

AUTUMN 2009

The English American Returns to Benefit Barker



“More!!”

That was the plea of one adoptive mother and long-time Barker conference attendee after experiencing Alison’s Larkin’s unorthodox keynote at last March’s conference. The conference-goer’s request will be granted when the acclaimed actress and author returns to the Washington area on November 17 with a performance at the Roundhouse Theatre in Bethesda to benefit The Barker Foundation’s life-long services to adopted persons.

Those of us who live with adoption as part of our lives know that adoption brings joy and moments of insight and connection, as well as times of loss, doubt and confusion. Most of us have experienced

she met the American birth parents who placed her for adoption, the ensuing culture clash shook her world. She eventually turned her experiences into a comedy routine, a one-woman show that sold out performances on both sides of the Atlantic, and ultimately, into the novel *The English American*, released by Simon and Schuster in 2008. Ms. Larkin is currently considering offers to adapt *The English American*, which will be released in paperback on the date of her Roundhouse performance, into a motion picture.

“I am absolutely delighted to be performing ‘An Evening with The English American’ at The Barker Foundation’s fundraiser on the very day the paperback is released,” Ms. Larkin said. “I am thrilled that the adoption agency I came from is leading the way in providing much needed support for adult adopted people and others in real need of post-adoption help.”

The actress and author is passionate about services to adopted persons and about their rights to their histories, but her beliefs are always couched in warmth and humor. As Susan Riecken, the adoptive mother who wanted “more,” went on to note, “It was refreshing to have such healthy doses of bald humor injected into what is so often such a serious dialogue.”

As Clive Davies of *The Times* (London) put it, “Alison Larkin’s autobiographical show offers hugely entertaining reflections on how we become the kind of people we think we are...nature versus nurture, the eternal search for roots

and the ups and downs of the great Anglo-American love affair—this is a marvelously light-footed theatrical work that manages to avoid preaching or pontificating...A lesson in the human condition.”

The paperback cover of *The English American* elegantly communicates the experience of divided identity. Half of a young woman stands in an English garden, holding a Stars and Stripes umbrella. The other half of her stands on the streets of New York City with an umbrella sporting a Union Jack.

“Young adoptees—indeed, all adult adoptees—respond passionately to Alison, no matter what the circumstances of their adoption,” said Marilyn Regier, Barker Executive Director. “She gives voice to their feelings in a way that is at once poignant, funny, and sometimes irreverent. We are thrilled to be able to gather together the Barker community to celebrate ‘one of our own,’ and we hope many outside the Barker family will also join us.”

Ms. Larkin’s performance at the Roundhouse will be preceded by a reception at the theatre. Invitations to the event will be mailed shortly. Reservations can also be made at www.barkerfoundation.org or by calling 301-664-9664.

If you would like to volunteer to help with this event or to donate an item for the silent auction, please contact one of the co-chairs:

- Rachel Firschein, rjfirschein@verizon.net
- Chris Intagliata, cintagliata2@gmail.com
- Mary Jaffe, magjaffe@yahoo.com ■

***The English American* begins:**

“I think everyone should be adopted. That way, you can meet your birth parents when you’re old enough to cope with them. Of course, it’s all a bit of a lottery. You never know who you’re going to get as parents. I got lucky. Then again, if I’d been adopted by Mia Farrow, rather than Mum and Dad, today I could be married to Woody Allen.”

the gentle humor that comes from living our lives in a way that does not conform to the “usual.” But until one sees Alison Larkin perform, one simply does not know how funny adoption can be.

Ms. Larkin was herself placed for adoption as an infant by the Barker Foundation with an English couple living in Washington at the time. She grew up in Africa and England, eventually becoming an actress who appeared regularly on the British stage. When, as an adult,



FROM THE *Executive Director*

This is the season of the year where it feels especially important to encourage the spirit of philanthropy.

Our September Annual Phonathon is upon us, followed soon thereafter by our November benefit performance at Roundhouse Theatre. I've chosen to let the voices of children and youth speak for me in this column. We often make reference to "Barker babies," and while some do not care for the term, in truth, the alliteration has made it charmingly irresistible for decades.

Once again this year, countless touching acts of giving by "Barker babies" have crossed my desk. We are seeing more teens and college students "click and pledge" online; adoptees making Barker the recipient of special gifts at Confirmation, Bar and Bat Mitzpahs, and holidays; Scouting troops raising funds for us; and many students volunteering at Barker, for no compensation other than the rewards that come from seeing firsthand the important work we do.

Just as we need to pass the baton to our children in terms of their possessing their own adoption histories and stories, so we as an organization also need to make sure that we energize our children to be invested in the Barker of the future and in child welfare causes that are critically important. I will share just four examples of youth philanthropy that speak volumes more than anything I could pen.

Crystal Pickar, a Barker teen adoptee, was just 16 when she overheard her mother discussing the family's donation for Barker's Phonathon. She thought: "That's what I want to do. I want to make my own donation." She and her mother, Cathy, brainstormed and decided that Crystal could use her photography skills to raise funds for Barker. Crystal photographed magnificent fall

and winter scenes in her Somerset neighborhood of Chevy Chase, and with the help of sister, Bess, she began selling note cards in packs of ten, with an inscription on the back that "all proceeds go to the Barker Foundation." The beautiful cards continue to be available at Barker's front desk. Not surprisingly, Crystal credits her mom with imbuing in her the spirit of philanthropy: "I've learned a lot about how I act from watching her. She is a *big* influence on me."

Eight-year-old Dana Mauser wrote to friends about the day she was placed in her mother's arms. "While I was waiting for her, I lived in an orphanage in Yong Zhou City in the Hunan Province of China. For my birthday, instead of a present, it would mean a lot to me if you made a donation to the orphanage where I came from in China. The Barker Foundation, the adoption agency that my mom used to adopt me...is going to help me send the donations to the orphanage." Dana's mother, Amy, reports that a total of \$325 was given in lieu of gifts. As for Dana, she says: "I wish the best for the babies in China and hope the money I am sending helps the babies until

they get a forever family. I am very thankful for my friends who decided to make a donation, and especially for one of my friends who used her own money."

Last summer, 9-year-old Alayna Lightfield organized her friends and ran "Laynie's Lemonade Stand" in Ellicott City, raising \$536.50 for FANA, the Bogotá orphanage where Laynie spent the first two months of her life. When I was in Colombia this summer with Barker's Homeland Tour, Mercedes de Martinez showed me a collage of photos of Laynie, which now occupies a prominent spot in Mercedes' office, and which she shows to visitors as exemplary of what even a young child can do. As I write these words, the lemonade stand is going strong for a second summer, with Laynie and her friends hoping to surpass last year's total. The "Lemonade Stand Blog" includes Laynie's thoughts about how her contribution will help children and birth mothers. (www.thelightfieldfamily.blogspot.com)

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Left to right, Crystal and Bess Pickar pictured in a favorite spot by a creek in their Somerset neighborhood. An avid photographer, Crystal turned her beautiful scenes into notecards that benefited Barker's services.



Dana Mauser used her 8th birthday as the occasion to raise funds for Chinese children. Her invitation featured this photo of an orphanage playground, with a note to her friends: "This is a picture from when I was in the orphanage. Guess which baby I am?" (Answer: far left!)



The Long family regularly discusses wise charitable choices and giving strategies. Pictured above, left to right, are Bob, Jr., Andrew, Bob, Sr., Joan, Eleanor (Duffy) and Robbie.



Little wonder that Alayna Lightfield's parents, Mike and Karen, say their daughter "amazes us every day with her big heart." Here is Laynie (far right) with friends, at her lemonade stand. This year she added face-painting to the usual lemonade and homemade cookies.

Annual Phonathon: Calling All Barker Supporters

Barker's all-important fall Phonathon, a cornerstone of the Foundation's fund-raising efforts for more than 27 years, is coming again on Tuesday, September 22, and Wednesday, September 23. David Sherman, Phonathon Volunteer Coordinator, reports that "as summer comes to a close, the Barker Foundation staff and volunteers throughout the area are busy getting ready for our annual Phonathon. I am delighted to see so many first-time callers this year."

Parent volunteers will be calling each member of the Barker community, seeking contributions in support of our comprehensive adoption programs. Several years ago, Rob DeLucia aptly observed that "the engine driving the Phonathon has been the dedicated cadre of volunteers who have come out every year to call their fellow Barker families." There's still time to sign up as a volunteer caller by phoning our main office, 301-664-9664, and asking for Mary Reyner, Director of

Development. The callers will be using the offices and telephones at **Reznik Group, 7700 Old Georgetown Road, Bethesda**, and we are extremely grateful that they have again donated their wonderful facility for the Phonathon. Barker parents, Tom and Charleen Merkel, of **Bradley Food and Beverage**, are again generously providing the delicious food that keeps the volunteers well-nourished.

In addition to David Sherman's coordination, John Freeman, Board

of Trustees Development Chair, helps to oversee the effort. The office team, led by Linda Adams, Barker's Director of Finance and Administration, and Mary Reyner, Barker's Director of Development, together with Beth Kirby and Kathleen Porter, will be coordinating mailings and communications with the Barker family. David Sherman reminds us: "Mark your calendars, and please be generous." ■

The Barker Foundation Named "One of Best Small Charities" by Catalogue for Philanthropy: Greater Washington

The Barker Foundation has been selected to be featured in the 2009/10 Catalogue for Philanthropy: Greater Washington. Sixty-eight exceptional nonprofits with budgets below \$3 million were chosen this year from a field of over 250 applicants. A committee of ninety professionals from



area foundations, corporate giving programs, family foundations, non-profit organizations, and the DC government participated in the review process.

According to Barbara Harman, Executive Director of the Harman Family Foundation and President of the Catalogue for Philanthropy: Greater

Washington, "The Catalogue is designed to be a showcase for high impact, DC-region non-profits, and an inviting way for individuals and families to participate in charitable giving. In the midst of the worst economic downturn we have seen in decades, supporting these organizations—which make a big difference in the lives of people throughout our community—is more important than ever. And the Catalogue makes informed, targeted giving truly possible."

"Charities were selected for excellence, innovation, cost-

effectiveness, and financial transparency—and for what they can teach us about the extraordinary ways that philanthropy works," Harman said. "These are certainly among the best small charities in the Washington, DC region."

Since its inception in 2003, the Catalogue has enabled deserving, local non-profit organizations to raise more than \$6.3 million dollars. For more information, or to order a copy of the 2009/2010 Catalogue, visit www.catalogueforphilanthropy-dc.org. ■

From the Executive Director, continued from page 2

And finally, Robbie (18) and Andrew (13) Long, together with their parents, recently designated Barker as the recipient of a gift from their grandparents' family foundation. Their dad, Bob, explains how his parents have encouraged their four grown children and seven grandchildren: "My parents ask each of the four families to select one or more organizations to receive a charitable donation for the year. Mom and Dad then make the donation. The grandchildren are encouraged to get involved in the process, and to talk through the pros and cons of various ideas. At a family gathering, each family reports on the organization they have chosen. My parents are planning to fund a small family foundation, would like to involve the whole family in it, and hope this will be good training, as well as good experience for charitable giving generally."

Research has found that two key forces to animate giving are: first, the organization has personally touched one's life or has a cause to which one feels strongly connected; and secondly, the organization has a history of accountability and integrity that imbues trust in the giver. I hope that our community feels this dual motivation to give to Barker, and that going forward, we convey this to the next generation. The Barker of the future depends on the vision and leadership of our children and youth, individuals like Crystal and Bess, Dana, Alayna, Robbie and Andrew.

As we consider our donations to Barker this year, may our own philanthropy combine the loving heart of a child, the determined idealism of youth, and the resources with which we have been blessed in adulthood. Surely then, Barker's mission will thrive. ■

— With Sympathy —

We express our heartfelt sympathy to the Gandal, Love and Rosier families as they mourn the loss of their loved ones.

Jeannette Kressin, mother of Barker parent Jan Gandal (Larry), and loving grandmother to Mara and Michael, died on October 23, 2008.

Dennis E. Love, Sr., father of Barker parent Dennis Love (Beth), and grandfather to Danny and Michael, died on August 8, 2009. Mr. Love was a teacher with the Montgomery Public County schools for 40 years.

Wilton P. Rosier, Sr., father of Barker parent Pat Rosier (Sue), and grandfather to Andrew and Elizabeth, died on August 8, 2009.

Mr. Rosier, a life-long resident of Tampa, Florida, served in both World War II and the Korean War. He spent his entire business career in the insurance industry.

The Barker Foundation is most grateful to each family for designating Barker as a memorial gift recipient.

Project Wait No Longer's Goal: Permanency for Foster Youth

In recent months, it's practically become a household name in the Barker community, as **Project Wait No Longer** grows increasingly well-known and respected. With the goal of helping place older foster youth into permanent adoptive homes, the program has been making a significant difference in the lives of many children.

Tabitha Kelly, a licensed clinical social worker, is the program's director working diligently to find homes for older children, through recruitment, training, placement, and post-placement services that strengthen and sustain the home. After one year of leading our expanding program, Tabitha reflects: "I could not be happier to see the growth of the older child adoption program. But, more importantly, I am pleased to be a part of building families and witnessing permanency being



Tabitha Kelly brings both expertise and commitment to her leadership role as Director of Project Wait No Longer.

also express a strong desire to make a difference. Dan Sparks remembers that "already when Tracy and I were courting, we discussed the type of life we hoped to lead. Adoption was part of that. We felt

there was a pressing need for homes for older at-risk children of color. For us this was a way to give back to the community, to love and to share with a child." Dan and Tracy are the parents of two sons by birth, Korben, age 10, and Dylan, age 7. Reaching a point where they felt both blessed and established—Dan as a career Marine officer, and Tracy with a retail career—they connected with The Barker Foundation.

In June 2007, 7-year-old Ashley, who had been in the foster care system since the age of 4-1/2, came to live with the Sparks family in Centreville, Virginia. Dan notes the warmth with which she was embraced: "She's loved by her big brothers, by our extended family, by all our friends in the neighborhood, and by her teachers." Her adoption was finalized February 17, 2008. Tracy sums up their feelings: "It was a long process, but with our persistence, plus amazing support and help from Barker, we did it.

Ashley is truly a blessing to our family. We will continue to encourage others to grow their family through adoption."

Among the newest families to celebrate in 2009 is the Phillips family of Arnold, Maryland. In April 2009, Bill and Sophia stood before a judge in Annapolis and declared their intention to raise and love unconditionally siblings Melat, age 11, and Surafel, who just turned 7. Both engineers by profession, Bill and Sophia first learned about the children's need for a home in October 2008. By Christmas the children were visiting them, and they came to stay on January 10, 2009. The wait had been long, but Sophia put it in perspective: "We went through three years of processing and waiting to finally become parents. It's lucky that Barker kept trying even when we were about to say 'stop.' They found a brother and sister to place in our home who have become such an important part of our lives. The older children

bring life experiences and insights into our home, and we bring ours to them. It is a wonderful blending of lives that has created something better for all four of us."



Pictured with their presiding Judge in the Circuit Court of Anne Arundel County are, left to right, Sophia, Surafel, Melat, and Bill Phillips

No family has been more passionate about advocating for the program than the Russ family. Greg, a planner coordinator for zoning, and Veda, a financial manager, have spoken eloquently at various Barker functions, recounting how they transitioned from the infant

program to **Project Wait No Longer**. Ebony had been in nine different homes by the age of 6, and finally found her "forever family" with the Silver Spring couple who now cannot imagine life without "Ebby." Veda reflects: "I switched from the infant program to the older child program because God planted the desire in my heart to do so. As one of my favorite quotes states:

'God said it; I believed it; that was good enough for me.' There were a number of trials over the adjustment period; however, none of them compare to the joy that our family now experiences. Through the

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The smiles on the faces of Tracy, Ashley, and Dan Sparks reflect their joy as they became permanent family. Here they pose for the traditional formal portrait with the judge who presided over the finalization hearing.

achieved. One of my life's goals is to positively impact the lives of children. Being the Director of **Project Wait No Longer** has given me the perfect opportunity to make a difference for children and families each day."

Like Tabitha, those parents who choose **Project Wait No Longer**



Several months after their actual adoption finalization, the Russes returned for an "Adoption Day Celebration" in Arlington Court House, where many new adoptive families were honored. Pictured are Veda, Ebony, and Greg Russ in front of the judge.

Director Tina Ji Announces Barker's Participation in China's Waiting Children Program

In August 2008, Tina Ji, Director of International Programs, announced Barker's approval by the CCAA for China's Waiting Children program. At this time we are seeking families for the children in our program. Adoptive parent, Barbara Ridenour, shares her feelings, as she and husband Mark, brought home a daughter to join big brothers, JT and David.

In February, our family was blessed and privileged to become Barker's first family to adopt a special needs child through China's Waiting Children program. Our beautiful new daughter, Grace Jingwan Ridenour, is our third child and third adoption from China.

But amazingly, she is our first daughter. Our first two adoptions were both non-special needs boys.



Grace Jingwan Ridenour, demure in her Easter bonnet

It was always in our hearts to adopt a special needs child. We knew that there were many children in the special needs process who had minor, correctable conditions that we could easily manage in our area with our health insurance. We researched the list of possible conditions that would cause a child to be in the special needs program and narrowed in on conditions we believed we were best able to manage. We also decided to stretch our age range and request a slightly older child. We knew an older child of three or four would go through a longer transition process, but we also knew that our family had a lot of love and support to offer an older child, and that we were at least as well equipped as other families we'd seen adopting older children.

China's process changed as we waited. The CCAA created a new waiting children program with a unified list and gradually allowed more agencies to participate over the past couple of years. When Barker received approval to participate, Tina could access a waiting children's list on a restricted area on the CCAA's web site. She



Grace Ridenour, heartily embraced by big brothers David and JT.

found a little girl that she somehow realized was meant to be our little girl, and we were matched! I traveled in February and am now home with our daughter. And we feel so blessed by what a perfect fit Grace is with our family. Somehow from her referral pictures, we had pictured Grace as a very quiet, mellow little girl. One thing we've learned is that you can never tell anything from those referral pictures. Grace is a live wire. She's interested in balls, her scooter, monster trucks, light sabers and just about anything else her brothers are interested in. The big difference is that she does all these things while wearing every

possible pink accessory that she can work into her outfit.

The good news for anyone open to a special needs child is that families in the traditional program (as we were) can now easily switch over to the special needs program. It only took us five months from the time we were matched until the time we were home with Grace... We are just so amazed that our wait is over, and we have finally adopted our daughter from China! ■

For more information about the Waiting Children program, please contact Tina Ji at tji@barkerfoundation.org, or at 301-664-9664, ext. 219.

Project Wait No Longer, continued from page 4

ongoing support of Barker's **Project Wait No Longer** program, we feel that we're not on this journey alone."

Such family stories give Tabitha Kelly—and indeed the entire Barker staff—great joy. Nonetheless, with over 500,000 children in the U.S. foster care system, it is not surprising that Tabitha says: "I feel a sense of urgency for waiting children in foster care. I am fervently looking for families who can best parent

children with special needs. Every child deserves a permanent family and a home where he receives unwavering commitment, love, limits, and unconditional positive regard. And the waiting children need all of this—now."

The Barker Foundation is grateful to the foundations and donors who have believed in the importance of finding homes for older children. From its inception, **Project Wait No Longer** received strong, generous,

and steady funding from the Freddie Mac Foundation. In recent years, the program has also received generous support from The George Preston Marshall Foundation, the Lois and Richard England Family Foundation, the Max and Victoria Dreyfus Foundation, and the Mead Family Foundation.

Our program director, Ms. Kelly, came to Barker in 2008, after working with Child and Family Services Agency in Washington, DC since

2001. She not only welcomes inquiries from those seeking information about older child adoption, but also seeks opportunities at churches and other community outreach events, where she and her staff and adoptive parents might make presentations. Please contact her at tkelly@barkerfoundation.org, or by calling 301-664-9664, ext. 206. ■

Two Barker Traditions: The Annual Conference & The Annual Meeting



Above: The highlight of this year's Annual Meeting was the presentation of The Richard B. Barker Award. Incoming President of the Board of Trustees, John Duff (left), presents the award to this year's recipient, Bob Long, who provided outstanding leadership as Board President over the last two years. The Award plaque reads: "The Richard B. Barker Award presented to Robert A. Long in deep appreciation of his wise and perceptive leadership, nurturing and generous spirit, unflinching optimism, and unshakable integrity."

Below: Three new Trustees were chosen in the Annual Meeting elections on May 5, 2009. Shown after the meeting are, left to right, Joseph Barloon, Cherisse Robinson, and John Freeman. They bring strong skill sets to the 19-member Board of Trustees. The audience also heard appreciation expressed for each of the dedicated outgoing Trustees, who have served so ably: Nonie Akman, Sonya Ali, and Giorgia Eigen-Zucchi.



Far left: Alison Larkin, internationally acclaimed as a comedienne, award-winning novelist, and passionate advocate for adoptee rights, received a standing ovation from her "Barker family" after a rousing and provocative keynote address entitled "Why My Adoption is a Laughing Matter." Her presentation concluded with the world premiere of her composition, "The DNA Song."

Left: Dr. John Raible of University of Nebraska-Lincoln led a session on "Transracialized Lives: Growing up White with Adopted Siblings of Color." An adult adoptee and educator, Dr. Raible has been speaking on issues around transracial adoption for more than 30 years.

Below: Peter J. Wiernicki received this year's Barker Staff Appreciation Award. A principal in the law firm of Joseph, Reiner & Wiernicki, he is shown at the Annual Meeting with Barker staff members, Sue Hollar, Sandra Fulton, and Tina Ji. His award reads: "To Peter J. Wiernicki, in deep appreciation for your remarkable leadership in the field of adoption law, your generosity in sharing your expertise, your empathy for all members of the family of adoption, and your joyful spirit that inspires us all."



Above: Rebecca and Kevin Zwisler shared their views as panelists for a session on "Insights into Blended Families: A Dialogue with Sibs by Birth and Adoption." Throughout the day, over 50 teen and adult adoptees led workshops and served as panelists.



[Homeland tours are an important component of Barker's Post-Adoption programs. Our international department began placing children from Colombia in 1978; thus homeland tours to that country have become a vital part of our services to families. We look forward to a time in the not-too-distant future when we will provide homeland tours to our other program countries, as well. Below are reflections by parents from our 2008 and 2009 tours to Colombia.]

Reflections on the 2008 Colombia Homeland Tour

by Joseph A. Slobodzian (Newton, PA)

"One more day. I wish we could stay one more day."

These were the words I heard from my children, Cristobal and Rocio, on our way to the Bogotá airport for the flight home after 10 days in Colombia. During the summer of 2008 our family participated in the Colombia Homeland Tour, sponsored by The Barker Foundation, and had a chance to revisit FANA and the historical and cultural sites of Bogotá.

Our children were getting older, 18 and 21, and we feared this might be our last opportunity to return together as a family to visit our children's homeland. We felt it was

"now or never" and so we took the leap to borrow the funds we needed to make the trip.

During the orientation, the adults met with tour director, Varda Makovsky, Barker's Director of Family and Post-Adoption Services, and Carolina Kenrick, Barker's International Program Coordinator, who would become our Spanish translator and occasional comic relief. The kids, meanwhile, met with Meg Herman, Barker's Birth Parent Counselor and Post-Adoption Social Worker, who immediately established herself as the coolest, most awesome adult on the trip.

The first day of the tour we arrived in Bogota at the Hotel La Fontana. A sprawling, Spanish Colonial complex with an open courtyard and gardens, La Fontana became our sanctuary: a place

where the adults and the kids could both carve out some private time. Each night the adults would gather with Varda and Carolina to discuss the day's events and their significance, and Meg held a simultaneous meeting with our children.

For our family, what happened evolved slowly, day by day. The tours around Bogotá introduced the children to the beauty and culture of Colombia. The visit to FANA would prove life-changing for Rocio, where Flor Rojas told her the story of her birth family and her mother and how she came to be adopted. So too was our meeting with the birth mothers at the Hogar Margarita, where the love, tears and emotion we and our children shared with the young women

communicated more than any language. The luncheon at FANA and the afternoon playing with the children who live there helped strengthen the bond.

Mostly, I think, the change came from spending time among the Colombian people. One day Rocio said, "It's nice to be surrounded by other people who look like you." It was a reminder that, even after keeping our children's birth names and filling our home with Colombian decorations, there's nothing like going home—even a home you left as an infant. Cristobal and Rocio say they want to return.

I have no doubt they will. ■

Two Countries to Call Home: Reflections on the 2009 Colombia Homeland Tour

by Diane C. Rolfe (Ridgefield, CT)

The poet T.S. Eliot wrote "Home is where one starts from." For internationally-adopted children, life's journey starts from the home of their birth country. It also starts

from the home of their parents' loving embrace. A Homeland Tour recognizes and celebrates these two beginnings, validating their place in the child's innermost heart.

Barker's 2009 trip to Colombia brought together four families from three states (Maryland, New Jersey and Connecticut) for a common journey of discovery—an introduction to the country's true character, and an opportunity for personal his-

stories to be shared directly with each adoptee. Exploring landmarks, art, history, music and food gave our teens an extraordinary appreciation of Colombia's natural beauty and rich culture; visiting FANA and the Hogar Margarite D'Youville provided insight into their deepest roots.

At FANA, thousands of family photos, plaques and awards gave tribute to the foundation's tremendous impact across the globe. During our tour, we met nurses and

caregivers who had nurtured our own children as newborns. It was a rare opportunity for expressing thanks, and a joyous moment for staff and families alike. The teens teamed up for a heartwarming and purposeful project: building a train set for the children of FANA. Individual appointments to review adoption files were handled with sensitivity and respect. Through it all, affection ruled the day.

On our visit to the Hogar, we toured the very place where so many FANA children are sheltered before they're born; where birth mothers come for kindness, assistance, and care. We were privileged to have an in-depth dialogue with women who are considering making an adoption plan for their own babies. The discussion was a source of comfort for them, openness for us, and enlightenment for our young adults. Depth of understanding transcended language barriers, as

universal emotions were unmistakable—pain and compassion, anguish and acceptance, grief and gratitude.

Support from Barker was wonderful. Staff social workers, guides, and translators accompanied us throughout the week. Even more important was their genuine empathy for each and every person's readiness and capacity to assimilate the experience. Their dedication to us all was an immeasurable benefit before, during, and after the trip.

Returning to one's country of birth is a gift full of deep impressions and profound personal enrichment. It is a gift of knowing someplace where one is accepted, loved, and welcomed back with open arms. It is indeed the gift of coming home. ■



The 2009 Colombia Homeland Tour group gathers on FANA's steps to begin the trip of a lifetime.



Admiring the train set at FANA, left to right, Marilyn Regier, Angela Moebius, Gabe Kahn, James Rolfe, Katie Leitner, Mercedes de Martinez, Elena Lopez, and Flor Angela Rojas.

A very warm welcome to our new Director of Development, **Mary Reyner**, who joined the Barker staff on September 1st. Mary has more than 20 years of development experience, most recently as Director of Development at Recording for the Blind & Dyslexic of Metropolitan Washington, where she worked for six years. Prior to that, she worked in development at a number of independent schools. Mary looks forward to coordinating Barker's fundraising efforts, including annual

appeals, major gifts campaigns, special events, and planned giving. She is the mother of two children by adoption. (mreyner@barkerfoundation.org)

We also welcome **Jackie Kinkaid** as the new International Program Assistant. We first came to know Jackie through AU Professor and Barker Board member, Dr. Andrea Brenner, when Jackie interned at Barker. Now that Jackie has graduated, we are delighted to have

her full-time on staff. (jkinkaid@barkerfoundation.org)

A beloved Barker social worker, **Sally Donelan**, died this May in Wilmington, Delaware, at the age of 92. She played an integral part in the lives of many Barker families until her retirement in 1985.

Watch for the launch of our new website, made possible through generous grants from the **Jim and Carol Trawick Foundation** and the **Lois and Richard England Family Foundation**.

Heartfelt thanks to photographer **John Spaulding** for his generous donation of time and talent. He has helped Barker with several recent projects, and one of his deeply moving photographs is to be found on the back cover of the 2008 Annual Report. (www.JohnSpauldingPhotography.com).

Special thanks to **15four Productions** for the creative and professional work they did in creating a DVD for *Project Wait No Longer* trainings and outreach.

Congratulations to Our New Adoptive Families

Domestic Placements

Aaron and Amy welcomed Elijah
Wesley and Diana welcomed Payton
Ingo and Bethanne welcomed Kahler and Marlee
David and Cheryl welcomed Grace
Erik and Tracey welcomed Eleanor
David and Skye welcomed Egan
Tom and Amy welcomed Silas
Ganesh and Marjorie welcomed Keila
Eric and Debbie welcomed William
Jim and Elise welcomed Vincent
Dan and Tracy welcomed Ashley

Jeff and Tonia welcomed Thunder
Bryan and Michelle welcomed Andrew
Fred and Lindsay welcomed Frederick
Andrew and Tiffany welcomed Christian
Richard and Leslie welcomed Phillip
Brooks and Kathy welcomed Patricia
Hennessey and Karen welcomed Hayden
Reese and Mary Ann welcomed Lacey
Jeff and Laurie welcomed Julian
Dervel and Kim welcomed Myles
Joseph and Stacy welcomed Ari
Les and Lisa welcomed Connor

Stefano and Elena welcomed Celeste
Rodney and Sharon welcomed Taylor
Raj and Nicole welcomed Rocco
Jon and Megan welcomed Hope
Ed and Aubrey welcomed Shelby
Andy and Sue welcomed Marcus
Scott and Dani welcomed Samuel
Rock and Jennifer welcomed Andrew
Bill and Sophia welcomed Melat and Surafel
David and Amy welcomed Sarah, Tala, and Aya
Mike and Sharon welcomed Frenice

International Placements

Paul and Amy welcomed Luis
Will and Michelle welcomed Gabriel
John and Madeline welcomed Paloma
Saumyendu and Swati welcomed Risov
Inderbir and Rosy welcomed Garima
Mark and Barbara welcomed Grace
Mark and Jessica welcomed Elena
Mark and Kimberly welcomed Maxwell
Patrick and Sheri welcomed Samuel
Paul and Becky welcomed Lindee
Anthony and Lisa welcomed Mason
Richard and Laura welcomed Andrew
John and Trena welcomed Lila
Brian and Laura welcomed Gabriella
Mark and Helen welcomed Patricia
Nripendra and Suneeta welcomed Renuka
Joseph and Julie welcomed Josie
Amy welcomed Yihun
Albion and Jenifer welcomed Julie
Niel and Jo welcomed Sam

Richard and Kathryn welcomed Annalie
David and Jennifer welcomed Ellie
Eugene and Jeannie welcomed Andrew
Brinton and Angie welcomed Lucas
Bill and Christy welcomed Annice
Dan and Karen welcomed Adam
Justin and Katrina welcomed Miles
Joel and Gisell welcomed Noah
Jon and Becky welcomed Lila
Derek and Sylvie welcomed Ahrin
James and Colleen welcomed Bo
Brian and Mary Ellen welcomed Norah
Joe and Jennifer welcomed Max
Adam and Stephanie welcomed Nathan
Leland and Jennifer welcomed Kadence
Geoffrey and Jennifer welcomed Jillian
David and Laura welcomed Mark
Chris and Barbara welcomed Landon
Pete and Claire welcomed Andrew
Dave and Karla welcomed Matthew

Eric and Regina welcomed Ewan
Jason and Susanna welcomed Chase
Nicholas and Jackie welcomed Sawyer
Scott and Kerri welcomed Casey
Matt and Kelly welcomed Gretchen
Joe and Erika welcomed Chaerin
Mickey and Ashleigh welcomed Reagan
Matt and Erin welcomed Anna
Brian and Annette welcomed Camden
Dave and Allison welcomed Lucy
Kurt and Jackie welcomed Ryan
Scott and Karen welcomed Mia
Steve and Richelle welcomed Cohen
Joe and Julie welcomed Nathaniel
John and Sue welcomed Max
Mike and Janel welcomed Lyla
Matt and Aphi welcomed Colin
Patrick and Susan welcomed Olivia
Robert and Regina welcomed Senna
Jon and Kelly welcomed Elijah

Always Fun—The Barker Family Picnic

On May 31, 2009, Barker hosted its Annual Family Picnic on a picture-perfect spring day. The estimated 250 attendees enjoyed a variety of delicious desserts, as well as hamburgers and hot dogs with all the fixings. This event has become one of Barker's premier events with Board members, staff, old, new and waiting families, grandparents and close friends, all in attendance. Special thanks to cooks Bob Kirby and Ken Kirkpatrick, for volunteering their time and talent. Watch for next year's flyer. You don't want to miss it! ■

— Beth Kirby



Everyone enjoyed greeting the youngest baby at the picnic, little Tricia Romyedy, held by Sandra Fulton, Director of Domestic Adoption. Left to right, Marilyn Regier, Sandra, and Tricia's family: Kathy, Brooks, and LB Romyedy.



Making new friends at the Barker picnic is always fun. Left to right, Camara and Katherine flash their wonderful 6-year-old grins!

350 Attend “In Our Own Voices: Adoptees and Foster Youth Speak Out”

[Excerpted from the Welcome at Barker's Annual Conference.]

My name is Maria Freeman, and I was adopted through Barker in 1978. I am now a post-adoption social worker at Spence-Chapin in New York City. I have been an adoptee for much longer than I have been a social worker...but in my opinion as both an adoptee and a social worker, the theme of today's conference is both unique and long overdue.

Adoption is about the kids... we work tirelessly on behalf of kids worldwide, supporting programming and providing resources for the children in countries around the world, educating prospective adoptive families on adoption issues, providing post adoption support after children come home...We support our families and empower them when they encounter bumps in the very bumpy road of parenting. We listen to them, we hear their needs, and we respond.

This conference is a chance to do the same for the children. The children on whose behalf we so tirelessly work, grow up into adults who no longer need us to work on

behalf of them, but instead need us to work *beside* them. Whether you are an adoptive parent or an adoption professional, adoptees need us to listen to them, hear their needs, and respond.

I don't deny that I straddle two different roles as an adoptee working in the field of adoption. But I think that I, along with every adopted professional in the field, have worked hard to understand my role in this process, establish appropriate boundaries and use my education and training to provide the best possible service to my clients. As a social worker, I respect the historical significance of the laws and legislation around biological information sharing but as an adoptee [and a clinician], I am frustrated by the fact that adoptees are not legally allowed to know the very basic facts of their story, details that the rest of the world takes for granted. As a social worker, I understand the need for clear boundaries and an awareness of counter transference, but as an adoptee, I know how my adoption status can help a young child feel comfortable sharing her deepest feelings with me because she knows that I can empathize with



Maria Freeman and her mom, Kathy Caputo, enjoy a moment with Alison Larkin at the book-signing table.

the way that she feels. I may process my work on one more level than my non-adopted colleagues, but in turn my story and my life experience richly informs my practice. And by being open about my story and my experience, the practice of my colleagues can shift as well.

Adoptees do not need to work in the field of adoption to be heard—their *stories*, their *experiences*—are their resume...Today you have the opportunity to hear many adopted persons, many voices, many perspectives. I am sure as you listen

to their voices, as you hear what they have lost and what they have gained, their challenges and their rewards, you will be inspired, in part to reexamine the policies and practices in the child welfare field. If the practice of adoption is designed to provide permanency, love, safety and emotional well-being for adopted children and adopted adults, then it is important—in fact I would say critical—to understand the adoptee's perspective. It is crucial that we listen to them, that we hear their needs and we respond. ■

Save the Date

Annual Phonathon – September 22-23 – 7-9 PM (training 6:00 PM)

New Parents' Group – Sept. 15, 22, 29, Oct. 6 – 10 AM, MD Office

Workshop: "Calming the Storm: Anger Management for Youth" – Tues., Sept. 29, 6:30-8:30 PM,
Andrew McGahan, LCSW, LICSW

The Voices Trilogy: Discussion of Transracial Adoption Issues & Book Signing by Rhonda Roorda & Rita Simon
(registration required)

Workshop: "Telling the Adoption Story" – Oct. 7, 7 PM MD Office (registration required) – Michelle Howard, LICSW

Kids' Groups Two-Session Workshops, K-2nd graders & 3rd-5th graders – Saturday, November 7 and November 14,
VA Office – Email Varda Makovsky (vmakovsky@barkerfoundation.org)

An Evening with the English American, starring Alison Larkin in a benefit performance –
Roundhouse Theatre Bethesda – Nov. 17

Birth Parent Support Group – 2nd Thursday of month – 7 PM

Adopted Persons' Discussion Group – 3rd Thursday of month – 7 PM

Parents of Teens – 2nd Tuesday of month – 7 PM

Barker Annual Conference – Saturday, April 10, 2010



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