



ABC Spring 2008 Newsletter

Carol's Last Note ...

It is hard to believe that I have been connected to ABC for 20 years! In 1988, the idea of establishing a licensed not-for-profit open adoption agency in Alberta was hatched, and as they say...the rest is all history! And what an amazing and memory-filled history it has been. I am immensely proud of where ABC has come and so excited about the direction it is going.

For some time now, I have been contemplating resigning as the Program Director of Adoption By Choice, and like many things around ABC, it has been a journey...and I am now very confident that I am leaving the agency in wonderful hands. I am delighted to announce that effective September 1, 2008, Ramone Kindrat will become Program Director leading a full and talented team. As you know, for the last several months, Ramone has competently and effectively fulfilled her role as Manager of Program Services and I have worked hard with Ramone to expand her understanding of her new role and responsibilities. Ramone has risen to the occasion and is exactly the kind of leader I had hoped would take Adoption By Choice into the next 20 years! This is definitely a bitter sweet announcement for me—ABC has played such a central role in my life—it will be interesting for me as I look towards my future and what it will bring. For the moment though, I will enjoy my last 4 months here, mentoring, guiding and supporting the incredible group of people who work here.

Adoption By Choice has grown in scope and in size and we have only been able to do that because of the extraordinary commitment, professionalism and caring that our staff bring to their job everyday. I am particularly grateful to Janet Patterson, Gayle Friesen and Sheila Feehan who have contributed so much and for so long. I also must say a very big thank you to my husband Garry, and our children, Heather and Gordon. Their support, encouragement and understanding over the past 20 years, in addition to their “volunteer” time at ABC, has definitely made this a family affair. I am grateful to ABC’s adoptive families, birth families and children, some of whom are now adults—and what they have taught me about adoption, families and connections. Your faith in the process of open adoption has made my work a pleasure, and a remarkable journey, both personally and professionally. I am looking forward to doing some travelling in the fall and then following my heart to my next adventure. In the meantime, I would be delighted to hear from you—and you can be sure, there will be some kind of a party to celebrate this new phase of my life—we’ll keep you posted!

Carol

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From Ramone's Desk

I am very honoured to become the next Program Director of Adoption By Choice. Over the past six years I have been privileged to work very closely with Carol and have benefited from her mentorship and guidance. She has devoted the past twenty years of her career to children and families who are moving through their adoption journey and she has worked tirelessly to develop and shape ABC into a centre that is a leader in adoption services. Carol truly is an expert in her field and has always been committed to empowering individuals and families whose lives we touch.

Over the past 20 years ABC has been privileged to work with adopting families, Alberta Children and Youth Services and the community at large. With Carol at the helm, the agency has grown tremendously. I am very excited about moving forward as Program Director with the talented and committed team that we have.

Sheila Feehan has been with Adoption By Choice for the past 13 years and runs the Edmonton office. I am so thankful to have such a skilled worker - another expert in the field of adoption, bringing considerable practice wisdom to the team.

Janet Patterson has provided counseling and assessment services to adopting and birth parents since the beginning of ABC in 1988, and is a very skilled and important member of our team. Laura Swift has proven herself to be a wonderful counselor in her work with both birth families and adopting families over the past several months, and I am confident that our infant and toddler adoption program in Calgary will continue to be strong with both Janet's and Laura's services.

Julia Marsh is a key person on ABC's team becoming our International Adoption Specialist. We rely on her to provide support and services to our families as they navigate the complexities of international adoption.

Jan Thomson and Tammy Hunt have become an integral part of our team as they contribute their expertise in mentoring the ABC contracted staff that complete home assessment reports for Children's Services in the Calgary Region.

Of equal importance, is the dedicated clerical staff that keep our office running so smoothly. Carrie Newman, Ruth Gissing and Kat Newman have become a highly functioning team without whom we would be lost.

ABC has many contracted staff which allows us to provide comprehensive services to families throughout the province and I am very thankful to be able to rely on such skilled resources to assist us as the need arises.

I am very pleased to announce that ABC has been awarded a new contract from Calgary and Area Child and Family Services for the Kinship Adoption Program. It started on April 1st, 2008, and I am very excited to have Tammy Hunt as the supervisor for this new program. She will be joined by social workers Jennifer Tevelein and Jeremy Nay, and Kat Newman as Administrative Support. I am very confident that with the experience on this team, we will develop an effective program that will meet the needs of kinship families pursuing adoption.

I feel very privileged to have had the opportunity to be part of many adoptive placements through ABC. I am very confident that Adoption By Choice will continue to provide excellent services that the community has come to count on and I look forward to the growth which we anticipate in the future.

Over the past several years it has been an awesome journey working with Carol at ABC. Carol is a woman who had a dream of providing sensitive and caring services to women faced with the prospect of building an adoption plan and to families prepared to welcome a child. Over the past 20 years that service has developed into the incredible agency that ABC is today, which serves hundreds of families and children across the province.

I am very excited about the next chapter of my career as Program Director of Adoption By Choice and am very grateful for the guidance, opportunity and friendship that Carol has shown me. Carol will be missed by the staff at ABC as well as the many families that she has come to know through her service over the years. We will be planning a celebration in her honour and will provide you with the details in the near future.

Carol, from the staff at ABC, we wish you all the best in the next chapter of your career.

Ramone

New Arrivals! ABC Placements

BORGES:

With joyful hearts and humble souls, Yvonne & Leigh Borges are most proud to announce the arrival of their son, Benjamin Stanley Borges, into their lives. Benjamin was born on April 5, 2008 and came home with mommy and daddy on April 8, 2008. Words cannot express the gratitude we feel to Laura and Ramone, and to all the ladies at ABC, who went above and beyond the call of duty to help our adoption plan moving forward, but mostly, we thank our angel on earth, Britney, for this most amazing and precious gift.



Benjamin Borges

CHOCHOLIK:

Jim and Lisa are thrilled to announce that Samantha-Lee Rebecca Chocholik has come into our lives. Samantha was born at the Rockyview hospital on Feb 4th, 2008. She was 6lbs 1oz of pure joy! Gillian and Justin are 2 extraordinary people and our deepest thanks goes out to them. Ramone was also such a huge part of the journey and we wish to express our heartfelt gratitude to her and everyone at the agency. God Bless!



Samantha-Lee Chocholik

BREEN:

Cam and Claire are thrilled to announce that Bridget Alexis Breen was born on April 11, 2008 and welcomed home the next morning. We are so grateful to Ramone for her experience, support, professionalism, and kindness. We are also thankful for the experiences shared with Bridget's birth mother and family. We appreciate the help of everyone at ABC!



Bridget Breen

HARTMAN:

Kelvin and Cindy Hartman would like to announce the arrival of their son, Kelton Karl, born on April 5th 2008, weighing 7lbs, 2oz. Kelton was placed with us at birth, and has made our dreams come true. He is our perfect bundle of joy. Special thanks to Laura, all the staff at ABC for all their hard work, and all the nurses at the hospital nursery. A big special thank you to the birth parents, Brianna and Matthew—we promise to love and cherish Kelton forever and ever. Our thoughts will be with you always.



Kelvin, Cindy & Kelton Hartman

New Arrivals! ABC Placements

JAKOBS/WHITE:

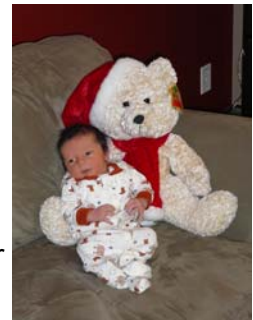
Extra! Extra! Read all about it! Santa and the Easter Bunny conspired to deliver an especially precious gift to Angela and Tim. The proud and happy parents are honoured that birth mom Crystal chose them to parent Valencia Elise, born December 10, 2007, and brought home on March 21, 2008. Special thanks to Laura, Ramone and Ruth for a supportive and compassionate adoption experience.



Angela & Tim with Valencia Jakobs-White

LEVANDOSKY:

Shannon & Mark Levandosky are pleased to announce the arrival of their son, Owen Robbin Setka Levandosky. He was born on April 21, 2008, at 8:55 pm and weighed in at 8 pounds, 1/2 ounce. Owen was brought home 19 hours later and joyously welcomed by 4 eagerly awaiting grandparents. Words can not express the gratitude we feel towards Owen's birth parents, Savanna & Joey. You have given us the most precious gift. We also wish to thank Ramone and Laura at ABC for their unfailing support.



Owen Levandosky

REINSCH:

Vince & Stacey are extremely excited to have Joshua Russell and Lucas William join their family. We extend a very heart-felt thank you to Birth Mom Cheryl, and Birth Grandma Debbie, for these wonderful little boys. They were welcomed into this world on April 11, 2008, 7 weeks early, but are very strong and healthy little men. We would also like to thank Ramone, Suzanne and everyone from ABC who stood by us through the process, as well as the nurses at Lethbridge Hospital NICU who took great care of the boys during their stay.



Vince, Joshua, Stacey & Luke

International Announcements!

DOYLE:

Yana, Eddie, Hannah & Hailey are thrilled that after 2 1/2 long years of waiting, their family is finally proud to welcome their new little addition to the family from China. Sadie is 1 year old now, born on April 1, 2007, and came home on December 20, 2007. We are so pleased to have her. She is such a great baby. Thank you so much for getting this journey started for us. It was definitely worth it!



Sadie Doyle

**The future belongs to
those who believe in the
beauty of their dreams.**

Eleanor Roosevelt

HERTZ:

Georgia Hertz (big sister), along with mom Shelley, are thrilled to welcome the arrival of little sister Madeleine Mae Jing. Madeleine was born in Shaanxi, China in September of 2005.



Georgia & Madeleine Hertz

SIRETT:

Fati and Lamissi arrived home from Ghana on April 25, 2008. Troy and Bonnie Sirett are thrilled to begin the next chapter of their lives as parents to these amazing sisters (11 & 6 years old).



Lamisi, Bonnie, Fati & Troy

International News from Julia Marsh

Post-placement assessments are rewarding interviews for social workers as we get to go out and meet with parents who have brought home a new child through international adoption. When I am with new parents they seem like any other parents who marvel at the accomplishments their children have mastered. Parents are in awe at how magical their children are but they seldom talk about the process that joined them. As my work now focuses on the international adoption program within Adoption By Choice, I know how complex a journey these parents underwent in order to bring their child home.

As a social worker with Adoption By Choice, I tend to work on the front-end of parents' journeys, answering questions for potentially new parents and assessing individuals for their home assessment process. New parents on the front end of an international adoption journey are typically excited, hopeful and enthusiastically overwhelmed. When I meet these soon-to-be moms and dads for subsequent interviews during their wait-time (for such things as update assessments or addendums to their home assessments), some of their optimism has fizzled. Many parents are frustrated with the length of time it takes to complete their adoption and stunned over how the numerous layers of bureaucracy impacts their adoption experience. Although these new parents knew intellectually that the process was complex, having this register on an emotional level was something that was unanticipated.

International adoption is complex and every country is unique. New moms and dads who are raised in Canada may falsely assume that bureaucracies in other countries match North American organizational standards. New parents often overlook the role played by Canadian Immigration and Citizenship. There are millions of children in the world who need safety and love, yet, there are policies, regulations and laws that make it impossible to bring these children together with new parents. At times, it is overwhelming for me as a professional, yet I am encouraged by the excited new prospective adoptive parents who are desperately hoping to provide love and nurturing to a child.

Parents who join together with their new child through an international adoption journey are experts. They have developed coping strategies to weather the wait period, and they know how to prioritize the expectations of different bureaucracies. As a social worker, I have learned a great deal from these families. While a few families are happy to be done, many are ready to start the process over again to bring another child into their home! All feel that their child was worth it.

I am organizing an informal meet-and-greet for those parents who have successfully brought a child into the Calgary area through international adoption. I would love to know what worked well for you and where you experienced difficulties along your journey. My hope is to put together an informational package for new adoptive applicants so that they can learn from your expertise. Anyone who is interested, please feel free to call me at (403) 451-2991.

Julia Marsh, BSW, RSW

Social Worker

A Note From Sheila...

When Birth Parents Change Their Mind

Yes, it happens. And when it does, adoptive parents will naturally react in disbelief, shock, and anger. Especially if the birth parents have reassured them throughout the planning not to worry; that they will not change their minds. No matter how sure the birth parent seems during the planning stage, some of them are just not prepared for the intensity of grief they feel after the baby is born. Even birthparents that have extensive pre-placement counseling and have built a strong and supportive relationship with the prospective adoptive parents may change their mind after the baby is born.

When the adoptive parent loses a child either before or after taking him/her home, they experience a loss similar to feelings parents have when a baby is stillborn or dies. They don't know how they will ever get through the ten days again or how they could ever trust another birth parent. It doesn't seem "fair" that someone would give you their baby and then take it back. But no one "owes" anyone a child, no matter what promises have been made.

Over the years, we at ABC have witnessed some incredible adoptive parents deal with these situations in a very gracious manner. Initially their grief feels insurmountable, but in time they move past the blaming stage and looking for what went "wrong", to an understanding through their own loss at how painful it is for a birthparent to say good-bye to their baby. They feel blessed to be chosen in the first place and report that the experience reinforced for them how ready they are to be parents. Having a baby in their lives for even a few days, opened up their hearts, and gave them faith that their goal of becoming a family is just one match away.

If the unthinkable happens to you, you are not alone. We are experienced grief counselors and will help you navigate through the healing process. We'll also hook you up with the peer support of adoptive parents who have been through it and moved on to become a family.

Sheila

A BIG Thank You to Charles, Shannon, Lincoln, and their birthmom Tammy, for sharing your experiences at our March workshop in Edmonton. You were awesome!

Turn your wounds into wisdom.

Oprah Winfrey

Adoption and You

Over the past few months Adoption and You has taken a different shape and we have had the privilege of guest speakers who have contributed by sharing their experiences with adoption.

On March 13, 2008 we were joined by social worker Susan Herman who does contract work for ABC. She talked about her experiences as a birth mother and shared her own heartfelt story. The group learned that birth moms come from all different walks of life, and that building an adoption plan for their child is a difficult and painful process. She also spoke about how important maintaining connections with her daughter has been in her life, and that the relationship between birth parents and adoptive parents is one that takes time and effort to maintain, but that is so important for the child as he/she grows. Thank-you so much Susan for sharing your story with our group.

On April 8, 2008 the topic for Adoption and You was "Pre-Natal Exposure to Drugs and Alcohol". Laura Swift, social worker at ABC and I spoke about some of the research about Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder and Fetal Drug Effect. We were also joined by adoptive mom Debbie Mitchell who spoke about her experiences as a parent adopting a child who may be affected. Debbie spoke about many of the difficult decisions that she and her husband Greg had to make during the process of adopting their daughter. Thank-you so much Debbie for taking the time to talk to our group and sharing your experience of adoption.

On May 7th, 2008 we had our final session of Adoption and You until the fall. We were joined by guest speakers Yvonne and Leigh Borges who were delighted to talk about their recent experience of welcoming their son Benjamin. Yvonne and Leigh have been part of our group (formerly known as Surviving the Wait) since its beginning in January 2007 and expressed their thanks for all the support and friendships that they have gained through this group.

Over the past several months in our group we have joked about "The Call". I've found a poem that I think captures many of the feelings that many awaiting adoptive parents feel during the many months of waiting for "the Call" to come. Hang in there, many families come together that are just meant to be...

Waiting for The Call

By Shelia Stewart Darst

every time the phone rings now
my blood pressure soars
my heart drops to my left foot
and my scalp starts to tingle
and with all the serenity of a hungry cat
I say hello in a voice three octaves too high.

I unconsciously hum cradle songs
and review old nursery rhymes
because in my bones
I feel the time nearing
as I study spring's calendar
musing on days and dates

I sit by a green sunny window
in my great-grandfather's rocking chair
and am pleased as I look around
the new calico walls that everything is ready
and it reassures me and makes it real

the calico dog and calico cat
chase one another on a bright field
of yellow and green and orange and blue
and I try to imagine our child, our children

distant laughter circles the hall
and tiny feet run to me
in my imagination as I
sit and rock and write
and wonder and dream and plan

the old rocker squeaks a
comforting old song
and I think of all the children
rocked to sleep in its arms over a century
of all the stories it could tell
of all the family ties that it has bound,
and I am calmed by the infinite cycle of time
and the continuity of life

until the phone rings

It has been my privilege to be part of the Adoption & You group over the past year and a half, as I have gained so much knowledge from each individual's experiences as they move through their adoption journey, both pre and post placement. ABC looks forward to planning ongoing topics and speakers, which will begin again in the fall of 2008. We would like to extend an invitation to all individuals connected with ABC. We would love to see you come out and share your experiences. If you have any suggestions for topics or would like to be a guest speaker at our group to share your adoption journey I would love to hear from you.

Ramone

A New Book in the Library

It was with delight that I received an email from Patricia Irwin Johnston about 4 months ago letting me know that she had a new book, ***Adopting: Sound Choices, Strong Families***. Pat had seen her books listed on ABC's website as resources and wanted us to know that though *Adopting After Infertility* (originally published in 1992) was out of print, she had taken it upon herself to write ***Adopting: Sound Choices, Strong Families***, out of a desire to consolidate current issues in adoption for would-be adoptive parents, adoptive parents and adoption professionals.

Her previous books: *Adopting After Infertility*, *Taking Charge of Infertility* and *Launching a Baby's Adoption* were all well read books in our library and had laid a foundation for us as professionals at ABC, helping us to understand how loss and grief affects everyone in the adoption constellation.

Adopting: Sound Choices, Strong Families, is a wonderful book not only because it offers the reader many vignettes to underscore a theme but because it is comprehensive in a very reader-friendly and interesting way. The book is divided into four stages—moving the reader through early exploration of adoption as a possibility, through examining 'tough stuff' in looking at adoption as a choice, and the commitment adoption requires and finally through anticipating placement and what the 'real thing' brings.

Each chapter offers the reader opportunities for reflection as well as vignettes that make the journey more than mere words on a page. As well, each of the sixteen chapters has a resource list for further reading or surfing. Readers of ***Adopting: Sound Choices, Strong Families*** will want to have this book as a resource in their personal libraries because of the wealth of information it provides. Though, as Johnston says in her conclusion, "... in the end, it is also about those birth parents and adoptive families loving one another—whether close or at a distance—respecting the role each has in the lives of the person at the center of it all—a child. May that child love and be loved, twice over". I couldn't agree more.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

Dave Ziegler, psychologist, family counselor, presenter, Executive Director and author of Raising Children Who Refuse to be Raised, Parenting Skills and Interventions for the Most Difficult Children, is coming to Calgary on November 20, & 21, 2008.

Don't miss this opportunity to learn innovative strategies to achieve success with challenging children.

WATCH FOR MORE INFORMATION

Why Have a Picnic?

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. This year the big events happen on Saturday, June 14 at Bowness Park in Calgary, and at Laurier Park in Edmonton.

The details are on the next 2 pages.

We'd love to have you come out!

PICNIC INFO

ABC's Summer Celebration Picnic: CALGARY

Saturday, June 14, 2008
11:30 AM – 2:30 PM
Bowness Park, Site 1

Please Bring:

- Potluck choice of a Salad or Dessert
- Picnic lunch item for your family
- Lawn Chairs

We will supply the drinks

What's Happening?

Lots of Fun & Games
Relay Races
Ice Cream treats for all

Parachute Games Face Painting And more!

How do I find Site 1, Bowness Park?

**There will be lots of signs at Bowness Park
on event day to help you find us!**



PICNIC INFO

ABC's Summer Celebration Picnic: EDMONTON

Saturday, June 14, 2008

1:00—4:00 PM

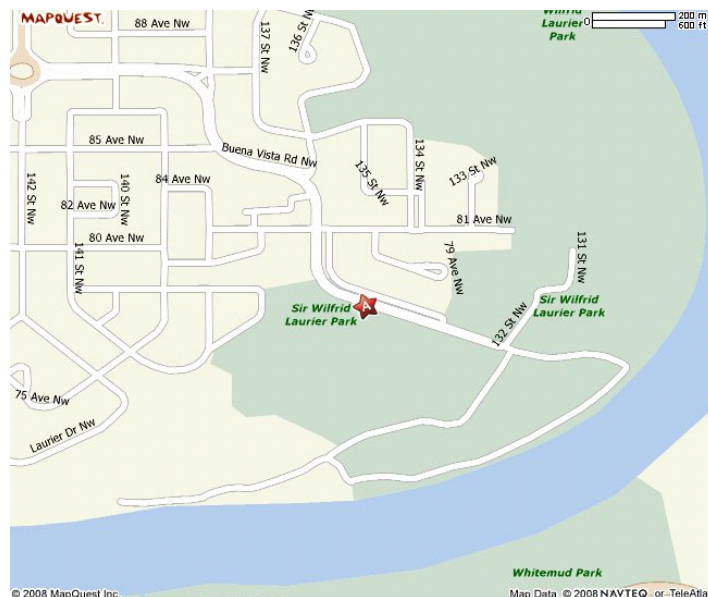
Laurier Park, Site 7

Bring your own picnic

Come Ready to Bounce in our Ball Tent

How do I find Laurier Park?

**Adjacent to the Valley Zoo at
134 Street & Buena Vista Road**



We Need Your Help:

ABC is looking for a volunteer to update our webpage. If you are interested in assisting us with this, please call Ruth at 245-8854 or email calgary@adoptionbychoice.ca

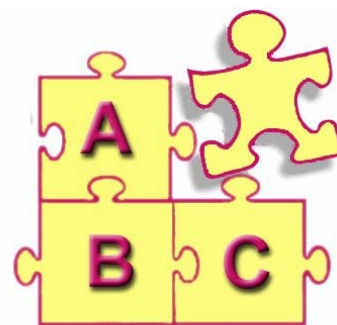
Did you know?

Adoption By Choice sends this newsletter via email to adoptive families, waiting families and interested parties in Alberta and across Canada. If you are receiving this newsletter by mail and would prefer to be on our e-mail list, please give Ruth 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.

Adoption By Choice



ADOPTION BY CHOICE

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

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