



**VINCENT, 10, and sister COURTNEY, 7**  
*photograph by Martin Schoeller*

THE HEART GALLERY

## WANTED: A Home

With help from top photographers, hard-to-place foster kids are finding their way to loving families

"C'mon, Hiram. I'm not gonna bite." Celebrity photographer Martin Schoeller has shot plenty of demanding stars, but he seems to have met his match in his latest subject, a 7-year-old foster child who won't come out of his shell. Then Schoeller, whose portraits of Brad Pitt, Bill Clinton and George Clooney fetch up to \$20,000, asks Hiram to name his favorite singer. "Eminem," the boy says in a barely audible whisper. "Eminem? We're buddies. I took his picture a little while ago," replies Schoeller. "But you know what? You're better looking!" Suddenly, the quiet kid comes alive: "You met Eminem!" he shouts, wide-eyed.

Minutes later, an Eminem CD plays and Schoeller's camera pops into action. This spring, Hiram's portrait



**HIRAM, 7**

*photograph by Martin Schoeller*



**THELMA, 11**

*photograph by Martin Schoeller*



**WILLIAM, 13**

*photograph by Michael Coglianry*



**"I JUST WANT TO BE PART OF A FAMILY—A REAL FAMILY. I WANT TO BE SOMEONE'S SON"**

**JOSHUA, 8**

*photograph by David Beryman*



**TOUCHING LIVES** "Some kids have eyes like mirrors," says the Heart Gallery's Najlah Feanny Hicks of the work done by volunteers like Antonin Kratochvil, shown here shooting 13-year-old Lorraine in Camden, N.J., for the current exhibit. "They've built up such a shield, but these photographers connect with them, whether it's by knowing the biggest pop stars or from going to such hellish places in the world that they instantly relate to children who have been through hell themselves."

will join those of more than 300 other New Jersey foster children at an exhibit titled Heart Gallery of New Jersey. Many have passed through multiple homes, enduring neglect and sometimes violence. As a result, some have behavioral problems and, by reason of age alone, are difficult to place. "These are kids who, for one reason or another, face many years living in our system," says Joe Delmar, the public affairs officer with the state's Department of Human Services. If all goes well, adults who visit the exhibit (or view the photos online at [www.heartgallerynj.com](http://www.heartgallerynj.com)) will be moved to adopt.

It's happened before. Former *Newsweek* photographer Najlah Feanny Hicks helped recruit 150 volunteer photographers after hearing about Heart Gallery projects in other states. In Connecticut, 19 of 40 children featured in an exhibit were adopted; in New Mexico, where the idea originated in 2001, at least 18 kids have found homes (see box page 114). "This was my chance to make a difference in the world," says Feanny Hicks, 43, who's married with a 3-year-old son. "A chance to truly change someone's life." All 328 children will also be featured in a special section of New Jersey's largest newspaper, *The Star-Ledger*.

The photographers aren't the only ones who hope something special shines through in their work. "It's not fun going from house to house to house," says Hiram at the end of his exciting day. "I'd like a mom and a dad and a room that's just my own." ▶

By Jennifer Wulff. Steve Erwin in Camden

## HOW TO ADOPT

Information on adopting the children featured in this article can be found at [www.heartgallerynj.com](http://www.heartgallerynj.com). Prospective parents must fill out applications with the New Jersey human services dept. and agree to be assessed by caseworkers in their homes for a period of up to 12 months. A series of meetings are then arranged with the child, leading up to him or her moving in. At least six months after placement, the adoption can be finalized in court.



**DANTE, 10**  
*photograph by Erica Berger*



**Twins BRIANNA and RAYMOND, 8**  
*photographs by Bob Krist*



**MICHELLE, 11, and her sister NANCY, 13**

*photograph by Kathleen Kelly*

## THREE SISTERS FIND A NEW FAMILY



"Being adopted was like a dream," says 11-year-old Jannaë, who, along with her sisters Vicky, 13, and Vanessa, 8, bounced between eight different New Mexico foster homes before being adopted by Drew and Melinda Somerville three years ago. Smitten by a photo of the girls dressed in princess costumes (below) at the first Heart Gallery exhibit in Santa Fe, the couple "made our minds up then and there," says Drew, 51, an aerospace engineer. It took seven months to formalize an adoption, and a tad longer for the blended family—pictured at left with their parents and new sibs Allison and Melissa at the Somerville's Edgewood, N.Mex., home—to gel. "There was a period of adjustment. All three girls tended to get into fights, and there was also a lot of lying at first," says Drew. "But adopting older children can show you whole new facets of love and loving." Jannaë still reels at her good fortune. "This is such a big, fun family," she says. "It's like being in a really great movie."



HEART GALLERY; JANNAE, VICKY, VANESSA, MELISSA, ALLISON, DREW, MELINDA