

On Being a Heart Gallery Photographer



What we've Learned:

- 1) We couldn't do it without you.
- 2) There's no such thing as a *typical* Heart Gallery photo shoot.
- 3) The reward is "in the can".

Location & Scheduling

Heart Gallery Photo Shoots are scheduled and conducted in collaboration with Heart Gallery staff, Care Managers and Photographers.

Our shoots typically take place on weekends and after school hours, though can be during the daytime in summer months. They average an hour in length, but depend on how much time the children and their care managers have to dedicate and also how long it takes for certain children to warm up to the camera.

We make our best attempt to match photographers and children by proximity. We recommend parks, beaches, and other kid-friendly public places or photo studios. Please be as accommodating as possible to arrange the location and time of the shoot. If you prefer to shoot at your studio, the care manager can transport the child there in most cases.

The photo shoot is scheduled according to the availability of the children, their transportation and the photographer's schedule. Once scheduled, contact info (cell phones) of all parties need to be exchanged to ensure everyone is informed of the date, time and location.

Care managers are responsible for communicating with the foster families and residential coordinators the plans for transportation and scheduling, also that the children arrive to the session clean and well dressed.

We understand cancellations are sometimes necessary, please inform care managers as well as Heart Gallery staff with as much notice as possible to reschedule.

In rare occasions, a child's care manager may decide that events of that day are not conducive to the child being photographed in their best light. We realize your time as a professional is very valuable and we try to minimize these occurrences as much as possible. Heart Gallery photographers are specialized and willing to work with children in all moods, and understand that these children may be struggling with issues well beyond their years and flexibility with scheduling is essential.

Sibling groups who intend to be adopted together should have *all* photos taken as a complete group. Please do not submit individual shots of children for the exhibit unless you are specifically notified of a goal change. Otherwise, no individual shots are needed, though you may opt to take some just for the kids to have themselves. If any siblings in a sib group do not arrive for the shoot, it will need to be rescheduled. Care managers will be aware of the adoption goals and, in rare cases, you may be asked you to photograph them together *and* separate.

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After the Shoot

Once the shoot is complete, photographers select their favorite images (minimum of 4, we can use up to 10 on our website) and send them to the Heart Gallery office on a disk. A photo selection committee will make the final selection for the touring exhibits and website profile. Heart Gallery photographers' images are credited whenever possible and websites may be linked from our photographer's page. Please avoid any collaging affects, heavy photoshop filters or borders. A technical guideline sheet is available for downloading on the website and should be reviewed prior to the photo session.

If a child you photographed for the Heart Gallery is going to be adopted, we'll invite you to the formal finalization at the court house! In most cases, we'll have enough notice to enlarge and frame your image for you to present it to the child and their "forever family". It's an incredibly rewarding process and we couldn't do it without you!

Helpful Hints

Confirming the Shoot: We recommend photographers *google* or *mapquest* directions and confirm with care managers on where specifically to park or meet before heading off to a location shoot. While care managers are instructed to confirm with you the day prior to confirm details, we request photographers be proactive and ensure arrangements are clear.

Clothing: Some children like to dress-up and others like to dress-down. Either way is fine, as long as there are no stains, holes, loud logos, graphics or distracting stripes or colors. Photographers are encouraged to have an extra t-shirt just in case. We encourage the children to express themselves! Also, be aware of any inappropriate clothing or jewelry or postures. The care manager will be able to assist you if there are any issues.

Props: Props are sometimes useful, but please ensure the focus is on the child and that large or distracting props may ultimately take away from the impact of the portrait. Please avoid holiday themed props. If pets or farm animals are incorporated, please take some images without them.

Keeping it Light: Our most successful photo sessions have been the result of photographers preparing for their time with the child by reading over the child's questionnaire (we have on file), inquiring about the child's demeanor (shy or gregarious) and understanding the child's potential physical or emotional needs. The most important element of Heart Gallery photo session is to keep the mood light and fun! This kind of undivided attention from adults is rare and while the purpose of the shoot can be somewhat difficult to work around, most children are delighted for the attention and photo shoots represent fun outings for them. Like all children, some are leery of cameras and can take extra effort to get a smile or unguarded moment. *Please refer to the article "How to Photograph Hope" to read more about various experiences of a Heart Gallery photographer which may better prepare you.*

Extra Prints: Often the photographers will make additional prints for the children, which they absolutely cherish, especially those in sibling groups. If you'd like to bring a small gift with you to the shoot or if you'd like to consider a special location, we can assist with the child's likes and interests.

Working together in heartfelt collaboration, we can introduce these deserving children to the community with dignity and continue to find them loving homes. We hope you will provide us feedback from your Heart Gallery experience so we can ensure the photo sessions occur as efficiently as possible. Thank you.