Adoption Agency Helps HIV-Positive Orphans Find Homes

January 7, 2010

Illinois-based Adoption-Link Inc. has found adoptive families for about 60 HIV-positive children through its Chances by Choice program, the *Chicago Tribune* reports. The organization works with an orphanage outside Port-au-Prince, Haiti, where many of the children are living with HIV.

Margaret Fleming, 73, founded Chances by Choice after a 2002 visit to a Vietnam hospital's HIV ward, where she witnessed discrimination against HIV-positive babies from caregivers who weren't educated about HIV transmission.

"No one is going to catch HIV from a child, but there are people who would be appalled if they knew a child was positive," said Mary Austin, a nurse and the director of operations at Adoption-Link. "But these kids aren't putting anyone at risk."

Austin uses a time-consuming, one-on-one process to educate prospective adoptive parents about HIV/AIDS, explaining that adopting a child living with HIV doesn't mean you are adopting a child with a death sentence.

A UNICEF report showed about 370,000 children globally younger than 15 were living with HIV in 2007. Most of these infections occurred through birth and breast feeding.

To read more about HIV and adoption, click here.

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