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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

HEART GALLERY CELEBRATES NATIONAL FOSTER CARE MONTH

Local Agencies Help Find Adoptive Families For Children In Foster Care

San Francisco, CA - April 21, 2008 – Shauna Mullins had always felt a calling to adopt. When Shauna met Rae, a spirited, but medically fragile infant, Shauna made the decision to become a licensed foster parent so she could bring Rae home with her. Since Rae came in to her life, Mullins has provided emergency shelter care for more than 10 children in foster care, and has adopted two additional children. “I am moved by these remarkable children” says Mullins. “They are resilient, loving and wise beyond their years, and they have incredible heart. If people only knew how amazing these children are, in spite of their challenges or maybe because of them, they would want to adopt.”

May is National Foster Care Month, and the team behind this year’s Bay Area Heart Gallery is working hard to help focus attention on the year-round needs of Bay Area children and youth in foster care. The Bay Area Heart Gallery is a stunning, museum-quality exhibit featuring the photographs and stories of local children and youth in foster care who are eligible for adoption. The exhibit is an annual project that is coordinated by a partnership between the Alameda Social Services Agency, San Francisco’s Human Services Agency, San Mateo’s Human Services Agency and Family Builders. The result is a stunning exhibit, consisting of photographs of children, youth and families, accompanied by their compelling stories.

The Heart Gallery is currently open as a joint exhibit at the Alameda County Administration Building at 1221 Oak Street in Oakland, and at the Eden Area Multi-Service Center, 24100 Amador St., in Hayward. In May, during National Foster Care Month, the exhibit will be on

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display in San Francisco's City Hall Rotunda and at the Eden Area Multi-Service Center in Hayward.

"There's such a wonderful response to the Heart Gallery each year," says Kim Goldman, a Specialized Recruiter for Family Builders, one of the participating agencies, and this year's Heart Gallery coordinator. "It gives us the opportunity to tell each child's story in an intimate and powerful way, and it helps us find permanent families for young people that have been waiting a long, long time."

Robin Fryday, an award-winning local photographer, oversees the team of professional photographers that volunteer their time and skill to help create the Bay Area Heart Gallery. "Each time I see one of the photographs" says Fryday, "I know we've had the chance to make a difference in a child's life. It's an incredible feeling."

There are over 10,000 children and youth in foster care in the Bay Area at any given time. "A picture really is worth a thousand words" says Goldman, "the Heart Gallery gives a human face to what are all too often just foster care statistics. It's an opportunity show children and youth in foster care as great young people who need families, just like we all do."

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About the Bay Area Heart Gallery – The Bay Area Heart Gallery is a partnership of public and private agencies serving children and youth in foster care throughout the Bay Area - the Alameda Social Services Agency, San Francisco's Human Services Agency, San Mateo's Human Services Agency and Family Builders - working together with community volunteers, photographers and artists. The result is a stunning exhibit, consisting of beautiful photographs of children, youth and families, accompanied by their compelling stories. For more information, visit www.bayareaheartgallery.com.

About National Foster Care Month – Each May, National Foster Care Month provides an opportunity for people all across the nation to focus attention on the year-round needs of American children and youth in foster care. The campaign raises awareness about foster care and encourages many more citizens to get involved in the lives of these youth – whether as their foster parents, volunteers, mentors, employers or in other ways. For more information, visit www.fostercaremonth.org.

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