



Adoptions Together

Celebrating 16 years of service to children

Spring 2007

conversation

An update from Adoptions Together

Adoption Resumes in Vietnam

by Sandy Rappeport



“I wonder how Vietnam has changed since adoptions were halted with the US in 2002? I wonder if I’ll like Hanoi as much as I liked Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon) 8 years ago when I traveled to adopt Lindsey? It’s so much easier to pack when you’re not adopting a baby!”

These are just a few of the thoughts running through my mind as I got ready to leave for Vietnam the day after Thanksgiving. Vietnam reopened adoptions to the US after a 3-year hiatus, and Adoptions Together received its new license in July 2006. Our first adoptive mom, Lauren, was traveling to adopt her 4-month-old daughter, and I decided to go with her to see the new process first-hand. I was excited to visit the Hoa Binh and Thanh Hoa orphanages to see the humanitarian projects that we are working on together. I was also looking forward to meeting our staff on the ground in Hanoi who had done so much work to make our license a reality.

We arrived in Hanoi on a hot Sunday morning (80 degrees) and were amazed to see people in hats and winter coats. It’s winter in Hanoi! The next day, we drove 1.5 hours to Hoa Binh, and Lauren received her precious daughter, Leah. I had many flashbacks of holding Lindsey for the first time and wiped a few tears from my eyes as we talked to the caregivers and took pictures of the “baby room.” I noticed that each baby was held by a staff person or a “granny” from the senior citizens section of the institution. It was obvious that these children are

absolutely adored by everyone at the orphanage. In Hoa Binh, we are providing funds to hire more staff, buy formula and food, and generally support the orphanage to provide the best quality care for all of the children. Adoptions Together hosted a wonderful banquet afterward to celebrate Hoa Binh’s first US adoption.

Several days later, I left for a 3-hour drive to Thanh Hoa and again saw a wonderful orphanage with each caregiver taking care of two babies. The babies were clean, well fed, and snugly bundled. I photographed and videotaped 4 babies and received referral information for our next 4 families! I kissed every baby and whispered in each little ear that their moms and dads would be coming soon! In Thanh Hoa, Adoptions Together is providing funds to hire more staff, buy educational supplies, and hire a teacher for the children. We also hope to recruit families for some of the special needs and older children that reside in Thanh Hoa.

Before leaving, I had a meeting with Dr. Long, the Director of International Adoption, and emphasized that Adoptions Together is committed to the highest ethical standards in international adoption. I also explained to Dr. Long that we are committed to helping find families for special needs children as well as healthy children. Although every new program has its bumps, I was encouraged by the official commitment in both Hoa Binh and Thanh Hoa Provinces regarding our collaboration and told Dr. Long about how impressed I was with the orphanages.

The rest of my time in Vietnam was spent enjoying the food, getting to know our staff, learning more about the intricacies of the consulate process, shopping, and having a thoroughly good time. The people were wonderful—helpful, friendly, and “moving toward the future,” as one government person emphasized to me. Vietnam is a dynamic, young, forward-thinking country that is growing by leaps and bounds. I left Vietnam feeling grateful that Adoptions Together will be allowed to provide a real “future” for some of the many young orphans that are waiting for their forever families to come. ♥





Janice Goldwater
Executive Director

Founder's Column

by Janice Goldwater
Founder and Executive Director

This past December many of us in the northeast nervously relished the spring-like weather as the calendar told us it was winter. Was this beautiful weather something to be concerned about because it was a result of global warming or should we just have appreciated the opportunity to enjoy the outdoors during a season not usually available to us? I don't know. In February we shivered stuck in a deep freeze contemplating such things.

Life is kind of like that. For years adopting a child from China was our most predictable, well-controlled adoption program. Prospective parents could turn in a dossier and we could predict almost to the day when a referral would arrive. Today, China remains a wonderful option for adoption but much has changed. Families who came into the program thinking that they were bringing home their child in months are now waiting double that time. While there is no question that a child will be identified and able to be adopted, there is much uncertainty as to when it will happen. As the Chinese government does its best to care for its orphaned children and creates new rules and policies, prospective adoptive parents feel anxious and uncertain. Is this something to be feared or should we just appreciate this wrinkle. Kind of like spring in December—children will come home, just not in the way we predicted.

A few years ago we sadly stopped doing adoptions in Vietnam when the government closed down the process. Families who had dreamed of adopting from Vietnam abruptly had to switch countries. All successfully adopted. Today, after years of work and anticipation, adoptions from Vietnam are open once again and children are coming home to their parents quickly.

Life is kind of like that, full of high and low chapters. We dream of parenthood, we become parents. Maybe not the way we thought it would happen but it usually does if we hang in there. Growing toddlers hit school age and challenging adolescents emerge. Out of challenging adolescents come interesting young adults. We navigate unexpected gifts and challenges each day. Our bodies change and adapt to the environment around us. Every moment is a chance to appreciate some rich life experience.

Inside Adoptions Together we continue to dream, to create and to implement new ideas that will enhance the opportunities for children to have stable and meaningful lives. We try to make the best of each challenge life hands us. We know some of you are struggling and others thriving. Please know that we care, are here for you and are doing everything in our awareness to be supportive and offer rich life tools to deal with the challenges growing families bring. As always my door is open and I welcome your ideas and thoughts of ways we can meet your needs during this family building and growing chapter of your life. ♥



Adoptions Together

www.adoptions-together.org

Adoptions Together is committed to building healthy permanent families for all children in need, without regard to race, religion or disability, by providing the highest quality child placement services, lifelong guidance to children and their families and advocacy for best practices in child welfare systems.

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Conversation is the newsletter of Adoptions Together and its programs, including AdoptionWorks, Center for Adoptive Families, the Domestic and International Adoption Programs.

Adoptions Together Staff and Agency News

Through the Recruitment Response Team, **Camila Clavijo** was contacted by *Washington Hispanic*, the largest Hispanic weekly newspaper serving Washington DC, Maryland, and Virginia, reaching more than 100,000 households. The journalist, Mitzi Macias, was working on several adoption articles and needed information on local agencies for her next publication. Camila was interviewed about Adoptions Together's services, and the article appeared in the December 1 issue of *Washington Hispanic*.

Grace Marshburn, Eastern Europe Family Coordinator, attended a Stakeholders Focus Group meeting at U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) for a pilot program to re-engineer their business process and case management system for inter-country adoption. The outcome will be a possible new business model for processing I-600A applications.



Adoptions Together staff attended and presented at the 18th Annual ATTACH Conference, which was held in St Louis, Missouri in October. The conference highlighted the developmental effects of early trauma, abuse, and neglect on the capacity to form healthy attachments. Emphasis was placed on the impact of trauma on foster and adopted children and their ability to form healthy relationships. **Janice Goldwater**, **Founder and Executive Director** and **Louise Fleischman**, **CAF Therapist**, presented "Love: The Last Taboo in Adoption," and **Janice Goldwater and Associate Director Dawn Musgrave** presented *Always Wear Clean Underwear: Ethical Decision-Making in Attachment-Focused Therapy*.

The Center for Adoptive Families was in the community offering seminars about special adoption topics last September. **Louise Fleischman** presented *Blending Families* to 20 foster and adoptive parents through the Carroll County Department of Social Services. She also presented a session on attachment to 25 foster and adoptive parents through Mentor MD.



On December 2 at the Grand Hyatt Hotel, the **Freddie Mac Foundation** sponsored the **2006 Metropolitan Washington Adoption Expo** in partnership with NBC4, the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments and WPGC-FM. The Adoption Expo provided an opportunity for more than 1000 attendees interested in adoption to gather information, talk with experts in the field, and find resources they needed to help them make the decision to adopt. The Adoption Expo also offered parents who have already adopted the opportunity to learn about the resources and services that are available to them and their children as they continue on their adoption journey. The Adoption Expo showcased over 30 exhibitors, a series of adoption-related workshops, an authors' corner, conversations with adoptive parents, and a wide variety of information on the resources and tools available for prospective and current adoptive parents.

Susan Ogden, **Domestic Program Director**, was a co-presenter for the workshop session *Adoption from A-Z*. Experts in the field of domestic and international adoption presented attendees with all the information they needed to know about the adoption process. Susan described the basic domestic adoption process for infants and older child placement, highlighting the key action steps like training and home studies. This session was in such high demand that a repeat session was offered later in the day to accommodate the overflow from the scheduled session.

Janice Goldwater moderated a session called *Meet the Parents*, which allowed attendees to hear parents share their experience about life after adoption. Janice provided an overview on how to decide what kind of child to adopt, then three adoptive parent panelists described their expectations versus the realities of the adoption process and parenthood. What were the joyful surprises that they found after adopting? What were the challenging surprises? What was as they imagined it would be? What do they know now that they wished they knew when they made the decision to adopt their child?



Everyone involved in this event from the adoption community was inspired by the incredible turnout. One of the exhibitors commented afterward that "it was fabulous to see so many people engaged in learning more about adoption—from those who were just starting out to those who were already embarking on an adoption process and hoping to learn more. The energy was so wonderful!"

AdoptionWorks Partners with Maryland To Increase Adoption of Children in Foster Care

AdoptionWorks, the popular Adoptions Together program for the adoption of older children from public foster care, has a new partner...the Maryland Department of Human Resources! Since the Fall of 2006, Adoptions Together has accepted referrals of families who have contacted the state or local departments of social services to pursue their interest in adopting. Under a new state contract, Adoptions Together will provide training and home study services to prospective adoptive parents, then match families with Maryland children waiting to be adopted while growing up in Maryland's foster care system.

Today, there are more than 10,000 children in foster care in Maryland. While most will be successfully reunited with their birth families, many are waiting to be adopted. The greatest need is for families to adopt children who are six years old and older or members of sibling groups who need to be adopted together. Most of the waiting children are African American, and there are more boys waiting than girls.

AdoptionWorks began in 1999 and has successfully placed more than 130 children for adoption from public foster care throughout the United States. "The key to success is extensive pre-adoption preparation and ongoing support for children and families

throughout the entire process," says Carol Edelstein, Director of AdoptionWorks.

Adoptions Together will support, guide, and educate families who are referred from the Maryland Department of Human Resources to help them learn about adoption and find a waiting Maryland child or sibling group who is the right match for their family. All services for eligible families are offered free of charge. To be eligible, families must be referred through the Department of Human Resources and be committed to adopting a Maryland child. For more information, call the Maryland Department of Human Resources Adoption Hotline at 1-800-39-ADOPT. ♥

Project Independence Helping Russian Orphans

Picture yourself a 15-year-old child. You have no home, no parents, and no family at all. Because you have lived your life in a Russian orphanage, you don't know how to catch the bus, cook a meal, or rent an apartment -- and certainly you have no idea of how to find a job. Worst of all, you have no one to ask. In 6 months, you will be released from the orphanage because you have reached the age of 16. How scared would you be?

There are more than 750,000 children living in orphanages throughout Russia, and this is what they all will face. About 10 to 20% will go on to lead a successful life. Most end up homeless or in prison.

Children in Common (humanitarian aid program of Adoptions Together) has partnered with Kidlinks International to help these children by starting Project Independence.

We have built an apartment in a large Moscow orphanage where the children are taught independent living skills. We have provided a curriculum for the orphanage psychologist and social workers to teach the children social and emotional skills to ensure their success in the mainstream.

The second part of the project is employment training. Many businesses, including IKEA, McDonald's, and the Moscow airport have agreed to hire and train the children. In

addition, we have recruited adults in the community to be mentors for the children. Each child has a mentor who is able to provide much needed support and encouragement.

January 2007 will be the start of the Chef's Apprentice program. The Radisson SAS, and several Marriott hotels in Moscow, will be training the children culinary skills to use in the hospitality industry.

More orphanages would like us to start this program in their facilities. Our hope is to do this for as many children as possible. If you can help, please send a donation to Children in Common. These children deserve the opportunity to have a successful life. ♥



Birthland Tours... an important trip for your family!

Many families have already returned to China with their adopted children. Families are now registering for 2007 summer tours to China. Adoptions Together plans to sponsor tours to Russia, Guatemala, and Vietnam in future years, and we hope to hear from families who are thinking about going. Several Vietnam families are discussing a 2008 tour. Adoptions Together believes that taking your child back to

their country is important to build an understanding of their adoption story and pride in their ethnic heritage. We hope many of you will plan for this important event. Let us know what year you may be interested in participating! (Email marcygitt@cox.net) Tours are also open to families who adopted through other agencies. Go to www.adoptionstogether.org for frequently asked questions, references, photos, and costs for China 2007.

More than 50 families, many of whom adopted through Adoptions Together, have toured China. They visited their child's orphanage, the Great Wall, and other beautiful sights. Most tours have five to eight families in a group. Xiumin Overall's family in China made the tour arrangements. In June 2006, 21 families returned to China together, accompanied by Xiumin and Marcy Gitt, who planned this exciting adventure. There were 29 adopted Chinese girls along with parents, siblings, aunts, and cousins. Most of the girls were 10 to 12 years old. More tour stories will be featured in a future Adoptions Together newsletter. ♥

Don, Lynn, Nora, Ben, and Grandmother after a climb on the Great Wall of China.



Rose plays with the babies at her orphanage with her mom, Lynn

Here are some of the participants' comments:

"The trip was very powerful for me—right up there with the initial experience of the first time I got my baby. This time I got the baby's country and culture."

"This trip was one of the best experiences of my life. The benefit to my daughters is immeasurable."

"The biggest change that I've seen in my daughter is more pride in being Chinese."

"My daughter loved China and already talks about going back. She has been 'at peace' since we came back. I don't know how else to describe it. She seems more confident and sure of herself."



Beijing Olympics August 2008 Tour

Join Xiumin Overall and Marcy Gitt at the Olympic Games in Beijing, followed by a trip to your child's orphanage city. Xiumin's niece, Nicole, who makes all the travel arrangements in China has special access to tickets to the Olympic games. For more information email marcygitt@cox.net.

FALL FAMILY DAY 2006... a day to remember!

We thought we could not top last year's Fall Family Day—but we DID!! More than 500 children and adults enjoyed Adoption Together's annual picnic at Centennial Park in October. In addition to face painting, pumpkin coloring, and children's activities, we made scarecrows!

The sunny skies added to the enjoyment of the live band, provided by Darrell Green. The band played requests all afternoon, including a rendition of "Happy Birthday," as we celebrated the 50th birthday of Adoptions Together's Founder and Executive Director, Janice Goldwater (what a surprise!!!).

It literally "takes a village" to have an event like Fall Family Day—THANK YOU to all the volunteers who helped make it a success. From the stuffing of invitations to the clean-up of the pavilion—everyone deserves a hand!!



**PLEASE MARK YOUR CALENDAR
FOR THE NEXT FALL FAMILY DAY:**

**Sunday,
October 14, 2007**



What does an auto show have to do with building families and keeping them strong?

On January 23, 2007, nearly 300 families, friends and supporters of Adoptions Together attended *The 2007 Washington Auto Show Congressional Gala and Charity Preview*. Along with a sneak preview of over 700 new cars on display, these individuals enjoyed the food, drink and general excitement of a gala evening in the heart of Washington, DC. In addition to having a great time, over \$65,000 was raised in support of Adoptions Together's mission to continue building families through

adoption and keeping them strong through education programs, counseling, advocacy, and other support services.

Adoptions Together thanks the Washington Area New Automobile Dealers Association for inviting us to take part in this year's gala. We thank all of the board members, staff, and supporters who helped make this event a success! Special thanks also goes to Adoptions Together Board Member, Debbie Schick and her husband, Rory, who introduced us to

WANADA and this unique event. The Schick family owns and operates Manassas Chrysler. They are an Adoptions Together family, and have supported AT for many years.

JOIN THE FUN! Keep an eye out for information on the 2008 Washington Auto Show Congressional Gala and Charity Preview to come out later this year!

Homecomings

July–December, 2006

Adoptive Parents	Welcomed into their home	Adoptive Parents	Welcomed into their home	From	Adoptive Parents	Welcomed into their home	From
DOMESTIC							
Christine	Elijah	Marcene & John	Braden		Steve & Anne	Sophia	China
Heidi & Michael	Michael Jr.	Jodi & Donald	Bodey		Jim & Laura	Ellie	China
Shannon & Mark	Marcus	Elizabeth & Emily	Gabriel		Karl & Michelle	Lida	China
Kimberly & Daniel	Sophia	Anne & Leslie	Jackson		Mark & Tamie	Alexa	China
Tyuna & Walter	Connor	Andrea	Ariana		Lauren	Lea Jean Ngan	Vietnam
Elizabeth	Amara	Stanley & Allen	Anna		Stan & Meiling	Gloria	China
Lisa & Joel	Kayla	Karen & Michael	Isaac		Michael & Tara	Sophia	China
Susan & Dan	Ella	Lexi & Shawn	Charles		Michael & Lauren	Maggie	China
Michelle & Abdul	Janiyyah	Niambi & Jamal	Starr, Kindra & Joanie		Joanna & Michael	Joshua	China
Mildred	Sydni	Paula & Sean	William		Drew & Nathalie	Mia	China
Pamela & Kimberly	Daniel	Yasmin & Richard	Howard		Randy & Cynthia	Elena	China
Melanie & John	Braydon	Matt & Tom	Kah-Sim		Colleen	Shannon	Russia
Karen	Amelia	Eric & Rob	Christian		Kim	Mason	Azerbaijan
Ebony & Norman	Grey	Kimberly	Tameka		Alison	Valentina	Russia
Charles & Baltasar	Bryan	INTERNATIONAL			Meg	Andrew	Russia
Cheryl & Philip	Boston	Jeffrey & Jean	Ann	China	Peter & Amanda	Peter Benjamin	Russia
Traci	Danielle	Todd & Heather	Katlyn	China	Randy & Masha	Veronika	Russia
Yvan & Jean-Francois	Leo	Scott & Melinda	Madelina	China	Stephen & Jennifer	Alexander	Russia
					Mike & Mary	Elena Diana	Russia

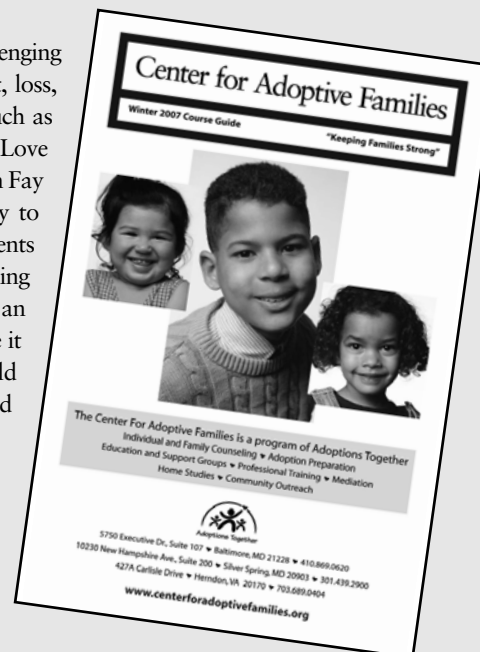
Fall Courses at the Center for Adoptive Families include:

Parenting with Love and Logic

Parenting is always a challenge. It can be even more challenging when a family is coping with such issues as attachment, loss, grief, trauma, and factors affecting brain functioning such as prenatal exposure to drugs or alcohol. Parenting with Love and Logic is a highly effective approach developed by Jim Fay and Foster Cline, which offers children an opportunity to learn to think for themselves and behave responsibly. Parents learn to provide clear structure and limits through offering choices and giving consequences with empathy. It is an approach which works well in adoptive families because it supports the development of a close parent/child relationship, and can be modified to meet their adopted child's unique needs.

Presenter: Kathleen G. Moss, LCSW, ACSW

Date: Saturday, May 5, 2007
Time: 9:30 am – 12:00 pm
Place: Silver Spring Office
Fee: \$50/family



New Seminars and Old Favorites

- *Second parent adoption*
- *Teen issues in adoption*
- *Openness in adoption*
- *Single parent adoption: From Soup to Nuts*
- *Talking to your child about adoption*
- *Adoption preparation*

Advance registration is required for all programs. For details, go to www.centerforadoptivefamilies.org.

CAF workshops and seminars for adoptive parents, adopted persons, prospective parents, educators and health professionals are made possible by donations to Adoptions Together.

12th Annual Kids Connection Conference

Our family talks, but are we really listening?



All families communicate their values, opinions, and feelings. Adoptive families have additional information to share because children have a birth and/or early childhood experience apart from their parents. At this year's Kids Connection Conference, children will participate in age-appropriate (K-9th grade) group activities that highlight honest communication at home and with friends, especially around challenging issues such as adoption. Children will learn how words, body language, and tone of voice convey messages and feelings. Kathy Moss, a nationally known leader in the adoption community will facilitate a discussion with parents about lessons learned about adoptive parenting, followed by small group discussion. We will offer books, gift shop items, yummy snacks, and door prizes.

Sunday, April 29, 2007, 1:00 pm – 4:30 pm

Melvin J. Berman Hebrew Academy

Fee: \$35/child, \$25/parent **Childcare:** \$20/child, ages 3 to 5

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conversation

An update from Adoptions Together

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