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## Washington recognizes 'Angel in Adoption'



Not everybody gets invited to the White House. Not

everybody is honored at a gala reception at the U.S. Capitol. Most people are not Rock Hill's Dale Dove. He got both.

Because, literally, Dale Dove is an "Angel in Adoption."

Dove, 52, lawyer, former school board member and volunteer for the poorest and least among us, was one of about 180 people last week to be invited to Washington, D.C., after helping children find families through adoption. The Angels in Adoption recognition program, a decade old, is one of the largest bipartisan children's advocacy events run by Congress as part of the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute.

"I was humbled and honored," Dove said in his typical fashion that tries to deflect any praise.

But Dove didn't toot his own horn to get recognized: U.S. Rep. John Spratt, D-S.C., nominated Dove for the prestigious award after area

adoption advocates -- all licensed adoption investigators -- wrote to the national organization about Dove's devotion to children. The letter shows that Dove will fight even if it takes years, knows the system and has the interests of children above all else. Dove has contacts with adoption experts all over the globe -- because so many adopted children come from other countries.

One of those three who wrote to praise Dove is Sharon Cole, executive director of the local adoption agency Christian Family Services. Cole has worked with Dove for more than 20 years, first as a staff member at the Department of Social Services.

"It is impossible to measure just what Dale Dove has meant to children and families," Cole said. "In adoptions, there are typically the birth parents, the adoptive parents and the children to deal with. Dale is the best at helping them all. He's helped so many foster parents adopt their foster children."

Dove, married with one grown daughter, has worked on more than 1,000 adoptions in more than 20 years of adoption law

practice, a practice so specialized that only four others in the state belong to the American Academy of Adoption Attorneys. Besides handling the legalities of adoption, he's been a crusader for legislative reform for adoption and other children's advocacy, helped start The PointE youth ministry in Rock Hill and is currently trying to get together a one-stop shop for homeless advocacy.

Don't try and find Dove during most days or evenings: If he's not trying to find a kid some parents, he might be delivering meals to the poor, or handling the lighting for Northwestern High's chorus even though he's not a parent there anymore, or volunteering at his church, RMC Ministries.

"I see this as helping create a culture of caring," Dove said. "The people among us who need us the most -- the poor, the imprisoned, those in need -- are the ones who need help."

But with all that accomplishment helping real children find real families, the excitement of being invited to the Capitol and White House wasn't lost on Dove. Along with his wife, Susan, and daughter, Beth, they were right

there where the world's most powerful man lives and works.

But Dove didn't get to meet President Bush.

"The president of Ghana was there so we got bumped," Dove said.

Typical Dove -- no problem, because he says any award isn't about him anyway. He's happy enough knowing that more than 1,000 children have a family, and "I helped a little bit to get them there."

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