

28TH ANNUAL
ANGELS
IN ADOPTION®
Celebration



TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 2026
CAPITAL TURNAROUND | WASHINGTON, D.C.

Program

Opening

Senator Chuck Grassley (IA)

Welcome from CCAI

Kate McLean, Executive Director

Adoption Caucus Bipartisan Call to Action

Message from the Board of Directors

Susan Neely, Board Chair

Lived Expert Testimony

Lily Ford, 2026 Foster Youth Intern

2026 National Angels in Adoption® Corporate Award

Cox Enterprises

2026 Angels in Adoption® Lifetime Achievement Award

Russel W. Sullivan

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Welcome

As we celebrate the 28th year of the Angels in Adoption® Program, Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute (CCAI) is proud to work alongside the Adoption Caucus on this annual public awareness program to recognize the extraordinary work and impact of our Angel honorees on behalf of children in need of safe, nurturing, and permanent families. For over two and a half decades, the Angels program has connected the powerful commitment of leaders in Congress to the extraordinary leadership and impact of so many individuals across the country on behalf of adoption and foster care.



This year, there are 83 incredible Angels in Adoption® and participating Members of Congress from all 50 states. Our Angels are adoptees, former foster youth, foster and adoptive parents, kinship caregivers, child welfare professionals, attorneys, judges, healthcare providers, law enforcement officers, business owners, civil servants, nonprofit and community leaders, volunteers, and fierce advocates—all champions in their communities across the United States. CCAI is honored to help give these champions a platform on Capitol Hill.

We have sincere gratitude for the leadership from our Board of Directors and Advisory Council, as well as support from faithful partners. We give thanks to the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption, Cox Enterprises, Tom Vallone, the Walter S. Johnson Foundation, Sara Fagen, the May & Stanley Smith Charitable Trust, the American Council of Life Insurers, Strategic Partners & Media, and Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck, with special thanks to our executive partners, the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation and Arnold & Porter.

Thank you for joining us for tonight's event! We look forward to celebrating this special night with you.

In community,

Kate McLean

Executive Director

About Us

Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute (CCAI) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization founded in 2001 to eliminate the barriers that prevent children from safe, nurturing, and permanent families. For more than twenty years, CCAI has served as a trusted, principal source of the information, expertise, and resources needed by members of Congress' Adoption Caucus, the Congressional Coalition on Adoption (CCA), on permanency issues in the United States and around the world.

Although the CCA and CCAI are distinct entities, they are closely linked in partnership. Both CCA and CCAI are deeply committed to bipartisanship, strengthening families, and permanency. CCAI's initial and continued mandate includes service to the caucus.

Knowledge is power. CCAI's main purpose and expertise is bringing awareness and education to the U.S. Congress by providing experiential and interactive resources and opportunities to the active membership of the Congressional Coalition on Adoption (CCA) to stay up to date on child welfare policy information. CCAI's programs are led by voices of both experience and professional expertise. CCAI's programs provide policymakers the knowledge they need to use the power they have to make a difference on behalf of vulnerable children and families.



For three decades, since establishing in 1985, CCA Members have led Congress in the passage of historic legislation that has dramatically impacted the lives of children, youth, and families including: Supporting Foster Youth and Families through the Pandemic Act, Family First Prevention Services Act, The Adoption and Safe Families Act, John H. Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood, Promoting Safe and Stable Families Act, Intercountry Adoption Act, and more.

Our Programs

CONGRESSIONAL RESOURCE PROGRAM (CRP) is CCAI's primary means of sharing objective, relevant, and timely information to help educate policymakers on information critical to federal adoption, child welfare, and permanency policy both domestically and internationally. In an effort to better serve children in need of families, CCAI's Congressional Resource Program also provides ideal opportunities for policymakers to communicate directly with experts with lived experience in adoption and foster care. Since its founding, CCAI's educational efforts have helped produce over 100 pieces of child welfare and adoption-related legislation.

Through CCAI's signature public awareness program, **ANGELS IN ADOPTION**®, Members of Congress have an opportunity to recognize individuals, families, and organizations from across the country who have made extraordinary contributions to adoption, permanency, and child welfare. Once selected, the Angels travel to Washington, D.C. to both celebrate their hard work and dedication to the issues and participate in special events designed to engage them in using their lived experience to effect change such as meeting with federal policymakers, participating in policy roundtables, and receiving advocacy training. Since 1999, thousands of Angels have traveled to Washington, D.C. to take part in this program, and these extraordinary leaders return home more empowered and better equipped to effect change on behalf of vulnerable children and families.

Since its founding in 2003, **FOSTER YOUTH INTERNSHIP PROGRAM**® is a congressional internship for individuals who have experienced the U.S. foster care system. Throughout the program, CCAI coordinates advocacy trainings, networking events, meetings with policymakers and child welfare experts, and other professional and personal development opportunities. The program participants also research federal policy recommendations oftentimes based on their experiences in foster care and present their policy research and recommendations to the U.S. Congress, Administration, Department of Health & Human Services, and private sector. Many of these policy recommendations have been passed into law. Moreover, the Foster Youth Interns leave Washington, D.C. with experience and skills that continue to bolster their careers and provide a foundation for them to become lifelong advocates for youth in foster care.

20/20 VISION is a public-private partnership delegation model designed to build relationships and increase positive dialogue among Members of Congress, foreign and domestic government officials, and private sector leaders to share information and improve adoption and child welfare policy and practice around the globe. The 20/20 Vision program facilitates ongoing communication, education and fact-finding trips between government entities both domestically and internationally. CCAI also hosts foreign leaders and dignitaries from around the globe in the nation's capital and coordinates meetings with congressional leadership. CCAI's 20/20 Vision delegations have visited California, Florida, Ohio, Ethiopia, Chile, Romania, Russia, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Uganda, India, Vietnam, Cambodia, and others.

Our Partners

Executive Partners

(\$150,000+)

Arnold & Porter
Conrad N. Hilton Foundation

Director Partners

(\$75,000-\$99,999)

Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption
Cox Enterprises

Champion Partners

(\$30,000 - \$74,999)

Autumn Hanna VandeHei
Tom Vallone
Walter S. Johnson Foundation
Sara Fagan

Leader Partners

(\$25,000 - \$29,999)

American Council of Life Insurers
Sharon and Bill Bailey
Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck
Strategic Partners & Media

Gold Partners

(\$10,000 - \$24,999)

American Beverage Association
American Retirement Association
Ashley O'Connor
Eden and Marty Durbin
Elevance Health
Kelly Gage
Mehlman Consulting
Retail Orphan Initiative
Susan and David Hirschmann
Susan K. Neely
Think of Us
Kelly Mohs Gage
PhRMA
Radiance Technologies

Bronze Partners

(\$5,000 - \$9,999)

ATHOS Media Strategies
AxAdvocacy

BGR Group
PLUS Communications
Show Hope
Smith-Free Group
Picard Group
Samuel J. Marchio
American Electric Power
Amgen
Andrea McDaniel Smith
Capitol Counsel
Chevron
CVS Health
Ferring Pharmaceuticals Inc.
LSG
Manatt, Phelps & Phillips, LLP
Mary Landrieu and Frank Snellings
Nailsaloon
Russel W. Sullivan
The Messina Group
The Russel Group
Brian Graff

Supporter Partners

(\$2,500 - \$4,999)

Anne and Greg Polk
C. Josi & Company
Elyce and Andy Arons
Good River Partners
L. James Roth
Thorn Run Partners
ALB Solutions
NCTA - The Internet & Television Association
Nickie and Rodger Currie

Friend Partners

(\$1,000 - \$2,499)

Catherine and Bart Barre
Century Next Bank
Karen and Gary LaBranche
Matt Nielsen
Patricia Soldano
Anthony Pritzker Family Foundation
Academy of Adoption & Assisted Reproduction
Attorneys
Gift of Adoption
Holt International Children's Services
The Real Estate Roundtable

Congressional Coalition on Adoption Caucus Members

119th Congress

U.S. Senate Co-Chairs: Sens. Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) & Kevin Cramer (R-ND)

U.S. House Co-Chairs: Reps. Danny K. Davis (D-IL) & Robert Aderholt (R-AL)

Alabama

Rep. Robert Aderholt (R)*
Rep. Barry Moore (R)

Alaska

Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R)

Arizona

Sen. Ruben Gallego (D)
Rep. David Schweikert (R)
Rep. Andy Biggs (R)

Arkansas

Sen. John Boozman (R)
Sen. Tom Cotton (R)
Rep. Bruce Westerman (R)
Rep. French Hill (R)

California

Sen. Adam Schiff (D)
Rep. Nanette Diaz Barragán (D)
Rep. Ami Bera (D)
Rep. Julia Brownley (D)
Rep. Ken Calvert (R)
Rep. Judy Chu (D)
Rep. Jared Huffman (D)
Rep. Zoe Lofgren (D)
Rep. Doris Matsui (D)
Rep. Linda Sanchez (D)
Rep. Brad Sherman (D)

Colorado

Rep. Joe Neguse (D)

Connecticut

Sen. Richard Blumenthal (D)
Rep. Rosa DeLauro (D)
Rep. Jim Himes (D)

Delaware

Sen. Christopher Coons (D)
Sen. Lisa Blunt Rochester (D)
Rep. Sarah McBride (D)

District of Columbia

Rep. Eleanor Holmes Norton (D)

Florida

Rep. Gus Bilirakis (R)
Rep. Kat Cammack (R)
Rep. John Rutherford (R)
Rep. Vern Buchanan (R)

Georgia

Rep. Barry Loudermilk (R)

Idaho

Sen. James Risch (R)

Illinois

Sen. Richard Durbin (D)
Rep. Danny Davis (D)*

Indiana

Sen. Jim Banks (R)
Rep. Andre Carson (D)
Rep. Erin Houchin (R)
Rep. Rudy Yakym (R)
Rep. Marlin Stutzman (R)

Iowa

Sen. Chuck Grassley (R)

Kansas

Sen. Jerry Moran (R)
Rep. Sharice Davids (D)

Kentucky

Rep. James Comer (R)
Rep. Andy Barr (R)

Louisiana

Sen. Bill Cassidy (R)
Sen. John Kennedy (R)
Rep. Mike Johnson (R)
Rep. Julia Letlow (R)
Rep. Steve Scalise (R)

Maine

Sen. Susan Collins (R)
Sen. Angus King, Jr. (I)
Rep. Chellie Pingree (D)

Maryland

Sen. Chris Van Hollen (D)

Massachusetts

Rep. Stephen Lynch (D)
Rep. Seth Moulton (D)

Michigan

Sen. Gary Peters (D)
Rep. Bill Huizenga (R)
Rep. John Moolenaar (R)
Rep. Tim Walberg (R)
Rep. Rashida Tlaib (D)
Rep. Tom Barrett (R)

Caucus Members

(continued)

Minnesota

Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D)*
Sen. Tina Smith (D)
Rep. Pete Stauber (R)
Rep. Tom Emmer (R)
Rep. Angie Craig (D)
Rep. Betty McCollum (D)

Mississippi

Sen. Roger F. Wicker (R)
Sen. Cindy Hyde-Smith (R)
Rep. Trent Kelly (R)

Missouri

Sen. Josh Hawley (R)
Rep. Ann Wagner (R)
Rep. Emanuel Cleaver (D)
Rep. Jason Smith (R)
Rep. Sam Graves (R)

Montana

Sen. Steve Daines (R)

Nebraska

Rep. Don Bacon (R)
Rep. Adrian Smith (R)
Rep. Mike Flood (R)

Nevada

Sen. Jacky Rosen (D)

New Hampshire

Sen. Maggie Hassan (D)

New Jersey

Rep. Frank Pallone, Jr. (D)
Rep. Christopher Smith (R)
Rep. Josh Gottheimer (D)
Rep. LaMonica McIver (D)

New York

Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (D)
Rep. Joseph D. Morelle (D)
Rep. Jerrold Nadler (D)

North Carolina

Sen. Thom Tillis (R)
Rep. Addison McDowell (R)
Rep. Greg Murphy (R)
Rep. David Rouzer (R)

North Dakota

Sen. Kevin Cramer (R)*

Ohio

Rep. Dave Joyce (R)
Rep. Joyce Beatty (D)
Rep. Mike Carey (R)

Oklahoma

Sen. James Lankford (R)
Rep. Stephanie Bice (R)

Oregon

Sen. Ron Wyden (D)
Rep. Suzanne Bonamici (D)

Pennsylvania

Rep. Brendan Boyle (D)
Rep. Mike Kelly (R)
Rep. Glenn Thompson (R)
Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick (R)
Rep. Lloyd Smucker (R)

Rhode Island

Rep. Seth Magaziner (D)

South Carolina

Rep. Joe Wilson (R)
Rep. Ralph Norman (R)

South Dakota

Sen. John Thune (R)
Sen. Mike Rounds (R)
Rep. Dusty Johnson (R)

Tennessee

Sen. Marsha Blackburn (R)

Texas

Rep. John Carter (R)
Rep. Joaquin Castro (D)
Rep. Lloyd Doggett (D)
Rep. Sylvia Garcia (D)
Rep. Vicente Gonzalez (D)

Utah

Rep. Blake Moore (R)

Virginia

Sen. Mark Warner (D)
Rep. Rob Wittman (R)
Rep. Don Beyer (D)
Rep. Ben Cline (R)
Rep. H. Morgan Griffith (R)

Washington

Sen. Patty Murray (D)
Sen. Maria Cantwell (D)
Rep. Adam Smith (D)

West Virginia

Rep. Carol D. Miller (R)

Wisconsin

Sen. Tammy Baldwin (D)
Rep. Glenn Grothman (R)
Rep. Mark Pocan (D)
Rep. Bryan Steil (R)
Rep. Gwen Moore (D)

2026 National Angels in Adoption Honoree

Cox Enterprises



Cox Enterprises is a family-owned company focused on making a positive impact and creating solutions that benefit both people and the planet in the wake of critical community challenges. Cox Enterprises has spent over 125 years with a focus on communications and sustainability in the automotive, agricultural, and technological industries. With a story rooted in innovation, resilience, and a deep commitment to people and progress, Cox Enterprises is dedicated to improving people's lives and building a better future for the planet we all call home.

Aside from their groundbreaking sustainability work, Cox Enterprises is devoted to supporting their employees through family-planning, fertility issues, the adoption process, and all medical needs. They have set an extraordinary example for all organizations to follow with their generous family benefits and support of their employees.

From family-planning benefits and paid parental leave to back-up childcare and work flexibility, Cox is committed to empowering working parents at work and at home. Cox Enterprises offers their employees financial assistance to help cover costs associated with the adoption process. This benefit comes with no restriction on the family's relation to the adopted child, where the child is born, or how many children a Cox employee chooses to adopt. Along with this, employees receive generous and flexible paid parental leave following the birth, adoption, or foster care placement of a child. Cox also offers coverage for fertility treatments for employees as well as access to a host of useful companies and programs including Milk Stork, Teladoc, Brightline, DCFSA, Care.com, The Calm app, and more.

Through their dedication to the physical, financial, and emotional wellbeing of their employees through all family-planning matters, Cox Enterprises fully exemplifies the spirit of the Angels in Adoption® program.

2026 Lifetime Achievement Award Honoree

Russel Sullivan



Russell Sullivan is the inaugural recipient of the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute's (CCAI) Lifetime Achievement Award. The award recognizes individuals whose extraordinary leadership and lifelong commitment have advanced CCAI's mission: to ensure that children have the safety, permanence, and opportunity every child deserves. For many years, Russ has been an invaluable member of the CCAI Board of Directors, offering wise counsel, steadfast leadership, and unmatched expertise in public policy and government relations.

Russ joined the Senate Finance Committee staff in 1999 and served as staff director from 2004 until he retired in 2013. As an advisor to then-chair Sen. Max Baucus, he helped shape major legislation, including the 2001 tax cuts, the Medicare Modernization Act, the Pension Protection Act, and the Affordable Care Act. Today, he provides strategic counsel on complex administrative, regulatory, and legislative matters across a wide range of industries, including tax, healthcare, energy, and the nonprofit sector.

Throughout a distinguished career on Capitol Hill and in Washington, Russ has earned the respect of leaders across the political spectrum without losing sight of the children and families whose lives are shaped by public policy. Over the past two decades, he has quietly opened his home and his heart to children in need. He has served as legal or designated guardian for 22 teenagers, and as foster parent, mentor, and father figure to many more young people facing extraordinary challenges. His commitment to giving vulnerable children stability, encouragement, and unconditional love shows that changing a child's life takes more than words. It takes showing up, day after day, with compassion, commitment, and hope.

Those who know Russ understand that recognition has never been his goal. He has simply lived the values at the heart of CCAI's mission: that every child deserves to be loved, to belong, and to have the opportunity to thrive.

2026 Angels in Adoption Honorees

Ad Astra Advocacy Center

Heather and Brian Ambrose

Karen Annis

Harold O. Atencio

Tatiana Ayala

Assemblymember Steve Bennett

Emily and Josh Benton

Shannon Bingham

Jamie and Gerald Bleakley

Katherine L. Boise

Boys Town New England

Shanna and Joshua Brady

Claudia and Robert Brown, Jr.

Broomfield FISH Food Bank and Family Resource Center

Amanda and Rodney Burton

Butler-Lawrence Co. Isaiah 117 House

Children & Families First Delaware, Inc.

Jaliyah Carlisle

Teresa A. Cirelli

Mindy and Christopher Deets

Kristen Deforge

Luis De La Cruz

Thomas Dent

Ashley El

Melissa and John Falendysz

Family Programs Hawaii

Family Support Services

Rhonda Fishbein

Jessica and Donovan Flaherty

Fostering Hope, Inc.

Gayle and Robert Franck

Diana Lynn Gelfand

Sarah Gerstenzang

Coleen Globke Brasch

Heart Gallery East Texas

Hearts with a Mission

Steven Hernández, Esq.

Courtney and Jeff Hessig

Terri Hoover Odom

Hope Ranch of Missouri

Traci Jamieson

Steven Jones

[Please click to read the
2025 Angels in Adoption® biographies](#)

ANGELS
IN ADOPTION®
Celebration

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2026 Angels in Adoption Honorees

(continued)

Suzanne Jones
Maribeth and Jake Joraanstad
Crystal and Justin Kasmiskie
Erin Keller
Alice and Erick Langseth
Jennifer Lisson
Mary and Robert W. Long
Elizabeth Fortin-Lussier
Tammy and Damon Magee
Robin E. and Louis J. Marino, Jr.
Vickie and Kenneth Mars
Hon. Deborah L. McNabb
Jennifer McNary
Mission West Virginia, Inc.
Ashley Mitchell
Laila-Rose Moorehead
Jolene M. Mullins
My G.E.A.R. Outreach
Anne and Don Nelson
Alexia Newman
New Mercies Ministries
Sara and Nicholas Pendleton
Heidi Peppers and Emily Story
Charlene Platter
Raise the Future
Ronnette and Bryan Rock
Alexia Rodrigues
The Sacred Portion Children's Outreach
Wendy Spoerl
Kendyl and Will Standridge
StepStone Family & Youth Services
Nicole M. Stewart
Jenna and Robert Stoner
Mary Suddath BSN RN
Tracy Swain
Kalei and Miller Thompson
Treehouse
Taylor Tugwell
Washoe CASA Foundation
Tiffany Wright
YCS Specialized Treatment Homes

[Please click to read the
2025 Angels in Adoption® biographies](#)

Advisory Council

Erick Alvarez

Lauren Behsudi

Dan Berger

Kamilah Bunn

Allison Coble

Hope Cooper

Ian Forber-Pratt

Dr. Sharen Ford

Amirah Foster

Philip Goldman

Bethany Haley

Daniel Heimpel

Lindsay Kaeding

Kathy Nuebel Kovarik

Zach Laris

McLane Layton

Jaia Peterson Lent

Jedd Medefind

Shaquita Ogletree

Steven Olender

Jennifer Perry

Ted Prettyman

Kelsey Vander Vliet Ranyard

Emily Chapman Richards

Debbie Riley

Ben Sand

Christopher Baker Scott

Chelsea Sobolik

Rita Soronen

Nicole Taylor

Rebecca Vahle

Taylor Vitello

Alexandria Ware-Hill

Board of Directors

Susan Neely (Chair)

CEO Emeritus, American Council of Life Insurers

Susan Hirschmann (Vice Chair)

CEO, Williams & Jensen

Brian Graff (Treasurer)

CEO, American Retirement Association

Ashley O'Connor (Secretary)

Managing Partner, Strategic Partners & Media

Sam Marchio (Development)

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CEO, Radiance Technologies

Marty Durbin

Senior Vice President of Policy, U.S. Chamber of
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Kelly Gage

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Senior Vice President of Government and
External Relations, AmeriHealth Caritas

Andrea McDaniel Smith

Partner, CarterBaldwin Executive Search

Russ Sullivan

Shareholder, Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck,
LLP

Autumn Hanna VandeHei

Co-Founder and President, The Zotheka
Foundation

Board of Directors

Susan K. Neely, Chair



Susan K. Neely is the former president and CEO of the American Council of Life Insurers (ACLI), the nation's leading trade association dedicated to providing products and services that contribute to Americans' financial and retirement security. As president and CEO, Neely drove public policy and advocacy on behalf of ACLI's member companies that represent 95 percent of industry assets and serve 90 million families.

Neely has long been recognized as a leading voice in public policy and advocacy in Washington, D.C. She served as special assistant to President George W. Bush and helped create the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and later became the first DHS Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs. Neely was a senior executive at the Association of American Medical Colleges and the Health Insurance Association of America (HIAA), where she designed award-winning national advocacy programs and initiatives, like HIAA's ground-breaking Harry & Louise campaign.

Most recently, she led the American Beverage Association (ABA) for 13 years as president and CEO. Under her leadership, ABA instituted first-of-their-kind initiatives with President Clinton's Global Initiative and First Lady Michelle Obama's Let's Move campaign. These partnerships decreased calories from beverages sold in schools by 90 percent, put transparent calorie labels on millions of beverage containers, and reduced sugar consumed from beverages in the American diet.

Neely has been named Trade Association CEO of the year by two different national organizations. She is a past chair of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Association Committee of 100 of the largest trade associations and the American Society of Association Executives.

A native of Iowa, Neely holds an undergraduate degree in journalism and French civilization from the University of Iowa and a master's degree in public administration from Drake University. She is the mother of two children, Eve and Ben.

Board of Directors

Susan B. Hirschmann, Vice Chair



Susan B. Hirschmann is Chairman of the Board and CEO of Williams & Jensen, having served as a Principal in the firm since 2002. Williams & Jensen is consistently ranked as one of the top lobby firms and is proud to be one of Washington, D.C.'s oldest independent lobbying firms. Hailed as one of D.C.'s premier lobbyists, Susan has a reputation for effective advocacy and creative strategies. She has helped clients achieve success on issues ranging from health care and taxation to financial services, transportation, education, and appropriations.

Whether it was working with a client to secure tax permanency for 529 education savings accounts, which was the first Bush Era tax cut to be made permanent; running the coalition to pass Medicare Part D; securing a rare Jones Act Waiver; or securing funding for the National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility (NBAF) after it had been removed from the President's budget; Susan's ability to win on tough issues is why her clients believe that there is no one better at "snatching victory out of the jaws of defeat."

Additionally, Susan brings a breadth of expertise in third-party coalition building and grassroots organizing. Her experience in state, local, and national youth politics and her years spent working for a national activist women's organization gave her the background to found Integrated Legislative Strategies – an organization which pairs grassroots programs with legislative strategy, and where she oversees dozens of field staff across the country and works to build successful coalitions. Prior to joining Williams & Jensen, Susan was Chief of Staff to the Majority Whip of the House of Representatives. During her time working for House Leadership, she worked with Congress and the White House to develop and execute strategy on major trade, health care, and tax issues. This experience gave her an intimate understanding of and ability to advise clients on the intricacy of the inner workings of the Hill.

Susan has been recognized for her achievements in D.C. She has been named her one of D.C.'s top lobbyists, one of the most powerful women in Washington, and one of the top 100 most highly regarded staffers on Capitol Hill.

Board of Directors

Brian H. Graff, Treasurer



Brian H. Graff, Esq., is the Chief Executive Officer of the American Retirement Association, the umbrella organization for the American Society of Pension Professionals and Actuaries (ASPPA), the ASPPA College of Pension Actuaries (ACOPA), the National Association of Plan Advisors (NAPA), the National Tax-deferred Savings Association (NTSA), and the Plan Sponsor Council of America (PSCA). Graff oversees the American Retirement Association's operations, and working with the Board of Directors, charts the strategic direction for the organization.

Graff also serves as the Executive Director of ASPPA and NAPA. The American Retirement Association is a national organization of more than 25,000 retirement plan professionals who provide advisory and administrative services for qualified retirement plans covering tens of millions of American workers. In addition to representing the interests of its members before Congress and federal regulatory agencies on a combined basis, the American Retirement Association annually conducts more than a dozen industry conferences, and annually administers more than 5,000 examinations leading to various industry-related professional credentials.

Graff actively speaks on behalf of the retirement plan system and has been quoted in *The Washington Post*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and interviewed by various television outlets. He has testified on retirement policy issues before Congress and various federal regulators on numerous occasions.

An attorney (District of Columbia) and certified public accountant (New York-inactive), Graff was formerly Legislation Counsel to the U.S. Congress Joint Committee on Taxation where he provided policy and technical analysis relating to employee benefits, health care and Social Security to members of Congress. While working for Congress, Graff participated in the development of legislation, including the Small Business Job Protection Act of 1996 and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996. Prior to working on Capitol Hill, Graff was associated with the Washington, DC, law firm, The Groom Law Group, which specializes in employee benefits. Graff received his doctoral degree in law, cum laude, from the University of Pennsylvania Law School in Philadelphia.

Board of Directors

Ashley O'Connor, Secretary



Ashley O'Connor is a veteran leader in political advertising and is recognized as an industry expert on messaging to women. With more than 25 years of experience, Ashley has helped dozens of candidates, C-suite executives, non-profits, and corporations navigate tough public affairs battles and win hard-fought elections.

As the Managing Partner at Strategic Partners & Media, Ashley leads an in-house production team and a full staff of digital specialists, designers, developers, and strategists to help clients tell their story and reach exactly the right audience with their message.

Ashley has produced and directed hundreds of advertisements for political campaigns across the country, from presidential races to local elections. An award-winning producer, Ashley's work includes the acclaimed 2004 Republican National Convention keynote video, "The Pitch," that introduced President Bush, as well as "The Surge: The Untold Story," a documentary of the Surge in Iraq which won the 2010 Military Channel Award at the GI Film Festival.

An expert on messaging to women, Ashley is a frequent speaker and presenter at academic and industry conferences. She has lectured on politics and advertising at some of the nation's top universities, including the Harvard Kennedy School, the University of Chicago's Institute of Politics, and her alma mater, Mount Holyoke College. In 2014, Ashley was selected to Campaign & Elections magazine's "The Influencers 50" list.

Ashley served two terms on the board of the YWCA of Anne Arundel County, the only domestic abuse shelter and youth human trafficking shelter in the county, and remains active with the organization to this day. She is also an avid equestrian and a baseball mom; when not out riding or on the diamond with her son, Ashley and her husband are sponsoring midshipmen from the United States Naval Academy, entertaining with friends and family or enjoying time on the Chesapeake Bay.

Board of Directors

Sam Marchio, Development



Samuel J. Marchio is Vice President of Federal & External Affairs for Elevance Health, Inc. As a member of the Executive Leadership Team, Mr. Marchio leads the company's advocacy activities before the U.S. Congress (House and Senate), and all national organizations and coalitions. Mr. Marchio also provides strategic legislative and political support to the company and manages Elevance's Political Action Committee and grassroots capabilities. Mr. Marchio joined Elevance

(formerly Anthem, Inc.) in January 2011 with 10-years of bipartisan legislative, communications, political, and management experience as a senior congressional aide and veteran of five congressional campaigns.

Prior to joining Anthem, Mr. Marchio served as Chief of Staff for former U.S. Congressman Michael A. Arcuri (D-NY). In this capacity, Mr. Marchio served as the Congressman's chief legislative, communications, and political advisor. Mr. Marchio also oversaw Congressman Arcuri's work on the influential House Rules Committee, which is responsible for interpreting and implementing the rules of legislative debate and decorum in the U.S. House of Representatives. In that role he developed and executed strategy for the successful passage of 12 amendments to legislation debated by the House of Representatives.

Earlier in his career, Mr. Marchio spent five years working for former U.S. Congressman Sherwood L. "Sherry" Boehlert (R-NY), Chairman of the House Science Committee, in a variety of increasingly responsible roles, including Communications Director and Senior Legislative Assistant. Mr. Marchio joined Congressman Boehlert's office in 2001 while in college and served until December 2006 when Boehlert retired after 24 years of service in the U.S. House of Representatives.

Mr. Marchio also serves on the National Board of the National Kidney Foundation, and as Secretary of the National Board. Mr. Marchio earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science with studies focused on Public Administration and Political Philosophy from Utica College of Syracuse University in 2001. He resides in McLean, VA with his wife Shana (Stribling) Marchio and their 5-year old son, Sammy.

Board of Directors

Bill Bailey



Bill Bailey joined Radiance Technologies in 2001 and sets the strategic direction of Radiance, a more than \$300M 100% employee-owned small business with core competencies in developing advanced technologies, integrating systems, performing technical intelligence, and providing engineering services to the U.S. Department of Defense, armed services, intelligence agencies, and other U.S. government agencies.

Bill has approximately 42 years of technical and military experience supporting various intelligence, research, information operations, electronic warfare, and cyber-related projects. He also has 26 years of industry experience as a project engineer, project lead, and program manager and 14 years of military experience as a B-52 aircraft maintenance technician and Research and Development Engineer at the National Air and Space Intelligence Center (NASIC) and the Phillips Laboratory, now the Air Force Research Laboratory (AFRL).

Bill graduated from Louisiana Tech University with a BS in Electrical Engineering, received a MBA from Florida Tech, and has completed several relevant courses in Intelligence, Information Operations (I/O), Cyber and Electronic Warfare (EW), as well as completed advanced courses in engineering and business management.

Board of Directors

Marty Durbin



Martin (Marty) Durbin is Senior Vice President for Policy, overseeing the U.S. Chamber's well-respected Policy Division. Durbin also serves as President of the U.S. Chamber's Global Energy Institute, leading the strategic development and implementation of the Chamber's climate, energy, and sustainability policy, and highlighting the role of the business community in both strengthening our energy security and accelerating the clean energy transition.

Durbin brings more than 28 years of trade association leadership representing highly regulated energy and manufacturing industries. Prior to joining the US Chamber in 2019, Durbin was Executive Vice President and Chief Strategy Officer at the American Petroleum Institute (API), overseeing the integration of API's advocacy assets. He previously served as President and CEO of America's Natural Gas Alliance (ANGA) where he led the natural gas industry's market expansion through a comprehensive lobbying, grassroots and media campaign.

Durbin earlier served in senior positions with the American Chemistry Council and the American Plastics Council and began his career in legislative positions for Senator Alan J. Dixon (D-IL) and Representative Rick Boucher (D-VA).

Known for his bipartisan approach to advocacy, Marty serves as a Fellow with the Bipartisan Policy Center's (BPC) Governance Project, and on BPC's Direct Air Capture Advisory Council. He is currently Board Chairman of A Wider Circle, a grassroots nonprofit dedicated to ending poverty, and serves on the Board of the Congressional Coalition for Adoption Institute. In 2021 and 2022 he made Washingtonian's Most Influential list.

Durbin received a B.A. in Government and Politics from the University of Maryland, College Park. He is married and has three children.

Board of Directors

Sara Fagen



Sara Fagen is an American technology and data entrepreneur with a background in political strategy and public affairs. Sara co-founded Tunnl in 2020 where she serves as CEO, leading the fast-growing Tunnl team in their mission to streamline and maximize the ad-targeting experience for strategists and buyers alike by putting all of the audience insights they need across social media, programmatic digital, streaming TV, and linear TV all in one configurable platform that accommodates direct integrations into buying platforms of choice.

In 2013, Sara co-founded Deep Root Analytics, the premiere micro-targeting solution for political campaigns. Deep Root Analytics was a natural extension of Sara's years serving as a partner at DDC Public Affairs in Washington D.C., where she helped clients solve some of their toughest public affairs and political challenges. Sara became a Partner at DDC in 2011 after the company acquired BlueFront Strategies, an issue advocacy firm that Sara founded. In 2014, Sara helped lead the sale of DDC to Omnicom Group Inc. (OMC).

In 2008, Sara co-founded Resonate Insights, a disruptive real-time consumer intelligence platform that brings together real-time survey data and insights on over 230 million consumers and online behavioral data all in one platform.

Before finding her stride as an entrepreneur, Sara led a successful career in government and campaign politics. Sara served as White House Political Director for President George W. Bush. During her years in the White House, Sara was involved in helping enact some of President Bush's most significant legislative accomplishments. Sara also played a key role in President Bush's 2004 re-election campaign in which she served as a senior strategist directing opinion research and paid media.

Sara's commentary can be seen across popular news programming including CNBC and NBC News' Meet the Press where she is a regular contributor.

Board of Directors

Kelly Gage



Kelly Gage is an accomplished public speaker, educator, advisor, and philanthropist, with nearly 20 years of experience with foundations and NGOs dealing with human trafficking, public media, arts and culture, education, and community development. She is passionate about fighting exploitation in women and children. Prior to joining Nomi Network, Kelly served as an Associate Professor in the Department of Apparel, Merchandising and Design at St. Catherine University.

Kelly holds a doctorate in apparel studies from the Department of Design, Housing, and Apparel at the University of Minnesota, a master's degree in Art History from the University of St. Thomas and a bachelor's degree in economics from Northwestern University. She has also sat on the boards of the World Childhood Foundation, an organization that combats the sexual exploitation of women and children, and the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute. Aside from being an analytical thinker and an impeccable dresser, Kelly is the proud mom of two sets of twins.

Kelly shows excellent relationship building and management skills throughout professional, academic, and social circles and utilizes her vast experience mentoring, coaching, and serving as a valuable resource to colleagues, students and graduates. Kelly's particular areas of international expertise are Brazil, Cambodia, and India. Her areas of specialization include Afro Brazilian slave dress, major gifts development, relationship building, development of grant-making programs, and Portuguese. Kelly was a board member at the Carlson Family Foundation between 1197 to 2003 as well.

Board of Directors

Joyce Rogers



Joyce Rogers is a senior executive with legal, public policy, government affairs, and political experience. Joyce has a strong track record of legislative and regulatory successes. Currently, Joyce is the Vice President of US Policy and Public Affairs at Pfizer. She leads Pfizer's US Policy and Public Affairs teams. Previously, Joyce was the Chief Government Affairs Officer for Advocate Aurora Health (AAH). Joyce leads AAH's federal and state advocacy.

AAH is the 10th largest not-for-profit integrated health care system in the United States and a national leader in clinical innovation, health outcomes, consumer experience, and value based care.

Before joining AAH, Joyce served as the senior vice president of government affairs at AARP. Joyce led AARP's federal and state advocacy. In this role, she worked with elected officials, patient advocacy groups, private sector companies and industry associations. Joyce was a partner at Williams & Jensen, a Washington, DC-based law firm and represented Fortune 500 companies, trade associations, non-profits, and small businesses.

Prior to Williams & Jensen, Joyce was an associate at Verner Liipfert. Early in her career, she worked for two Members of Congress, including House Democratic Whip Steny Hoyer. Throughout her career, Joyce has worked on presidential, gubernatorial, congressional and local campaigns. Joyce serves on the Friends of the National Zoo (FONZ) Board of Directors and the Franklin Center for Global Policy Exchange Board of Directors. Joyce is a graduate of Williams College and the University of Pennsylvania Law School and admitted to the District of Columbia and State of Maryland Bar Associations.

Joyce has certificates from the Tuck School of Business at Dartmouth's Executive Management Program, Leadership and Strategic Impact Program; Georgetown University McDonough School of Business, AARP Agile Leadership Program; and Executive Leadership Council's Institute for Leadership & Research, Strengthening the Pipeline Program.

Board of Directors

Andrea McDaniel Smith



Andrea McDaniel Smith leads the Washington, D.C. office for CarterBaldwin Executive Search and serves clients in the nonprofit, education, international and economic development, philanthropy, and public policy sectors.

Andrea joined CarterBaldwin in 2015 following more than 15 years of distinguished work in public service, and nonprofit organizations. Andrea served in the White House Office of Presidential Personnel, advising George W. Bush on his appointments to government agencies.

She also played a key leadership role in the recruitment and assessment of hundreds of senior individuals as the Deputy White House Liaison at the U.S. Department of State.

Following her government service, Andrea moved to Kigali, Rwanda and co-founded a nonprofit organization focused on education and community-based development. That experience led her to co-produce the award-winning documentary film, *Mama Rwanda*, which tells the story of women overcoming extreme poverty through entrepreneurship. She then spent a season at the Aspen Institute, promoting entrepreneurship and education in the Middle East and North Africa.

Andrea serves on the Board of Directors of The Veritas Forum and Faith and Law in Washington, D.C. Andrea, her husband, Adrian, and their young son and daughter split time between Washington, D.C. and Gering, Nebraska, where Adrian represents the 3rd Congressional District in the U.S. House of Representatives.

Board of Directors

Russell Sullivan



Russell Sullivan provides strategic counsel, offering comprehensive solutions from an administrative, regulatory and legislative perspective on client's most complex matters. He brings a unique perspective to a wide variety of issues for a broad range of industries, including tax, healthcare, energy, pensions, transportation, education, trade and economic development, as well as matters involving the nonprofit and for-benefit enterprise sectors.

In addition to providing strategic legal counsel, Russ advises clients on business planning and public affairs. Russ joined the Senate Finance Committee staff in 1999 before rising to staff director in 2004, a role in which he served until he retired in 2013. From that position, he saw some of the most important and complex issues within the business community come before the committee. Along with advising former committee chair Sen. Max Baucus, Russ also helped devise and implement strategies on the 2001 tax cuts, the JOBS Act of 2004, the Medicare Modernization Act of 2004, the Pension Protection Act of 2006 and the Affordable Care Act of 2009.

Russ has served as legal or designated guardian for 22 teenagers over the past two decades.

Board of Directors

Autumn Hanna VendeHei



For over two decades, Autumn Hanna VendeHei has dedicated her career in federal government and NGO sectors to empowering youth from marginalized communities and supporting traumatized people with theology and pastoral care. As the co-founder and President of The Zotheka Foundation, Autumn oversees the provision of scholarships and mentorship to students who aspire to pursue higher education.

In addition, Autumn leverages her skills in child advocacy, human rights policy, and communication to advocate for the rights and needs of children and families in various contexts, especially those affected by trauma and abuse. She served as a political appointee - Deputy Assistant Secretary for Legislation (Human Services) - at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and the Deputy Director of Floor Operations in the House of Representatives. Autumn also served as the Victim Advocate for the Anglican Church in North America on behalf of sexual assault survivors and collaborated with survivor organizations to hold Church leaders accountable for their decisions in sexual abuse cases. Autumn's mission is to inspire and support diverse and underrepresented groups in achieving their goals and overcoming their challenges.

Our Partners

CCAI would like to thank the following 2026 partners for their continued support of our work to ensure every child knows the love and support of a permanent family. These partners support CCAI and our ongoing work throughout the year.

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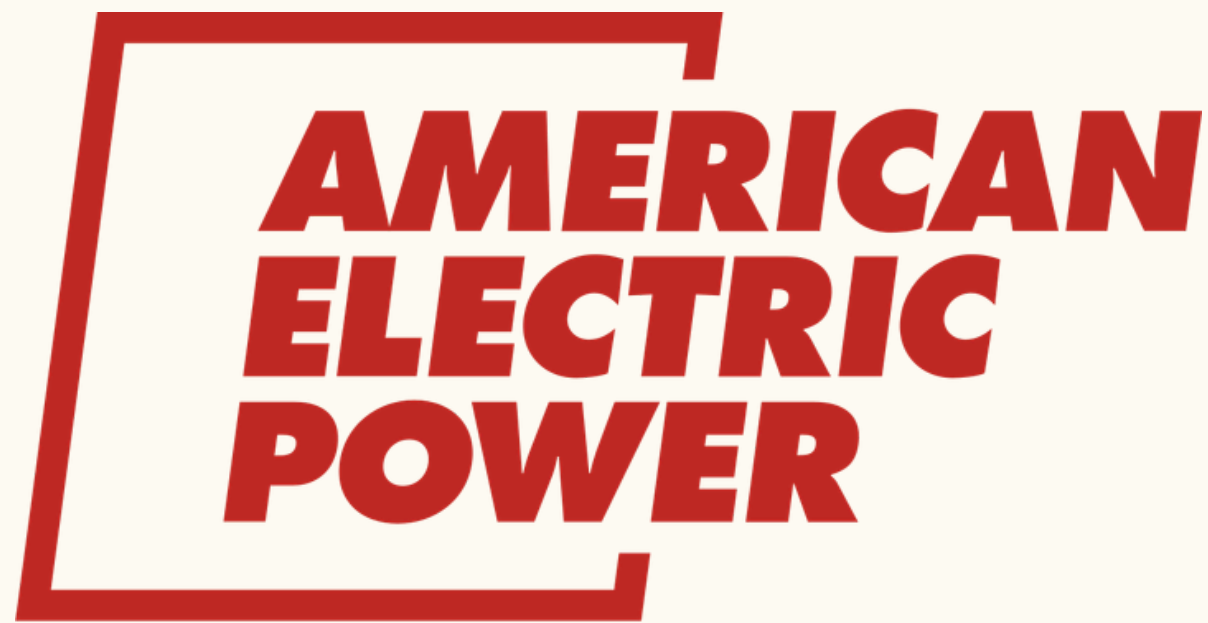
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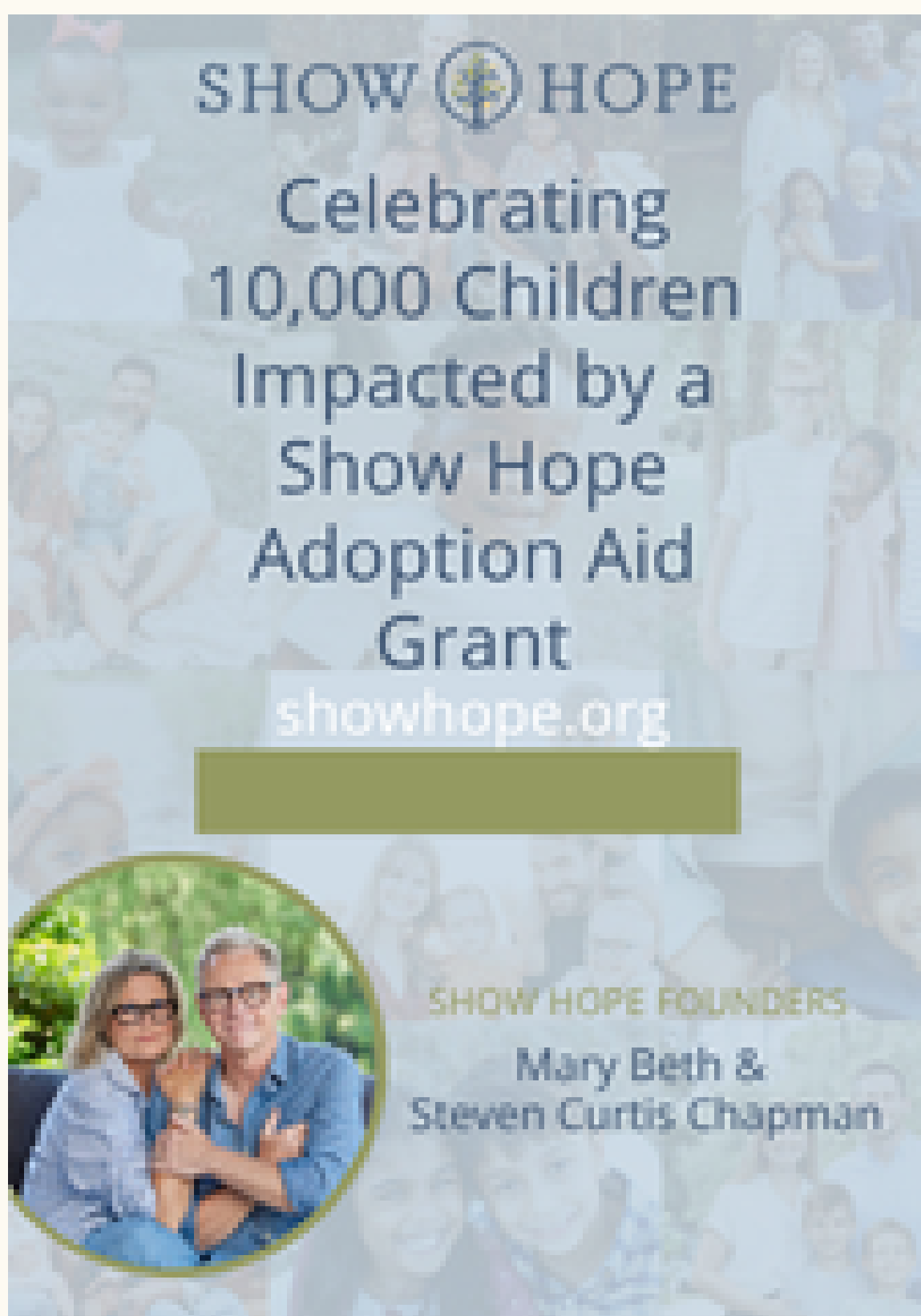


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