http://www.adoptionri.org).

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