

For Immediate Release

**Press Conference
May 13, 2003, 9AM
Room 864
Hall of Administration
500 West Temple Street**

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Los Angeles Foster Care Awareness Week Seeks to Raise Awareness of Needs of Foster Children (May 11th through May 17th)

LOS ANGELES COUNTY – Child advocates, County judicial and community leaders, and child welfare officials have teamed up to bring attention to the tremendous need for community support of our over 30,000 abused and neglected foster youth and to honor foster care “heroes” during Los Angeles Foster Care Awareness Week. A variety of educational activities and special awards will highlight the week, commencing on Mother's Day, Sunday, May 11, 2003, and extending through Saturday, May 17, 2003.

On Tuesday, May 13, 2003, in recognition of Foster Care Awareness Week, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors will honor seven “Foster Care Heroes” who illustrate outstanding foster care success stories. The heroes will include a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA), a foster parent, a Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) social worker, a relative caregiver, an emancipated foster youth, a child's Dependency Court lawyer, and a parent. These seven heroes, chosen by a roundtable of child advocacy agencies, through their accomplishments and personal stories reflect the ability to overcome adversity and make a significant difference in the lives of foster children. (Their stories are described in the attached sheet.)

Child welfare specialists and child advocates will also seek over the course of the week to educate the larger community regarding ways to have a positive impact on the life of a foster child, whether by creating a permanent home, volunteering as a mentor, or serving as a tutor or child advocate. Posters

and flyers describing ways that our community can "Change the Life of a Foster Child" will be posted and distributed Countywide. In addition, the Los Angeles Affiliate of the National Association of Counsel for Children will distribute flyers on children's rights and important dependency court information.

Foster Care Awareness Week activities will culminate with the groundbreaking "Los Angeles Education Summit on the Needs and Challenges Facing Foster Youth: Identifying Obstacles and Forging Solutions", to be held on Friday, May 16, 2003, at Loyola Law School's downtown Los Angeles campus. This first ever gathering of over one hundred Los Angeles leaders and decision-makers from the education, judicial, child welfare and advocacy community will seek to identify issues, challenges and possible reforms relating to the educational needs of L.A. County foster youth. Guest speakers will include Los Angeles County Supervisors Michael Antonovich and Zev Yaroslavsky; Dr. Darline Robles, Superintendent of the L.A. County Office of Education; Los Angeles Juvenile Court Presiding Judge Michael Nash; Dr. David Sanders, Director of DCFS; and other judicial, community and school leaders.

Foster Care Awareness activities are coordinated by a roundtable including representatives from the Alliance for Children's Rights, the Children's Law Center of Los Angeles, the Dependency Court Judiciary, the Los Angeles Affiliate of the National Association of Counsel for Children, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, the Los Angeles County Children's Planning Council, the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services, and Public Counsel Law Center. These events are being held in conjunction with National Foster Care Awareness Month.

At the press conference to be held on May 13, Supervisors Antonovich and Yaroslavsky will be present to discuss the importance of this effort, along with the seven honorees, Juvenile Court Presiding Judge Michael Nash, and others involved in the planning of this event.

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