

**K•A•P**

**KINSHIP ADOPTION PROGRAM**

ADOPTION BY CHOICE

# *KAP Newsletter*

## *1<sup>st</sup> Edition Fall 2008*

### A Letter from Ramone...



ADOPTION BY CHOICE

As the Program Director of Adoption by Choice, I am delighted to see the commitment of Children's Services in Alberta in creating and supporting permanent homes for children in need. At Adoption By Choice we are very excited to be part of the creation of the Kinship Adoption Program – KAP and we were honoured to be awarded this program as of April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2008. KAP's goal is to support kin families through their adoption journey and to prepare the required documentation to finalize the adoption for the child(ren) in their care. KAP has become a natural extension of the services provided to families at Adoption By Choice as our Vision is:

**To bring permanency, safety and happiness to children.**

Just to give you a little bit of history about us, Adoption By Choice - ABC was founded by Carol Lamb, our past director, and was the first private adoption agency to be licensed by the Alberta Government on September 1<sup>st</sup>, 1989. Carol has been an integral part of the development of the Kinship Adoption Program as she held the position of program director until August 31<sup>st</sup>, 2008.

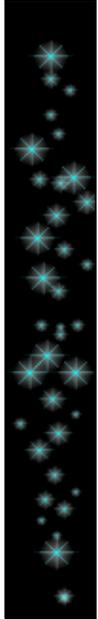
ABC began as a Calgary based licensed open adoption agency providing services to birth parents and adoptive parents in the placement of infants and toddlers. Over the years we have grown both geographically and in the scope of our programming – we have a satellite office in Edmonton and have trained registered contract social workers in many communities across the province. In 1995, the Alberta Government authorized Adoption By Choice to offer an International Adoption Program. Over the past several years, ABC has expanded their services to Children's Services in the Calgary region to include: The Adoptive Parent Preparation Program, which provides training to all applicants considering adoption through Children's Services in this region. After the first year, we understood more clearly, the distinct needs of foster and kin families wishing to adopt and we designed a specific pre-adoption course to address their unique needs, called Preparing For Adoption. We also provide a Home Study Program in the Calgary region and complete adoption, foster, kinship and private guardianship home studies for families working with Children's Services. And of course most recently we added The Kinship Adoption Program – KAP to our range of services for families.

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ABC is committed to excellence in each of the programs we undertake. We understand and value accountability, client service, a high quality of work with clients and their systems and we believe strongly in supporting permanence for those children who can not return to their biological parents. We also believe that working collaboratively with caregivers and the professionals in their world will enhance opportunities for children to achieve a stable, secure and permanent home. For those children who cannot be reunited with birth parents because of significant protection concerns, kinship families are increasingly being sought as caregivers on both a temporary and permanent basis. Many of the relative caregivers, who start out providing shelter on a short term basis, find themselves making a lifelong commitment to offer a permanent home. This shift brings with it a myriad of role changes within the entire family and as such increases the complexity of the family constellation. Because of this, we believe that kinship families require a wide range of supports and services that are sensitive to their unique needs and life situation.

One of the benefits of children being cared for by clan is the reduced risk of estrangement from their respective cultural and religious affiliations. This is critically important for Aboriginal and Métis children as well as children of other cultural minorities. A child’s evolving identity must include acknowledgement of their roots and the opportunity to maintain connections to their people.

Adoption By Choice is committed to work collaboratively with Children’s Services, the Kinnections Program and other professionals to ensure that kin families receive the support and timely coordination of services to help them to move towards finalization of the adoption process. I am very proud to introduce to you our Kinship Adoption Program staff: Tammy Hunt – Program Supervisor, Jeremy Nay and Jennifer Tevelein – KAP workers. Please take a moment to review their profiles. And of course our team would not be complete without the vital support we receive from our KAP Office Administrator – Katherine Newman. I am confident that with the many years of experience on this team, that we will continue to develop a program that can provide service in a sensitive and timely manner. As this is the first newsletter, we will keep you posted on the success and developments of this new and exciting program.

~ Ramone

### Why a newsletter?

KAP is focused on supporting kinship families. Our goal in developing this newsletter is to inform and educate those we work with as well as provide a sense of connection, community and even a touch of humor.

Look for “spotlights” on FASD and Attachment with tips and information in each newsletter.

Have an idea of things you’d like to see?  
Have questions or comments, please let us know.

Email [kap@adoptionbychoice.ca](mailto:kap@adoptionbychoice.ca)  
or call (403)244-2700

**Things I've Learned from  
My Children**  
(Honest and No Kidding)  
- an anonymous mother -

A 4 year-old's voice is louder than  
200 adults in a crowded restaurant.

When you hear the toilet flush and  
the words  
Uh-oh, it's already too late.

Legos will pass through the  
digestive tract of a four year old.  
Duplos will not.

## WHO ARE WE? BIOS OF THE KAP TEAM

### **Tammy Hunt, B.S.W., R.S.W KAP Supervisor**

Tammy is very happy to be a part of such a strength based program that will ultimately move an increased number of children to their permanent, legal homes. After working for Child and Family Services for 12 years, Tammy is well aware of the special circumstances that face kin adoptive families. She holds a Bachelor of Social Work as well as special training working with child in residential care, including group homes. She has had extensive experience working with Aboriginal families and children having worked both on reserve and Métis settlement.



### **Jeremy S. Nay, R.S.W. KAP Worker**

Jeremy brings with him a wide range of experience within the field of Social Work. He survived the many challenges of working in a group home and then became a foster care support worker and group home supervisor. Jeremy discovered ABC while making his own personal journey through the adoption process. Due to his own experience with adoption, he can not only empathize, but assist families with challenges they may experience throughout this process. In addition, Jeremy and his wife have been foster parents since 2005 and in doing so have enriched the lives of 10 children who have been welcomed in their home. He is a valued member of the team at ABC.

### **Jennifer Tevelein, B.A., Cert.Crim KAP Worker**

Jennifer is originally from London, Ontario and completed her Bachelor of Arts (Sociology) degree and Certificate in Criminology at the University of Windsor in 1993. Jennifer has been working with children and families in the Social Work field for over 17 years in community-based, treatment, education and early intervention settings. Jennifer has demonstrated the strength-based approach front-line with families and as a Program Supervisor. As a KAP Worker with ABC, Jennifer guides kinship families towards the finalization of their adoption to reduce barriers to permanency.



### **Kat Newman, Office Administrator**

Kat is charged with the task of keeping the team organized and in line. She has office and customer service experience from a variety of industries including accounting to home improvement and renovations. Kat is happy to be working at ABC as a part of KAP, where “our work has real meaning”

## Grief: A Normal Reaction to Loss

*Ann Marie Marshall, family life educator*

When children come to live with their grandparents, it is often because of a tragedy—a parent has died, abandoned them, been incarcerated, or is very ill.

With this tragedy comes not only the loss of the parent, but also the loss of friends, neighbors, home and school. As one teacher observed, "It's the loss of the person who knew you the best."

Grief is a normal reaction to loss. But in children, grief may be quite different depending on their ages and stages of development.

Even though infants have little awareness of exactly what has happened, they do experience feelings of loss and separation. Crankiness, eating disorders, sleep problems, and intestinal disturbances are all normal grief reactions in children under a year.

For toddlers, the separation may seem like a game of disappearance and reappearance. They expect their parents to return at any time.

Children ages 3 to 6 sometimes believe that they caused their parents to leave. Feelings of guilt and responsibility are common. At this age, children do not



understand the meaning of time. Words like forever are hard for them to grasp.

Older children can understand loss, but they may not realize their behavior is related to their loss.

Allow your grandchildren to talk about their parents, friends, and previous home or school. If talking is too hard, ask them to draw a picture or write a note. Keeping a scrapbook or box of mementos from their previous relationship can help them maintain a connection to the past – even when the past is painful to remember. Be flexible. They may want to remember at unusual times or places.

Taken from the website Parenting Again University of Illinois Extension <http://www.urbanext.uiuc.edu/grandparents>



## How 'Bout A Little Support?

Being a kinship provider can be fun, exciting, and rewarding, but it can also be difficult. Kinship families face a number of special challenges, including managing grief and loss, and parenting children who have been exposed to traumatic circumstances. KAP understands that these experiences are different than those of traditional adoptive families and as such we are hoping to establish a support group for grandparents, aunts, uncles and siblings who are in the unique position of adopting. Jean Stoutenburg, an adopting grandmother currently participating in KAP, has generously agreed to help get this group running and we would ask that if you are interested contact Jean through her e-mail at [ajstoutenburg@shaw.ca](mailto:ajstoutenburg@shaw.ca) or call the KAP office at (403)244-2700.

**Other support options out there...** The Children's Link Society offers a the *Family Link Program Coffee Socials* to help provide guidance, information and support to families caring for children with special needs. They offer a Grandparent's group the 2nd Tuesday of each month from 9:30 - 11:30am at Westwinds Superstore at 3633 Westwinds Dr N.E. See their website for more information and other groups <http://www.childrenslink.ca/Newsletters/September08.pdf>

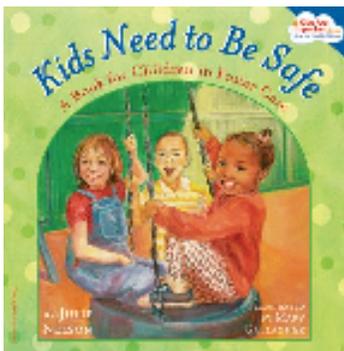
## Book Reviews

### Little Miss Spider by David Kirk

On the very first day of her life, Miss Spider discovers her mom is nowhere to be found. She sets out in search of her, and after many adventures, Miss Spider learns a most valuable lesson:

*For finding your mother,  
There's one certain test.  
You must look for the creature  
Who loves you the best.*

A good book about adoption for ages 4-7. This book was the jumping off point for the kids show "Miss Spider's Sunny Patch Friends" on Treehouse TV.



### Kids Need to Be Safe

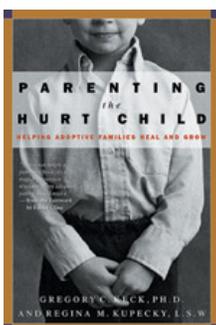
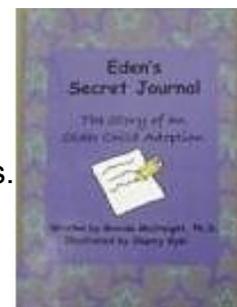
by Julie Nelson Illustrated by Mary Gallagher

"Kids are important... They need safe places to live, and safe places to play." For some kids, this means living with foster parents. In simple words and full-color illustrations, this book explains why some kids move to foster homes, what foster parents do, and ways kids might feel during foster care. Children often believe that they are in foster care because they are "bad." This book makes it clear that the troubles in their lives are not their fault; the message throughout is one of hope and support.

### Eden's Secret Journal The Story of an Older Child Adoption

by Brenda McCreight, Ph.D. Illustrated by Sherry Kyle

Eden is a 13-year-old who lived with her drug-addicted parents until she was three. This journal is full of her fears, hopes, and happy moments. She is a child not hardened by a multitude of foster parents, but confused and completely misunderstood. Eden's story will touch your heart. This book is brief enough to be enjoyed by teens and honest enough to be appreciated by adults. If you have ever considered foster parenting or adopting an older child, this is a must read.



### Parenting the Hurt Child: Helping Adoptive Families Heal and Grow

by Gregory C. Keck, Ph.D. and Regina M. Kupecky, L.S.W.

Some adoptees come to their new homes with hurts from the past that can affect an entire family. With time, patience, and informed parenting, your adopted child can heal, grow, and develop beyond what seems possible now. PARENTING THE HURT CHILD explains how to raise your child with loving wisdom, resolve, and success, while preserving your stability and sanity. (Hardcover, 256 pages, 2002)

## Spotlight on FASD

### FASD Tip #1

#### How You can help Children with FASD Make Decisions

Good decision making is very hard for children with FASD. Everyday decisions are difficult for them to make. Because their brains work differently, children with FASD may not be able to clearly understand the outcome of their actions. They may also have trouble sorting out the facts when they make decisions. Most parents help their children to learn how to make good decisions and wise choices. Parents and caregivers of youngsters with FASD soon discover that their children need extra help learning how to make decisions. They might need this help for a longer time than other children do.



#### Tips to Improve Decision Making

1. **Routine is important.** A child with FASD takes longer to learn some things. Try to do things the same way every day. For example, your child needs to put his dirty clothes in the laundry hamper every time he gets into his pyjamas. Repeat, repeat, repeat- it will help your child develop a good life skill.
2. **Keep your explanations short.** Use the same words each time. A rhyme or rap may help your child remember the order of things to be done. For example, “Feed the cat, outside there’s snow, wear your hat, off to school you go.”
3. **Use visual cues or hints whenever you can.** For example, put a picture of a coat over the coat hook where your child should put her coat.
4. **Offer only 2 choices at a time.** For example, “Do you want to wear your blue sweater or your red sweater today?”
5. **Cut down on things that distract the child with FASD.** It’s hard for them to think straight when a lot is going on. For example, if a few children are getting ready to go outside, it will be easier for you and the child with FASD to get ready before or after the other children.
6. **Leave enough time for a child with FASD to move from one activity to another.** It may help to set a timer for 3 minutes and let your child know that when it rings it’s time to stop playing and get ready for school.
7. **Point out good decisions & good choices made by your child.** For example, “That was great that you didn’t run into the street after your ball! You made a good decision. I’m proud of you.”
8. **Stay calm and cool.** If you get angry or lose it your child may become excited or confused and lose control of his or her behaviour

Taken from the FASD Support Network of Saskatchewan [www.skfasnetwork.ca](http://www.skfasnetwork.ca)

"Ohana" means "family." "Family" means "no one gets left behind."  
~ Lilo in Walt Disney's Lilo and Stitch (2002)

# MISSION IMPOSSIBLE:

## Understanding and Helping the Challenging Child

*An evening presentation for adoptive parents, foster parents, professionals and interested members of the community*

**November 20, 2008**

**About our guest speaker .....**

Dave Ziegler, Ph.D., LMFT, LPC is a licensed psychologist and Executive Director of Jasper Mountain, an agency in Oregon that treats our society's most damaged children and their families. Therapist, clinical supervisor, trainer, frequent expert witness and consultant to programs, he has worked with traumatized adults, children and their families over the last four decades.

His current treatment program is internationally recognized for its innovation and success with the most difficult cases. Over the last 26 years he has lived with the children in his treatment program, providing him a first hand glimpse of the inner world of these children.

Dr. Ziegler has numerous publications and a number of books including: Raising Children Who Refuse To Be Raised, Traumatic Experience and the Brain, Achieving Success With Impossible Children, the 2006 publication of the Attachment Disorder Assessment Scale-Revised, and his newly released Beyond Healing: The Path To Personal Contentment After Trauma. Dr. Ziegler brings into his trainings the belief that children and adults learn best when they are having fun.

**Time:** 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.  
**Place:** EDC 179, Education Block Bldg.  
 Located on the University of Calgary Campus

Advance Ticket Registration Fee:  
 • Individuals \$25  
 • Couples \$35

**Registration deadline Nov 13, 2008.** Tickets will be available at the door for \$35 per person or \$40 per couple.

For further information on this presentation contact:  
 Frances Seyer at 403-297-2603.

Parents are also invited to attend the professional session *Mission Impossible: Understanding and Helping the Traumatized Child*

MacEwan Student Centre, University of Calgary  
 November 21, 2008 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Early registration (before Oct 31/08) - \$135.00 (incl. GST)  
 Regular registration (after Oct 31/08) - \$165.00 (incl. GST)



**MISSION IMPOSSIBLE: Understanding and Helping the Challenging Child**

**ADVANCE TICKETS**

Tear off this form and mail with your cheque (made payable to "University of Calgary") to:

**Centre for Social Work Research and Development, Faculty of Social Work, 3246 PFB, University of Calgary, 2500 University Drive NW, Calgary AB T2N 1N4.**

If paying by credit card please complete and fax this form to (403) 210-6414

Nov 20 \_\_\_\_\_ Nov 21 \_\_\_\_\_

Total Amount Enclosed

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

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Method of payment: Cheque Enclosed  Credit Card  VISA  MasterCard

Credit Card # \_\_\_\_\_

Expiry Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

*(Mandatory for credit card payments)*

## Spotlight on Attachment

### Attachment and adoption

Attachment is a subject that all adoptive parents must acquaint themselves with. Having difficulty with attaching to a parent is not just a problem for children who lived in an orphanage, or suffered abuse and neglect. Any child that has suffered an interruption in caregiver, or poor caregiving, even for a short period, may have attachment issues. Many experts argue that if a pregnant woman is suffering from abuse or depression during her pregnancy that her baby will also be harmed in-utero and may be born with attachment challenges.



Children who were adopted usually join their families a little later than biological children, some a matter of hours or days after their birth; others, several months or years later. Some of our children have lived in orphanages or in multiple foster homes and others may have experienced extreme stress in-utero. All these beginnings are compelling reasons for adoptive parents to understand the importance of attachment, be able to recognize when their child seems to have problems attaching, and to know what to do about it.

Of course, attachment is not just an issue for adoptive parents: experts like Dr. Gordon Neufeld passionately argue that all parents, no matter how they formed their family or whatever age their children are, must pay great attention to developing and maintaining their attachment relationship with their child. He insists that unless they do so their children will replace any parental attachment void with peer attachments, which are not what growing children or teens need.

It isn't always the child that has the difficulty in attaching, sometimes it's the parent. Attachment is a two-way street. Fortunately, attachment is not static. Consistent, reliable, and loving care can bring great improvements

#### Possible Signs of Attachment Issues

- Reluctance to make eye-contact or to accept touch
- Little affection for parents
- Demanding or clingy behaviour
- Stealing and lying
- Low impulse control
- Hoarding or gorging on food
- Affection toward strangers
- Superficially charming actions
- Destructiveness to self or others
- Inability to link cause with effect
- Attempts to control situations by manipulation or aggression

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#### Tips to Promote Attachment

- Maintain predictability in daily schedules.
- Rock and dance with the baby and child. Use movement to help cue the child to respond to the parent.
- Spend time with the child. Look for activities to do that are exciting, have movement, are fun and offer stimulation.
- Keep the home pace slow enough to allow for discussions and nurturance.

“Children today are confronted with so many adversities and challenges that can impact their personal wellness and influence the adults they will grow up to be...



## “*Building in Resiliency*”

A candid look into a young man’s journey  
from neglect and abuse

*With*

**Troy Payne**

**November 17, 2008**

**Carstairs Memorial Arena**

**(Upstairs) 7:00—8:30 pm,**

**Tickets required (free with food bank item)**

**available at: 2 A Gas, Town of Carstairs, &**

**Didsbury Neighborhood Place**

**Contact: 337-2633 or 335-8719**

Troy Payne is a nationally known speaker for school assemblies, conferences and educational events for both youth and adults. His message is simple, yet powerful, entertaining yet challenging. Troy speaks with passion, while he engages and inspires audiences.



A Partnered Project of  
Carstairs & Didsbury  
Funded in part by  
Family Violence Prevention &  
Bullying of the  
Province of Alberta



## Featured Resources

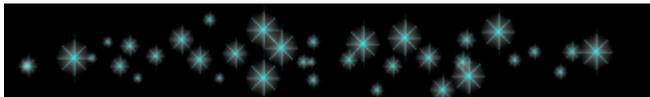
### Parent Link Centres

Research over the past decade has shown that parenting has a powerful impact on children's learning and behaviour. It has also shown that **parents need support** and that community-based parent resource programs can have positive long term effects on child development. They provide parents and families with comprehensive support in 4 core areas: **parent education, early childhood developments and care, family support and information and referrals**. Each centre is designed to meet the unique needs of families and offers a range of services, which include: play-based learning activities for children and parents; workshops and seminars on issues related to parenting and early childhood development; family support services such as nutrition programs, support groups, clothing exchange, toy-lending and resource libraries; and information and referrals to other parenting support and child development programs in your community. Parent Link Centers are specifically designed for young children ages 0-6, by giving them a place to laugh, learn and play during their early years.

The Virtual Parent Link Centre brings together information about choosing child care, communicating with your child, behaviour and discipline, health and safety, and becoming a parent. Content will be regularly updated to reflect the concerns of Alberta parents.

For more information about the programs and services offered through Parent Link Centres or for locations, call the Parent Information Line 1-866-714-KIDS (5437), or visit the Virtual Parent Link Centre online at [www.parentlinkalberta.ca](http://www.parentlinkalberta.ca)

*"Call it a clan, call it a network, call it a tribe, call it a family. Whatever you call it, whoever you are, you need one." ~ Jane Howard*



**Children don't come with instructions** but there is help. Families Matter offers a variety of parenting courses and workshops including: Positive Discipline, Understanding Anger in Your Children, Tantrums in Toddlers and more.

For more information or to register, call (403)205-5175 or check out their website [www.familiesmatter.ca](http://www.familiesmatter.ca).

While we try to teach our children all about life,  
Our children teach us what life it all about.  
~ Angela Schwindt

**PFA (Preparing for Adoption)** is a weekend training course facilitated by ABC for CFSA. It is intended for foster and kinship families who are interested in pursuing adoption. The course has 3 main goals:

- to help prepare caregivers for the changes that adoption will bring to your family,
- to educate about special needs, attachment issues and resources for family and children and;
- to provide connections with other foster and kinship families who are preparing for adoption.

Completion of the course is a requirement of CFSA for all caregivers wishing to pursue adoption. PFA weekends are held eight times a year. Contact your KAP worker for more information about PFA and to register.

**Upcoming weekends: November 15 & 16, 2008, January 24 & 24, 2009 and March 7 & 8, 2009.**

# K • A • P

## **KINSHIP ADOPTION PROGRAM**

### ADOPTION BY CHOICE

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