



### Child In Need of Protective Services Bill Introduced

By Betsy Johnson

The long awaited CHIPS legislation has finally been introduced! On November 17<sup>th</sup>, Representatives Pillich and Belcher introduced H.B. 371, which would replace the current definitions in the Ohio Revised Code for Abuse, Neglect and Dependency with a definition for Child in Need of Protective Services (CHIPS) as recommended by the Supreme Court's Subcommittee on Responding to Abuse, Neglect & Dependency.

As a member of the Subcommittee since its inception, and as the mother of three adopted children who were abused, neglected and ultimately abandoned by their birth parents, I feel strongly that updating the ORC to reflect this change will help family and domestic relations courts focus their efforts on the needs of the child. While there is no question in my mind that responding to the criminality of parents who deliberately cause harm to their children is critical, it should not be the focus of this section of the code.

A Child in Need of Protective Services statute will help guide the Court in securing the most appropriate care for the child by placing the child at the center of their decision-making. Additionally, eliminating the references to abuse, neglect and dependency will remove the trauma to children that can result from being labeled "abused" or "neglected". The short and long-term trauma that children experience when they are removed from their families cannot be overstated. Anything that can be done to lessen this impact is worthy of the time and consideration of the Ohio General Assembly. To view the bill, go to: <http://www.legislature.state.oh.us/bills.cfm?ID=128 HB 371>

### OFCA Joins In Adoption Awareness Month Celebration

By Dot Erickson

For those of you who didn't make it to Columbus on November 6<sup>th</sup> for the adoption awareness rally, below is a photo of what you missed. That is OFCA Board Member Marynell Townsend's two year old adopted son Josiah walking through over 600 frames set up on the Statehouse steps.



The event was a success thanks to the cooperation of the 10 different child advocacy organizations. Folks from the rally took time to deliver the pictures of waiting children and a letter, drafted by Board member

Dora Sterling, to each legislator's office after the event. It was great to see the participation. The remaining frames were given to a local art school to use to display their work.

Rebecka and Moriah Miller, daughters of long time OFCA staff member Lisa Miller, began the event with leading the group in the Pledge of Allegiance. [Moriah even did it in sign language!]. Board President Betsy Johnson's daughter, Christine, gave the speech from an adoptee's viewpoint. Peter Schoepflin, husband of Board member Angela Schoepflin, spoke as the adoptive parent, and Lisa Dickson, former OFCA Board member and spokesperson for the Former Foster care Alumni Association, gave a great wrap up speech reminding us of the 1,000 kids that emancipate out of Ohio's system yearly without permanency.

All in all, OFCA held ourselves proud in planning and execution of this advocacy event. We do not have the resources and staff of all our sister agencies, but we do have the heart and the participation of a mighty core. Thanks everyone for your participation! I'm proud to be a part of your efforts.

