



ABC Newsletter

Summer 2010

A Letter from Ramone...

It's hard to believe that it is July already as time seems to pass so quickly. Most recently I have taken the time to reflect on life's milestones. For so many families and individuals that we connect with at Adoption By Choice, life changes bring many joys, but also deep sorrow. It is often difficult to know why things happen as they do, but it is important to take the time to process and reflect. Sometimes change is anticipated and other times it happens without notice, but significant events can change our lives forever.

Whether we are prepared for change or not, one thing is certain, it takes time to adjust to new circumstances. When there is significant grief it takes time to process and it can resurface when we don't expect it. At times like this we must accept the things that we cannot change, strive to change the things we can, and to have the courage to know when to act and when to allow life to happen. During difficult life transitions we may be called to step out of our comfort zone to provide support to others. By extending ourselves to others we can help them heal, and at the same time heal our own wounds, whether they are fresh or scarred over.

When a child comes into someone's life, intense emotions are inevitable, and numerous lives will be affected. When difficult decisions need to be made, if we focus on what is best for the child, answers suddenly become very clear. I encourage all of our adoptive parents to reach out to the birth parents of their child, and to help them with their grief process regardless of what point they may be at. I am always encouraged and amazed to see how birth families' and adoptive families' lives come together in ways that no one could have predicted. Life long bonds are created and a circle of love, openness and security for the child is formed.

I wish everyone a very happy and safe summer.

~ Ramone Kindrat, Program Director



NEW ARRIVALS!! ~ ABC PLACEMENTS

FACCA— Hi, my name is **Angelo Lucius Facca** and my parents say I am their wish come true! They also say they have been waiting for me for a very long time and it is destiny that we are now a family. I was born February 8th, 2010 and the very next day I started my journey with my mom, Maggie, Dad, Dario & my dog TJ. My birth-mother, Jenna, made my adoption plan with unconditional love. We are very thankful to everyone at ABC and I would like to give a special shout out, from my crib, to Janet and Laura for all their love and support!

**Angelo Lucius
Facca**



FRASER — Steven & Valerie Fraser were thrilled to welcome **Bronwyn Fraser**, born February 5, 2010 at 2:37 am. She was 6lbs 8oz and was 19.5 inches long.

**Bronwyn
Fraser**



MYCHALUK - Keith and Carolyn Mychaluk are thrilled to welcome **Jade Emma Mychaluk** into our family. She was born on June 8, 2010 at 5:27 am weighing in at 6 lbs 14 ounces. She is our little JEM! Words cannot truly express the love we feel for birth parents Lisa and Mark for this miraculous gift. They will always have a special place in our hearts. A huge thank-you to Laura for all of her guidance and support through this amazing journey."



**Carolyn, Keith and
Jade Mychaluk**

VINE - Val, Ken and big brother Cameron are proud to announce the arrival of baby boy Oliver Charles Eric. Oliver was born early on the morning of April 1st, and we are thrilled to welcome him into our family. Although we were waiting for over a year, somehow it still came as a surprise to learn about Oliver and meet him for the first time on his birth day! Special thanks to Laura for all her help and assurances along the way. We feel truly blessed and elated to have this dream come true and we are so proud of both our boys!

**Cameron &
Oliver Vine**



TWARDY - Vince and Cary are thrilled to announce the birth of their son **Owen Cash Twardy** who was born February 4, 2010 at 12:57 a.m. in Bonnyville. We were able to hold, kiss and love Owen within minutes of his birth, making our adoption plan a wonderful memory to hold dear to our hearts forever. Our deepest gratitude and love goes to birth parents Myshella and Christopher for this most amazing gift; a beautiful, healthy & happy baby boy. Owen was welcomed home the very same day by anxiously awaiting and overjoyed grandparents, and many aunts, uncles, cousins and friends. Special thanks to Carolyn, Sheila and Laura at ABC for guidance and caring support to our families throughout the adoption process. As well, we would like to thank the staff at the Bonnyville hospital for the compassionate care to our families during Owen's birth. You all were AWESOME! Our hearts are bursting with love and are forever changed by becoming parents through open adoption.

Owen Cash Twardy



BHANA – Damian and Kathy are very happy to announce the arrival of **Ava Marie Bhana** into their family. Ava was born on June 1, 2010 in Lethbridge and came home to Calgary 2 days later. Going through the adoption process with Ashlee and her family was an amazingly loving and respectful experience. We are so grateful to have received the call that Ashlee was in labour so we could go to the hospital and wait with Ashlee's friends and family to give her our support and meet our beautiful baby girl as soon as we could. Ashlee is an incredible young woman, who handled everything with so much dignity and strength, she left us speechless many times. We are also thankful for the way her family rallied around her to support her in her decision to create an adoption plan with us, it was a wonderful reminder of what the word "family" truly means. Ava is doing wonderful, she has met a lot of her aunts and uncles already and had her grandma (Kathy's mom) wrapped around her little finger from the moment she met her the day we brought her home. We would also like to extend a special thank you to everyone at ABC, from the time we did our home study with Gayle to working with Janet on the initial meeting with Ashlee and all of the paperwork to follow – it has been a tremendous source of strength and counseling for us to help us navigate our way through the adoption process and we couldn't have asked for a better result.

Ava Marie Bhana



INTERNATIONAL ARRIVALS!!

BILLEDO - Bernadita is thrilled to announce the arrival of Lyn from the Philippines – after 5 years of paperwork! Lyn arrived in a snow storm on May 9, 2010!



*“Welcome Home to All
our Angels”*

BAUER – Kari, Robin and Kaiya are very excited and proud to announce the arrival of our little girl **Betchilove** from Haiti. As we all know there was a devastating earthquake there on January 12th, 2010. We are extremely thankful that the Canadian Government acted quickly and evacuated many children under adoption within a matter of weeks. Betchilove arrived home on January 30th after a very exhaustive trip for her. When she arrived she was a mere 20 pounds at 3.5 years old and was extremely weak. She is doing very well now and has even managed to put on over 10 pounds already, which is very exciting. So many people played a vital part in getting her home safely that we could never thank them all. We of course would like to thank ABC and CAFAC for the amazing work that they have done as well as our orphanage Foyer de Sion and Sion Fonds (www.sionfonds.org) for their tireless work in keeping these children as healthy as can be through this catastrophe. We cannot even fathom how they have handled this earthquake and we are just so grateful that none of the children at Foyer were injured, sadly and tragically we know this was not the case for all the orphanages.. We are so grateful and fortunate to have her safely with us, she is doing absolutely amazing. Our prayers and thoughts are still with all the people of Haiti who continue to struggle since the earthquake as they slowly put their lives back together.

Betchilove Bauer



ABC'S ANNUAL PICNIC

Mark Your Calendars!

Date: Saturday, September 11, 2010

Time: 11:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.

Where: Bowness Park, [Site 2](#)

The snow in May caused us to have to cancel our Picnic, but we're willing to try it again. Please join us on the new date for some fun activities, good food and a chance to connect with other adoptive families. Watch your email in late August for your invitation and the map.

Over the years, our Annual Picnic has been a highlight at ABC! Adoptive families and birth families come together with the special children in their lives for a fun afternoon. It's a great chance for the families to connect, and for all of the adopted children (and all siblings) to meet & play with other adopted children.



PROMOTION IN YOUR COMMUNITY

Are there places in your community that you think should know more about ABC and the services we offer to birth parents and adoptive parents? Send us their name and address and we would be happy to send out brochures.

You may want to consider:

- Doctor's offices
- Counseling services
- Social agencies
- Resource centers
- Public health offices

Thank You

A great big thank you goes out to J.D. and Sheila Freele, Kelvin and Denise Demontigny and Dario and Maggie Facca who shared their adoption stories at the Pre-Adoption Workshops in Calgary and Edmonton.

We are very thankful to all our adoptive and birth families that come and share their journey with couples that are just starting their own journey. Your joys and struggles help other families start on their own paths to adoption.

If you are interested in joining in the panel at a future workshop, either in Calgary or Edmonton contact Penny at calgary@adoptionbychoice.ca or call the office at 403-245-8854.

LOVE HAS COME TO STAY by Sherri Gragg

Adoptive Families Magazine, July/Aug 2010

It was four years ago today. As my daughter and I stared silently at that first photo of us together, taken on a rooftop in Haiti, I was struck by her eyes. They looked weary. Battleworn, saturated with grief.

She touched the picture with a mocha-brown finger. "You are smiling," she said, "I am not."

"Smiling" hardly says it. I was beaming, thrilled to hold my daughter for the first time, after almost two years of longing for her.

But she was broken.

Soon after that photo was taken, she began to wail, pacing back and forth. I tried to hold her, but she would not let me. I offered a snack. She would not eat. I tried to tempt her with bright, new toys. She turned away.

I hadn't understood it then. The orphanage director told me they had explained to her that I was coming, and that she was excited. I felt rejected and helpless. If only I had known then what I know now: how much the beautiful little girl in my arms had suffered in the years leading up to that moment.

The orphanage undoubtedly saved her life, but it was a place of such desperate hunger that she ate anything she could scrounge to fill her stomach. A lime given to her to treat a bee sting. Her fingernails. A piece of plastic.

It was a place of terror, too, where people entrusted to care for her were the ones who injured her the most. She learned to be wary of change, fearing that it would bring new abuse.

I stared into the sorrowful eyes in the photo. How could she have known that love had come to stay?

I wish I had known then what I know now.

"Look at your eyes," I said. "So tired. So sad. No wonder you didn't trust me..."

She scooted closer to me, and I wrapped an arm around her. Our eyes filled with tears as I recounted one of her own memories, which she had since forgotten.

"How do you remember this stuff?" she asked.

"That is my job," I told her. "To remember things for you, so that you don't have to anymore. I don't know how it works, but it seems that, sometimes,

when you tell me bad things, I carry them afterward, instead of you. Then, you are not so sad about them."

"But then *you're* sad!" she said.

"Yes, but I am OK," I replied.

Am I OK? Yes. But each recounting of the nightmares she lived before she came home has carved deep, winding paths through my soul.

"I'm still a little sad," she said.

"Yes," I answered. "And you always will be. It won't keep you from the life God has for you, but you will carry it always."

She nodded solemnly, with more understanding than should have been possible for a nine-year-old child. Then, like sunshine breaking through clouds, she smiled through her tears and hugged me tight.

"I love you!" she said.

I held her for a long moment and told her I love her too, and that I appreciate her giving me the chance. Then she bounded off to bed, full, healthy, safe, and strong. Because love has come to stay.

-Sherri Gragg is a freelance writer, specializing in adoption, race issues, transracial adoption, and inspirational works. She writes about life as the mother of five children at everydaymiracle.wordpress.com.



HELPING SIBLINGS BOND

Are you thinking of adding to your family? Here are some tips from [Baby Centre](http://www.babycentre.co.uk) for helping siblings bond. www.babycentre.co.uk (March 2008)

Let your children care for one another

Encourage your children to nurture one another; let the older child read a bedtime story to the younger one. Or suggest that your younger child give the older one a kiss and a hug because he's crying. Step back and allow them to look after each other. Let our toddler try to comfort your crying infant. Your toddler will see himself as compassionate and your baby will perceive her big brother as a caring, gentle person.

See each child as an individual

While it's tempting to tell your children that you love them equally; the truth is children don't want to hear that – they want to be loved uniquely. Instead, you may say something like: "You are my only Amy. In the whole wide world there is no one quite like you."

Be careful not to compare as in: "Why can't you be tidy like your sister?" It only breeds resentment.

Make time for your toddler

A newborn can be all-absorbing, but try to find time alone with your first born. And don't forget to put your older child first from time to time. Once in awhile, when the baby is crying, instead of saying, "The baby is making a fuss, hold on," try saying, "Hold on, baby. I'm tying Charlie's shoes." The baby can wait a few minutes and your older child will see that sometimes he's your top priority.

Embrace conflict

It's inevitable. Some experts say that sibling conflict is an opportunity for the children to learn the skills they will need in future relationships. Help your children learn that it's normal to feel frustrated and upset sometimes, even with the people you love. Help them to find positive ways to express their feelings and work out their differences.

Listen to grievances, acknowledge concerns

If you simply listen when your child says how jealous, angry or hurt he's feeling because of a sibling, he'll feel supported by you, which in turn will reduce his resentment toward his sibling. You don't have to agree with him. Your role is to be a calm mediator who listens to each side of the story so they both feel heard and understood. You are not the Judge or Jury.

Go from conflict to conciliation

Help your child identify their feelings: "You two sound so cross with each other." And then guide them to a peaceful resolution: "Do you want to play with it together or do you want to take turns?"

For your toddler who is stomping his feet and screaming with rage, you can help by voicing what he's feeling, such as: "It made you really angry when the baby knocked down your blocks. Let's find a safe place to play with them so it won't happen again."

Help them begin to start expressing their frustration in a positive way – through talking, listening, and deciding on a compromise.

Siblings are a challenge; but worth it!
Sheila

TRAVELLING OUT OF COUNTRY— WHEN WILL OUR ADOPTION BE FINALIZED??

The process of finalizing an adoption begins for Adoption By Choice, following the ten day period after consents are signed. Two post placement visits occur with a social worker (a court report is written from these visits in support of the adoption finalization), legal documents are prepared for signature, live registration of birth is ordered through Vital Statistics, new criminal record checks are required, two references sign affidavits to name a few of the many additional tasks and requirements. In some cases there may be additional delays as we may also be waiting on obtaining an ex-parte order from the court if there is no consent from the birth father. Some of the required documents take considerable time to obtain, for example, new criminal record checks through the Calgary Police Service take approximately 6-8 weeks. And of course, families are adjusting to their role as new parents and there are simply delays obtaining some of this information and or meetings.

I often get asked by adoptive families, when will our adoption be finalized and when can

we apply for a passport. Over the past two years, I have seen numerous delays from the Calgary court house with respect to finalizing court documents. A process that used to take 2-4 months is now taking well over six months. For families this delay can be very frustrating not only in being unable to travel abroad, but in simply not having the adoption order finalized. For most families awaiting the adoption order is a very pivotal time as they gain peace of mind once the order is granted. Unfortunately due to delays at the court house, we are not certain when these timelines will begin to improve. We have asked families for patience when



these documents have been filed and please do not book travel dates in the hopes of your adoption order being processed. Please note that you must have the adoption order before you can apply for a new birth certificate which you will need to apply for a passport.

Adoption By Choice will continue to do their best in processing documents in a timely manner and my hope is that timelines in the future will improve.

Laura Swift BSW, RSW
Supervisor, Domestic Adoption Program

A GIFT FOR GRACE by Andrea Fox

Adoptive Families Magazine, July/Aug 2010

It wasn't until my daughter's first birthday that it hit me: I was grieving her birthmother's loss. With that realization, I was able to celebrate as she would have wanted.

I could hear the guests arriving downstairs. My husband, Bill, kept them entertained, so I could pull myself together. Our family had come to celebrate my daughter's first birthday, and I – the host, the mom who waited forever to be a mom – was hiding in the bathroom, sitting on the floor and sobbing.

Reflecting on the past year, I should have seen this coming. As a 45-year-old, full-time, first-time mom of a three-pound preemie, I quickly realized that there are as many ways a mom can cry as Eskimos have words for snow. As each day drew to a close, I would try to determine what had triggered my tears. Adoption issues? Infertility leftovers? Lack of sleep? I made a game of it, called “Name Those Tears.”

Several weeks before Grace's birthday, my sisters began asking me what I was planning. Their questions confused me. I didn't feel like celebrating, but I didn't know why. Instead, at the thought of Grace's birthday, I plopped down on my couch and cried. Eventually, I decided on an intimate birthday dinner and told my family we'd be celebrating at our house.

Trusting Beth

When I sat down to write the letter” to Beth, Grace's birth-back to the moment we met call all that was said, but I tween us was filled with and fear. She looked different. I realize now that there is no I thought to myself – the thoughts – *She's so pretty; nice clothes. Why is she making she back out?*

Over the next 11 days, while to be discharged from the and admire Beth. At dinner out a tattered prayer card. prayed to St. Anthony to to raise Grace. By the time her prayers had been an-

After dinner, we walked Beth to her car. There she presented us with a bag of baby clothes, telling us that she didn't want us to waste time shopping. She wanted us to spend all of our time with Grace while she was in the hospital. I was speechless when she brought up the topic of breastfeeding, a few nights later. She'd read that it was possible for adoptive moms to breastfeed, and she wanted Grace and me to develop the special bond that comes with this intimacy. I knew then that we were blessed to have her as Grace's birthmother. Over the next few months, the most unpredictable thing happened: Beth and I became friends, as close as sisters.

Problem Solved

Sitting on the bathroom floor, as the party went on without me, I began to see what was wrong – why I'd been crying, why I tried to forget about Grace's first birthday.

I tiptoed out of the bathroom and made my way to our bedroom. Kneeling on the floor, I pulled out a pink paisley box from under our bed. This is my “Leave It Up to God” box. It's where I've placed scraps of paper denoting problems I can't solve and decisions I don't want to make. I reached into the box and found my



agency-required “one year mother, my mind wandered at the hospital. I don't remember that the air between us was filled with hope, longing, confidence, more than I'd imagined her. typical “birthmother look.” first of many groundless *she accessorizes and wears an adoption plan? Will*

Bill and I waited for Grace hospital, we grew to trust that first evening, she took She told us that she had help her find loving parents she met us, she knew that swered.

list. It's dated May 6, 2007, six months after being told we couldn't conceive a child, and a year before I was ready to adopt. It's titled "Why I Don't Want to Adopt." I scanned the list and found the item I was looking for, scrawled between *It's so expensive* and *I want my child to look like Bill and me*. Number 6 is *I want to be the only mother my child has*.

But I'm not. Grace has two mothers: a first mom and a forever mom. And it hit me – I'd spent that first year grieving Beth's loss, and what I assumed she was going through. Beth's letters and e-mails came less often in the months leading up to Grace's birthday. I respected her need to retreat, to reflect and heal, but I missed my friend. It was that simple. I didn't feel like celebrating if she couldn't be there with us. All of a sudden, I felt selfish, silly, and guilty. Beth made a decision. She wanted Grace to celebrate life and be celebrated; how could I doubt her faith that this was the right decision?

In one of her letters to us, Beth wrote, "I hope that Grace will bring you all the joys a child can bring into your lives." She has, many times over. My heart is twice as full as I ever thought it could be, with my love of Grace and my admiration for and love of Beth. I used to worry about becoming too close to my child's birth-mother. But now I see our closeness as our gift to Grace. And, despite the diminished contact, I know Beth will come back to us when she is ready.

So, I decided I would celebrate Grace's special day as Beth would want me to. As I descended the stairs to join the party, I marvelled at how far I'd come since I wrote "Why I Don't Want to Adopt." I had wanted my daughter to have only one mother, but now I can't imagine our lives without Beth.

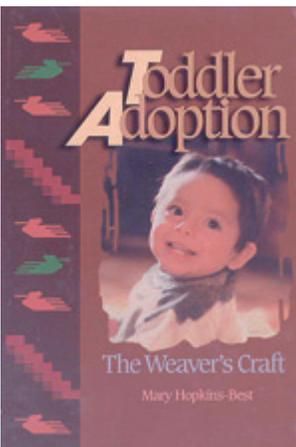
~ *Andrea Fox is a freelance writer and a former high school English teacher. She lives in Boston with her husband, Bill, and daughter, Grace.*

BOOK REVIEW: TODDLER ADOPTION BOOKS

Is toddler adoption right for you? What makes it unique from infant adoption? How do you prepare for a new son/daughter who has spent time with their birth family or in an orphanage (or both)? There are excellent books available, either through the ABC library, the book store or your local library. Two books ABC highly recommends were both written by adoptive parents, and are available from our library:

Adopting a Toddler: What Size Shoes Does She Wear by Denise Harris Hoppenhauer

This book is "easy to read and covers every aspect of adopting a one to four year-old; with sections on the toddler wardrobe, the nursery, child safety, mealtime, bath time, selecting a paediatrician, medical considerations, international adoption travel, pre and post adoption resources, and more. *Adopting a Toddler* provides the most up-to-date solutions for preparing for your new arrival."

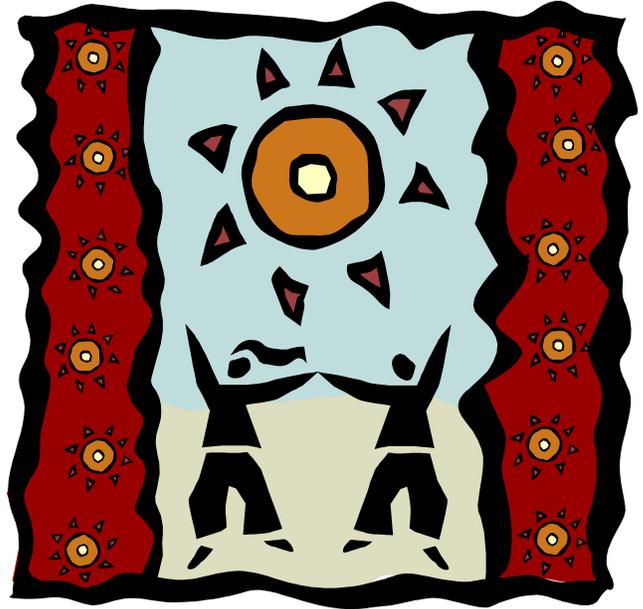


Toddler Adoption: The Weaver's Craft by Mary Hopkins-Best

"This is a book about the journey of building a family through adoption of a child between the ages of one and three. The journey begins long before the child arrives, and continues indefinitely. This book explores the decision to adopt, the preparation for adopting and the adjustment to adoption of a toddler. This book is rich in examples of challenges and strategies from real families whose children were adopted as toddlers. The author discusses both the exquisite joys of toddler adoption and challenges that the majority of families will probably encounter. This is a "can do" book that is intended to encourage toddler adoption.

LOOKING FOR SOME SUMMER FUN?

With summer here, it's a great chance to get out of the house and enjoy some of the festivals and other fun activities in our communities. From the Calgary Stampede and Capital Ex in Edmonton, to local Folk Festivals (Calgary, Edmonton and Canmore to name a few), cultural exhibits and everything in between, there are lots of excellent opportunities to have some fun and expose your family to a wide variety of experiences. Watch your local newspaper for information about events, or hop on the web and see what you can find. Two websites we really like are www.calgaryschild.com and www.edmontonkids.com — take a look! Both have interactive calendars listing events almost every day over the summer, and year round. Or hop in the car and do a day trip around Alberta, see the Dinosaurs in Drumheller, drive up to the Hot Springs in Banff, or check out many other attractions across the province. Travel Alberta's website (www.travelalberta.ca) is easy to navigate and has tons of information about these locations and many more including the ability to just look at attractions and events in your area. Whatever you do, get out, have fun, and enjoy the lovely weather while it lasts—old man winter will be back before we know it!



Did you know?

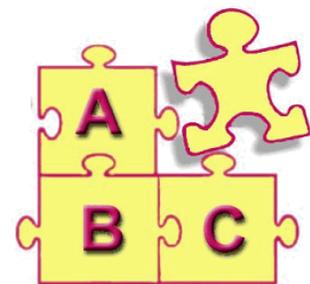
Adoption By Choice sends this newsletter via email to adoptive families, waiting families and interested parties in Alberta and across Canada.

If you would like to be on our e-mail list, please give Penny a call at the office, 403-245-8854, or e-mail calgary@adoptionbychoice.ca.

If you do not wish to receive this newsletter, please let us know and we will remove you from the distribution list.

Previous editions of the newsletter are also available on the website at www.adoptionbychoice.ca.

**Visit our website at:
www.adoptionbychoice.ca
To see our photo album, events
and much more!**



ADOPTION BY CHOICE

Adoption By Choice
#315, 908—17th Avenue S.W.
Calgary, AB T2T 0A3

Phone: 403-245-8854
Fax: 403-245-8897
E-mail: calgary@adoptionbychoice.ca