

SPRING 2008

Annual Conference to Highlight Birth Parent Themes

A birth mother and a birth father, each with impressive academic credentials, and each authors of leading books, serve as keynoters for this year's Annual Conference. With generous support from the Freddie Mac Foundation, Barker's 14th Annual Conference again promises to educate and inspire our regional adoption community, taking us at times beyond our comfort zone with distinguished speakers and workshops that promise to

to bring conference themes sharply into focus. Ms. Roles and Dr. Clapton bring both their personal experience as birth parents and their rich backgrounds in therapeutic and research settings to this ground-breaking conference.

The day will reverberate with birth parent perspectives, including cross-cultural ones. Lee, Seung Hwan, President of Barker's partner agency, Social Welfare Society, leads the Korean delegation and

Youth, the conference will provide ample opportunity for both birth parents and professionals in the foster care system to highlight the challenges faced in balancing family preservation and birth parent rights with a child's need for a safe and permanent home.

The day-long conference also offers workshops addressing how to talk with children about birth parents; how to navigate post-reunion relationships; challenges faced by birth parents in many other countries; and much more. The culminating event will feature voices of adopted persons in a plenary panel: "Thoughts, Memories, and Insights: Adopted Persons Talk about Birth Parents," led by Barker's Kate Coopersmith.

The hard-working conference committee includes Chair Chris Intagliata; Kate Coopersmith, Rosalie Daelemans, Maureen Evans, Becky Flitcroft, Kate Horty, Shelley Hutchins, Sarah Mejac, Kelly Schaeffer, Daria Vettori, and Joan Wittan, as well as Barker Staff serving in key roles. For more information, please call Sue at our Office, 301-664-9664, or download the program and registration on our website: www.barkerfoundation.org. ■



Author of the classic *Saying Goodbye to a Baby*, Patricia Roles (above) joins Gary Clapton, author/academic who focuses on birth father issues, and Lee, Seung Hwan, President of SWS, to bring unique expertise to Barker's Conference.



move the adoption field forward. Designed for *all* those touched by adoption, "Connected Lives: Understanding the Birth Parent Experience in Adoption and Foster Care" is scheduled for Saturday, March 15, 8:30 AM – 4:00 PM, at The Shady Grove Conference Center in Rockville, Maryland.

Patricia Roles, author of *Saying Goodbye to a Baby*, and Gary Clapton, author of *Birth Fathers and their Adoption Experiences*, will travel from Vancouver, Canada, and Edinbrough, Scotland, respectively,



has counseled over 5,000 Korean birth mothers prior to assuming his administrative role. Announcing the delegation's inclusion of a Korean birth mother who placed her child for U.S. adoption, Executive Director, Marilyn Regier, observed: "Her participation is an act of courage and offers an unprecedented opportunity at a U.S. conference to hear firsthand the perspective of an international birth mother."

Underscoring Barker's commitment to its initiative *Project Wait No Longer: Permanency for Foster*



FROM THE *Executive Director*

In the last decade, we have seen tectonic shifts in adoption policy and practice. Unless you have recently served on the Board of Trustees, or attended last year's Annual Conference on the "adoption revolution," or perhaps subscribe to adoption journals and magazines, more than likely you have not kept current on the numerous changes that have taken place in the adoption field – changes that affect all members of the adoption circle. These include changes in legislation, in demographic and cultural trends, and in the policies of several of the top-five "sending countries." Wherever possible, Barker seeks to be proactive rather than reactive to changes, but clearly this is not always possible.

Both clients and adoption professionals are feeling the changes and have gradually come to accept them as "the new normal." Nowhere are the changes being more strongly felt than in the large group of new prospective parents who seek to adopt through Barker. The Hague Treaty has rightly put emphasis on in-country placement as the preferable option for a child who cannot

remain with birth parents, and wait times for an international adoption are currently longer than they were a year ago. Domestic adoption, once called "pregnancy without a due date," is currently viewed on a par with some of the international programs in terms of wait time and predictability. Because Barker is situated in the Metropolitan Washington Area, our clients are diverse and come from all parts of the world. They appreciate the comprehensive nature of our adoption programs and express approval that the agency offers both international and domestic options. We will remain committed to programs which are vibrant and ethical, both here in the United States and with our foreign partners, and we will also remain committed to lifelong adoption services through our post-adoption department. But with adoption programs across the world in transition, our prospective parents need more support than ever before, as they navigate the process and cope with the wait.

Many of you may still recall how it felt to bring a child home. Barker parents found the last Annual Report evocative, particularly as they took in the two-page collage of "arrival announcements." They wrote or called, to share

the memories this engendered, despite the passing of the years. They thanked us, shared stories about their children's joys and challenges, and underscored that they wanted to keep the dream alive for future children and families.

We will continue to develop resources that sustain our capacity for dealing with the dynamics that fluctuate from year to year. Gifts such as the recent million dollar pledge from the Hillside Foundation, described in this issue of *Connections*, will help make it more possible for us to withstand the vicissitudes that come our way in the adoption world. I hope that many of our wonderful Barker families will continue to find satisfaction and fulfillment in giving to an organization that has so personally touched their lives. If we believe in our mission, the Barker community must and will find ways to deal with change. And what mission could be more compelling than ours, to find homes for children who need them?

Marilyn Regier

Hillside Foundation Pledges \$1 Million Gift to Barker

The Hillside Foundation, the family foundation of Barker parents Allan and Shelley Holt and their children, has offered to donate \$1 million to The Barker Foundation. In expressing Barker's gratitude for this extraordinary pledge, Robert Long, President of Barker's Board of Trustees, said: "I believe this will be a transformative gift for The Barker Foundation and for the children, birth parents, and adoptive families we serve." Echoing his statement, Marilyn Regier, Executive Director, responded: "We are honored that the Holts have designated Barker to receive this magnificent gift, which will not only increase our financial stability but also keep the dream of a family alive for children and parents, and help sustain Barker's lifelong services to all members of the adoption circle."

Given with the intent to help secure Barker's future, the Hillside Foundation's contributions will be spread over a 5-year

period, starting with \$200,000 in calendar year 2008. The pledge is subject to two conditions: the Barker Foundation must raise an additional \$200,000 in 2008 to match the Hillside Foundation's gift for 2008, and the agency must recruit and hire a Development Director in 2008.

A committee under the leadership of Gary Rappaport, Board Development Chair, has been designated to ensure that we meet the conditions of this wonderful pledge, to inspire other members of the Barker community to new philanthropic goals, and to use the Hillside Foundation pledge as a springboard for strategic planning for Barker's future. Also working with Gary are Nonie Akman, John Duff, John Freeman, Maureen Golden, Deborah Kennedy, Robert Long, Marilyn Regier, and Linda Adams. In the coming months, the committee will share ideas and plans with the Barker community. ■

Evan Rose Himelfarb

The Evan Himelfarb Memorial Fund has been established to receive contributions from those wishing to honor Evan's memory with a gift to The Barker Foundation. Evan was deeply cherished by our community and died on September 6, 2007, at the age of 50 years, after a long and courageous battle with cancer. She served as President of the Board of Trustees for three years (2000-2003) and was also a dedicated volunteer who chaired Barker auctions and participated in countless other ways.

Bob and Eleanor Long hosted a dinner at their home on January 26, to bring together many of those in the Barker family who had worked closely with Evan. Also in attendance that evening was her husband, Daniel Himelfarb. The devoted mother of Aaron and Jesse, Evan was known not only for her leadership, but for her warmth, enthusiasm, and nurturing spirit. The memorial fund will be a fitting way to honor her and continue the work she began at Barker. Those wishing to make a contribution may send their gift to the Maryland Office, and designate the gift to "The Evan Himelfarb Memorial Fund."

2007 Phonathon Most Successful in Barker History

This year's Annual Fund Phonathon, held September 25-26, proved to be the most successful to date, with contributions of \$389,000, including workplace giving donations. David Sherman again chaired this critical fundraiser, and Gary Rappaport, Chair of the Board of Trustees's Development Committee, helped oversee the event. We are also most grateful to Linda Adams, Beth Kirby, and Sue Culver, who provided vital administrative support, without which this event could not be held. Special thanks to the Reznik Group who again donated its offices and telephones, and to Barker parents, Tom and Charleen Merkel of Bradley Food & Beverage, who continued their generous tradition

of providing callers with delicious sustenance.

There were many first-time callers this year, who stepped up to work hand in hand with our veteran callers. First-time callers, John and Monica Hodson, volunteered on both nights! In reflecting on their first Phonathon experience, John observed: "My wife and I had the rewarding experience of participating in the Barker Foundation Phonathon this year on both nights. We volunteered not fully knowing what we were getting ourselves into, but we knew that we would be helping, so it was certainly going to be worth it. All of the other volunteers were extremely nice, and those with the experience in the Phonathon offered many great

suggestions as well. In the end, though, speaking to the families and talking about their adoptions – some of which were many years ago and others very recently – and telling them about our adoption just

a year prior from Colombia, gave us so many wonderful connections with those families."

We are so appreciative to the volunteers whose names are listed below. Great job! ■

2007 Phonathon Volunteers

Kamal Ali	John Hodson	Joe Nahra
Meg Bender	Monica Hodson	David O'Bryon
Rick Brenner	Shelley Hutchins	Nancie Park
Rob DeLucia	Chris Intagliata	Priscilla Peterson
Roger DeLucia	Deborah Kennedy	Betty Pyles-Harris
Megan Dennis	Guy Kolb	Gary Rappaport
Gary Diamond	Bob Long	Judy Sagall
Becky Flitcroft	Don Longano	Rick Seligman
John Freeman	Beth Love	David Sherman
Stephen Frum	Robb Mackie	Erika Shugart
Shari Gilbert	Sarah Mejac	Karen Sorenson
Susan Goldberg	Howard Menditch	Monika Walters

The Hague Treaty and Barker's Accreditation Process

Barker's International Programs Department concluded its initial Hague accreditation process on October 25-26, when a team of evaluators from the Council on Accreditation visited our office for two days. Under Director Tina Ji, the department spent much of the spring and summer examining and writing policies and procedures that met the Hague Standards. In many instances, such documents already existed but sometimes needed updating. The Board of Trustees was also involved in reviewing and drafting many important documents. Tina was also assisted in this rigorous process by Sue Hollar, Carolina Kenrick, Linda Adams, Carol Huttar, and Marilyn Regier, with strong administrative support supplied by Beth Kirby, Sue Culver, and Anjali Singh.

As part of the onsite inspection, the reviewers interviewed Robert Long, Board President; Jay Meriwether, Board Treasurer; Marilyn Regier, Executive Director; Linda Adams, Director of Finance and Administration; Tina Ji, Sue Hollar, and Carolina Kenrick of the International Department; Roz

Blogier, Barb Donesky, and Angela Willmore, social workers; and four adoptive families who adopted through Barker. The accreditation officials also read case files and personnel files, as well as over 1000 pages of self-study documents prepared by Barker staff. The exit interview with staff was very encouraging, and one month after the onsite, the Barker staff was delighted to receive notice that no further documentation was needed.

The Department of State has set February 29, 2008, as the Uniform Notification Date (UND) of applicants granted accreditation or approval to provide services in Hague Convention countries. The Barker Foundation hopes to be on the list of accredited agencies released that day.

Marilyn Regier and Carolina Kenrick were invited to participate in a reception and champagne-toasting at the State Department Atrium on December 19, to celebrate U.S. accession to The Hague Intercountry Adoption Convention. Assistant Secretary of State for Consular Affairs, Maura Harty,

inspired the listeners as she shared her experience of travelling to the Netherlands and depositing the U.S. Instrument of Ratification for the Hague Intercountry Adoption Convention. Although it took many

years to achieve this goal, the United States now joins the many other nations who are committed to protecting the children and families involved in intercountry adoptions. ■

— With Sympathy —

We extend our deepest sympathy to the family of Margaret Love, beloved mother of Barker parent, Dennis Love (Beth), and grandmother to their sons, Dan and Michael, as well as to three other grandsons in California, George, Timmy, and Sean. Margaret died on December 26th at the age of 70 years. As her daughter-in-law, Beth, noted, Margaret "devoted her life to her family." We are grateful for the Love family's designation of Barker as recipient of memorial gifts honoring Margaret's life.

We also send our heartfelt sympathy to the Grodin family, as they mourn the loss of their loved one, Jay Grodin. Dr. Grodin, who died on January 10, 2008, was the husband of Linda Grodin, and father of Stephanie Letchinger and Rick Grodin. Jay and Linda were married for 46 years at the time of his death. Dr. Grodin was not only a Barker parent but was also well-known to many Barker families because of his distinguished career as a reproductive health specialist. We thank the family for designating Barker as a recipient of memorial gifts. Jay Grodin's contributions to the medical community and to the field of adoption will long be remembered.

We also extend loving sympathy to our International Director, Tina Ji, at the loss of her beloved mother, Zhang, Ruizhi, on December 30, 2007, in Beijing, China. We were privileged to meet Tina's mother during her trip to Washington this year, and we know this loving mother and grandmother will be deeply missed by Tina, Joshua, Emma, and Aiden.

Each year we receive many wonderful essays written by teens or young adults for their English or Speech classes. Often full of both wisdom and whimsy, these essays inspire and educate classmates, teachers, and family members. Printed here are excerpts of two such essays Barker staff received this year from teens who were adopted through Barker. Space does not permit reprinting either essay in its entirety, but we thank Dan and Allie for consent to reprint portions.

Close Encounters of a Newborn Kind

Written by Dan at Age 14

A smart man once said, "Life isn't measured by how many moments you live, but by how many lives you touch in the moments you live." The truth in these words can be seen everywhere. Whether it's a fireman pulling a little girl from a burning building or just a young boy helping his grandmother across the yard, it happens all the time, everywhere in the world.

It was a regular day in the fourth grade, and our teacher, Mrs. Glubb, was helping us into our cars. But that day was different. It wasn't that the temperature was a couple degrees cooler than normal, or that my best friend was not in class, but rather that in the second row of our mini-van, there was a baby named Kayla, fast asleep in a "baby-in-a-bag." Four months earlier, my parents had taken my sister and me into our family room and told us that we were maybe going to have a chance to take care of [that is, foster] little babies who were waiting for an adoptive family. I thought, "Okay, so what? Nothing's different. I'm still the cutest, youngest, and most fun." So we went shopping for a crib, some diapers, clothes, and of course, bottles. Eventually the hustle and bustle of "Oh, no, a baby is coming" died out, and things went back to normal. Until that one day. The day the baby came.

The baby's name was Kayla. She was four days old and seven pounds. The fact that it was late October meant Halloween. It was that one holiday when you could go out and get as much candy as you wanted, and nothing your parents said could stop you. I remember it hit me right in the head that I didn't have a Halloween costume. So as I had done every year, I said, "Mom, I don't have a costume. We need to go get one right now." We always went to the closest Party City and found a cool costume that usually

even scared me. She answered, "Not today. Kayla needs to eat in an hour, and I'm too tired anyway." What? I was speechless! This "not today" was unheard of to my ears. That was the first sign of change.

After that, some things changed, and some things didn't, but I couldn't help but only notice those that *did*. My dad wouldn't play catch with me when he came home from work, and of course my sister, the big *Eighth Grader*, was too busy with homework, and the free time she did have was spent feeding the baby and changing the diapers. I didn't know what to do.... It was now late November, and we were getting ready for Thanksgiving. My mom was making sure she had everything she needed for our Thanksgiving feast, and then what I thought would never happen happened. "Daniel, could you change the baby, please?" I was cornered, the front door was just out of running distance, and the bathroom was occupied. I thought to myself, "This is crazy! Change a poopy diaper!" So I had no choice. I had helped with holding her and feeding her but never something to this extreme. Luckily I had my sister for a teacher and for moral support. So I started and actually got through it. It wasn't so bad, but I vowed never again to do it...but that didn't hold on for very long when I was asked to do it again the next week.

So it is late January, and that meant that a lot of holding and taking-care of Kayla time was coming, since Mom had to help my sister with exams. While in the middle of listening to my favorite Garth Brooks song, "Hear the Thunder Roll," I heard the phone ring...It was something none of my family had ever expected. "Well, hello Daniel, this is Beth Kirby from Barker. Is your mother there?"...I saw a flustered look come over

my mother's face, but I hadn't known what went on in that phone call until another call came a couple days later...This time it wasn't to tell us we were *getting* a baby, but that she was going to be *placed*. My sister and I had no idea what to say or do. I had finally gotten attached to Kayla, but now she was leaving. What was I going to do? The first thing I said was, "No, we're going to adopt her first, so there." My mom then had that teary look that people get when they're sad..."No, Dan, these people have been waiting a long time for her, and they'll be a great family for her."

Fast-forward to placement day in early February, which is the day we will meet the adoptive family and talk with them, give them tips on how Kayla likes to eat, sleep, her favorite toys, and her favorite music. Then at the end we hand her over to the couple and wish her the best of luck. So we arrive at the agency and come into the meeting room where we wait for the couple.... We introduced ourselves, and they introduced themselves. We were offered some coffee or milk by the caseworker, and talked for a while about what we do...about how I like soccer, what high school my sister will be going to, what my mom's business, Creative Memories, is like, and how the commute to DC is for my dad. Then came the moment my dad, mom, and sister were dreading, but I also found myself dreading this moment. We all started to stand up, still continuing our various conversations, but then came that moment where the room is silent for a couple of seconds, but seems to everyone like a lifetime. We all know what's about to happen. We were just trying to delay it a couple of seconds.



Dan relaxes with one of the 11 babies his family has fostered.

We were parting. My mom exploded in tears along with my sister. My dad could barely hold it in, letting a tear go every once in a while. But to everyone's surprise I started to cry. I realized that "Hey! We might never see her again." But after we played "pass the baby," where everyone holds her for one more minute, and as we were heading out the door, the couple said, "Thank You." Those two simple words made me rethink the past four months, and I thought about how that little bump in my playing time became another member of our family and theirs. That we might have just taken care of the first woman president, but most of all we took care of someone's child...a seemingly unimportant event turning into a phenomenal influence on our family.

Over the course of the next year we would receive pictures and even travel down to Richmond to see her dedication in her church. But I think most of all we remember the influence she left on us and the memory of her little toes sticking out of her pants and those chubby cheeks drinking formula at three in the morning. "Life isn't measured by how many moments you live, but by how many lives you touch in the moments you live." I would like to add to this quote a little. "Life isn't measured by how many moments you live, but by how many lives you touch, and by how many lives touch you in the moments you live." ■

My Adoption Story

by Allie, written at age 18

Does it bother me that I am adopted? The answer is no. It does not bother me at all. My parents have always told me, "There are three ways to build a family. You can be married, born, or adopted into a family." I was brought into the waiting arms of my adoptive parents on June 23, 1989. I was three months old.

My biological or birth parents were unmarried teenagers, Vietnamese boat immigrants living in Maryland. My birth mother was sixteen years old when she had me. She knew she was too young to care for a baby on her own. I have often wondered if I had not been adopted, or if a different set of parents adopted me, who would I be...It's amazing to think about how the combination of environment, culture, and genetics affect who you become.



Allie has always known her adoption story and believes it is important for parents to be honest from the very beginning.

Whenever I tell anyone I am adopted, the looks on their faces are priceless. Most people can't tell that I am adopted when I am with my parents. My mother and I look very much alike. She is half Filipino and half Italian. We share the same Asian eyes, noses, skin and hair color. My father is a mix of Welsh and Pennsylvania Dutch ancestry. That is what throws everyone off. Many people think I am Filipino or have some Filipino in me, but I may never know....

When my birth mother made her adoption plan, she was visited by The Barker Foundation. It is a non-profit adoption agency in Washington, D.C. At two weeks of age, I lived with a foster family provided by The Barker Foundation. It took a few months for my birth parents and new parents to complete the necessary paperwork before I could be placed in my new home. Since I was only a baby, I don't remember what it was like. All I know is what I have seen in pictures. When my parents met me for the first time at The Barker Foundation, my foster parents gave them a photo album of the time I spent in their care. One of the pictures I love most is of my foster parents' teenage son. It was taken on his prom day. He is standing in front of a white limo, and he's dressed up in a tux. He is holding

me, and I am wearing a pretty dress.

My parents have shared my adoption story with me throughout my life. I am pretty sure they started sharing it long before I could actually comprehend what they were talking about. They would read to me every night, and one of the books they read was my adoption story. My mother put a book together filled with pictures and captions

that tell how I came home to them. It included the word "adoption." It is a word I have always known. I believe it is very important for parents to be honest about their child's adoption. It shouldn't be some dark secret. Adoption is just another way to build a family. I have friends who didn't know they were adopted until middle school. It was tough for them to find out that their parents kept their adoption secret. Why was this secret kept? Why could they not know the truth about how their

family was formed? What were they hiding?

Some people have asked me, including my parents, if I have any interest in finding my birth parents. I tell them not really. At this stage of my life, I don't feel the need to find them. This may change when I am older. For now, I am content. My parents have raised me my entire life. I am happy with my life and feel very much loved even if I didn't come from my mother's stomach!

There are times I am conflicted between giving my birth mother the benefit of the doubt, and wondering why she could not take care of me. My parents have always said that we should be proud of her for making an adoption plan. She wanted a better life for me, and she decided adoption would provide that life. My parents have often said to me "Wasn't she smart to know she couldn't care for a baby at her age? She loved you enough to make a plan for your future." I realize that I may never know all the reasons that led to my birth mother's choice but I admire her for it. I understand my birth mother's life was very difficult. Yet, I have often wondered if she questions whether she did the right thing eighteen years ago by placing me for adoption. Certainly, I cannot imagine have a baby or being a mother right now.

When in high school, I was assigned a career day project. We were asked to spend a day at a place of business that we might be interested in learning more about. I visited a social worker, Miss Louise, who worked for a local adoption agency. I was interested in learning more about adoptions and adoptive families. One of the things I learned from her was that children who have been adopted have a higher percentage of parental care than those in birth families. She also shared that adoptive parents have often had to overcome all kinds of bureaucratic obstacles to create their family. If they are unable to have children, like my parents, they also undergo invasive infertility

treatments. The adoption process takes a lot of time and can be quite expensive too. It took my parents a year or more to go through the whole complicated process to qualify to be an adoptive parent. After meeting with Miss Louise, I gained a greater appreciation for my parents and the struggles they went through to make our family.

How many others get to have the kind of story that I have? I know that I am not any different from most adopted children. We know we are loved and wanted. It is not like I was thrown away or rejected. My birth parents made a plan for my life as well as my adoptive parents. They believe that I am the child that was meant for them and I believe it too. I am grateful to my birth mother. She carried me for nine months and went through labor to deliver me. She loved me enough to make a very difficult choice. I am sure it is a choice that she will never forget, especially each year on my birthday.

In the end, I realize that I love my adoption story and have no reason to be bothered about being adopted. My birth parents made a loving choice to make an adoption plan for me. They were not able to be my parents and wanted to give me the best life possible. I consider my adoptive parents to be my "real parents." They are the ones who adopted me and continue to love, support and raise me. They have given me a good life and a family filled with cousins, aunts, uncles and grandparents. I think my birth parents would be happy to see that their hopes and dreams for me are fulfilled. Someday when I am a parent, I hope my children will feel as I do. They will be loved no matter how my family is made. They will always know that there is more than one way to make a family. Who knows what their story will be? ■

Welcome to new staff: **Liz Kuttler** is now our International Program Assistant, helping families with the myriad of questions and paperwork entailed in international adoption.

Constance Lindo has joined our **Project Wait No Longer** team as a Senior Social Worker, and comes from a rich background in the adoption/foster care field.

Maureen Golden hosted the entire Barker staff at her lovely historic home in St. Michael's, Maryland, for a much-needed staff retreat. Her home was beautifully decorated for the holidays and for St. Michael's Historic Homes Tour. Everyone was unanimous that the day rejuvenated us! In addition to some team-building exercises and staff discussion, we also enjoyed Maureen's gracious

tour of her home, her cuisine, and her inspirational speech on what Barker has really meant to families over the years. The day ended with some always-enjoyable shopping!

Jaiya John, a featured presenter at last year's Annual Conference, has published a book of poetry and prose: **Reflection Pond**. For details on his publications, available wherever books are sold, please visit Jaiya's website at www.soulwaternrising.com.

Andrea Brenner, Barker Board member and sociologist on the faculty of American University, was featured on NPR's "Youth Voices" on February 21st. The program focused on issues of racial diversity in American high schools.

Would you like to serve as a volunteer for Barker? Opportunities abound, and include serving as a mentor for a waiting family; helping with events such as Phonathon, Annual Conference, and Family Picnic; planning something special for the Birth Parent Support Group (e.g., Mother's Day weekend); assisting staff with information booths at exhibitions and workshops; helping with special mailings; helping with special fund-raising events; and many other opportunities. If you have the volunteer spirit and some free time to give to Barker, please call Beth Kirby at the Maryland Office (301-664-9664) or email her at bkirby@barkerfoundation.org. Thank you!

A Letter to the Barker Community from Robin Allen, former Executive Director

Dear Friends,

Thanks to the Barker community for the kindness you have shown me and Dwight following my surgery. The cards and notes, photos, flowers and delicious meals have brought more comfort, reassurance, (and pounds) than you could possibly imagine. It has been wonderful to reconnect and hear how your families are doing. How could it be that those beautiful children are now mostly adults!

We are so grateful to all of you.

I look forward to seeing you at the Barker conference.

Fondly,
Robin

Colombian Embassy Holiday Program for Children

Ambassador Carolina Barco played host to Friends of FANA children and their families at her beautiful residence on Saturday, December 8th. The holiday program featured traditional Colombian art, music, snacks, and a brief presentation about the sculptures by Colombian artist Hugo Zapata. More than 100 people attended this

highlight successful event, including staff members from The Barker Foundation. The Ambassador is already talking about the program for next year. Friends of FANA is grateful to Ambassador Barco and the entire Embassy staff for helping to keep our children connected to their heritage and culture. ■

– Tracy L. Stanton, Vice-President,
Friends of FANA DC



Enjoying the holiday party are (left to right) Tina Ji, Ambassador Carolina Barco, Marilyn Regier, and Carolina Kenrick.

Connections Make a Difference in the Lives of Older Youth!

Maintaining healthy birth family connections can make such a difference in the life of an older child in foster care. Issues of first family loyalty, commitment, and love are primary themes for children in the foster care system, whether they talk about it or not. Maintaining healthy birth family connections can increase the sense of identity, self-esteem, security and understanding of a child's life story. Our Annual Conference will feature two panels addressing these issues. One panel

entitled "When First Families Are Still Loved: Maintaining Birth Family Connections in Adoption and Foster Care," will be moderated by Carol Huttar. Constance Lindo will moderate "Losing My Child: Understanding the Birth Parent's Perspective in Foster Care and Adoption."

We could not attempt to change the face of foster care one child at a time without the committed, continued support from The Freddie Mac Foundation and the Mead Family Foundation. With the Freddie Mac

Foundation's recent \$75,000 grant we can remain steadfast in our goal to identify committed families for older foster youth. The Mead Family Foundation recently awarded \$5,200 to PWNL for education and community building initiatives. We are thankful for all of our partners in permanency!

Project Wait No Longer continues its campaign to raise community awareness of the need for older child adoption. Julian Wiles,
continued on back page



Constance Lindo (left) and Carol Huttar plan outreach, training, and placement activities for Barker's older child adoption program.

News from the Department of Family & Post-Adoption Services

Spring promises to be very busy in Barker's Post-Adoption Department, with many exciting programs and groups planned.

Kids' Groups

Does your child know other children who were adopted? Barker's unique Kids' Groups are a great opportunity for your children to meet peers and talk about their adoption experiences in a safe place. The groups give children in Grades 1-5 an opportunity to share their experiences, feelings, and thoughts through discussion, games, play, and arts and crafts.

The three-session workshops will be held in the Maryland Office on Saturdays: April 12, April 26 and May 10. The sessions for children in Grades 1-2 will meet from 10:00-11:30 AM, and the sessions for children in Grades 3-5 will meet from 1:00-3:00 PM. Participation at all three sessions is highly recommended. The groups will be facilitated by Melissa New, LGSW, MSW, Post-Adoption Social Worker.

Teen Weekend

The 4th Annual Teen Weekend will be held April 26-27 at the 4-H Center in Bethesda. This popular retreat for teen adoptees will again be staffed by counselors Michelle Howard, MSW, Susan Alvarado, LPC, and Seth Solondz. Students in Grades 9-12 are eligible.

New Parent Group

A New Parent group will be starting in May for parents who have adopted children since July 2007. In response to requests for some evening options, this group will meet at the Maryland Office from 7:30-9:00 PM, on four consecutive Wednesday evenings; the first meeting will take place on May 7th.

Group objectives include: providing an opportunity for new parents to meet other adoptive fathers and mothers; learning together and from each other; and addressing new parent challenges. The group will be facilitated by Melissa New, LGSW, MSW, Post-Adoption Social Worker.

Colombia Homeland Tour

Barker is pleased to announce that this summer we are sponsoring another Colombia Homeland Tour, scheduled for July 10-20. The tour is designed as a family trip with parents accompanying their children and is geared toward teenagers and young adults between the ages of 13 and 21. In addition to touring and learning about their Colombian culture and heritage, each participant will visit FANA and meet with a social worker to learn about his/her own personal history, as well as visit the Hogar, the residential facility for birth mothers. Previous participants have found the tours to be very meaningful to their families. In the words of one Barker parent:

"Along with seven other families with teenagers who had all been adopted from FANA, our kids had the opportunity to see their birth country, visit FANA, talk with current birth mothers at the Hogar and experience Colombian culture. My husband and I relived the emotions of the adoption experience, and we

are so grateful that Barker enabled us to give this *trip of a lifetime* to our children." — Toni Giordano

Support Group for Parents of Adolescents

Barker looks forward to the resumption of its long-standing support group for parents of adolescents and teens who were adopted. The group will meet monthly, facilitated by Barbara Donesky, LCSW-C, who has extensive experience in the adoption field, as well as with adolescents. The group will meet at the Maryland Office the second Tuesday of every month, starting on April 8th.

Please contact Varda Makovsky, Director of Family & Post-Adoption Services for additional information on any of the above programs, or to inquire about other services offered by the department, including individual and family counseling, and search-and-reunion consultation and support. Varda may be reached at 301-664-9664, or at vmakovsky@barkerfoundation.org. ■

Congratulations to Our New Adoptive Families

Domestic Placements

Jeff and Monica welcomed Emma
Cynthia welcomed Skylar
Doug and Marnie welcomed Kevin
Bill and Lorraine welcomed Zachary
Brian and Susan welcomed Erin

Peter and Margaret welcomed John and Ryan
Kevin and Karen welcomed Jonathan
Jeff and Chris welcomed Corey
Bill and Debbie welcomed Stuart
Dan and Nina welcomed Avery

Tom and Deb welcomed Micaela
Russell and Dana welcomed Chandler
John and Carroll welcomed Joseph
Phil and Kjersten welcomed Iris

International Placements

Donna welcomed Sean
Brian and Pamela welcomed Mira
Enrique and Yazmin welcomed Daniel
Tim and Alexandra welcomed Juliana
Ryan and Brandi welcomed Tito
Robert and Wanda welcomed Breanna
Peter and Joyce welcomed Benjamin
Mahesh and Lina welcomed Niyati
Mark and Eileen welcomed Dylan

Michael and Ivy welcomed MacKenzie
Peter and Theresa welcomed Jaxon
Richard and Aprale welcomed Demisse
Jud and Laura welcomed Anna Marie
Diana welcomed Carlos Manuel
Andrew and Eileen welcomed Angelina
Roberto and Candyce welcomed Jonathan
Daniel and Donna welcomed Ryan
Rick and Amy welcomed Alice

Thomas and Stacey welcomed Matthew
SungWoo and Lisa welcomed Grayson
Michael and Kathleen welcomed Noah
Michael and Toisha welcomed Eagan
Sarah and Jim welcomed Alexander
Larry and Casey welcomed Benjamin
Elysia welcomed Wilson
John and Rhea welcomed Nicol
Gregory and Joyal welcomed Addie

Connections Make a Difference

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Outreach Coordinator, and Barker staff graced the grounds of Washington D.C. at Black Family Reunion on September 8-9, and For Sisters Only on November 10 in support of National Adoption Month. We also joined thousands of others at the highly-anticipated Adoption Expo sponsored by the Freddie Mac Foundation on December 1. Held at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Washington, D.C., the Adoption Expo is one of the most comprehensive adoption events of the year. Thank you to all the PWNL families who attended! ■

– Carol M. Huttar

Barker social workers Rick Ellsbury and Claudine McDaniel-Johnson at the Freddie Mac Foundation Adoption Expo.



THE
BARKER
FOUNDATION since 1945

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www.barkerfoundation.org

Save the Date

Annual Conference – Saturday, March 15,
8:30 AM–4:00 PM

Kids' Three-Session Workshops for 1st–2nd graders & 3rd–5th graders – April 12, April 26, May 10

Parents of Teens Group – 2nd Tuesday of each month
starting April 8th

Teen Weekend – Bethesda 4-H Center, April 26–27

New Parents' Group – May 7, 14, 21, 28, 7:30–9:00 PM

Barker Family Picnic – Sunday, June 1, Cabin John Park

Colombia Homeland Tour – July 10–20

Barker Birth Parent Support Group – 2nd Thursday
each month, 7:00 PM