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Congressman John Campbell has nominated Melissa Dodson as a 2008 Angel in Adoption for her outstanding advocacy of adoption issues. The Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute (CCAI), which orchestrates the Angels in Adoption program, honored Melissa Dodson, along with more than 180 Angels, at an awards ceremony and gala event in Washington, DC, September 16, 2008.

Melissa Dodson is being honored for her more than 25 years dedicated to quality adoption services. She is truly an unsung hero in social work. Melissa is highly respected for her work in Orange County. Her work encompasses infant adoption, finding homes for medically fragile children, and adoption of children from foster care. She is committed to the belief that there is a family for every child and proves that to be true in the most difficult of circumstances. As only one example, Melissa was called by a local hospital staff to help find a home for a newborn that needed a heart transplant. Physicians would not do the surgery without a family, as the chances of survival would be very slim without the bonding and nurturing of parents. Within a few days, Melissa identified the family, the surgery was soon accomplished, and the child is stable, healthy, and has been adopted by a wonderful local family. She also provided loving counseling to the birth mother who desperately needed to be supported in a difficult decision. Each year Melissa is responsible for serving more than 100 children and getting them safely into adoptive families. She is also an educator in the field and shepherds masters level interns from schools of social work all over Southern California, preparing many young professionals for careers serving children in foster care and adoption. There is no finer professional in the field of adoption, and I am proud to honor her.

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.

This year, CCAI is celebrating their 10th Anniversary of honoring ordinary people doing extraordinary things! Over the last 10 years, CCAI has highlighted the work of more than 1300 people making a lasting difference in the life of a child.

“The Angels in Adoption program is unlike any other program in the Nation’s Capitol. Because of it, over 1300 “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 180 local angels from around the country, several National Angels will also be recognized at the ceremony and gala for their dedication and commitment nationally and internationally to child welfare on a grand scale. 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, and Marcus Samuelsson.

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 awards Gala and celebration in Washington, D.C.

The Angels in Adoption program is made possible through the generous support of Diamond

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CCAI does not receive any government funding and they rely on the generous support of foundations, corporations, and individuals to accomplish their mission. For more information visit <http://www.ccainstitute.org/>