

THE LINK

A Resource of the DFW Alliance of Adoption and Orphan Care Ministries

www.DFWAlliance.org

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Church Ministry Workshop Sponsored By Tapestry & DFW Alliance

**Saturday, January 19th
5:30 to 9:00 p.m.
Irving Bible Church
Room West C & D**

Tapestry, together with the DFW Alliance, will host a mini-workshop designed for those interested in starting a church adoption, foster care and orphan care ministry, as well as those who are already involved in church orphans ministry. The mini-workshop will include dinner and the entire evening is *free* of charge. Childcare will not be available for this event.

Jason Weber, from Hope for Orphans (hopefororphans.com),

An Amazing Web

Recently Texas state park officials discovered a spider web that covered an area the size of a house at Lake Tawakoni State Park just outside of Dallas. Over Labor Day weekend 2007 more than 3,000 people and reporters from various national news media outlets came to see this most unusual phenomenon.

But what was most amazing about this web was how it came to be. As reported by James Hohmann in the Dallas Morning News (visit www.dallasnews.com to find the article) the web was created “by spiders from a couple dozen species who flourished in unusual harmony” in an extremely spider-friendly environment. Instead of the typical individual, classic orb-shaped webs that spiders form, these spiders wove one giant integrated web that was said to look similar to a hammock – a very large hammock.

As the Dallas Morning News article points out, scientists that observed the giant web concluded that the spiders “created a canopy that almost entirely covered a pond ripe with mosquitoes and other gnat-like insects – guaranteeing enough chow to go around.” In other words, the spiders chose to discard their tendency to go it alone and instead worked together toward a common goal and for a common objective. As a result, they were able to realize an outcome that caused people to stop and take notice.

Upon first reading about this amazing web I immediately saw a number of parallels to what God is doing among the ever increasing number of church adoption, foster and orphan care ministries across North Texas and beyond. Like the various species of spiders that contributed to this community effort, God is leading Christian churches of various denominations and traditions to work together toward a common objective – to love and care for the fatherless. These efforts are being expressed in many different ways, including adoption support and education, foster care awareness efforts and outreach to orphans and children at-risk around the world. In North Texas alone we have seen the number of churches in the DFW Alliance grow to 13 and many more churches are becoming involved in ministering

will share his insight on the important role of the local church in living out God's heart for the fatherless. In addition, you will be able to attend break-out sessions led by experienced ministry leaders covering topics such as:

- How to launch an adoption, foster care or orphan care ministry in your church
- Practical ideas and resources for your church ministry
- Ways your church can become effectively engaged in international orphan care
- And more . . .

Whether your focus is on adoption, foster care or international orphan care ministry; whether you are just beginning to consider starting a church ministry or have been involved in leading a ministry for some time – this mini-workshop is sure to be helpful and encouraging for you. This will also be a great opportunity to meet and connect with others in North Texas that are already involved in church orphans ministry.

For more information contact Michael Monroe via email at info@DFWAlliance.org or by phone at (972) 315-9628. For directions to Irving Bible Church go to www.irvingbible.org.

Did You Know?

In 2007 a dozen churches throughout North Texas displayed a Heart Gallery exhibit

to and serving the fatherless in many different ways.

As this movement continues one of the most exciting things that is happening is the spirit and level of cooperation among local churches. It reminds me of the saying that “some things are too good not to share.” That is certainly true of God's heart for the orphan and how we, within the context of our local churches, can be His hands and feet to these precious children.

Numbers are frequently used to illustrate the magnitude of the orphan crisis in our world today. Huge, unfathomable numbers such as 143 million orphans worldwide, 500,000 children in foster care in the United States, even 1,000 children in foster care in North Texas waiting for a forever family paint a dark and often gloomy portrait of need. As a result, it is daunting to figure out how best to go about truly making a lasting impact in the face of this seemingly overwhelming situation. But with hundreds of thousands of Christian churches in the United States, and thousands of churches in North Texas alone, I am convinced that we must begin to imitate the spiders and work together in “unusual harmony.” By weaving a giant integrated web, not only with churches in our local area but also with churches around the world, I believe that we can more effectively offer the hope and help that is so desperately needed. Each of us building our individual, isolated “webs” will likely prove inefficient and limited in overall effectiveness. And not only that – I believe that it betrays the unity of purpose and oneness of spirit that is God's ideal. Instead, we have the opportunity to work together, share and collaborate like never before as we seek to love and serve the fatherless. If we will do so, I am convinced that together we can build a truly amazing web that will bring hope and help to the fatherless and will bring glory to God.

Michael Monroe, together with his wife Amy, leads Tapestry, a ministry for adoptive and foster families at Irving Bible Church. You can contact Michael at tapestry@irvingbible.org or visit www.tapestry.irvingbible.org for more information.

A Not So Simple Idea Made Easier

It started, as so many things do, as a simple idea – to find a way to provide guidance and support to families in the various stages of adoption. As an adoptive parent myself, I know firsthand the trials, tribulations and never-ending questions that families face throughout the adoption process. I also have experienced how lonely that journey can be as you search and wait for answers and direction.

to raise awareness of the over 1,000 children who are in foster care in North Texas and waiting to be adopted by a forever family. The Heart Gallery is a unique photographic exhibit that introduces children in our local community who are waiting for a loving, adoptive family they can call their own.

Through the help of The Faith Connection, these churches were also able to provide information about the many ways that people can become involved in the lives of children in foster care. As a result, many people have begun to consider adopting or becoming foster parents, learned more about volunteer, advocacy and mentoring opportunities and started praying for the needs of children in foster care.



With nearly 4,000 children in foster care in North Texas, there is no doubt that the foster care situation in our area presents many difficult challenges. But it is equally clear that local churches throughout our community can make a meaningful and lasting difference in the lives of these precious children.

As Director of Congregational Care at Custer Road United Methodist Church in Plano, Texas (just north of Dallas), I saw an opportunity to provide support of this nature to members of our congregation and to those in our community. Only one small challenge – I had to figure out if the need was as great as I envisioned it to be and then determine how to effectively go about meeting it. What happened from that point forward was nothing less than a “God thing”.

Within a period of one month, I was inundated with newspaper articles, community stories and personal testimonials of a nationwide movement calling on Christian communities to reach out to children in the foster care system. News about the Heart Gallery of North Texas was one of the first articles I encountered. I quickly learned that the Heart Gallery was a collection of professional photographs of children in foster care who are waiting to be adopted. I immediately recognized that my church could do more than just provide support to the families, important as this is – we could also make a huge difference in the lives of children in our own community who desperately longed for a forever family they could call their very own!

The decision to host the Heart Gallery at Custer Road and embrace the opportunity to raise awareness of the needs of children in foster care suddenly made this once simple idea seem very challenging. However, in the end it proved to be anything but because of the encouragement, support and resources we were provided from other area churches who shared our vision and desire to serve these children. With the help of people from Tapestry at Irving Bible Church, The Faith Connection (a North Texas effort designed to help churches raise awareness of children in foster care) and other churches in the DFW Alliance, the Heart Gallery display at Custer Road and the informational seminar on foster care and adoption that followed seemed to come together almost on its own. Utilizing the knowledge, experiences and expertise from those within the DFW Alliance who have laid the groundwork for similar ministries was key in successfully taking this important message to our congregation.

I am happy to say that our congregation responded astoundingly, with at least 10 families expressing genuine interest in becoming adoptive/foster families, and others wanting to learn more about how to become volunteers and advocates in order to serve children in foster care. With the continued help from other area churches in the DFW Alliance, we recently hosted a foster care/adoption orientation meeting at Custer Road. In addition, several members of our congregation followed-up with CASA and TRAC to become volunteers or mentors, and an ongoing support group for adoptive/foster families is now in the works.

To learn more about how your church can host a heart gallery in order to raise awareness and help children in foster care, contact Penny Cook at penny@thefaithconnection.org or visit The Faith Connection at www.TheFaithConnection.org.

New DFW Alliance Website Coming Soon

The DFW Alliance website is undergoing an 'extreme make-over.' The transformation should be complete in early 2008, but in the meantime you can find out all of the basic information about the DFW Alliance and participating ministries at www.DFWAlliance.org. If you would like to include information about your church ministry (such as upcoming events) on our website, please contact us at info@DFWAlliance.org.

About the DFW Alliance

The DFW Alliance of Adoption and Orphan Care Ministries is a network of local church adoption, foster care and orphan care ministries in the Dallas/Ft. Worth area that are committed to living out God's heart for the "fatherless."

For questions or more information about the DFW Alliance, contact Michael Monroe at info@DFWAlliance.org or visit us at www.DFWAlliance.org.

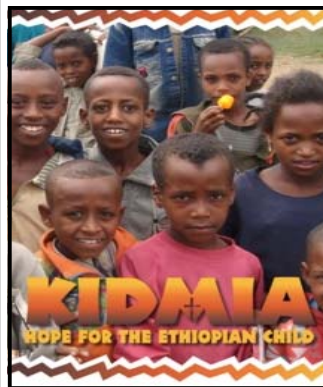
Through this experience I have learned that making a difference in the lives of children in foster care and providing a nurturing and supportive environment for those touched by adoption and foster care is most definitely a community effort – and one that is far easier and better accomplished by working together the way God intended.

Taci Kistler is the Director of Congregational Care at Custer Road United Methodist Church in Plano, Texas. You can contact Taci at tkistler@crumc.org or visit www.crumc.org.

Making the Fatherless in Ethiopia a Priority – An Update on Kidmia

The Link previously highlighted what God was doing in Ethiopia through the vision of several people at Christ Chapel Bible Church in Ft. Worth. The effort is known as Kidmia, which means "priority" in Amharic (the official language of Ethiopia). Kidmia is committed to making the fatherless in Ethiopia a priority, and God is continuing to bless and multiply their efforts.

2007 was all about "building" for Kidmia, as the first transition living center in Gunchire, Ethiopia was opened in October. In addition, the organizational infrastructure for Kidmia, both in the United States and in Ethiopia, is now in place. In 2008 Kidmia,



in partnership with a local Ethiopian church, is turning its focus toward implementation of the various programs that it will use to serve and minister to orphans and families in Ethiopia.

For more information about Kidmia and how you and your church can partner with them to make the fatherless in Ethiopia a "priority," visit Kidmia online at www.kidmia.org.

Recent Adoption Conferences

DFW Alliance churches Lake Pointe Church and Irving Bible Church recently hosted adoption and foster care conferences. For more information about these successful conferences and to download conference materials visit www.LPCAdoption.org and www.tapestryconference.org.