

As a member of the Congressional Coalition on Adoption, I have a unique opportunity to recognize the contributions of Missourians in our congressional district who devote their time and talents to making the selfless act of adoption possible.

The greatest thing that these organizations and adoptive parents do is to create a family for children who need the love, support and sanctuary of a home.

This year, I nominated Great Circle, of Boys and Girls Town of Missouri, for the 2012 Angels in Adoption Award from our Southern Missouri district. This organization takes on some of the toughest challenges in the state when it comes to helping troubled, disadvantaged and abused children find hope. Through the programs and placements made by Great Circle, our whole communities are strengthened.

In any adoptive process, there are tremendous hurdles. The social services that help place children with adoptive families are not always available when those families experience difficulties in their relationship – sometimes years after the adoption – due to exposure to drugs or abuse that may have taken place in an adopted child's distant past, even prenatally. Older foster children may face a more difficult adjustment period with their adoptive families than babies who find their match through private agencies. Likewise, imperfections in the citizenship process for foreign adoptions sometimes create unforeseen problems for adults who were adopted from other countries decades ago. Just as there are children of all kinds, there are adoptions of all kinds, each with unique circumstances and great potential.

Recognizing the array of unique factors in every adoption leaves plenty of room for improvement in our system.

Fortunately, there are also leaders in this area of social and community services who understand where the problems are, as well as what is at stake if we do not solve them. The high cost of re-entry into the foster care system for a child who is unable to stay with his or her adoptive family can reach into the tens of thousands of dollars. Worse, it means additional stress and strain on a child hoping and praying for a permanent home.

Because of the strong families of Missouri, we have many such homes just waiting for the opportunity to welcome a new child into their loving arms. We have nothing to lose by helping them at every step of the way, so they may achieve a bond that only parents and children can share.

The ranks of adopted children are full of now-famous names. Dave Thomas, who founded Wendy's restaurants, Steve Jobs of Apple, singer and songwriter Bing Crosby, and country star Faith Hill were all adopted. Babe Ruth learned the game of baseball in a Baltimore orphanage. Nelson Mandela and John Lennon, too, were adopted.

In each adoption, there is the potential for greatness – not just in the chance to go on to the kinds of achievements these famous names have compiled – but also in the opportunity to join a stable family and to fulfill the promise inside each child who only needs a place to call home, a place to start.