

OPINION

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JOHN S. KNIGHT (1894-1981)

Portraits of hope

OUR OPINION: EXHIBIT A REMINDER OF FOSTER CHILDREN'S NEEDS

Portraits of 36 foster children adorn the walls of the Miami Children's Museum. The pictures are more than a group of winsome faces. They make up a heartwarming — and heartbreaking — exhibition full of dreams that these children hope will come true.

The youngsters featured in *The Waiting* need adoptive families. In Miami-Dade County, there are hundreds more like them. According to the Department of Children & Families, 900 children were available for adoption in 2004. Their parents' legal rights have been terminated, and the children live in foster care. Of those available for adoption, only 332 were placed with families this year; the others still hope for the same good fortune.

Time is running out for many of them, however. That's because foster children 6 and older are less likely to be adopted. Many families deem infants more desirable. It takes a special individual or family to allow an older child to enrich their lives. Scores of families have made the decision to do so.

The Waiting is more than a plea for adoptive homes. The exhibition is a reminder that foster children have other needs that volunteers can fulfill. They need mentors to guide and counsel them and



MANOLO DORESTE/FOR THE HERALD
Henrietta Barosy, 11, is waiting to be adopted.

guardians *ad litem* to assist them in court. Big Brothers/Big Sisters are always welcome. And the business community also can make contributions.

Bravo to nine local photographers, led by Chendo Perez, for doing their part to create happy endings for these children and to the Children's Museum for donating exhibition space. Interested individuals can help by visiting *The Waiting*, or volunteering to help. Or, to make a big difference, adopt a child.

● *'The Waiting'* is on display at the Miami Children's Museum through Sunday. Call 305 373-5437.

Exhibition shows faces of adoption

■ In an exhibition aptly titled 'The Waiting,' nine Miami-Dade photographers have presented portraits of 36 kids currently up for adoption. The show at the Miami Children's Museum is open through Jan. 2.

BY KEVIN DEAN
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Jose Valdez is used to the sound of slamming doors.

The wiry 12-year-old lives in a bustling foster home with a dozen other kids and all of them love to rattle every hinge in the house, swinging open bedroom doors and then banging them shut as they race from room to room.

The sound makes Kristen Glaspay, the house parent, wince. But she acknowledges that kids like Jose have an excuse for their restlessness.

Most couples looking to adopt a child seek infants, the younger the better, often overlooking teenagers. So every year when Valdez blows out his birthday candles, his chances for finding a permanent home get slimmer. Now a group of Miami photographers is hoping to show that there are faces behind the close to 1,000 children that are currently up for adoption in Miami-Dade County.

Under the name "fotomission," the nine photographers teamed up to take intimate portraits of 36 children that are waiting to be adopted, for an exhibit now at the Miami Children's Museum entitled "The Waiting." The photos, of kids 9 to 18, will be on display until Jan. 2. The museum granted the exhibition space for free.

"People think that these kids have been traumatized because of what they've been through," Chendo Perez, founder of the pho-

SMART BOX

IF YOU GO

- **What:** 'The Waiting,' an exhibit featuring kids up for adoption in Miami-Dade.

- **Where/When:** The Miami Children's Museum, 908 MacArthur Cswy. Exhibit runs until Jan. 2.

- **Information:** Museum is open 10 a.m. — 6 p.m., seven days a week. Closed Christmas Day. \$10 museum admission fee (for adults and children) required to view exhibit. Museum offers free admission one hour before closing, from 5 to 6 p.m.

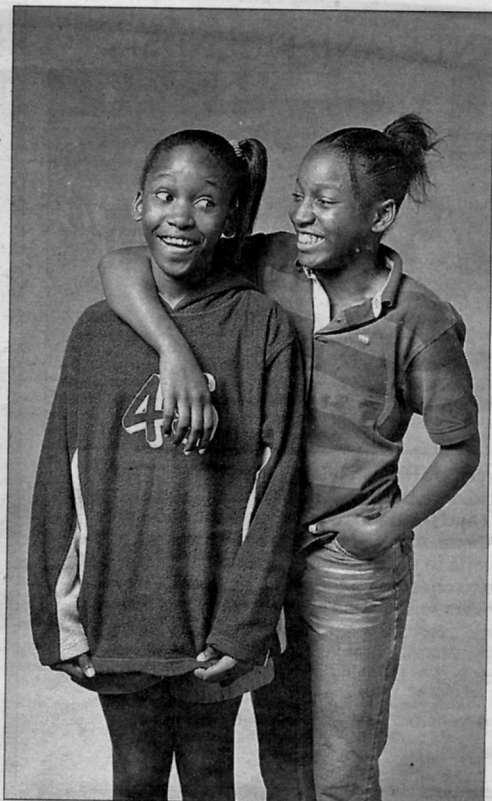
tographer's group 'fotomission,' said at the opening reception earlier this month. "But when I photographed some of these kids, I saw that they're all just normal kids that don't ask for much."

"They just want a family," he emphasized as he looked toward 10-year-old Tatyanna Brown standing proudly next to her photo mounted on the museum's brightly colored walls.

Brown was photographed with her sister, Natasia, whom she only gets to see about once a week.

She said that she likes the photo, shot by Michelle Sas, but that she prefers her own drawings of her and Natasia "older, together, and happy" that she sketches in her free afternoons at her foster home in Northwest Miami-Dade.

Tatyanna dreams with her pencil. But her and Natasia's chances for being



MICHELLE SAS/FOR THE HERALD

SISTERS: Tatyanna Brown, left, and her sister, Natasia, waiting to be adopted, are part of the Miami Children's Museum photo exhibition 'The Waiting.'



MANOLO DORESTE/FOR THE HERALD

NEEDS A HOME: Henrietta Barosy's portrait is one of 36 photos of children waiting to be adopted on display at the Miami Children's Museum.

adopted together are good, since two siblings are usually kept together, said Peter Coats, a public information officer with District 11 of the Department of Children & Families.

All of the children photographed in "The Waiting"

were selected from this district, which spans Dade and Monroe counties.

As the largest urban center in the state, Dade has the highest number of children up for adoption at any given

MIAMI CHILDREN'S MUSEUM

Photo exhibition shows many faces of adoption

• EXHIBITION, FROM 3

time, Coats said. Last year District 11 placed 562 children in permanent homes, which accounted for about one-third

of the state's adoptions.

Coats, who attended the opening, said the district hopes to place even more children this year.

"People need to come see

these photographs so that attention will be brought to these kids and to this issue," said photographer Manolo Doreste, who photographed 11-year-old Henrietta Barosy, her sister Andree, 13, and brother Altorik, 8, in a North Miami park. Doreste turned to Henrietta and asked, "Then maybe you'll get adopted, right?"

Henrietta's face glowed at the thought, her smile far bigger than the one she gave for the camera lens.

"I hope that the person who adopts me will love music..." she said.



ALISON FRANK/FOR THE HERALD

BROTHERS: Kevin Valdez, left, and his brother, Jose, both waiting to be adopted, are included in the Miami Children's Museum photo exhibition.