



Project "If Not Us"

EVERY STEP OF THE WAY

A Desire to Love...A Reason to Adopt...

Volume 1, Issue 1
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"EVERY STEP OF THE WAY"
PROJECT INU LAUNCHES NEWSLETTER

A Message From the Director, Sabrena McAllister

Adoptions Together, Project If Not US is proud to launch our new team newsletter, "Every Step of the Way". Our goal is to keep our families abreast of the many activities and happenings of Project "If Not US." Future newsletters will highlight a school aged child waiting for a loving home, as well as information and tools on strengthening your families. We will also keep you informed about the many trainings and information sessions that we will be conducting in your neighborhoods. Most importantly we hope that you find support as you travel through the many stages of your adoption process. Whether still deciding to expand your family, waiting, placed or in finalization; we want you to know that INU is with you "Every Step Of The Way".



Project INU Team

Janice Goldwater
Adoptions Together
Executive Director

Dawn Musgrave
Adoptions Together
Associate Director

Sabrena M. McAllister
Director

Kamilah Bunn
INU Family Recruiter

Shani Thaxter
INU Coordinator

The Project If Not Us team is very dedicated to finding homes for the 126,000 children waiting in the foster care system. INU has just completed the first six months of Year 2, which has been very successful

- ◆ We have launched our extensive recruitment plan, which includes conducting outreach in our targeted recruitment areas: by structuring community informational sessions, attending community events and forming partnerships with local business and organizations in the community.
- ◆ We have developed our multimedia recruitment and education campaign, which includes print media, the development of public service announcements, participating in and organizing local radio and television interviews, the development of our collateral material, and the development of a speaker's bureau.
- ◆ In June, the INU Advisory Council Recruitment Committee did a wonderful job in developing a Dispelling the Myth a workshop about African American adoption.
- ◆ We conducted a successful Legislative Briefing breakfast attended by local policy makers and politicians during Adoption Awareness month in November 2003.
- ◆ We have seen an increased numbers of prospective adoptive parents responding to our call to action. In May & July 2004 our first set of INU families graduated from AdoptionWorks training and have begun their home study journey. We also have parents registered for our upcoming trainings. It's not too late to register for November training!

We appreciate all of your support to make INU successful!

Sabrena M. McAllister, Director Project "If Not US"

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THE CALVIN SPIGNER STORY

A Flash of Fate, A Bus Ride to Freedom



Calvin Spigner was in his late 30's when he was taking the bus home and looked up to see the faces of a happy father surrounded by three smiling children staring at him from an ad across the aisle. He doesn't remember what was being advertised, only that something about it hit his heart. To his surprise, a voice in him said, "I want that." In a flash, he knew his days of being a bachelor were over.

A devoutly spiritual man, Calvin pays attention when this voice in him speaks. He knew his next steps in life would be to adopt a child, and shortly after his revelation, he found Marcel, then 12, his first son. "When I saw Marcel, I knew he was supposed to be my son. I just knew it," he says.

Calvin, who at first considered adopting a younger child, found his natural gifts being a father to teenagers. Calvin treated his son with the respect he needed. Calvin knew they would get nowhere if Marcel did not trust him. "When you stick by kids, it gives you points in their eyes. I stood by Marcel and defended him, and I earned enough points," he says.

Three years later, Calvin heard the voice of divine inspiration again and found himself on the same road, this time with Willard, his second son, whom he adopted by working with Adoptions Together, a Silver-Spring, Md.-based private, non-profit child placement agency licensed by the State of Maryland and District of Columbia. Project "If Not Us," an initiative of Adoptions Together, is dedicated to finding adoptive homes for older African-American children.

"Project "If Not Us" specializes in working with individuals like Calvin who want to welcome an older African-American child into their hearts and home," explains Sabrena McAllister, Director of Project "If Not Us."

*"..Follow Your Heart It Will Never
Lead You Wrong"*

"When I saw Willard, I was so nervous. It was a happy nervous," Calvin remembers with a smile on his face. "I couldn't believe God would send me such a beautiful kid." Now the father of two teenage sons, Calvin thought his life was complete, but it turned out that he wasn't finished yet. He was at work last year when the call came again. "Something told me to go to the adoptions website. I'd been on it before, but this time I saw Teako and thought, 'that's my son.'" In November 2003, Teako became an official member of the Spigner family.

Calvin is a happy and proud father of three teenaged boys. "I don't know how I'm doing it," he laughs. "I'm just doing it. My pastor says I have a heart for it." Now seven years since that fateful bus ride, Calvin Spigner looks just like the man in the advertisement. "My sons helped me grow up. Until Marcel I was worried just about me, but now I understand responsibility," he says. "My father wasn't there for me, my sons have helped me heal because now I am doing for them what didn't happen for me."

Calvin's personal experiences have given him a touching clarity about his relationship to his boys. "The best moment of being a father was when the adoptions were finalized. To keep them from that road of rejection, abuse, being unwanted . . . I was a part of that, and that felt good. It felt right," he says.

When asked if he had any advice for people hearing an inner voice about adoption but were unsure about following it, he says firmly: "Follow your heart. It will never lead you wrong."



KAMILAH'S KORNER

INU FAMILY RECRUITER, KAMILAH BUNN



Many of you have had the distinct pleasure of meeting or speaking on the phone with INU Family Recruitment Specialist, Kamilah Bunn. Kamilah is passionate about championing causes and issues that affect our community. Spreading the word about African American adoption is her passion. She wakes up every morning and says, "What can I do to find an older child a home today." Kamilah works to fulfill those words everyday.

Kamilah welcomes and is always looking for families to help her spread the word on adopting.

- ◆ If you know someone who is interested in adopting, pass their name on to Kamilah she will gladly contact them and provide them with the great support she provided you.
- ◆ You may be interested in having her speak at your church, PTA, office or even speak to a group of friends in your home.
- ◆ Kamilah is always looking for dedicated volunteers for events in the community.
- ◆ The possibilities are endless on ways you can help.

What can I do to find an older child a home today?

If you are ready to begin the adoption process, want to attend an information session or have questions, give her a call at 301.439.2900 or email kbunn@adoptionstogether.org

Each quarter Kamilah will INU activities on recruitment, families, workshops and other inspirational topics.

FINDING YOUR CHILD

Helpful Tips To Keep in Mind While Searching the Net

Search the Internet sites every week. Most states update once a week and the day varies.

◆ Stay in contact with your Adoption Specialist

◆ Broaden your search on age ranges.

◆ Know what issues you can and cannot handle.

◆ Pick a couple of states and concentrate on them.

◆ When asked to tell about yourself be sure to tell about your lifestyle, your home, schools, and any special activities for kids in your area.

◆ When checking on the status of a child, give the worker the best daytime phone number to reach you.

◆ When you do have the opportunity to speak to a caseworker, get as much specific information regarding the child/ren as possible.

◆ Always ask if the child is still available before having your Home Study sent.

◆ Be prepared if you are looking to adopt out of state to have travel expenses. Some agencies can help..

◆ Be prepared for a roller coaster of emotions.



REGISTER FOR WINTER TRAINING! NOVEMBER TRAINING

Still holding on to your application?

Still waiting for just the right time to attend training?

Well Now is the Time!

We have Winter classes beginning **November 11th–December 6th** on *Tuesdays & Thursdays!*

Training provides you with the essential tools to make your family and adoption successful!

Call us at 301.439.2900 to get more information or mail your application today to
10230 New Hampshire Ave, Suite 200, Silver Spring, MD 20903

2004 FALL AND WINTER INFORMATION SESSIONS

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| <p><u>September</u></p> <p>Tuesday, September 28th Seat Pleasant Activity Center 5720 Addison Road Seat Pleasant</p> | <p><u>October</u></p> <p>Thursday, October 14th Bowie Library 15210 Annapolis Road Bowie</p> <p>Saturday, October 16th Martin Luther King Library 901 G Street NW Washington, DC</p> <p>Tuesday, October 19th Greenbelt Library 11 Crescent Road, Greenbelt</p> <p>Wednesday, October 27th Laurel Library 507 7th Street, Laurel</p> |
| <p><u>November</u></p> <p>Tuesday, November 9th Adoptions Together 10230 New Hamp. Ave Silver Spring</p> <p>Wednesday, November 10th Largo-Kettering Library 9601 Capital Lane Largo</p> | |

NEED SUPPORT? WAITING FAMILY SUPPORT GROUP

Feel Like you are waiting alone for your Child? Feel Like No One Understands What You are Going Through?
Join families like yours for our Waiting Family Support Group! Talk about what's important to you. For more information contact INU Director, Sabrena McAllister @ 301.439.2900 or smcallister@adoptionstogether.org.

