



NEWS RELEASE

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Congressman Bill Young Congratulates Eckerd Adoption Specialist Connie Going as an Angel in Adoption™ to be Recognized at National Event in Washington, D.C.

CLEARWATER, FL – Congressman Bill Young (R-FL) congratulates Connie Going, adoption specialist for Eckerd Community Alternatives serving abused and neglected children in Florida’s Pinellas and Pasco counties, as a **2012 Angels in Adoption™** for her outstanding advocacy efforts and passionate work in the area of foster care adoptions. Congressman Young nominated Ms. Going for the prestigious **Angels in Adoption™** designation, which is part of the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute (CCAI). Ms. Going, along with over 140 Angels, will be honored at an awards ceremony this afternoon, September 11th, and during a gala event on September 12th in Washington, D.C.

Ms. Going has over 11 years experience in the field of adoption and over 20 in child welfare and foster care. In her current role with Eckerd Community Alternatives, Ms. Going coordinates adoption recruitment efforts and provides much-needed support to adoptive parents. An advocate for adoptive families, Ms. Going has helped the community build its capacity for adoption competent services, created post-adoption support groups and coordinated the implementation of a five-year community plan for adoption promotion and support. Under her leadership, adoption finalization goals have consistently been exceeded to nearly 300 foster children who were adopted into loving homes last year in Pinellas and Pasco counties. Moreover, Ms. Going works tirelessly to ensure that the children placed with their forever family receive the help and assistance they need.

Ms. Going’s efforts in supporting adoptive families and connecting them to needed services have helped deter countless adoptive placement breakdowns and dissolutions. In fact, it was one of Ms. Going’s adoptive families – the Casper Family – who brought her outstanding work to the attention of Congressman Young. The Casper Family is in the process of adopting a foster child with very special therapeutic needs – and one who has had prior failed adoptions. The Casper’s shared their amazing adoption journey with Congressman Young, crediting Connie Going with being their “adoption angel”.

“She will always be his (Taylor’s) hero, and we think of her as our friend and now even a part of the family for what she’s done for us,” wrote Mrs. Casper in a letter to Congressman Young. “She is changing the way adoptable foster children are cared for and how the system should work when a child needs a home.”



The **Angels in Adoption™** program is CCAI's signature public awareness campaign and provides an opportunity for all members of the U.S. Congress to honor the good work of their constituents who have enriched the lives of foster children and orphans in the United States and abroad.

"The **Angels in Adoption™** program is unlike any other program in the Nation's Capital. Because of it, over 1800 Angels have come to share with Washington their adoption experience and left with a renewed excitement of all that adoption makes possible," said Kathleen Strottman. "I learned one simple lesson from my time on the hill, knowledge is power. **Angels in Adoption™** is meant to give Members of Congress the knowledge they need to use the power they have toward making the dream of a family a reality for every child."

In addition to the more than 140 Angels from around the country, several "National Angels" will also be recognized at the ceremony for their dedication and commitment nationally and internationally to child welfare on a grand scale. This year's "National Angels" are actress Katherine Heigl, singer/songwriter Josh Kelley and PEOPLE Magazine. Former National Angels include First Lady Laura Bush, Patti LaBelle, Jane Seymour, Muhammad Ali, the late Dave Thomas, Steven Curtis Chapman, Bruce Willis, Alonzo Mourning, Rhea Perlman and Kristin Chenoweth.

The Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute (CCAI) is a 501(c)3 nonpartisan organization dedicated to raising awareness about the tens of thousands of orphans and foster children in the United States and the millions of orphans around the world in need of permanent, safe, and loving homes through adoption. CCAI's goal is the elimination of the barriers that hinder these children from realizing their basic right of a family. CCAI was created in 2001 by the active co-chairs of the bicameral, bipartisan Congressional Coalition on Adoption (CCA) to more effectively raise Congressional and public awareness about the issue of adoption. The **Angels in Adoption™** program was established in 1999 as a Congressional press conference to honor outstanding individuals. Since then, the program has developed into a yearlong public awareness campaign culminating in an extraordinary award gala and celebration in Washington, D.C. CCAI does not receive any government funding and they rely on the generous support of foundations, corporations, and individuals to accomplish their mission. To learn more visit ccainstitute.org and angelsinadoption.org.

About Eckerd Community Alternatives:

Eckerd Community Alternatives serves as the community-based care lead agency for child welfare and foster care services in Florida's Pinellas and Pasco counties. One of Florida's largest child welfare systems of care, Eckerd Community Alternatives is responsible for the safety, well-being and permanency of over 3,400 children and their families each day. It is a program of Eckerd, a national nonprofit youth and family services organization headquartered in Clearwater, Florida, that has given much-needed second chances to over 120,000 children and families since its founding by Jack and Ruth Eckerd in 1968. To learn more visit eckerd.org.