(Washington, DC)— Congresswoman Gwen Moore (D-Wisc.) today met with Marshall and Marjorie Barlow, a couple from the Fourth Congressional District of Wisconsin who she selected to receive the 2009 Angels in Adoption award. For the past 11 years, the Barlows have accepted children of all ages into their safe and loving home and provided them with a place to stay and a sense of stability in an otherwise trying time. Marshall and Marjorie have fostered more than 400 children in total.

The Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute (CCAI), which orchestrates the Angels in Adoption™ program, will honor Marjorie and Marshall Barlow, along with more than 190 Angels, at an awards ceremony and gala event in Washington, DC today, September 30, 2009.

“I want you to know how proud I am of you,” Congresswoman Moore told the Barlows. “This has to be one of the most rewarding aspects of what I do – meeting people like you.

“Every time we get ready to run out of hope and become cynical, people like you come along and remind me how good and generous we can be. You are unsung heroes.”

“I was one of those people hollering at the TV,” Marjorie Barlow said. “I was seeing things that I did not like on TV and just yelling. And then it dawned on me – instead of doing all that yelling, I would try to make a difference.”

The first child that walked into the Barlow home was a teenage girl who was six months pregnant. The Barlows helped her through the pregnancy all the way to delivery. But when the baby, Taliyah, was one month old, her mother left.

“The state asked us if we could keep Taliyah,” Marjorie said. “We kept her.”

While the state and the Barlows continued trying to connect Taliyah with her biological mother, it did not work. By the time Taliyah was five, the Barlows were able to adopt her.

They have continued to open their home to teenagers, younger children and babies. In the beginning, they worked mostly with teenagers, feeling that there was a great need for outreach to teens. They did that for a couple of years, and then started taking in younger children. Now, their home is an emergency after-hour care home (formerly known as an Assessment Home) which means that the Barlows are on call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week ready to give children a safe place to stay at any time they might need it. The children who come to their home stay for short periods – anywhere from one to six months. Often, they arrive with only the clothes on their back, and the Barlows provide the rest..

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 Capitol. Because of it, over 1,400 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, Executive Director of CCAI. "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 190 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.

"Being in D.C. has been very educational," Marshall Barolow said. "I knew about Washington, D.C., but I did not KNOW about Washington, D.C. until I got here. I am thinking about bringing my daughter Taliyah here so she can experience it. It's been a real experience for me."

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.

CCAI does not receive any government funding and they rely on the support of foundations, corporations, and individuals to accomplish their mission

A photograph of Colleen Ellingson (Adoption Resources of Wisconsin), Marjorie Barlow, Marshall Barlow and Congresswoman Moore is available for publication.

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