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Comings and Goings

It was with great sadness that we wished Adrienne Elliott, Assistant Director and Placement Supervisor, farewell and good luck last month.

Adrienne has taken a new position with the University of Denver where she will be sharing her vast wealth of knowledge with aspiring social workers.

Many thanks, Adrienne, for your commitment to Adoption Options. You will be missed.

**Perspectives of....
Transracial Adoption** by Kellie McGowan

Transracial adoptions are on the rise in the United States as well as here at Adoption Options. Families are increasingly open to adopting children outside of their own ethnicity and research has suggested that these adoptions can be extremely successful. However, literature also suggests that transracial adoptions are most successful when transracial adoptive parents have received education and training in preparation for this challenging role.

For the past nine months, I have been interning with Adoption Options as I am finishing up my masters degree at the University of Denver Graduate School of Social Work. In order to fulfill the requirements of my degree, I conducted a research project on the topic of transracial adoption education. More specifically, I aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of the transracial adoption education offered here at Adoption Options as part of the mandatory adoptive parent education class.

Unfortunately, the overall results of my evaluation were inconclusive due to the small response rate. However, the results did reveal that the education class was effective in increasing adoptive parents' knowledge in a few specific areas. The education class increased adoptive parents' awareness of the importance of providing transracially adopted children with opportunities to learn the history of the people of his or her race. The results also revealed that the education class increased adoptive parents' awareness of the importance of encouraging their transracially adopted child to seek support and advice from adults of his or her race about coping with prejudice. Finally, the results revealed that the education class increased adoptive parents' understanding that coping with prejudice or racism is much different than coping with other problems.

Research in the area of transracial adoption education has just begun. It is evolving out of the questions, concerns, and struggles of transracial adoptive parents and their families. These parents have expressed a need to understand how they can better prepare themselves for the challenges, and rewards of transracial adoption. Through my research, I have learned that transracial adoptions can be most successful when the children are taught about their own culture through books, games, and regular contact with others in their cultural group, when the children are taught skills to deal with racism and prejudice, and when the children's parents are aware of how race, ethnicity, culture and language influence their lives and the lives of their children. When a child is raised in a culturally competent environment, they are able to develop a strong identity, deal with prejudice and racism, and learn about their cultural heritage so that they can feel good about who they are and where they came from.

UP-COMING EVENTS

👉 14TH ANNUAL GOLF TOURNAMENT

👉 ADOPTIVE FAMILY PICNIC

SEE INSIDE FOR MORE INFORMATION

DIRECTOR'S PEN

by Carol Holliday Lawson, Executive Director



As we make the transition to summer, the agency is also making a transition in terms of staff. Sadly, Adrienne Elliott left the agency in May to become a trainer at DU. Adrienne brought many wonderful assets to the agency – she was very involved with me, in reviewing policies and practice within the agency. Her enthusiasm, knowledge and hard work will be sadly missed. We also have three members of staff who are pregnant at the moment and all due within three weeks of each other in July and August. Allison Villarreal, Amanda Schaad and Kathryn Beals will be taking some time away from the agency from July, however, we are hoping they will return in the future. We wish them all well. We have interviewed for a new Assistant Director/Placement Supervisor and hope to have someone in place by the beginning of July. We will keep you posted!

So far this year we have placed 12 children into new families. Several of these have been designated or interstate designated adoptions. I believe this reflects the different ways that birth parents now connect with adoptive families. Many more of them use the internet to locate a family. It is with this in mind, that we are reviewing all our ways of marketing to birth parents. We now have a video on You-Tube, we are also on Face Book and MySpace. We are working with an expert on search engine optimization. In addition, we have dramatically increased our outreach efforts in the local community. We hope that these efforts will increase our visibility for birth parents considering a plan of adoption or seeking information about their options.

Elsewhere in this newsletter is information about the upcoming golf tournament and picnic. Our annual golf tournament is an integral part of our fundraising strategy and we would love to see more of our adoptive families on the golf course. Additionally, our annual picnic is a celebration of all the wonderful families who have been built through adoption. Please try to attend and meet staff and families.

I wish you all an exciting and fulfilling summer.

Carl Holliday Lawson

Education and Your Baby

by Anna Padden

We wanted to just take a moment to highlight the education we provide here at Adoption Options as a reminder that, while you wait or as you are parenting, education is a lifelong process. Have you ever heard the Chinese proverb, “If you give a person a fish you feed them for the day, but if you teach a person to fish, you feed them for a lifetime?” This timeless quote shows the importance of education and the value education holds in all facets of our society. The value of education is something that has always been at the forefront of Adoption Options’ philosophy since our formation, not just because it is a requirement of the state, but because, as the proverb implies, it benefits you and your family in the long run. It enriches your future and your child’s future.

We have recently been looking at how information is given to families and how that education is presented. We feel it is important to reiterate the value of education. Obviously, the Chinese proverb simplifies things a bit, we wish it was as easy as

just teaching you “how to parent an adopted child” and then you would be set for life, but as many of you already know, or will learn—that is not the case. We all know that every child and every family is unique and techniques and styles have to be learned and adapted. You will have to learn the basics of adoption and parenting and adapt that to your child and their personality. We can give you those basics, and that is what we aim to do with the education classes. All adoptive families in Colorado are required to complete Core Training Education which is broken into the reading of articles and attending classes. At Adoption Options, the first two classes which are held prior to placement cover grief and loss, attachment and bonding, the birth parents’ process, the adoptive family’s process, transracial adoption, medical considerations, and an adoptee’s perspective. Families hear from birth parent, adoptive family, and cradle care family speakers. The third class is held after being placed with a child

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Post Adoption Depression

By Sarah Jorgensen

Finally! After months or years of waiting, you have welcomed your adopted child home. You expect to feel blissful, ecstatic, content—this is the fulfillment of your dream of becoming a parent! But what if everything doesn't feel as perfect as you expected? Post-adoption depression syndrome (PADS) is a real and painful phenomenon that affects many adoptive parents. First named in a 1995 article by June Bond, PADS describes the negative feelings experienced by adoptive parents at and following the placement of an adopted child. One survey of 145 adoptive parents found that while 65% of parents surveyed had experienced PADS, only 8 people had been prepared for it by their adoption professionals. Why does PADS occur? What can you do to cope with these feelings? It is our hope that this short article will give you some helpful information and resources for further learning.

PADS occurs because of a variety of complex factors. First, like any new parents, you are experiencing a major life change. Caring for a newborn or young child is a full-time job and new parents must balance their needs with the needs of the child. You're bound to be tired, stressed, and emotionally drained. You're just getting to know the "little stranger" in your family while at the same time experiencing profound changes in your marital relationship and a new self-identity.

During the long journey to becoming adoptive parents, you developed ideas and expectations of the child you would someday have. The experience of adoption and the child who is placed may not fulfill those expectations. For many families, the focus for so long has been on *getting* a child it can be a difficult shift to *having* a

child. Many parents re-experience feelings surrounding infertility at the time of placement and may grieve those losses again.

Adoptive parents often feel ambivalent about the placement of a child and must cope with the complex emotions involved in adoption. Along with the excitement and joy of placement, you may feel responsible for the pain and loss experienced by the birthparents, doubt about the bonding and attachment process, and guilt for feeling anything but happy. You may also be having fears about the legal process of relinquishment or termination. It's ok to talk to your caseworker about these feelings! Many parents are worried that admitting feelings of sadness, stress, or disappointment will jeopardize their adoption, but your caseworker has heard these feelings before and is there to support you. PADS is exacerbated by isolation, so turn to your caseworker or other support people to process and normalize your feelings.

What else can you do to care for yourself during the post-placement period? Make sure you and your partner both take as much time as possible away from work to "nest" and bond with your child. Even though your friends and family are excited to meet the baby, it's ok to hold off on visitors until you feel settled. If you do have visitors, ask them to help with other housework while you care for the baby. Prepare yourself before placement for the coming change in your relationship with your partner. Commit to communicating openly, supporting each other, and taking time for just the two of you after the baby comes. Stay in touch with your network of support, especially when things are difficult. Look for a new parents' or adoptive parents' support group and make sure not to isolate yourself. Finally, remember that adoption is a lifelong process for both you and your child. Your journey is not over at placement, it is just beginning!

Further Reading

The Post-Adoption Blues: Overcoming the Unforeseen Challenges of Adoption
Karen J. Foli, Ph.D., John R. Thompson M.D. Rodale Books, 2004.

Post Adoption Depression Syndrome
Judy Bond, *Roots and Wings*, Spring 1995
www.adopting.org/pads.html

Baby Shock
Jean MacLeod, *Adoptive Families*, Sept/Oct 2001
<http://www.adoptivefamilies.com/articles.php?aid=1063>

Post Adoption Depression: The Unacknowledged Hazard
Harriet McCarthy, Eastern European Adoption Coalition, Inc.
<http://www.eadopt.org/content/view/100/76/>

Signs to watch for

Depressed mood most of the day, every day (sad, empty, tearful, irritable)
Less interest or pleasure in activities you used to enjoy
Significant changes in weight, appetite, or sleep patterns
Fatigue or loss of energy nearly every day
Feelings of worthlessness, guilt, or hopelessness nearly every day
Suicidal thoughts or ideation

If you are experiencing many of these symptoms regularly for more than two weeks, you may be depressed. Speak with your caseworker, doctor, or another professional for help. Depression is common and treatable. *If you feel like hurting yourself or others, tell someone immediately!*

Employee Spotlight



Hi, I'm Leslie Dezendorf, Adoptive Family Caseworker and Birthparent counselor. I joined Adoptions Options in October, 2006 and do contract work for the southwest part of the state including Durango where I live. Previously, I worked as a child and family therapist in a mental health center for ten years. Originally from Florida, I received my BA in teaching from Ft. Lewis College, and my Masters in Counseling from Adams State College. Even though I enjoy working out of my home, I miss being able to walk "across the hall" to talk to Adoption Option staff members. Initially it was a bit of adjustment but I now feel I have adjusted to communicating by email and phone with my wonderful colleagues.

Having grown up in my family with my adopted brother from Guatemala, I feel very fortunate to work with adoptive parents and birthparents as they are making the most important decisions of their lives. Making the call to an adoptive family that they have been chosen as the "forever family" by a birthparent/s is one of the most rewarding phone calls I have ever made!

Apart from work, I enjoy spending time together in the outdoors with my family. I volunteer for the Red Cross and Big Brothers/Big Sisters. For the past two summers I have also volunteered at a camp in New York for children that are either infected or affected by Aids with my two daughters. My son is a freshman at CU in Boulder, Co. I am very happy to be working at Adoptions Options and look forward to meeting many more parents eager to add children to their family.

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and this is when you delve further into the topics of child development, disclosure issues, talking to your child about their story, discipline and adoption as a lifelong process. Families are also required to review additional articles provided by the agency before completing the home study process.

A common theme in the feedback evaluations we ask you to do during these classes is that the information is valuable, however, it would be beneficial for the information to be provided closer to the time of placement. We appreciate that many of you complete the education classes far before you are placed and therefore the information is unused, and then much of this information is forgotten. We talk about how adoption is a process and education should be a process as well. The classes offered through Adoption Options should not be the end of your learning process, your lifetime of fishing if you will. We recognize that there are continued issues that arise through the process of adoption. Now that's not to say that we believe every family should attend the education class on a regular basis—that's unrealistic. What we do believe, though, is that additional education during your wait time, or even after finalization could be beneficial. After all, there are many different fishing techniques. If a person was only taught to fly fish, they may miss out on the unique opportunities that reel fishing may provide. Thus, as adoptive parents it is important to continue to learn all the different approaches and techniques within the realm of Adoption Options. As an agency, we have been looking at options for continued education for our families. We are considering holding an additional class, not covered in your current fee agreement, in which we cover the transracial adoption in further detail, maybe on a week night for a couple hours. We are open to ideas on further topics on which to potentially hold a class. There would be only a minimal charge for these classes



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