

**FOR RELEASE ON SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 2008**

**CONTACT: Misty Stenslie, 703-862-7295 (p), [mstenslie@fostercarealumni.org](mailto:mstenslie@fostercarealumni.org)**

**SACRAMENTO AREA FOSTER CARE ALUMNI HOLD FIRST  
EVER “FAMILY REUNION”**

*Attendees Highlight Needs of California’s Children in Foster Care and Look to  
Congress to Improve Nation’s Foster Care System*

**SACRAMENTO, CA** —Young people and adults gathered today in Sacramento to attend the first annual “Together 2008: Alumni Family Reunion.” Organized by Foster Care Alumni of America, this event was created for, and attended by, individuals who spent time in California’s foster care system.

“All too often, youth in California and across the nation who are placed in foster care are separated from brothers and sisters, friends and family,” said Nathan Monell, executive director of Foster Care Alumni of America. “Most foster care alumni will never be invited to a family reunion or other traditional family gatherings. They will never eat favorite family recipes, play a game of whiffle ball, or sit around and share stories about the past. Today’s event transforms the classic family reunion into a community event, creating lasting memories for many of the 12 million foster care alumni nationwide.”

In California today, there are more than 78,000 children in foster care. They will spend an average of more than three years in foster care and nearly half (46%) will experience three or more placements. In 2006, 3,889 young people “aged out” of California’s foster care system without a family to rely on or a home to return to.

Today’s event, held at the Independent Living Program, 925 Plaza Del Paso, was attended by local alumni of the foster care system along with foster parents, professionals, administrators and community members who care about foster care. In addition, Foster Care Alumni Family Reunions took place today in states across the nation, including: Washington, Texas, Arizona, Maryland, Virginia and Pennsylvania.

“It’s so good to be together and have fun, and focus on making good memories with others who share the foster care experience,” said Kamika Whetstone, who spent 18 years in foster care and attended today’s event in Sacramento. “It seems like foster care is usually focused on difficulties, but this day is for fun and sharing, and for doing normal things together!”

A landmark child welfare bill passed on Wednesday by the House of Representatives could make a huge difference for many children and youth in foster care today. The Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act will ensure that more children can leave foster care for permanent families through adoption and guardianship, that fewer youth will “age out” of the system with no one to rely on, and that children in foster care will have improved health and educational outcomes. This bill, the most sweeping federal legislation in more than a decade, is now being considered by the Senate.

The honorary host committee for the Foster Care Alumni Family Reunion includes Congressional Representatives Jim McDermott (D-WA); Jerry Weller (R-IL); Shelley Berkley (D-NV), Chaka Fattah (D-PA), Dennis Cardoza (D-CA), Senator Mary Landrieu (D-LA), and William Bell, President and CEO of Casey Family Programs.

“I am so proud to be a part of this first-annual Foster Care Alumni of America event,” said Senator Mary Landrieu of Louisiana, an honorary host committee member for today’s event. “Lawmakers, in particular, should be well educated on the policies that will create the best circumstances possible for children in foster care in and transitioning from foster care. I know that FCAA will continue to promote awareness of our foster care system and the ways it can be strengthened, and I am proud to be a member of the extended family of our foster care alumni.”

In addition to Foster Care Alumni of America, sponsors of the Alumni Family Reunion include Casey Family Programs, The Pew Charitable Trusts, Clark & Allen, P.C., Clarke & Sampson, Inc., Virginia Commerce Bank, Renner and Company Certified Public Accountants, and Focus Data Solutions.

**About Foster Care Alumni of America:** In 2004, foster care alumni and advocates created a national non-profit association that brings together the expertise and experience of adults who have experienced foster care. Foster Care Alumni of America (FCAA) was formed to engage the more than 12 million alumni of foster care and to advocate for the needs of the youth and alumni of foster care.

FCAA has more than 1,700 members from all 50 states. Through FCAA, alumni of foster care hope to create the ability to connect with one another in an organized and well-supported community and to use alumni expertise to transform the foster care system.

FCAA's mission seeks to provide innovation in the federal and state child welfare systems and effective and meaningful partnerships with child welfare organizations. FCAA has confidence that it can partner with others to reduce the numbers of children and youth in foster care and can improve the foster care experience through investments of their expertise and energy.

For more information on Foster Care Alumni of America, please visit our website at [www.fostercarealumni.org](http://www.fostercarealumni.org).

###