



The Barker Foundation's Open House

Blue and white balloons heralded the Barker Foundation Open House on April 10, 2005. A beautiful spring day framed the afternoon celebration, where we celebrated our 60th anniversary and our wonderful new office location in Bethesda, Maryland.

At 1:00pm, Barker's doors opened, admitting over 400 visitors to our new home. The many faces of Barker were in attendance that day: beaming new adoptive parents, as well as our wonderful "veteran" parents; birth parents, representing multiple periods in the agency's life history; Barker teens, grown strong and tall as they approach adulthood; social work colleagues and former employees; board members; grandparents; adoption attorneys; foundation heads; and everywhere, the many faces of children who joined their families through Barker. Guests toured our new facility, marveling at the poignant story-quilts decorating our halls, while the children were entranced by the balloon animals created by a clown and by the activity stations where they could have their faces painted, create crafts, or color.

At 1:30, everyone moved outside for the formal ribbon cutting ceremony to dedicate our new office. Underneath the bright blue awning of Barker's entrance, Board President Nonie Ackman spoke first, praising the "mission-enhanced space," and thanking the donors and staff for their efforts to make the move possible. She was followed by the incoming Board President, John Harris, who said that with the new location, Barker was truly a



The Barker Foundation's new office in Bethesda

"growing, expanding, strengthened agency." Agnes Leshner, Director of Montgomery County Child Welfare Services, spoke next, representing Doug Duncan, and she was followed by The Honorable Chris Van Hollen, who thanked the Barker board, the Move committee, and the Barker family members for "the good work that is done here." He noted that Barker's International Adoption services help to truly bring the world together. A plaque was presented to the Congressman, which read: "To Chris Van Hollen with many thanks from The Barker Foundation, for his understanding of the importance of adoption in providing a permanent and loving home for every child, for his work to help this agency bring children and families together, and for his tireless advocacy for all children and families." Marilyn Regier, Executive Director of the Barker Foundation, spoke next to the audience of young

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Zach Flinko, Samantha Hammer, and Maria Freeman officially cut the ribbon at the dedication ceremony.



From the Executive Director

[In lieu of the usual column, please find below excerpted remarks from my Open House greetings, as requested by a number of you. As prefatory, however, I note that what was perhaps most remarkable about the day was the crowd's rich diversity on all fronts: age, ethnicity, era of affiliation with Barker, role in the oft-called adoption "circle;" particular Barker adoption program used; interdisciplinary specialities; and the like. We will long remember and treasure the day.]



A very warm welcome to all of you. What a glorious day this is, weather-wise, spirit-wise, and we are truly honored by your presence. In one way or another, I hope you all feel that you are a part of the "Barker family." Many of us here today are part of what we call the "family of adoption" or the "adoption circle"—that is, we are birth parents, birth grandparents, adoptive parents or adoptive grandparents, foster parents, or adopted persons. Still others of you are here because you respect or love or care for someone who is part of the adoption circle—perhaps you are their girl friends, boy friends, husbands, wives, clergy, teachers, babysitters, neighbors. Still others of you are here because you have chosen to make your life's work as an adoption professional—social workers, nurses, attorneys, adoption educators, and many others. Lastly, some of you find yourselves here today because you had a significant part in the physical and creative work of designing, building, and assembling this place. But hopefully we are all here because we share the conviction that a compassionate society supports ethical adoption as a vital part of its child welfare practices.


Just two years ago, the space we now call our Barker "home" was an empty concrete shell, a vacant first floor. Once the upper deck of a parking garage, the intent was to convert it to leasable office space. It did not take the Barker Move Task Force long to add this location to our short list of potentially desirable spaces, for while we had looked at many spaces, and had finally narrowed it

down to three, this one really stood out. What a unique location—right at the boundary of a lovely residential neighborhood and a bustling urban environment, with excellent public transportation. It took talented people to turn a garage into our agency's home. Susan Stine and Lawson Architects took the time to talk with us and learn about our adoption work before Susan drew up the plans. Kane Construction ultimately won the bid to construct the facility. Dennis Kane, who heads the company, is himself an adoptive parent (though not through Barker), and thus this project had special meaning for him. [Acknowledgement of Board of Trustees, former Trustees, Staff, former Staff].

I am so proud of our staff; day after day, they are on the front lines. They will be happy to tour you through the offices today—and show you the domestic wing; the international wing; the post-adoption center; the support group room where our birth parents, young adults, and parents-of-teens meet. I hope you will really walk into the offices, not just stand at the door. We want you to see them, because we doubt they will ever be this clean again!

There is an ancient Confucian proverb that goes like this: "If your plan is for one year, plant rice; for ten years, plant trees; for a hundred years, nurture children." That's what The Barker Foundation has been doing for 60 years. We have journeyed a long way from the modest beginnings in 1945, when birth mothers were housed in Richard and Ruth Barker's home, and adoptive parents gathered in their living room every Sunday evening. The environment may have changed—as has much about adoption—but the mission and the values have remained constant. We are so grateful to all who have gone before us, who remained steadfast in their mission, and on whose work we build today. And we are grateful for your generosity, which has sustained us for 60 years, and which made this move possible.

Now in this bright and modern setting, we are poised for substantial expansion of the services we can offer to future generations. Key moments in



Barker's 60th Anniversary Gala *Save the Date!*

-- by Megan Dennis

This year, the Barker Foundation is celebrating its 60th anniversary...What a History - What a Future! To commemorate this remarkable achievement, there will be a dinner gala on Friday, November 18, 2005, from 7:30 to 10:00 p.m. at the Army Navy Country Club in Arlington, Virginia. This will be a great chance not only to raise money for Barker but also to connect with friends old and new. In addition to a lovely dinner buffet and a spectacular slide show, the evening will feature raffles for a variety of great items such as a week at the beach, sports tickets and an

assortment of exciting themed gift baskets. Baskets already organized include "All Aboard," for train lovers young and old, "Night at the Movies," for quality family time, and "Picture This," with everything you need to get those photos organized! To make the evening a big success, the gala committee needs your participation. Invitations will be mailed in September, so most importantly, we hope you can plan to attend the event. As always, we would gladly accept any kind offers of items for the raffle. If you or your company has tickets to events, jewelry, a weekend getaway, plane tickets or anything that you would like to donate, please contact Susan Walker at (703) 471-8784. If you are interested in volunteering to help with this fun event, or to become an event sponsor, please contact Eleanor Long at (703) 751-8765. Whether or not you can attend or volunteer, please send in a photo of your children/family to be included in the slideshow...a Barker tradition! The ticket price is set at \$50 per person, and thanks to event sponsors who have already stepped forward, most of this amount will go directly to Barker. Mark your calendars for Friday, November 18 at 7:30. What a night it will be!

Don't Forget Barker next time you're online

Forget the stamps! Honor a loved one or celebrate an important life cycle event with an online contribution to Barker. It's fast, easy, and yes, totally secure. We accept all major credit cards and all donations are acknowledged by email and regular mail. If requested, we'll also send an acknowledgement to the individual or family being honored. (www.barkerfoundation.org)

Annual Phonathon *September 26-27*

-- Don Longano, Board of Trustees
Development Committee Chair

Barker Foundation's annual phonathon has been scheduled for the evenings of Monday, September 26 and Tuesday, September 27, 2005. This is the major annual fundraising event for Barker. The high level of professional, caring services provided by Barker in domestic and international adoptions, birth parent counseling, post-adoption services

and minority outreach programs are made possible in great part through the generosity of the Barker community and the annual phonathon. For over 20 years, the annual phonathon has provided a simple, friendly way to contribute to Barker. You will receive a letter in early September reminding you of the phonathon dates. At your option, instead of receiving a telephone call, you may send in your contribution by mail or through the Barker website prior to the phonathon dates. On the evenings of September 26 or 27, a Barker volunteer will call you to update you on all the exciting news about Barker, and to take your contribution. The Barker volunteers are very respectful of your time, and our calls can be as

Annual Conference Sponsored by Freddie Mac Foundation

“Fulfilling the Promise of Adoption” was the theme of this year’s Annual Conference on March 5 at Shady Grove Conference Center. The event featured two distinguished keynoters and adoptive fathers: psychologist and author, Dr. Michael Thompson; and former foreign correspondent and Washington Post staff writer, Neely Tucker. Their presentations were complemented by a variety of break-out sessions, with a conference attendance of almost 300. We are most grateful to the Freddie Mac Foundation for its generous sponsorship of the conference again this year! One of the hallmarks of the conference is always the opportunity to interact with many members of the adoption circle. What follows is one birth parent’s perspective on the day:

A Birth Parent Reflects

-- By Angela Ingram-Ly

There was a certain amount of anxiety as I made my way to my first Barker conference. The road that stretched out before me seemed to pass away unseen, as I ran through what I would say during the Birth Parent Panel. Thank God for Auto-Pilot, I mused as I realized I had driven ten miles completely lost in thought of what the day would hold.

Having not yet had the chance to attend a Birth Parent Support Group, I was excited to meet others like me. Others, women and men, who placed, for whatever reason, their child with another family. Would I be able to pick them out of the crowd? I wondered. Or perhaps when they see me, will they think I am a birth or adoptive parent? We will all wear name tags, yet none will hold a title. I made my way through the doors and signed in. I was early and few had yet arrived. I wondered what I would do for the next hour. One thing was certain, if I reviewed what I prepared for the panel one more time, I would go nuts. My nerve level was off the charts. I worried about simple things. Would I stumble over my words? Would I go off on a tangent and lose my train of thought? Would that train run out of control with emotion and frighten everyone in the room? Would I offend anyone?

In an attempt to calm those nerves, I decided to get a cup of coffee and look at the books for sale. There were many wonderful titles to choose from, and I purchased two of Michael Thompson’s, Raising Cain and The Pressured Child. I did notice, however, there were very few written by a

birth parent. I made a mental note to add that to my long list of things to write.

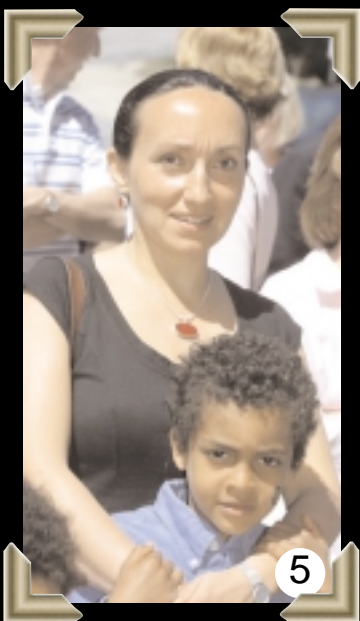
More and more people arrived. Any birth parents? I saw a few faces that looked familiar, but I wasn’t quite sure. Then I bumped into a couple that I had met at the Waiting Parents Group. I had been a presenter not long after I had placed and shared my story with them and other couples. It was great to see someone I knew in a room full of strangers. We chatted about our children; my friends weren’t “waiting” anymore. We talked about how great it is to be parents, and I felt a true level of comfort with them. The anxiety and nervousness that I earlier felt was easing away. I was finally relaxing. I listened to Michael Thompson and Neely Tucker share their stories. Both were very moving. I have never heard a speaker like Dr. Thompson share with such emotion. His tears pulled the same from me. He was not just some guy with a pocket full of research, he was real. He knew. And Neely Tucker, he knew also. Unfortunately I sat towards the back and had some difficulty hearing him. Mental note: get his book, Love In The Driest Season.

The Birth Parent Panel was scheduled for the end of the day. I would, for the first time, meet two birth fathers and hear their stories. I wondered if they had the same feelings as I. Our topic was “role and responsibilities of the birth parent,” and I would hear for the first time how others like me deal with that. My son’s parents were there to support me, and I shared with little fear of making mistakes or causing anyone to run from the room.

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*A Photo Album of
Our Grand Opening*



1. Chance Pinkney clutches Mom Felice's hand.
2. An enthusiastic group displays the ceremonial scissors after the ribbon-cutting.
3. Shelly Hutchins and son August join the crowd.
4. Balloons frame the Ali family in a delightful impromptu portrait.
5. Giorgia Eigen-Zucchi and son, Theo, listen intently.
6. Representative Chris Van Hollen greets the crowd.
7. Samantha Hammer speaks on behalf of 6,000 children placed through The Barker Foundation.
8. The crowd begins to gather outside for the opening ceremony.
9. Dionne Johnston and Rashida Brown hug Maggie Sechrest.



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1. Chris Intagliata welcomed over 400 guests!
2. Artist Diane Brooks shows Kim Kelly some of the art work crafted by Barker parents.
3. Diana Simione models her face-painting design.
4. Moe Walters coordinates the art table for children.
5. The Brooks family listens to the speeches.
6. John Harris and Marilyn Regier greet James McKay, Sr. Counsel, Covington & Burling, & Pres., George Preston Marshall Foundation, and his wife Mary Anne.
7. Maureen Golden of the Art Committee tours Kathy Bucher and children, Clare and Noah Jessey.



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1. Robin Allen, former Executive Director, and current Director, Marilyn Regier.
2. Left to right, Sonya Ali, Meg Miller, Marilyn Regier, & Nonie Akman cut the first slice of cake.
3. Artists Diane Brooks and Alice Corbett show Evan and Danny Himmelfarb the "hands quilt."
4. Board President John Harris and Rep. Chris Van Hollen share a moment.
5. Sonya Ali congratulates Rob DeLucia on winning a raffle item.
6. Jeff Garrison and daughter Cassandra enjoy the festivities. (Also pictured: Kate Coopersmith, who has led the birth parent support group for 14 years.)
7. Mari Murphy and daughter Gabrielle.

From Mother to Mother

-- by Kelly Schaeffer

[Note: In December 2004, the author traveled to Guatemala to meet her new daughter. During her stay, she and her extended family had the opportunity to meet the birth mother. Below are her reflections on the experience.]

I always knew that adoption would be a truly wonderful and life changing event for me and my family. I never knew, however, the

extent to which it would impact the every fiber of my heart and soul. This is a story of one adoptive mom's meeting with my daughter's birth mother—an experience that I will never forget and cherish forever.

My name is Kelly. I'm a single adoptive mom to Zoe, age 4 months, and birth mother to Nicholas, age 8, and Renee, age 6. I actually hadn't planned to meet the birth mother of my child by adoption. When I set out on my adoption journey, the two countries I was considering were China and India. Both countries had about a 0% chance that I would get any information about the birth mother, let alone be able to meet her. As fate would have it, I decided to pursue the Guatemalan program at Barker, and I was suddenly faced with the prospect of having the opportunity to meet "the birth mother." Wow. Now, in our

pre-adoption group meetings at Barker, we had talked about the role of birth mothers, and what you might want to ask a birth mother should you have the chance. But it was now oh so real—what did I really want to say to the person who gave the most important gift of life to her—and my—child?

What would she think of me and my family? Would she be afraid of the terrible rumors that exist in the Guatemalan countryside about Americans?

I wanted my meeting with the birth mother to be oh so much—but how could I really say everything I was feeling, and how could I convey those

Dear Señorita,

It has taken me days to get started writing this letter—every time I think I'm ready to put my thoughts in words, I get flustered trying to decide whether to begin by thanking you with all my heart for your gift of life of Beatriz or to begin by acknowledging your loss and the very difficult decision and incredible emotions that you must have gone through—and probably to some extent still do—in making your birth plan. If you wish to share some of these decisions with me, I would be grateful so that Beatriz always will know about you and how her life began in Guatemala. You must be a strong, brave, caring, and loving person to be able to think ahead for your birth daughter. Let me take the time to assure you that first and foremost, she will be loved unconditionally! Beatriz will be surrounded by a family who loves her. I have a large extended family. Beatriz's grandparents are here with me, as well as my brother, and I also have a son who is 8 and a daughter who is 6. They are thrilled to have a baby sister to love and have in our family. Beatriz will be raised in an environment that fosters family togetherness and teamwork, yet respects and encourages individualism. She will be raised in an environment that allows her to develop a healthy self esteem, to accept responsibility and to understand and respect the cultural, ecological and physical world in which she lives. She will always know about you and Guatemala and if you would like, I will send you pictures of her often. We will travel and see new places and she will be exposed to new experiences. She will attend school and will have the opportunity to go to college. She'll have the opportunity to play in a safe environment, eat healthy foods and get medical attention whenever needed. And she will be encouraged to think about, travel to, and seek out you—her birth mother, should she choose. We will celebrate your role in her life and participate in cultural events so that she is always connected to the place—the culture—from which she breathed her first breath of life. I will love and protect this child with all that I have—forever. Welcome to our family.

feelings

across a language barrier that would seem as big as the Atlantic Ocean? After a few sleepless nights and the common phrase on my computer "do you want to save changes" from Microsoft Word, I finally decided to put my thoughts in a letter that I would later have translated by Carolina Kenrick at Barker and subsequently read to the birth mother at our meeting.

New President of Social Welfare Society Visits Barker

[Note: In September 2004, the Board and Staff of The Barker Foundation enjoyed a visit from retiring President, Rev. Kim, Myung Woo, who accompanied SWS' new President, Lee, Seung Hwan to the United States to visit a number of partner agencies.

Reprinted here is a translated excerpt from the Spring 2005 quarterly journal of SWS, which featured Mr. Lee's reflections after his visit.]

"While visiting the U.S.A. this time, I was deeply impressed especially by the Barker Foundation in Washington, D.C. The moment I set my foot in the office, I was fascinated with all smiles of the staff members and the indescribably genial atmosphere in there. People usually have a fixed idea that every social welfare agency should be unconditionally kind and offer unconditional benefits. The reality, however, is not like this. As we have lots of work to do at every turn and fouled-up propositions to manage, we are to encounter many obstacles. This real situation does not make it easy for the social workers to receive clients with wholehearted warmth in every circumstance. Nevertheless, something like comfortableness and warmth was with all the staffers in the agency. Thinking of this, I became buoyant with expectations and hopes that more advanced adoption service with the agency will be performed continuously.

President Marilyn C. Regier (the president of the Barker Foundation) treated me with consideration, gave me great pleasure, and made me feel the true heart and the deep humanity of the Americans.

Those who adopted our children, those who want to adopt our children, the chairman [Nonie Akman] and the trustees of the Board of Trustees, and the staff in the institution—all of them held a reception for us. Many memorable things have been waiting for me: the lunch at the Potomac riverside; the painting of a child in the president's room [by Alice Corbett]; and even the music CD which was presented to me as I happened to say that I like Schubert and Chopin. What was more impressive and touched me when I stepped inside this agency was that fact that every member was bright and jovial. Especially the lady, Michelle [Howard] by name, who had been adopted from our institution and is now a staff member here was so kind and warmhearted that just seeing her even affected me.

In my inaugural address, I stressed kindness and warmth of our staff members as the most important thing for social work. Now that I see you, I feel like showing you as it is to our staff. Children are said to grow up eating love, not eating milk. I believe your overflowing love will bring up our children nicely and take good care of them. . . ."

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and old, noting that they had all gathered here because "a compassionate society supports ethical adoption." She remembered with humor coming upon the two-level parking garage that was the building's previous incarnation, then thanked the current and former Barker trustees and Barker staff. In reflecting on Barker's long history of nurturing children, Marilyn quoted a Confucian proverb, "If your plan is for one year, plant rice; for ten years, plant trees; for a hundred years, nurture children." She recalled Barker's modest beginnings in the living room of Richard and Ruth Barker sixty years earlier, and stated that the mission and values of Barker remain the same to this day.

Next came the ribbon cutting ceremony that officially marked the dedication of our wonderful new home. Samantha Hammer, a poised young woman and current college student, spoke movingly of how she and her older brother, who also joined the family through Barker, had always felt part of the larger "Barker family." She fondly remembered how that feeling was nurtured as her family attended Barker picnics and birth mother's days over the years. Two other young adult adoptees, Zack Flinko, and Maria Freeman, joined her to officially cut the ribbon, to cheers and applause. As she wielded the ceremonial scissors, Samantha solemnly stated: "I cut this ribbon to symbolically open the way to all who would come here, seeking help, looking for answers, sharing their joy. We dedicate these offices to birth families, adoptive families, adopted persons, and all those who provide services to them. May we come together in our shared mission of providing families for children for a long time to come."

Laughter and applause continued through the afternoon, as refreshments were served, door prizes were awarded, and the delicious Barker birthday cake was served. Throughout the day, Co-Chairs Sonya Ali and Meg Miller guided the events with enthusiasm and dedication. For the many who attended that day, the warmth and purpose of the Barker family was clearly demonstrated in the smiling faces, laughing children, and hugs between friends, family, and colleagues. Thanks so much to all of you who came to celebrate our 60th birthday and our wonderful new location!

Teens Rule!

Barker's First Teen Weekend, organized by Barker's Post-Adoption Department and made possible through a grant from the George Preston Marshall Foundation, was by any measure a resounding success. Ten wonderful teens, ages 14-17, participated at the May retreat, and parents enjoyed their own wrap-up session Sunday morning. The schedule included outdoor activities, art projects, great meals, and discussions featuring both adoption-related and adolescent-focused subjects of interest. Several of the co-ed staff were themselves adopted persons. Social worker Michelle Howard, coordinated the retreat and was assisted by Susan Branco Rodriguez and Seth Solandz. Reflecting after the event, Michelle commented: "With the combined efforts of Barker's staff and families, the George Preston Marshall Foundation, and the Chevy Chase 4-H Conference Center, the 1st Annual Barker Teen Weekend was a great success. The true measure of success was when all the teens said they wanted to come back next year. We had great co-leaders and outstanding teens. They openly shared their thoughts and met new friends who were also adopted."

Rachel Eidelman, Director of Post-Adoption Services, added: "In their evaluations, all the teens stated that the most helpful part of the



Teen Weekend Retreat participants take a break from their volleyball game.

weekend was hearing everybody's story and being able to share their own story with people who absolutely understood. . . Their feedback reminds us that even though our children may not be talking about their adoption with us [the parents], they do think about the issues and appreciate the opportunity to share in a neutral environment. All the teens hope that subsequent programs are longer than the day and one-half of this first program. The staff is taking that under consideration!"

[If you are interested in being contacted about next year's teen retreat, please email Rachel at reidelman@barkerfoundation.org]

From the Executive Director

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people's lives will unfold here, and joy and sorrow will co-mingle in that unique way that is adoption. Yes, we're a long way from the Barkers' living room. Our fervent hope is that Barker's mission—to create and sustain children in permanent, loving homes—will be carried out even more effectively in the place we shall now call "home." The great American novelist, Graham Greene, once wrote: "There is always one moment in childhood when the door opens and lets the future in." As we cut the ribbon and open the portals, my wish is that these doors may always open bright futures for many children, and for all those who love and cherish them. Thank you so much. And now it is my honor to introduce our next speaker, one of our "children" who has grown into a lovely young woman, a 19-year-old college sophomore who drove from her Ohio school to be with us today, Samantha Hammer. She will cut the ribbon and offer a few remarks. The ribbon will be held by Zach Flinko, a high school senior, who 18 years ago came from Bogotá, Colombia, to join his adoptive family; and by Maria Freeman, who joined her family 26 years ago, and who will be entering Columbia's Graduate School of Social Work this fall, because of her strong interest in the sub-specialty of adoption. Samantha, Maria, and Zach are proudly, and yet humbly, representing today the over 6,000 children placed in adoptive homes through The Barker Foundation. Also holding the ribbon will be our Board President, Nonie Akman; our incoming President, John Harris, who also chaired the Move Task Force; our Immediate Past President, Evan Himelfarb; and the Co-Chairs of today's event, Sonya Ali and Meg Bender Miller. Please welcome them now.

Marilyn Rezier

From Mother to Mother

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I share this letter in hopes that it will inspire those of you that also have reservations, fears, hopes and joys about meeting the birth mother. I know that it was therapeutic for me to really think about the role that the birth mother would play in my daughter's life and how I would address discussing her with my daughter over time.

Meeting the birth mother is a great opportunity for getting information to share with your child. I have read and heard first-hand from adopted children the importance of being able to share information with your child about their birth parents.

Meeting Zoe's birth mother was one of the most emotional thirty minutes of my life—one that I will treasure forever. I hope that someday I can see her again, but most importantly, should she be open and my daughter willing, I hope they will someday meet in person. Until then, I will have the memories and information from those thirty minutes to share with Zoe, along with those we make along our life journey.

Annual Phonathon

Continued from page 4

brief or as informative as you would find helpful. If for any reason we miss you by telephone on one of the two phonathon evenings, we will send you a reminder notice in the mail.

Please circle September 26 and 27 on your calendar and spend a moment speaking with our Barker volunteers. As a member of the Barker community of adoptive parents, adopted persons and birth parents, we are highly thankful to you for your continued support of the vitally important mission of the Barker Foundation.

Special thanks go to David Sherman, this year's annual phonathon chairman. Anyone wishing to assist as a Barker volunteer during the phonathon can contact David at (703) 405-9779. Also, a special thank you goes to the firm of PricewaterhouseCoopers for providing the telephone facilities for the Barker volunteers for this year's event.

Agency News and Notes

At the Annual Meeting in May, Outgoing Board Chair, Nonie Akman, was presented with the "Richard B. Barker Award," and Diane Brooks, Alice Corbett, and Maureen Golden received the first "Barker Staff Appreciation Awards."

We welcome three new Trustees to the Barker Foundation Board: Deborah Kennedy, Sarah Cesnik Mejac, and Gary Rappaport. Mark Simione has been elected to the Friends of Barker Board of Trustees. Thank you to outgoing FOB Trustee, Greg Durig, for his many years of service on both Boards!

A Birth Parent Reflects

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Those nerves from before were gone. I learned that although our stories are different, we are basically the same. We all love our children. We all have cried for them. We all have hopes and dreams for them. When those of us on the panel had shared our hearts, those who attended also shared with us. They posed poignant questions, and some bared part of their souls with us. The comfort level was extraordinary. I said during the panel, "Regardless of title, birth or adoptive, we are parents," and on that day we came together to learn, to share, to open our hearts to new things. There were no strangers in sight.

I drove home feeling at peace with who I am. I had found among a room full of birth and adoptive parents a spiritual center, a new culture of people that I never imagined. People who, although they may not speak about their experiences, nor wear it on their sleeves, radiate understanding and caring for one another. People who share the ups and downs that the world of adoption brings, create a true connection that few understand. I smile thinking that, finally, after two years of searching, I found a place I fit: a community of families woven together, linked through the love for a child.

[Special thanks to Marilyn Regier for giving me the opportunity to share my story that day, to Eliza Niemann and Dionne Johnston for putting up with my endless phone calls and all that I fret about. A HUGE hug and tons of thanks to Bill and Cathy for all their love and support and for tying balloons all over my truck.]

Congratulations to our New Adoptive Families!

International Placements:

Scott and Ann welcomed Benjamin
Catherine and James welcomed Christopher
Scott and Jeanne welcomed Griffin
Ellen welcomed Jorge
Geoff and Monika welcomed Devin
Thorsten and Fabiola welcomed Thomas
David and Mary welcomed Anna
Lewis and Beth welcomed Giles
Karen welcomed Miguel
John and Mary welcomed Jack
Bill and Donna welcomed Gianna
Glenn and Brenda welcomed Noah
Cesar and Karen welcomed Daniel
Thomas and Susan welcomed Dylan
James and Shelley welcomed August
Mohan and Girija welcomed Vina
Wilfred and Snehlata welcomed
Sunita and Suchita
Kelly welcomed Zoe Grace
Michael and Miriam welcomed Maria Emilia
David and Jacque welcomed Juan David
Jonathan and Elizabeth welcomed Clara

Thomas and Miriam welcomed Dreema
Donald and Jeanne welcomed Jade
Pascal and Maureen welcomed Thomas
Mahadeva and Meredith welcomed Priyanka
Mark and Mariella welcomed Camila
Stephen and Jeanette welcomed Teagan
Craig and Jenifer welcomed Mateo
Ajit and Arvina welcomed Joshua
Mike and Allyson welcomed Mia Rose
Chris and Gwen welcomed Alexander
Thomas and Jolene welcomed John Thomas
John and Sharon welcomed Jack
Greg and Anne welcomed Nina
Alexander and Denise welcomed Kyle
Michael and Annie welcomed Kiri
Sean and Denise welcomed Jake
Michael and Kathy welcomed Samantha
Shane and Denise welcomed Connor
Cindy welcomed Isabella
Rajesh and Tracy welcomed Karina

Domestic Placements:

Felice welcomed Chance
Greg and Julie welcomed Amelia
Ron and Mari welcomed Gabrielle
Brian and Michelle welcomed Cole
Doug and Sandy welcomed Stephen
Dan and Lisa welcomed Quinn
Dan and Andrea welcomed Sydney
Doug and Marnie welcomed Brian
Chris and Linda welcomed Dylan
Franklin and Angela welcomed Vera
Frank and Karen welcomed Steven
Kim welcomed Margaret
Stephen and Andrea welcomed Matthew
Eric and Judy welcomed Ethan
Nick and Anne welcomed Elizabeth
Clark and Wendy welcomed Aiden
Patrick and Mary welcomed Madeline
Lamont and Nichole welcomed Ava
Hank and Yanelle welcomed
Quentin and Kayden
Tim and Lynn welcomed Daniel and Joshua
Paul and Jean welcomed Elizabeth
Michael and Karol welcomed Ella
Glen and Yvonne welcomed Wil
Roderic and Karen welcomed Slade



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