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**FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE FAMILY SERVICES (FAFS) BEGINS YEAR-LONG
FORTIETH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION**

Monmouth Junction, NJ - April 4, 2013 – Beginning this month, Foster and Adoptive Family Services (FAFS) starts a celebration of four decades of service to New Jersey families. The organization was formed by parents discussing their concerns around a kitchen table. Hattie Talley, Sue Dondiego and Bernie Dondiego are considered the founders of the organization. At that time, in the early Seventies, there were few if any resources for foster parents to call on in time of need. They formed a true, grass-roots movement, began to organize and meet with other concerned citizens of New Jersey. Over the first three years, members met with then, Governor Brendan Byrne, they held the first New Jersey statewide training conference on foster care, state level committees were developed and representatives served on the committee that established uniform, statewide mandatory pre-service training for foster parents.

With a proud beginning, FAFS has become the leading organization advocating for foster, adoptive and kinship families. Over this anniversary year, Foster and Adoptive Family Services will be holding various contests and events. FAFS CEO, Mary Jane Awrachow said, “We hope to have hundreds of families participate in these varied activities.”

Now through June 30, 2013 we are asking children to, “Color My Heart”. A PDF of the FAFS heart-shaped logo is available on our website, www.fafsonline.org. Children may decorate the logo in what fashion they choose and then submit their effort by mail. The various designs of the hearts submitted will be the models used to inspire a commemorative quilt. The Quilt will be unveiled at the May 2014 Annual FAFS Recognition Brunch.

Now through August 30, 2013 we are conducting an Essay Contest. We are asking parents to tell us about one child that they fostered or adopted that positively influenced your life. The submissions can be made via standard mail or email (development@fafsonline.org). The committee will pick (4) four winners, who will have their special stories shared online.

Another program called “Message in a Bottle” encourages foster, adoptive and kinship parents to submit their own personal messages for children in foster care, using both social media and conventional methods. In 25 words or less, *if you could leave a message for all children in foster care – what would it be?* (Web location: www.fafsonline.org/40th-anniversary/contests/message-in-a-bottle/messages-for-foster-kids.html) Select messages will be placed on small bottles and displayed at various anniversary activities.

During this year, FAFS is forming “The Forty Club” we are attempting to identify foster parents who either have fostered 40 children or have been foster parents for 40 years. Their stories are part of the history and heritage of the organization. Members of this “club” will receive a small gift, first-come, first-served, while supplies last.

Any individual is welcome join the FAFS 40th Celebration or contribute in honor of the anniversary. For more information, please call 800.222.0047 or go to our website, www.fafsonline.org.

ABOUT FAFS: The mission of Foster and Adoptive Family Services (FAFS) is to provide support, training and advocacy to meet the special needs of foster, adoptive and kinship families, who provide safe, stable, and nurturing homes for children in foster care. FAFS is a federal 501(c) 3 nonprofit organization, with headquarters on Route 1 in Monmouth Junction. We promote an enhanced understanding of foster care and adoption. We serve as a catalyst for positive advances in the child welfare system. Simply stated, we are the VOICE of foster, adoptive and kinship families in New Jersey.