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

*Attendees Highlight Needs of Pennsylvania’s Foster Children and Youth,  
and Look to Congress to Act to Improve Nation’s Foster Care System*

**Philadelphia, PA** — Young people and adults gathered today in Fern Hill Park 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 Pennsylvania’s foster care system.

“All too often, youth in Pennsylvania 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 Pennsylvania today, there are more than 21,000 children in foster care. They will spend an average of two years in foster care and a third will experience three or more moves while in the system. In 2006, 1,051 young people “aged out” of foster care in Pennsylvania without a family to rely on or a home to return to.

Today’s event at Fern Hill Park 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: California, Arizona, Washington, Texas, Maryland and Virginia.

“Today’s event redefines both ‘family’ and ‘reunion’ in a way that strengthens us as a community of individuals with a common experience,” said Samantha Broderick, who spent 4 years in foster care and attended today’s reunion in Philadelphia. “Whether it is Thanksgiving on the Capitol steps or a reunion in a local park, we are taking ‘family’ traditions and making them our own.”

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 C. Bell, President and CEO of Casey Family Programs.

“Every child needs and deserves a loving family,” said Congressman Chaka Fattah, who represents Pennsylvania’s 2<sup>nd</sup> Congressional district and is on the honorary host committee for today’s event. “Every child needs and deserves to feel part of a community, a part of something larger than themselves. That’s why I wholeheartedly support the Foster Care Alumni Family Reunion as it provides individuals - separated from their family of birth and embraced by their family of choice – the opportunity to reflect and reconnect on their shared experiences.”

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).

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