The 15th Annual Rhode Island Heart Gallery

An Exhibit of Rhode Island Children Waiting for Adoption
Adoption Rhode Island is honored to dedicate the 15th Annual Heart Gallery to Nick Cardi of NiRôPe.

Children lost a champion with his passing. Nick, and his brothers Ron and Peter, have been the strongest of ambassadors for the most vulnerable children, sharing our belief that every child deserves to be safe and loved in a family—always. We are proud to honor his legacy as the Heart Gallery makes its way across Rhode Island and we treasure the unwavering dedication of NiRôPe and the entire Cardi’s team to making life better for others through their compassion and generosity.
Every child deserves a place to call home, a family to be there during the best and the worst of times and opportunities to flourish in adulthood.

~ Welcome to the 15th Annual Heart Gallery ~

A good night kiss and a bedtime story. A fan in the stands. Someone to wipe away tears or kiss away a hurt. To sign a permission slip or ask how the day went. A safe place to call home with family they know will be by their side forever.

For children in foster care, this is the childhood that they are missing. There are hundreds of children and teens in Rhode Island who, through no fault of their own are in foster care—waiting for the childhood they deserve and a place to call home—forever.

You will meet some of these beautiful children through their portraits and stories that so poignantly capture their strength, their resilience, and their hope.

Our children and teens are caring, creative, inquisitive and talented. They want and deserve the same opportunities any other child would have.

We hope these amazing young people in our Heart Gallery will move you to learn more about the difference you can make. They inspire us every day. Life has not been fair or easy for them, yet they still hold on to the hope of a better tomorrow.

Are you the person to make their hopes and dreams a reality?

Thank you for caring.
Putting children first, always, means that no child should ever grow up alone—and no child should age out of foster care without someone by their side or a place to call home.

Children living in foster care have too much pain and suffering in their young lives - through no fault of their own.

You can help Adoption Rhode Island to change lives and give children in foster care the tomorrows they dream of.

While it is our hope that this Heart Gallery will find a home for every child that is looking for one, we realize that not everyone can adopt. But, everyone can help to fulfill a child's dream of a family, and a place to be safe and to call home by supporting Adoption Rhode Island’s mission.

There are countless ways to get involved!

Make a donation, volunteer, host a fundraiser, send a child to camp.

Organize a back to school drive, sponsor a dress-down day, host or attend a fundraising event, volunteer.

Tell a friend about Adoption Rhode Island, or bring a group of friends together for a meet and greet.

However you choose to help will make a life-changing difference for a child.

For information about getting involved to make a difference for children or teens in foster care contact us at 401-865-6000 or AdoptionRI@AdoptionRI.org.

Visit our website to make an online donation and learn more about Adoption Rhode Island AdoptionRI.org.
“I want to adopt all of them”!

This is a sentiment we hear so many times as our talented and generous photographers try to capture the essence of our kids.

They know their job is an important one. You can read all about a child, but until you look into their eyes and feel the pain of their past and their hope for the future, you can’t really know them.

As the photographers capture that elusive smile and that inner beauty, they know they are bringing them one step closer to becoming part of someone’s family.

We are incredibly grateful to our devoted photographers, many of whom have been with us since the first Heart Gallery fifteen years ago. They share in our children’s desire to find a forever family. We hope you love these photographs, and these children, as much as we do.

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**3D Virtual Heart Gallery**

Doug Fingliss and Laura Vaillancourt of Innovative Visuals

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Visit our website for an immersive 3D 'walk through' of the Heart Gallery.
12-year-old Reinaldo is a jubilant boy who exudes so much positive energy! He carries much care and love for all who are around him. Reinaldo enjoys playing soccer and football. When he is older, Reinaldo would like to be a professional football player in the NFL, preferably for the Seattle Seahawks.

When asking Reinaldo about his favorite things, he stated that he really enjoys eating pizza, donuts, and mac & cheese. Reinaldo’s favorite colors are green and blue. He has a new found passion for riding horses. Any time spent outside being active is truly a win for Reinaldo. During downtime, he enjoys playing video games and with action figures.

Reinaldo would love to be a part of an active family, who would be willing to throw a football around in the backyard. While being active is most important, Reinaldo also longs for a family that is willing to provide love, affection, and a FOREVER commitment. He has had several moves and yearns for a family to call his own!
Alexxis is a smart, talented, and engaging 15-year-old. She expresses her creativity through singing, dancing, poetry writing, photography, drawing, and painting. She is motivated to do well in school and has made the honor roll. Alexxis is starting to think about her future, but is unsure if she wants to pursue a career in science or music producing. At this point, anything is possible!

Unlike most teens, Alexxis prides herself on her ability to maintain a pristine environment. Alexxis keeps her room neat and well organized. She will help with chores and appreciates the comfort that a tidy space can bring to an unpredictable life.

Alexxis loves to snuggle into a good book to relax. She is an avid fan of Marvel Avengers and her favorite character in the MCU is Groot. She enjoys and is up for most activities and is looking forward to spending quality time with people who are open to sharing their lives with her.

Alexxis says that she had to rely on herself for a long time and she is looking for parent(s) who will help guide her to make good choices, while allowing her to show that she is ready for trust and independence. She is open to all family types, siblings, and pets but want to make sure that she is able to stay connected with the most important person in her life, her brother.
James is an active, adventurous and entertaining eleven-year-old boy who is looking for a family who can help him start his own YouTube Kids show. According to James, he would love to have his own room in a suburban setting -- a home with dogs would be ideal. Golden retrievers and pitbulls are his favorite.

Among James’ favorite sports is track and field - in fact his sports hero is Usain Bolt, a Jamaican Olympic runner. James also enjoys playing basketball and football. His favorite subject in school is science. He has a lot of fun conducting different experiments during class. James would appreciate a family who would motivate him as he navigates through school.

James enjoys playing video games and going to the movies. His favorite movie is “Black Panther”. James also likes the outdoors. He enjoys hiking, swimming and riding his bike or just playing outside. James has traveled to China, South Africa and Antigua. He would love to continue to travel with a family that likes to take on adventures and explore the world together, making fun memories.

James has said he would do great in a two parent home but he knows he will also be able to do well in a single parent home as long as he is supported and loved. James has siblings and maintaining a relationship with them is important to him as he integrates himself into a new family.
Florencia is a radiant, beautiful 6-year-old girl who is full of life! She may have some physical limitations, but that doesn't stop her! Florencia enjoys life to the fullest! She thrives when engaged in water activities, especially the Water Room at the Providence Children’s Museum. Florencia loves being outside and riding on the swings at the park. With some assistance from her foster family, she loves to dance to any music that plays. And if you like to cook, Florencia will be your biggest fan, as she really loves food! (Especially soup!)

While Florencia is nonverbal, she is learning some sign language. She truly adores attention from others and loves to cuddle! Florencia is in need of a FOREVER family that is committed to her for a lifetime.
Jayson is a lovable, affectionate 9-year old, who thrives on comfort and connection. He is shy at first but once he is ready, he is outgoing, talkative, and engaging. Are you a snuggler? Jayson is. He needs adults who with reciprocate hugs and kisses, offer praise and positive reinforcement and above all, be a constant safe person in his life.

Like all kids, Jayson is all about fun. He enjoys building with Legos, creating whole new worlds in Minecraft and being active. Jayson recently started taking karate. He was unsure about participating at first, but now he is enthusiastic about attending each week. The part he loves most about this class is making new friends. Jayson tries hard to make friends wherever he goes. He loves people and animals. Jayson adores the pets in his life and would like to someday have a dog.

Jayson needs and deserves to be loved, wanted, and the center of attention in a family that will meet him where he is and have the patience to help him achieve his goals.

Jayson is motivated to continue to do well at school and at home. He can not wait to meet his FOREVER family.

Jayson
Photographed by
Catherine Hellman Photography
When asked how his friends would best describe him, three words quickly came to mind: funny, caring and creative. This handsome 11-year-old enjoys swimming, playing with Legos, coloring and bike riding. Marquies has a curious mind. He likes to learn about various things, especially anything about animals. He states that the Spider Monkey is his favorite animal.

Marquies has big hopes for his future. He would one day like to have a career as a veterinarian (specializing in reptiles) or be a medical doctor. Marquies has a kind and generous heart, a heart he is eager to share with a family that will provide support and encouragement.

Marquies likes school, noting his favorite subject is math. He also enjoys reading a good book. When not being active, Marquies passes the time away listening to music, watching a movie or playing video games. He has a healthy appetite but give him some of his favorites like bacon, pizza and broccoli and you will get your own treat – his big smile!

Trusting adults is not easy for Marquies. A family would need to have patience, structure and be consistent. Marquies will tell you that staying connected to his sister and grandmother is important to him as well.

Marquies is a resilient boy who has much to offer a family – could you be that FOREVER family for Marquies?
Our friend Trinity is a social butterfly. At 15-years-old, she enjoys meeting new people and participating in many activities. She sings in the school chorus, enjoys the drama club and theater program, plays buddy basketball and enjoys participating in the Special Olympics. Trinity is known to be that kid whose smile brings joy and positivity to all who know her. She makes friends easily and loves animals. Her family and friends describe Trinity as funny and sweet. She is loved by her peers, teachers, and friends. You will love her too -- you won’t be able to help it.

Like most of us, Trinity loves Disney! She is a fan of the Disney princesses and can name them all. She loves to swim, play dolls, and be outside. Trinity loves school. Many kids dread the end of summer, but Trinity is enthusiastic about learning and participating in all her school has to offer. She looks forward to each day of school with excitement. She does best through repetition, clear and simple directions and through routine activities. With encouragement and praise, Trinity loves to be independent.

Trinity relies on her foster parents and the connections in her life to support and guide her. Those caring adults want to help her transition to her FOREVER home and are committed to offering guidance to your family as well. If you are looking to parent this heartwarming young lady, you will find a host of compassionate people to support you on that journey.
Are you ready to meet the next professional football player to sign to the New England Patriots? Meet Jakahri! This 11-year-old lives and breathes football. His room is even decorated from top to bottom with a Patriots theme! When asked who is favorite player was, Jakahri jubilantly responded, “who else but Tom Brady!”

When not playing football, you can find him chilling out playing video games or engaging in some activity with his foster brothers. He also enjoys playing basketball.

Academically, Jakahri is quite intelligent, but needs help staying focused. He enjoys school, and besides Physical Education, he states that Reading is his favorite subject. Now that he’s getting older, Jakahri is looking for a new series of books to peak his interest.

Jakahri dreams of a FOREVER family that is active and has other children to be able to play with. He would love to be able to throw a ball around in the backyard - and maybe even take in a Patriots game! Jakahri wants to feel wanted, safe, and loved in this family. Jakahri has a biological sibling who he loves very much and would need to continue to see.
Fashionista is one word to describe this beautiful, sassy, fun loving 13-year-old! Marianna loves all things fashionable and PINK! She is up to speed on all of the latest trends. Marianna will most definitely set you straight with any fashion faux pas! If able to do so, Marianna would own an entire wardrobe of pink clothing and shoes! She states she “can never get sick of pink.”

Although some may say she is a girly girl, you can also find Marianna getting down and dirty on the soccer field. She loves sports and finds that they help her to cope with the difficult situations she’s endured in her short life. Marianna also finds solace in music. While she mostly enjoys rap, she is open to other genres as well.

Marianna has a heart of gold, she would do virtually anything for anyone. She just wants to be a normal teenager. She wants to be able to text on her phone and use social media to connect with her friends that she doesn’t often see. She wants to be able to pick up the phone daily to check on her siblings and remind them of how much she loves them and thinks about them. Marianna’s siblings are her world. She regularly visits with them and would like this to continue. She also has other strong, positive relationships within her birth family that mean a great deal to her and will need a family that is open to these relationships.
Say hello to this little ball of energy. 4-year-old Aliyah loves to play, jump, climb and splash in the water. She will keep you on your toes and bring joy and laughter into your life. At four years old, Aliyah is loving, playful, and wants your full attention.

Aliyah’s foster mom shared that Aliyah does well going to the store and out to dinner and does best with clear limits, structure and routine. Her favorite part of her day is bath time. She likes to go on walks, swim, and watch Peppa Pig on YouTube. Like most kids her age, Aliyah’s favorite foods are chicken nuggets and hot dogs, she prefers no bun.

Aliyah has a brother, maintaining visits with him is very important. She needs a family who will show her love, patience, and attention. Parents who like to be busy, active, and outside will be a good fit for Aliyah.
Laurahli, 10-years-old and Jacob, age 8, have a sibling bond that can’t be broken! Their love for each other is second-to-none! Laurahli is a sweet, sassy girly-girl who loves gymnastics, dance and arts & crafts. She would love to be a professional gymnast when she grows up. She is also quite the fashionista and loves to dress up in fancy clothes. But, there is another side to Laurahli, and you can also find her getting down and dirty outside. She enjoys riding bikes in the neighborhood, playing on the playground, and just being a typical kid.

Jacob is a kind, gentle soul who loves playing outside, riding his bike, and playing sports. He would like to play soccer and football someday. When Jacob is not enjoying the great outdoors, you can find him engaged in family games or playing with action figures.

Both children are avid readers and enjoy being read to. Jacob & Laurahli are extremely bright and are very successful academically! When asked what family means to them, Jacob and Laurahli responded “family means love. A family takes care of you!” They would love a family to do just that for them. Laurahli and Jacob would also love to be tucked in with a bedtime story each evening. Are you able to provide the love and structure they so thrive on?
If you like to be active or enjoy relaxing with a good book, this amazing 10-year-old boy is a good partner in crime! Haiden has many layers to him at such a young age. He is very smart, inquisitive and insightful with a touch of cuteness to boot!

Haiden struggles to speak about himself but easily engages with others, especially about topics of interest to him; such as animals, movies (the entire Star Wars series) and the Marvel Universe. When asked who his favorite Marvel super hero is? He would say Captain America because “Capt. America is strong and smart - that is me!”

Haiden wishes to one day travel to Hollywood Studios in Florida to experience the Star Wars Galaxy’s Edge and Jedi Training.

Haiden enjoys building with Legos, playing video games or board games. Haiden hopes that a family would share in his love for ice cream, particularly Cotton Candy.

Haiden has experienced a lot of loss but remains unwavering in his desire to belong to a family -- A family that can see him as someone with challenges -- not a challenge. The ideal family would be a two parent home that provides consistency, structure and time to be active; Haiden wishes to have a family to share family traditions with him as well as create new ones.
Logan is a fun 11-year-old who is open to trying new things. He happily joins in new activities, helps younger peers learn the rules and comes up with witty, creative ideas to improve on the game. He is eager to learn and wants to be able to speak another language someday maybe Spanish. He has a willingness to explore and is amazed by the world around him. Logan has a way of and making every moment you spend with him more enjoyable.

Logan is a jokester and loves to laugh! He hopes to someday dye his hair green and is always unique and creative. He is adventurous and says he would love to vacation in California and work on his tan! He enjoys swimming, fishing, playing gaga ball and camping. Logan is outgoing, chatty and has a great smile. He is easy going and engages well in conversation. Logan is open to hearing and understanding better ways to do things. He is able to recognize, reflect on, and learn from his mistakes and works to improve for next time.

Logan loves to live life to the fullest. He is an absolute sweetheart and joy to be around.

Logan does well with pets, and hopes to have a dog some day. Logan would prefer to be an only child or have older siblings. Sibling connections are important to Logan. He has a twin sister and an older brother that he is very close with. It is a priority for Logan that he finds a FOREVER family that is committed to keeping him connected with his siblings.

Logan
Photographed by
Diane Miller Photography
Mylikai is a fun, loving young man who is very hands-on. He loves to build, draw and create things. Mylikai has quite the imagination! If you give him a pile of random recycled supplies, he’s bound to create the coolest new invention! When Mylikai is not busy creating, you can find him enjoying the outdoors. He gets his energy out best by playing a rough and tumble game of basketball or football but also loves just being outside.

Mylikai is very inquisitive and wants to know why things are the way they are and how certain things work. When engaged in conversation, Mylikai could talk for hours. Mylikai has experienced much loss in his short life and does have a hard time trusting that people are going to do what’s in his best interest. However, once you’ve gained that trust with him, you’re in!

This resilient young man would love a FOREVER family that will support the strong bond that he has with his biological siblings. This is a bond like no other! Visits and phone calls with them are important to Mylikai and his development.

When asked what else his FOREVER family should be made up of, he responded with the words, “LOVE and a dog.” Mylikai hopes to one day be able to travel the world and see what exists outside of Rhode Island. Could you be this family for sweet Mylikai?

Mylikai
Photographed by Options Photography
Adopting Siblings from Foster Care

All too often, siblings are separated in foster care for no fault of their own. Recruiting families who are open to reuniting these siblings and keeping them together FOREVER can be a bit more difficult. This is a barrier that Adoption Rhode Island is consistently trying to breakdown.

Think about growing up with your own siblings? Now imagine if you woke one day and you no longer were together. How would this make you feel? This is exactly what separated siblings in foster care feel. They feel the longing to be together again. They just want to play one more game with their siblings. They just want to celebrate one more birthday together. They want just one more conversation......one more hug from their sibling!

At Adoption Rhode Island, we strive to educate families on the importance of keeping siblings together in loving, safe homes, and how these relationships help with healthy growth and development of our children. Sibling relationships are like no other. They cannot be broken or replicated. Could you be a family to provide siblings an environment where they can prosper together FOREVER?

The next page will introduce you to just one of the many families who made the decision to embark on the adoption journey. They, and others, made this decision knowing Adoption Rhode Island will ensure they will never be alone along the way, but also knowing that their love and support will change the future for a child who didn't ask for a childhood in foster care.
We received the phone call that changed our life on a Monday afternoon in April, 6 weeks after being licensed for adoption. Young Patrick and Lillyann needed emergency respite care for 12 days. We met briefly that evening and then on Wednesday they were welcomed to our home. Those days went by quickly, even though we were all exhausted. The last afternoon, of the respite Lillyann wrote a note to Patrick, “we don’t want to go.” We knew we were meant to be together. The next several weekends we began the transition from their last foster home to our home.

Once school ended, the move in occurred and we began to form our family bond. It wasn’t easy at first, but with the help of family, friends, and support from Adoption RI, we began to settle in. Being Mommy and Daddy just felt right and we began to see Patrick and Lillyann become individuals with their own little personalities. It has made us better educators and better people. We learned that you don’t just love kids, you fall in love with them.

November came and our adoption day happened. We became what we all wanted, a family. Each day is a new opportunity to grow and learn as a family. A family together, always moving forward.

We are proud of who we are and what we have become. We hope that sharing our story will inspire and encourage others to find the happiness and love we will feel FOREVER.
Are you ready to learn more?

The children featured in the Heart Gallery are just some of the hundreds of children in foster care in Rhode Island right now waiting to be adopted—waiting for someone like you. There are children of all ages, coming from a variety of ethnic and religious backgrounds—each an individual with likes and dislikes, interests and talents, hopes and dreams. They are resilient and courageous and share a need and longing for love, guidance, security and the sense of belonging that only a family can provide.

Who can adopt?
In RI you may adopt a child if you are over 21 years of age—there is no upper age limit. We believe that there is a family for every child and understand that families come in many different forms. Single people and couples of any sexual orientation or gender identity are welcomed as adoptive parents.

What is the cost to adopt? What kind of income does an adoptive parent need?
There is no fee to adopt a child in state care. The Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) is a public agency and offers its adoption services free of charge. Furthermore, some children in DCYF care are eligible to receive subsidies until they are 18 or 21, depending on their needs. There are no income requirements for adoptive families and no requirement for adoptive parents to be homeowners.

How do I begin?
We suggest coming to an Information Meeting. These meetings are held once a month and feature presenters from Adoption Rhode Island and the Department of Children, Youth, and Families. You will learn the steps of the adoption process, about the children waiting to be adopted and the rewards and challenges involved. There will be plenty of opportunity to ask questions. Attending a meeting does not obligate you to adopt or even take any further steps. Applications to start the adoption process are available at the meeting if you decide you are interested. Other routes to take to become involved in the lives of waiting children are discussed at the meetings.
What is a homestudy?
The homestudy will be explained fully at an Information Meeting. The simple answer—it is a mutual learning process. The process includes a series of group and individual meetings between prospective adoptive parents, family members, and a social worker, along with screening and reference requirements. The social worker will learn about you and your lifestyle in order to make the best match between you and the child or children eventually placed with you, and you will learn about the kind of child you might best parent.

What should I know about the children who are waiting for a family?
Like all children, these children and teenagers will make you laugh and make you cry; they will bring you joy and bring you challenges. They have experienced loss and trauma in their lives that the permanency of a forever family can help to heal. Some have had multiple foster care and group home placements. Our older children who have been waiting too long urgently need a family to help navigate the milestones of becoming a young adult. Some children are waiting with siblings, we try whenever possible to keep siblings together, honoring the importance of these relationships.

Adoption is a beautiful way to create a family, but it is a lifelong journey and everyone needs help along the way.

You can expect support from Adoption RI during the entire adoption process from pre-adoptive, through the legalization process, and after you become a forever family.
These children have touched your heart. How can you help?

We understand that adoption is not an option for everyone who cares about our children. There are many ways to join in ensuring that children in state care are nurtured and protected while waiting for their forever family. We need you; our children need you.

Please call us to learn more.

Partner with Adoption Rhode Island to make a difference.
Partner with Adoption Rhode Island to give children in foster care back some of the joys of childhood they are missing—and the chance at the future they deserve.

When you make a donation, volunteer, share your talents, host a fundraiser or attend a fundraising event you make a difference for a child who is waiting for the better, brighter future you make possible.

We need you; our children need you.

Become a mentor.
Developing trusting relationships with adults is critical to the well-being of a child in foster care awaiting adoption. As a mentor, you can play an important role by being a constant presence—to share experiences, to listen, to have fun, to encourage, to nurture hope, and to expand a child’s view of what is possible.

Become a foster parent.
The future is brighter for our children when they are cared for in a safe and loving home while on the journey to permanency. It takes a special kind of love to offer a temporary home and the love of a family to a child or children awaiting reunification with birth parents, or adoption into a forever family.

Share your talent with a child.
Help children express themselves through art or music. Support success in school as a tutor, or teach computer skills. Offer coaching or skill development to a budding athlete. We can help you to share your skills and talents through Adoption Rhode Island programs or our connections with agencies serving children in state care.
Heart Gallery Supporters

Special Thanks to Printmakers, Inc. for producing the Heart Gallery Portraits and Booklets and for their continued support of the Heart Gallery

Thank you to Lexjet for donating the canvas media for the Heart Gallery Portraits

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Thank you to Canon for contributing to the printing of the Heart Gallery Booklets

Thank you to Central Paper for donating paper for the Heart Gallery Booklets

Thank you to Al & Gerrie Verrecchia for donating the easels for our Heart Gallery display

In Memory of
Edward and Agnes Macari
Children First, and Always.