

Campaign in Review 2013



November 22, 2013

My Fellow Virginians,

In the Commonwealth, 4,000 children in foster care are waiting for a permanent family, and as of January 1, 2013, roughly 1,000 of them were eligible for adoption. If those children are not placed into a permanent family, they age out of foster care and are challenged with unstable housing, obstacles to finishing college, and many, unfortunately, will turn to crime. Within two years, two out of four of these children will be incarcerated, and one out of four will be homeless. Casey Family Services has estimated that each child that ages out of the system will cost \$300,000 in social services and or other costs to the government and society. With these statistics in mind and the countless stories of children waiting for a permanent family, this past spring I formally launched the Virginia Adopts: Campaign for 1,000. The purpose of the campaign was to match 1,000 children with permanent, loving families before the end of my administration. It has been one of the most impactful and rewarding initiatives of my term.

The Campaign will leave a number of legacy items for the future of the Commonwealth. First, for the first time, Virginia used social media to profile children waiting for adoption and promote the recruitment of prospective parents. Our social media efforts led to a number of direct matches that might not have taken place without the Campaign. Second, we began collecting more detailed data and for the first time tracked how many parents were coming into the system with the intention of adoption. Lastly, we documented the current landscape and now understand better the barriers to adoption from the perspective of parents, adoption agencies, and local departments of social service.

As a result, since January, 913 children have been matched or adopted by families to date. Included in that number are 16 of the 20 longest waiting youth, one of whom was waiting since he was eight months old for a forever home.

The enclosed report chronicles the events of the campaign, its results, and how the foster care system can be strategically improved to better serve children and prospective families. I hope this report will serve as a guide for future administrations and stakeholders, and build upon the success of Virginia Adopts.

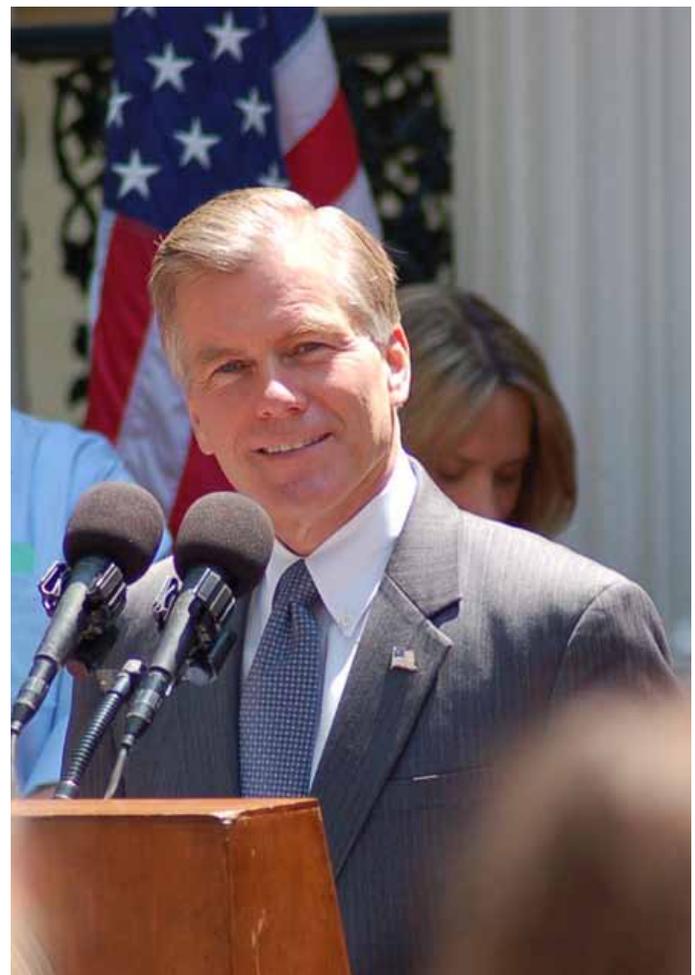
I am truly indebted for the efforts of Secretary of Health and Human Resources Bill Hazel, Secretary of the Commonwealth Janet Kelly, and Commissioner Margaret Schultze of the Virginia Department of Social Services, to shepherd this campaign through the past seven months.

It has been an honor to serve as Virginia's 71st Governor. Among the greatest satisfactions of this office has been to launch and promote this great initiative. These children will continue to need the commitment of Virginia, and I will stand ready to support that commitment.

Regards,



Robert F. McDonnell



BACKGROUND

The Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) is a state-supervised and locally-administered¹ social services system.

In the early 1990s, the Commonwealth of Virginia pooled eight² different child-services funding streams to create the Comprehensive Services Act (CSA), to encourage innovation and develop a system of child-centered, cost-effective services. By the end of 2006, however, the Commonwealth ranked 50th in the nation for children aging out of foster care without permanent connections to family or community.

In order to address this and other child-related issues, in November 2007, the Council on Reform (CORE) was created. Led by Governor Tim Kaine, this initiative launched a Children's Services System Transformation in 13 geographically-diverse localities throughout the Commonwealth with the goal of improving the rate of permanent placement for foster children.

CORE's foundation for change was built on the six principles which included:

1. Development of a clear practice model that guides policy as well as practice;
2. Management by data to improve critical outcomes;
3. Engagement of family to focus on the child;
4. Development of a community based continuum of care;
5. Establishment of comprehensive training; and

¹ Administered by the 120 various cities and counties within the Commonwealth of Virginia

² Foster care was one of the funding streams, along with juvenile justice, education, substance abuse, mental health, and others systems.

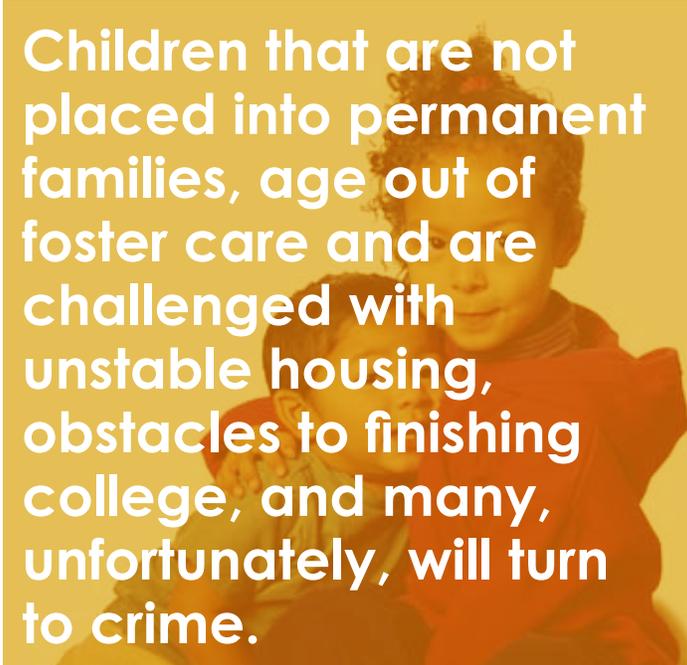
6. Development of resource family and family finding to keep families together.

The Federal Fostering Connection Act (FFCA) of 2008 also spurred change throughout the system. This FFCA Act was designed to help hundreds of thousands of children and youth in foster care by promoting permanent families for them through relative guardianship and adoption, and improving education and health care.

Within three years of implementation, the Virginia Transformation reform effort made strides to improve

the situation for Virginia's foster care and adoptive children. Specifically, by 2010:

- VDSS introduced and implemented a family-centered practice model that focused on permanence and underscored the statewide commitment to including families in child welfare decision-making and permanency planning;
- CSA spending decreased 5.8 percent after years of relentless inflation;
- Community-based care for children increased by nearly 60 percent;



Children that are not placed into permanent families, age out of foster care and are challenged with unstable housing, obstacles to finishing college, and many, unfortunately, will turn to crime.

- The state's foster care case load shrank by more than 20 percent;
- The number of children in congregate care was cut nearly in half; and
- Child permanency rates increased to more than 80 percent.

However, Virginia was found to not be in substantial conformity with the adoption outcomes in the 2009 Child and Family Service Review (CFSR). Two key findings on adoption from the CFSR were delays in completing or approving home studies and delays due to a general lack of effort to finalize an adoption.

Data showing the decrease in placements of eligible children in adoptive homes and increase in the numbers of children waiting for such placements suggests that, without focused and intensive strategies to find, approve and place children into safe and permanent adoptive homes, Virginia's waiting children will increase.

The Commonwealth and VDSS developed some strategies to attempt to resolve these issues. Virginia codified Resource Foster and Adoptive Family Home Approval Standards (22 VAC 40-211) that provided a unified process of approval ("dual approval") for foster, resource, and formal kin caregivers and required pre- and in-service training for all dually approved families. The dual approval process was designed to reduce the time to adopt because it eliminated the need for a second home study.

Also, the adoption services contracts beginning July 1, 2011 to June 30, 2012 were redesigned based on data specific to the number of children in the custody of each LDSS who had the goal of adoption and whose parental rights had been terminated, but the child was not in an adoptive placement. In state fiscal year (SFY) 2012, Virginia awarded approximately \$1.8 million in funding through Title XX/SSBG (Social Services Block Grant), Title IV-B Subpart 2 (CFDA 93.556) and State General Funds for adoption services contracts. Thirteen contracts were awarded to Virginia private, non-profit licensed child placing agencies (LCPA), "Adoption through Collaborative Partnerships" (ATCP).

The ATCP contractors provide recruitment through various means such as Wednesday's Child, flyers, the Heart Galleries, churches, parent magazines, match retreats, etc. Preparation of the children for adoption includes creation of life books that document for the adopted child his or her life story and the use of family partnership meetings.

Preparation of families includes training using the PRIDE curriculum and training on topics such as CPR, Crisis intervention, Communication in Crisis, Love and Logic Parenting, and Foster Parent College.

Since May 2012, VA One Church, One Child (OCOC) has served as rapid responders for the AdoptUSKids Virginia inquiries. The organization now coordinates the Virginia Heart Gallery - a photographic display of Virginia's waiting children, which circulates throughout the state of Virginia.

In order to better assist the local departments of social services (LDSS) to meet federal, state and VDSS adoption assistance compliance requirements and guidance, in July

2012, Division of Family Services (DFS) established the Adoption Assistance Review Team (AART) as a permanent fixture within the division.

Additionally, in the fall of 2012, the Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS), Division of Family Services formed an Adoption Initiative Workgroup to analyze the issue of more timely adoptions and to examine potential improvements in the adoption process. The workgroup consisted of individuals from public and private child placing agencies as well as staff from VDSS.



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- Half of children with a goal of adoption are adopted within 33 months of entering foster care.
- Time to adoption varies substantially across localities.

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- Half of children with a goal of adoption are adopted within 33 months of entering foster care.
- Time to adoption varies substantially across localities.
- Time to adoption can be separated into two components: the time from foster care entry to termination of parental rights (TPR), and the time from TPR to adoption. Of these two components, the time from TPR to adoption is a stronger predictor of the total time to adoption.

- Age, race, and having a diagnosed disability affect how quickly a child is adopted.
- Adoption subsidy payments do not vary substantially across localities.

INTRODUCTION TO VIRGINIA ADOPTS



In the fall of 2012, Governor Bob McDonnell, Secretary of the Commonwealth Janet Kelly and Secretary of Health

and Human Services Bill Hazel began discussing strategies to improve Virginia's foster care system as it relates to adoption. The discussion was prompted by Secretary Kelly's personal experience with the foster care system; in May, she and her husband, of three weeks, took an 18 month old boy into custody. Through those initial discussions came a number of legislative proposals for the 2013 General Assembly Session. The main focus of the proposals was an ambition to recruit parents for the nearly 850 children waiting for adoption, annually, in Virginia's foster care system.

The 2013 General Assembly Session produced a number of policy successes, including appropriations of \$1.5 million in new funding focused on recruitment and post-adoption services. Spurred on by the success from the General Assembly, Governor McDonnell instructed Secretary Kelly and Secretary Hazel to identify what else could be done to improve foster-to-adoption outcomes.

Governor McDonnell committed to using the remainder of his term in office to focus on foster care adoption.

The Virginia Adopts team suggested an issues campaign aimed at recruiting new foster and adoptive parents. Secretary Hazel charged the Virginia Department of Social Services to aid in the campaign and within a few weeks a campaign strategy was developed. A core group from the Governor's Office signed up to become "campaign staff" and the Department, too, dedicated staff and resources.

On May 17, from the front steps of the Executive Mansion, Governor McDonnell launched the Virginia Adopts: Campaign for 1,000. The launch coincided with National Foster Care Month. Governor McDonnell was joined by

former First Lady Anne Holton, Joan Ohl from the Casey Family Programs, and more than 150 foster care parents and children. Speaking before the crowd, Governor McDonnell said:

On May 17th from the front steps of the Executive Mansion, Governor McDonnell launched the Virginia Adopts: Campaign for 1,000. The launch coincided with National Foster Care Month.

"In addition, foster families frequently adopt the very children they are fostering and provide a lifelong permanent family for the children they have welcomed into their homes. The 'foster to adopt' trend is one we hope will only increase. Every child deserves the security and love that a family provides. Statistics show that children who age

out of the foster care system without being adopted are less likely to finish high school, much less likely to start or finish college, less likely to have stable housing, more likely to commit crimes, more likely to have a child out of wedlock. These statistics aren't just heartbreaking; they are unacceptable. That's why we're launching the Virginia Adopts: Campaign for 1,000. It is our goal to match 1,000 children to permanent, safe and stable families. Now, that's an ambitious goal, but it's one I know we can reach with your help."

The goal of the campaign was clear, to match 1,000 families with children waiting for a permanent family. The campaign hinged on the new funding and promotional

efforts to reach new families with the message of foster care adoptions. Through dialogue with states across the country that employed similar campaigns and stakeholders throughout Virginia, the campaign also looked closely at the foster care adoption system as a whole, and discussed ways to make overall improvements.

PROMOTING TO RECRUIT

At the onset of the campaign the task was clear, and daunting. The Office of the Governor quickly learned what the industry was already well aware of, that it takes eight contacts to comfort a family considering foster care adoption to the point where they are willing and open to act on their interest. In other words, an average family entering the foster care system with the purpose of adoption will have done so only after they have been approached about foster care adoption an average of eight times, either by direct contact with a social worker, in the media or other outreach efforts. Further, only one in twenty families recruited to adopt out of the foster care system reaches the point of adoption. That means for every one family that adopts, 19 others will say no. The

campaign team came to the conclusion that in order to find 1,000 families, 20,000 would need to be reached or contacted.

Social Media

The campaign aimed to promote foster care adoption through any means available. Noticing the scale to which the Governor was followed on Facebook and Twitter, the campaign team turned to social media to promote Virginia Adopts.

By quickly establishing a social media presence, Virginia Adopts was well positioned to utilize creative

micro-campaigns to expand the reach and grow the brand. Beginning in the summer of 2013, Virginia Adopts worked in concert with the Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) and the Governor's Office to launch the first of two significant messaging efforts on Twitter and Facebook.

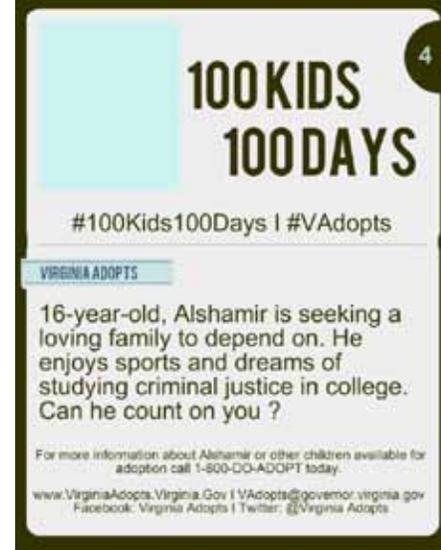
On July 1, the "100Kids, 100Days" social media campaign began with a goal of sharing the story of real Virginia children in foster care who are ready and waiting for

adoption each day. By working closely with VDSS to ensure that proper legal precautions were accounted for, Virginia Adopts leveraged the compelling stories and pictures of children who, through no fault of their own, did not have a permanent home.

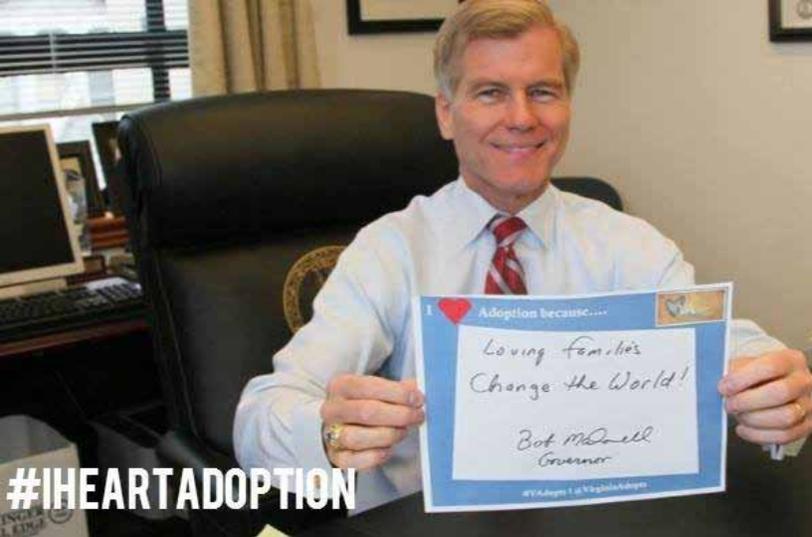
These images were designed to be easily shared across social media platforms. Additionally, the Virginia Adopts team

identified partners in the private adoption advocacy sector and leveraged the Governor's own social media capital to ensure that these posts received a chance at going viral. "100Kids, 100Days" raised the profile of the overall campaign and has resulted in a number of direct matches.

On the heels of the "100Kids, 100Days" effort, Virginia Adopts asked fans, followers and advocates to share why they are passionate about adoption on Facebook and Twitter using the hashtag #IHeartAdoption. Governor McDonnell kicked it off by tweeting a photo of himself holding a sign that said, "I heart adoption because loving families change the world!"



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Kick Off, Delegate Toscano spoke at the Charlottesville Kick Off, and the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors broke during a Board Meeting to host the Northern Virginia Kick Off and welcome the Governor.

Almost a thousand Virginians attended the Kick Offs and a third of the attendees expressed an interest in adoption. Just as significant were the numerous news stories that carried the message of foster care adoption to thousands more across the Commonwealth. The Virginia Adopts Regional Kick Offs were covered in every media market in Virginia, totaling more than twenty newspaper articles and television stories. Local and Regional DSS staff, Central DSS, and the Governor's Office pulled together to promote these events to local media outlets in an effort to appeal to a larger audience.

The campaign received and shared online examples of families from every corner of the Commonwealth who wanted to share how adoption had changed their own families for the better. The campaign utilized this form of engagement with its followers in order to further reinforce a community of support around adoption and to build momentum towards achieving the goal of 1,000 adopted children by the end of 2013.

Earned Media

On July 1, Governor McDonnell, also announced eight Regional Kick-Off events across the state. The events were designed to further promote the Campaign for 1,000. Parents and families interested in foster care adoption were invited to attend. Each event hosted educational information for parents wishing to become adoptive parents, provided an instructional component to help get potential parents started, and highlighted some of the children across the Commonwealth who were in need of a family.

Funding from the Casey Foundation and a partnership among the Governor's Office, Central DSS, Regional DSS Offices, and local departments of social services contributed to the success of these launches. The Kick Offs were enhanced when local elected officials joined in the promotion and support of the events. Mayor Sessoms from Virginia Beach attended and spoke at the Virginia Beach

Using the governor's social media capital, these posts received a chance at going viral. #100Kids, 100Days raised the profile of the overall campaign and resulted in a number of direct matches.

A sampling of those stories and articles follows:

"[Supervisor Pat] Herrity spoke movingly about his own experience as an adoptive parent. He and his wife, Nancy, adopted daughter Valeria in 2002 when she was 9 years old. She is now 21, and about to graduate from culinary school.

'As an adoptive parent this campaign is close to my heart,' Herrity said. 'By matching kids with

adoptive families we are giving these children a shot at a life, a chance to stay in education, and a place to call home.'"

– *Connection Newspapers, 07.31.13*

"Nannette Bowler, director of the Fairfax County Department of Family Services, served as mistress of ceremonies for the event.

'The Department of Social Services is grateful to the Governor for his leadership in heightening the awareness of the great need for adoptive homes for our foster children who are available for adoption, yet do not have adoptive placements, particularly children ages 12 to 17 years of age,' said Bowler.'

– *Connection Newspapers, 07.31.13*



WORKING TOGETHER AND OPEN TO LEARNING

Throughout the campaign, staff was open to hearing about what kind of impact the campaign was having on local recruiting efforts and what kind of impact it was making overall. The campaign quickly looked for help throughout Virginia; not only to promote Virginia Adopts and recruit new parents, but also for guidance on how to most effectively conduct that outreach. In mid-July, the campaign named a Statewide Steering Committee and two

“State officials say they know that not every family will be like the Eatons and foster or adopt more than a half a dozen children. They’re just hoping people will consider taking in one.”

– Roanoke Times, 07.30.13

“Beth Reavis, director of the Warren County Department of Social Services, said she and her staff were happy to hear about the statewide campaign.”

‘If this initiative places one kid, 10 kids ... it’s successful,’ she said Friday morning. ‘Every single child is so important to us, and honestly, initiatives like this don’t cost the state or tax payers much money, if any, so it’s a real blessing that the Governor put this into action.’

– NV Daily, 07.26.13

“But in his final year, McDonnell also has brought attention to people Virginia has long ignored: felons who have successfully completed their sentences but still are stigmatized by not being allowed to vote; and foster children ready to be adopted.”

– Virginian Pilot editorial, 07.22.13

Herrity, an adoptive parent, said, ‘By matching kids with adoptive families we are giving these children a shot at a life, a chance to stay in education, and a place to call home.’

State Chairwomen, and began to look more intentionally for input. Secretary Kelly hosted an informal roundtable discussion with the 13 adoption agencies. Staff also began looking at similar campaigns across the country and interviewing other leaders of foster care adoption in other states. Representatives from the campaign visited affiliated working groups to provide progress reports and gather feedback. The campaign team was continually

open to dialogue and receiving input not just on Virginia Adopts, but the foster care adoption issue as a whole. These discussions, both in group settings and in private with individual stakeholders, led to the discovery that an attempt must be made to document barriers and solutions to the foster care system. For efforts outside Virginia, one of the first steps to long term change was developing a baseline to work off of, which included understanding agreed upon barriers.

The campaign brought on Catoctin Consulting, LLC in the fall to facilitate the documentation of barriers to adoption and to identify potential solutions. This was accomplished by utilizing three focus groups made up of LDSS foster

care/adoption staff, representatives from the 13 adoption agencies, and parents. Highlights of the Catoctin report are listed below.

The purpose of the focus groups was to solicit input and participant perspectives on:

1. What works today in the foster care adoption process/system;
2. What does not work today in the foster care adoption process/system;
3. The potential barriers to foster care adoption; and
4. Ideas on how to improve the system.

- » Delays and lack of common goals in the court system;
- » Lack of common goals and collaboration with Child Protective Services;
- » Issues with access to and support for adoptive parents;
- » Insufficient access to quality information;
- » Lack of common goals or cooperation and a team approach;
- » Lack of consistency and transparency in the process;
- » Rules that make little sense or do not serve the best interest of the child;

Things that Work in the Current System

Participants identified many things that work in the current foster care adoption system. Best practices include:

- » Collaboration and alignment of goals across the various participants in the process;
- » Parallel general recruitment of adoptive parents and child-specific recruitment of parents for a particular child;
- » Dual approval of foster and adoptive parents to create a pool of families with home studies; and
- » Concurrent planning for return to home and adoption for a child.

Barriers and Things that Do Not Work in the Current System

Participants provided significant feedback on the barriers and things that do not work in the current foster care adoption system, which were grouped into the following categories:

- » Delays in the process;
- » Jurisdiction and school issues;
- » Issues with adoption subsidies and services;
- » Insufficient resources and training;
- » Limitations in the structure and administration of the adoption service contract;
- » Perceptions of the 1,000 Children Campaign; and
- » Issues when boundaries extend beyond the State.

Ideas for Improvement

Participants had many ideas for improvement to the foster care adoption system and related systems, which were grouped into the following categories:

- » Change culture to cross-system collaboration;
- » Implement policy and regulatory changes;
- » Implement process and procedural changes;
- » Increase funding and access to services;
- » Improve the adoption services contract;



Throughout the campaign, staff was open to hearing about what kind of impact the campaign was having on local recruiting efforts and what kind of impact it was making overall.

GOING FORWARD

FUNDING

The success of the Virginia Adopts: Campaign for 1,000 is complementary and apart from the funding approved by the General Assembly during the 2013 Session. The 2013 Acts of Assembly provided \$828,734 in State Fiscal Year 2014 and \$1,500,000 in State Fiscal Year 2015 to implement pilot programs that increase the number of foster care children adopted. Following the formal procurement process, those appropriations were issued in the September/October timeframe. The Requests for Proposals were dedicated to three areas – extreme

recruitment, general recruitment, and post adoption services. Those RFP's are summarized below.

Targeted Recruitment (RFP#1)

The first RFP, addressing the targeted recruitment of adoptive families, was awarded to two agencies, United Methodist Family Services and coordinators². These agencies will use Extreme Recruitment[®], an evidence-based model to identify, recruit and

match families for hard-to-place youth who are available for adoption. The target population will be Virginia's 100 "Longest Waiting Youth" followed by children who have been in care longer than 15 months and older than 10 years. Other states (Missouri, Florida, and California) have had success in targeted recruitment, which targets extended family members and other kinship relationships of the child. Family members or close friends have proven to be the most likely people to adopt a child in foster care. Best practices indicate having a child adopted by a family member or close family friend contributes to the long-term psychological health of the child.

- » Explore best practices and new ways of looking at adoption;
- » Provide additional resources and support for workers;
- » Educate partners;
- » Facilitate changes to other systems;
- » Improve public awareness and access to information; and
- » Improve information technology.

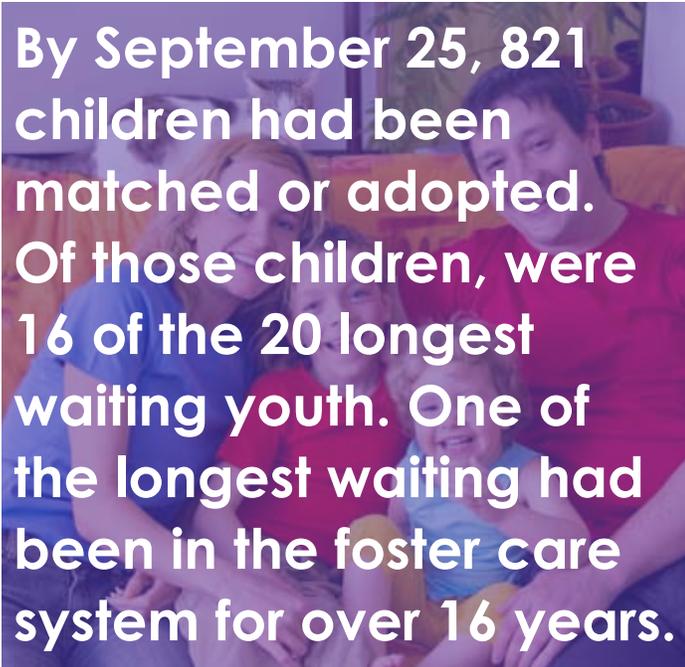
RESULTS

The Governor's Campaign for 1,000 provided a major spotlight to the issue of foster care adoption as only a governor can. Virginia Adopts spurred discussion of best practices and challenged the status quo approach to foster care adoption. Most importantly, it assisted the already hard-working efforts of Local Departments of Social Services and adoption agencies to recruit parents and find children forever homes.

As the summer of 2013 came to an end, the Department of Social Services began analyzing adoption data more critically.

By September it became apparent, although surprisingly so, that Virginia was on track to match or adopt 1,000 children out of the foster care system within calendar year 2013. By September 25, 821 children had been matched or adopted. Of those 821 children, were 16 of the 20 longest waiting youth. One of the longest waiting children had been in the foster care system for over 16 years; available for adoption for 14 of those years.

By the end of October, the campaign was near 900 with traditionally the most productive month for foster care adoption, November, still ahead. At the time of this report, 937 children had been matched or adopted with still four weeks left in the calendar year.



By September 25, 821 children had been matched or adopted. Of those children, were 16 of the 20 longest waiting youth. One of the longest waiting had been in the foster care system for over 16 years.

Recruitment & Market Segmentation (RFP#2)

The second RFP was awarded in early October to Bethany Christian Services for \$399,557 to create a state-wide general recruitment campaign. This contract incorporates the use of Market Segmentation to target potential families using the training and technical assistance of the National Resource Center on Diligent Recruitment. Virginia has purchased market segmentation software that will allow existing data on adoptive families to be utilized in identifying future families who are willing to adopt. Market segmentation is comparable to micro-targeting practices that businesses and campaigns use and enable DSS to develop a profile of families who are likely to adopt. Other states (Colorado, New Jersey, and Kentucky) have used market segmentation with good degrees of success.

Post Adoption Support (RFP#3)

This RFP solicited proposals that were focused on innovative post-adoption services and supports to adoptive families. These services will be designed to help families stabilize during crisis and are also intended to prevent dissolution of the adoption. Underserved areas of Virginia and unmet post-adoption services were given greater consideration. The RFP was written in collaboration with the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services to address gaps in the continuum of care in Virginia. The post adoption support RFP was awarded to Frontier Health of southwest Virginia and the Center for Adoption Support and Education (C.A.S.E.) of the Piedmont region.

CONTINUITY

Through the Virginia Adopts: Campaign for 1,000 and through the cooperation of the Virginia Department of Social Services the following steps are underway to ensure that lessons learned from the Campaign for 1,000 are among the Department's future strategies.

- **Best Practices in Adoption Institute**—The Department of Social Services will begin to host a semi-annual Best Practices in Adoption Institute for adoption case workers and supervisors beginning in the spring of 2014. The best practices model and training curriculum is still being developed but the goal is to create a pool of leaders and experts to keep case workers current on adoption recruitment techniques and state-of-the-art trends facing foster care adoptions.
- **Long Range Planning**—The Department will lead an all inclusive, stakeholder-wide discussion on strategic planning based on the list of barriers and solutions documented through the VAdopts

campaign. The most likely venue for this discussion, where all sectors come together regularly, is the Child Welfare Advocacy Committee (CWAC). From that discussion, the Department will develop a 3 to 5 year strategic plan and seek agreement from stakeholders, including parents and children and public and private entities, before implementation. The strategic plan should be finished by September 2014 and implemented no later than January 2015.

- **Peer Support Group**—The Department will establish a support group consisting of former foster care children 16 years of age and older who were adopted after their 16th birthday. The purpose of the support group will be to encourage other children who are beginning to age out of the system not to give up on adoption.



The 2013 Acts of Assembly provided \$828,734 in SFY 2014 and \$1,500,000 in SFY 2015 to implement pilot programs that increase the number of foster care children adopted.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Through both open dialogue the campaign maintained throughout the year, as well as research conducted on barriers and solutions, Governor McDonnell makes the following recommendations:

- Encourage increased use of the “Consortium” model used in the Northern Neck and elsewhere, where families, training, and other resources are pooled together for use by every locality member of the consortium.
- Develop a standard home study and establish an agreement among localities to honor home studies from other jurisdictions.
- The Department of Social Services should look for ways to improve customer service toward prospective parents.
- Encourage the use of concurrent planning utilized by a number of jurisdictions within the Commonwealth.
- The Commonwealth should strive to develop unity among all stakeholders across the foster care adoption system.
- The Commonwealth should look to streamline judicial requirements to save both time and money for parents, children, and the system as a whole.
- Develop and utilize a central database of potential resource families.
- The Commonwealth should appropriate new funding for long term care as a reserve for families who deal with hardships unforeseen at the time of adoption.
- Focus recruitment based on market segmentation profiles.
- The Commonwealth should decrease the amount of time it takes to assign a case number to a child who becomes eligible for adoption.
- The Commonwealth should take over the role of negotiating assistance payments or set a definitive non negotiable amount rather than continue to move LDSS from parent advocate to adversary once an adoption is agreed to.

- Virginia should move to establish a strategic plan for long term solutions to barriers identified by Virginia Adopts: Campaign for 1,000 by utilizing the proposed solutions along with the input and “buy in” from all sectors of the foster care adoption community in Virginia.

COMMITMENT

Based on the new funding, if the Commonwealth continues to commit to improving its foster care adoption process and continues to intensely focus on recruitment, it is possible for Virginia to anticipate within the next 3 to 5 years, a significant reduction in foster care children waiting for adoption. Even with the added success of the Virginia

Adopts campaign, 879 foster care children were waiting for adoption as of October 1, 2013. Through Virginia Adopts, the Virginia Department of Social Services for the first time, has tracked parents matched to children waiting for adoption. Currently, Virginia is matching 66 children per month while roughly 42 children per month enter foster care.

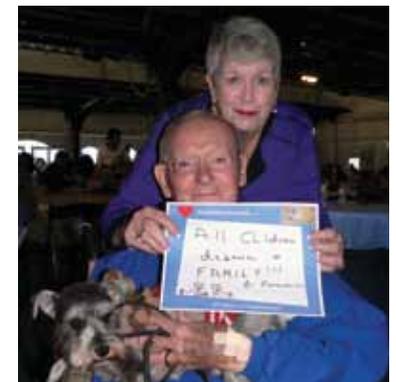
With adequate measures, attention, and

commitment provided by the Executive, Legislative and Judicial branches of government, and an increased effort to improve the foster care adoption system as a whole by all stakeholders, and assuming the rates described above remain the same, the Department is on pace to significantly reduce the number of foster care children eligible for adoption by December 2016, potentially to the point of having more parents waiting to adopt than children waiting to be adopted.

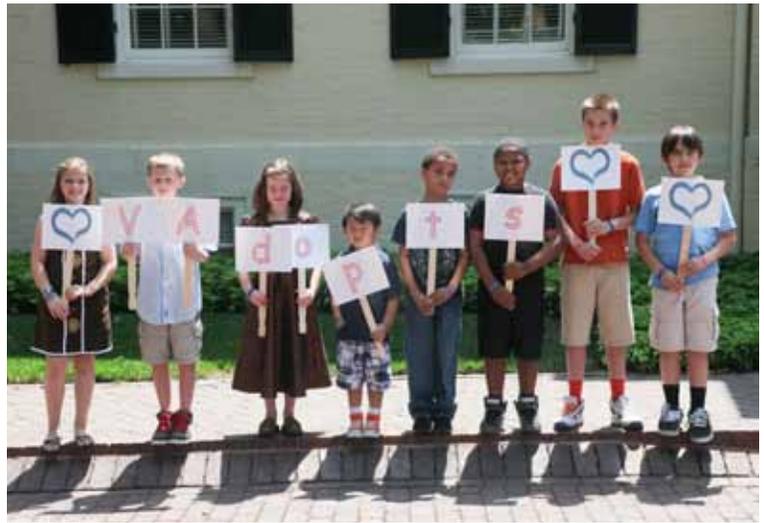
Again, this will require a full commitment from the Commonwealth and the foster care adoption community working together as a team.



With adequate measures the Department is on pace to significantly reduce the number of foster care children eligible for adoption by 2016. This will require a full commitment from the Commonwealth.



Virginia Adopts Celebration at the Science Museum (Nov. 9, 2013)



VAAdopts kick-off at the Governor's Mansion (May 17, 2013)



The Office of Governor Bob McDonnell
in partnership with



**VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF
SOCIAL SERVICES**