

For Immediate Release
September 18, 2008

Contact: Amanda Kim, Public Information Officer
County of San Mateo Human Services Agency
Phone: 650-802-6433, e-mail: akim@smchsa.org

HEART GALLERY CHANGES LIVES

Breathtaking photo exhibit of Bay Area children awaiting adoption opens at Serramonte Center

Redwood City, CA – After twelve years of marriage and eight years of attempting to have a biological child, Shannon and Rich Walker of Folsom, CA, decided to start a family through adoption. After careful consideration, they decided to adopt San Mateo County brothers, Austin and Adrian. Later, when the boys' birth mother became pregnant with a girl, they added 3-day old Elaina to their family. "Our lives, hearts and laundry baskets are full," Shannon says of her lively and laughter-filled home and, *"We wouldn't have it any other way."*

The Burke-Walter family photo is one of many beautiful and moving images that can be found at the Bay Area Heart Gallery, an exhibit that raises awareness about the 10,000 Bay Area children and youth waiting homes. The exhibit opens October 1 at the Serramonte Center in Daly City.

The Bay Area Heart Gallery is part of a nationwide movement with a mission to find loving homes for the children featured in the exhibit. A special feature is a series of photographs dedicated to San Mateo County adoptive and foster families that vividly display the power of love and family.

"The Heart Gallery is a wonderful way for us to reach out to potential foster and adoptive families. By looking at the photographs, people can visualize what their own families might look like with the inclusion of a child or even siblings. Any stereotypes people might have about foster children disappear when they see these photos," says Beverly Beasley Johnson, Director of the San Mateo County Human Services Agency, "You can see on their faces, that these are kids who want what every kid wants, a sense of permanence in the world and a family to call their own."

The Bay Area Heart Gallery is a regional project that is coordinated by a partnership of four public and private agencies serving children and youth in foster care, and photographers from throughout the Bay Area. On October 1, 2008, the Heart Gallery will open at the Serramonte Center at 3 Serramonte Center in Daly City and will be available for viewing through October 30, 2008. The exhibit will then travel to various San Francisco and East Bay locations throughout the rest of the year.

---MORE---

###

About the Bay Area Heart Gallery – The Bay Area Heart Gallery Team is a partnership of four public and private agencies serving children and youth in foster care – working together with volunteer photographers and artists from throughout the Bay Area. The partner agencies are Alameda Social Services Agency, San Francisco Human Services Agency, San Mateo County 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.

WHEN:

The 2008 Bay Area Heart Gallery exhibit opens in San Mateo County at the Serramonte Center in Daly Center on October 1, 2008, and will be available for viewing through October 30, 2008.

Exhibit Hours: 10:00 AM - 9:00 PM, Monday-Saturday
 11:00 AM – 7:00 PM, Sunday

WHERE:

Serramonte Center, 3 Serramonte Center, Daly City, CA

PRIVATE TOURS AVAILABLE:

To schedule a private, guided tour of the exhibit for your camera or news crew, please contact Amanda Kim of the San Mateo County Human Services Agency at (650) 802-6433 or e-mail akim@smchsa.org.

ADDITIONAL CONTACT INFORMATION:

To inquire about becoming an adoptive or foster parent in San Mateo County or to attend a biweekly foster parent orientation, please contact Sharon Stone at (650) 802-7651 or e-mail sstone@smchsa.org. To learn more about the Bay Area Heart Gallery, visit www.bayareaheartgallery.com

###



Walker Family Photographed for this year's Bay Area Heart Gallery by Jenn Farrington
--- END ---