Gov. Dave Heineman proclaimed November as Adoption Awareness Month for the state of Nebraska. Adoption Awareness Month spotlights children in foster care who are waiting to find permanent, loving families.

"Many Nebraskans look forward to spending the upcoming holidays renewing traditions with their family," said Gov. Heineman. "Meanwhile, children across our state in foster care won't share these special days with a permanent, stable, loving family. I'm asking Nebraskans to consider adopting foster children and I want to thank the parents who have opened their hearts and homes to the children who are in the child welfare system. Adoptive parents are making a positive impact every day in the lives of the most vulnerable children in our state."

In 2012, more than 200 foster children have been adopted. Another 130 are expected to be adopted in ceremonies during the coming weeks.

"Not only are foster children positively changed through adoption, but so are the lives of the adopting parents," said Thomas Pristow, director of Children and Family Services in the Department of Health and Human Services. "Statistics show that without a permanent family, children in foster care are at increased risk for homelessness, substance abuse and crime as young adults. On the other hand, adopted children are more likely to grow up as healthy, functioning and productive members of society. These children have experienced so much in their young lives. Many of them are over six years old and find it difficult to become adopted."

Jack and Cathy Taff of Omaha joined the Governor for the news conference. They have adopted two young men, served as guardians of another and as foster parents for several others. Their two sons, Lukas, 18, and Paul, 15, joined them at the announcement of Adoption Awareness Month.

"My wife and I both like kids and we want to have an affect on young men's lives," Jack Taff said. "We have adopted older boys because they need somewhere to go and they need permanency and stability. We don't stand on the sidelines and watch."

Taff said they've found that positive reinforcement makes a difference to the young men. "We tell them they can be successful and they can accomplish something. We try to explain where they're doing things right and wrong. Once one or two are headed in a positive direction, you add one more and they usually go in the right direction, too. It takes patience and you need to be able to sit with them and talk to them.

"I would encourage others to get consider adopting foster children," Taff said. "Take the chance and it will help you as much as you help them."

In a loving and caring environment, foster children develop networks of support through friends, relatives, neighbors and the organizations they join. More information about the foster children available for adoption can be found on the DHHS website at: http://dhhs.ne.gov/AdoptionKids.