



ABC Newsletter

Fall 2009

A Letter from Ramone...

The seasons change so quickly, only a few of weeks ago we were enjoying the sunshine and unseasonably hot temperatures, and now it looks like winter is only around the corner. But with every change in life comes a new challenge and new opportunity.

September 1st, 2009 marked the 20th anniversary of Adoption By Choice providing service to the community. Although the face of ABC changed in its breadth of services, the core values and service have always remained the same. Adoption By Choice's founder and original Program Director, Carol Lamb, has been a pioneer in establishing open adoption services throughout Alberta. Over the past 20 years ABC has had the privilege of working with hundreds of birth parents and adoptive parents in building adoption plans for children. One of the core values in every adoption plan has been to support birth parents and adoptive families to connect, build relationships and maintain connections. Every adoption plan is unique, and changes over time, but rooted at it's heart, is the best interests of the child. ABC is proud to continue to provide its core service to families with the infant and toddler program for domestic adoption and the international adoption program.

As you will note from our birth announcements, we have continued to be busy with domestic adoption placements throughout 2009. Over the past year Adoption By Choice has placed 30 children in adoptive homes, and 21 children since the new year. We continue to provide counseling to several birth parents across the province to help them to build a plan that is right for their child.

With international adoption we are very aware that the climate is ever changing, yet we find that many families forge ahead in hopes of bringing a child to Canada to provide him/her with more opportunity and a stable family life. Although the journey can be uncertain and lengthy at times, we celebrate along with each family as they welcome their child home. For those that are in need of the service, we are happy to help with the finalization of their adoption.

As always I am very thankful for our committed staff at Adoption By Choice who work tirelessly in their service to birth parents and families. They continue to be committed to providing high quality service to families in all that they do. I am also thankful for the continued support of the adoptive families and am so delighted to see the joy that their children bring.

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NEW ARRIVALS!! ~ ABC PLACEMENTS

HARRISON– Thomas, Laura and Anna Harrison are pleased to announce the birth of their daughter (and sister), **Ayden Sarah Harrison**. Ayden was born on September 11th, 2009 and brought home the next day. Special thanks to Ayden's birth parents; Kyleigh Devin who made this adoption plan out of the utmost love for Ayden. Thank you also to Janet Patterson and Kathy Tippe for helping us all through this journey.



"The Universe has a way of knowing when people belong together."

Ayden and Anna Harrison

ALDERSON– Eric and Maria are ecstatic to announce the arrival of their daughter **Sara Susanna Nicole**. She was born on June 9, 2009 and weighed 5 lbs 11 oz. We are truly blessed and thank birth parents Jessica and Steve for their gracious gift; they will always have a special place in our hearts. We would also like to thank Sheila, Janet and all the staff of ABC for all their help and insight through our incredible journey.



Sara Susanna Nicole Alderson

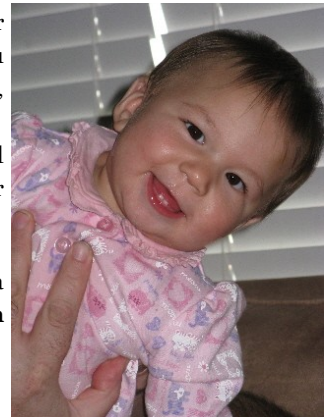
HILLIARD— Shonn and Kim Hilliard are thrilled to announce the arrival of baby **Kamryn**, born on January 11, 2009. Kamryn entered our life in the blink of an eye and we couldn't have asked for a more beautiful little girl. Along with all of our family and friends, we feel truly blessed to have Kamryn join our family. She has taught us all that adoption is simply another word for love. We would like to thank everyone at ABC for their support during our adoption journey.

Shonn, Kim and Kamryn Hilliard



WYBORN— Sheldon, Tricia and Gabriell Wyborn are thrilled to welcome home **Kristine Reanna**. Kristine was born November 8th, 2008 at the Foothills Hospital and through all the hard work and devotion of Laura, Ramone and the gang at ABC we are blessed with another precious little girl who has finally joined her forever family. Thank you so much for your support, guidance and perseverance. We will always be grateful to you for helping make our family complete.

Kristine Reanna Wyborn



FREELE— JD and Sheila are excited to announce the arrival of their daughter **Sianna Marie Heaven Freele**. Sianna was born May 4th, 2009 @ 12:06 pm in High Prairie, Alberta. Sianna weighed 6lbs 15oz and was 20 inches long. We wish to extend our sincerest thanks to Heaven and her family for blessing us with this precious gift. A HUGE thanks goes out to Alison for her guidance and support and help throughout this whole process. We are grateful you were with us to give us support at our meetings and at the hospital. Thank you to ABC for their help and support throughout our journey. Our families are so excited and overjoyed with Sianna's arrival. Our families will be connected forever.

Sianna Marie Heaven Freele



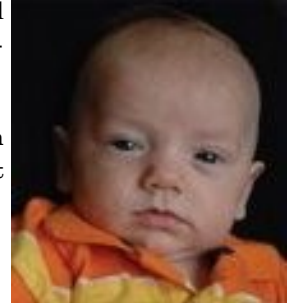
CONSTANCE— On August 19, 2009 we were blessed with the birth of our son - **Kole Dezan Constance**! Kole weighed 5 lbs 8 oz and was 19 inches long. He has forever changed our hearts and has brought a whole new meaning to life! We are eternally grateful to Kole's birth parents Shannon and Shawn and want to thank them for this wonderful gift. Our adoption experience has been more than we could have ever hoped for. Thank you to Laura and the staff at ABC for making this such a positive journey. The best things in life are definitely worth waiting for... With love and gratitude, Paul & Alana

**Paul, Alana
and Kole
Constance**



HIEBERT— John, Wendy, Ashley & Tyson are honoured to welcome **Jordy Austin Hiebert** into their family. Jordy was the perfect father's day gift - a surprise for us all! We were able to hold him on the day he was born and spend time bonding in the NICU for a few days. Jordy was 4 pounds 10 ounces and just under 18 inches long. He is growing bigger and bigger every day and loves interacting with his big sister and brother. We are truly blessed to have him in our lives and thank God for this precious gift. We are excited to watch him grow and to see what the future holds for our family. Thank you to Jordy's birthparents, Matt and Jaki and also to Laura for making this experience so amazing.

**Jordy Austin
Hiebert**



POWELL— Jerilyn and Jago are proud to welcome **Jayla Dawn Evelyn** into the Powell family. Jayla was born on July 24 in Drumheller, AB weighing 6lbs 10oz and measuring 20 inches in length. She has been our shining star and a wonderful delight from the day we met her at the hospital. We would like to thank Lisa from the bottom of our hearts for the wonderful gift she has given us and for her understanding and maturity throughout this whole process. We'd also like to thank Laura and Sheila at ABC for supporting us throughout our journey, and helping to bring Jayla to us. Our hearts will never be the same.

Jayla Dawn Evelyn Powell

*God sends us children for another
purpose than merely
to keep up the race—
to enlarge our hearts.
~Mary Howitt*

MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR EDMONTON'S ANNUAL CHRISTMAS PARTY!

Where:

The Unitarian Church, 10804-119 Street
(entrance on the south side of the bldg.)

When:

Sunday, December 6th, 2009, 1:00 to 3:00 p.m.

What to bring:

An appetizer or dessert to share
A wrapped gift with your child's name on it.

SANTA will be making an appearance.



Make an effort to come out and meet your fellow adoptive families as this will be our only organized event this year.

BABY AND ME



Are you at home with your adoptive child? Want to meet and connect with other adoptive parents? Many ABC families have formed life long friendships with other parents in their Baby and Me group. To get things started, ABC will be hosting the first meeting of a new Baby and Me group on Tuesday, November 10 at 10:30 a.m. (location to be announced). Moms and Dads welcome! Please RSVP to Laura Swift (laura.swift@adoptionbychoice.ca) if you are interested in attending (even if you can not attend on that day/time).

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



Thank you to George, Emilia, their daughter Dana and birth parents Jackie and Barrett who shared their adoption story at the Calgary workshop in September.

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.

Nice Genes!

As published in *Adoptive Families Magazine* February 2009

By Kelly James-Enger

While my husband and I were trying to have a child—first, the “old-fashioned way,” and then through fertility treatments—we often talked about what our child would look like. I wanted our baby to inherit Erik’s distinctive hazel eyes and thick lashes. Erik hoped our baby would have my smile. I imagined our baby would be a blend of us—an appealing mix of our best qualities. But over the years, our conversations became briefer, and then they ceased altogether.

One day, soon after another miscarriage, while I was sitting in a restaurant, a woman and her daughter caught my eye. They were both tall, long-limbed, dark-haired, with oval faces and similar features. The mom said something that made her daughter laugh, and they threw back their heads with the same mannerisms. They belonged to each other. That’s what I had wanted, had dreamed of for years. But as I watched the matched pair, I realized it was a dream I’d already begun to give up.

Undergoing rounds of IVF that resulted in failures or miscarriages, and watching the chance of having a biological child grow even slimmer, had shifted my focus. I was no longer obsessed with having “my own” baby. I just wanted to be a mom—now! Learning about adoption made that more of a certainty. We changed our course.

Less than a year later, and just weeks after being chosen by a birthmother, we drove to the hospital to meet our son. In the car, I felt that long-forgotten question reemerge. What would our baby look like? Our child was not going to share a genetic link to Erik or to me, so this time around there was no speculation, only curiosity.

He was, and is, more beautiful than I could have imagined. My son, who’s now three, has olive skin, huge blue eyes, dark, springy curls, and a

sunny smile. His looks garner a lot of attention from friends and strangers alike.

When complimented on my child’s appearance, I say “thank you.” Secretly, yes, I think he’s the most beautiful child who’s ever lived. But I had nothing to do with creating his arresting looks. When I admire him, I’m admiring not my genetic legacy but that of his birthparents. I’m just the grateful recipient of it.

I’m also aware that some of the attention we attract is inspired by something other than my son’s striking appearance. I watch people glance at me, then at him, questions showing on their faces. This was brought home to me a few months ago, when I dined out with my brother and his kids. Both of his children bear a clear resemblance to their father, but my nephew, in particular, is a carbon copy of my brother as a child—their

round faces mirror each other. “Well look at him,” the waitress commented. “Don’t you look just like your daddy?” I realized then that no one would ever say something like that about Ryan and me. Does it matter? No, but it’s nonetheless a reminder of what I lost.

Biological parents may be given the gift of seeing themselves in their children’s faces. Adoptive parents look for other reflections. I see myself in my child when he kneels beside our old golden retriever, Sandy, gently stroking her and calling her “good dog.” The way he mutters, “slow down and try again” (his mommy’s mantra) to himself when he’s frustrated. The way he loves to read, snuggled in my arms. That’s my legacy to him.

*Kelly James-Enger is coauthor (with Jill S. Browning) of *The Belated Baby: A Guide to Parenting After Infertility* (Cumberland House).*



Children of Our Own

by Leah Cook

As published in *Chicken Soup for the Adopted Soul*
Health Communications Inc., 2008

After a couple years of “trying”, and having tests and drugs and procedures and more tests and more drugs, a fertility specialist told us it was very unlikely we would be able to have a child of our own.

After much discussion and the realization that having biological children wasn't our motivation to be parents, we decided to adopt. The adoption process was eye-opening, soul-moving, and time consuming. It was close to three years of application forms, weekend workshops, and visits with our caseworker before we got the phone call.

“Leah, there are two-year-old twin girls I think you should meet.” Two days later, we met them. The possibility of these gorgeous little girls becoming our daughters had both Keith's and my heart racing. After one more visit, they were living at our house.

Keith and I decided to be very open with the girls about how they came into our lives. We started talking about adoption long before they knew what the word meant. We wrote our own little book about their adoption and talked about our adoption journey with them often.

They loved to hear the story about the first day we met them. It tickles them to hear that we fell in love with them the very first moment we laid eyes on them and how they hid behind the door and peeked at us.

I always ended these little adoption talks with, “Thanks for being mine.”

As the girls have grown older, they seem to have fewer questions; adoption is simply the thing that brought the four of us together to be a family, no big deal.

Then. A few days ago, the girls and I were talking about writing a letter to their birth mother and sending her some pictures. At the end of this little chat, I said, as always, “Thanks for being mine.” Then the best moment of my life happened.

My sweet little Madison said, “I wouldn't have it any other way, Mom. Thanks for adoptin' us!”

My other sweetheart, Brooklyn, came running over. “Me, too, Mom!”

And to think that the fertility specialist said we wouldn't have children of our own.



Leah and Keith Cook adopted their daughters, Madison and Brooklyn through ABC in October, 2000.

Adoption By Choice is 20 this year!!! And what a great 20 years it has been!

~ By Janet Patterson

Looking back, it's wonderful to see how far we've come in helping birth parents and adoptive parents build the kind of open adoption plans that feel right for them. Twenty years ago, when we started this journey into open adoption, there were certainly times when the uncharted waters seemed a little treacherous. Thank goodness we had some very adventurous birth parents and adoptive parents to guide us along the way!

There was Rachel, who gently and patiently taught me that "typical" was not always a good thing, that she was not like "most" birthmoms, and that her adoption plan would probably not look like the "typical" adoption plan. And she was right! Then there was Shelley who was the first birthmom who taught me the importance of having her baby at home with her for a week, so that they could get to know each other before she could say good-bye to being her baby's everyday mom. And Shawna, who moved into the home of the adoptive parents that she had chosen for a week or so before the birth of her daughter, just because they had such a great relationship (they continue to have a great relationship). And there was another Rachel who moved into the adoptive parent's home for a week, at their request, AFTER her daughter's birth, so that there would be an easier transition for the baby.

The adoptive parents we have worked with have been absolutely amazing as well. Twenty years ago, when we started out in open adoption, we were admittedly pretty tentative about being REALLY open. We started out slowly, and didn't push people to be as trusting about open adoption as we might today. Basically, we were more protective of adoptive couples, I think, and needed some unique parents to show us that the boundaries could be pushed out a bit! We have worked with incredible adoptive parents who have warmly welcomed their child's birth families into their lives, and whose children have grown up loving and honoring their birth parents. Parents like Glen and Norma, who encouraged their daughter's birthmom and grandmother to travel to Saskatchewan with baby Natalie to introduce her to their relatives on a weekend visit, without worrying about whether they would see their baby again! And Myles and Lori who invited their birthmom over to help decorate the baby's room together. And Graham and Dean who flew all night across the country to meet their son's birthmom the next day. Then there was Dave and Debi, who travelled over an hour each way to pick up the breast milk that their daughter's birthmom was committed to providing for her. And Dave and Nicki, as well as George and Emilia, who not only met three generations of the birth family when their daughters were born, but have welcomed all of those birth relatives into their lives and the lives of their children.

What else stands out over the past 20 years? The PICNICS every year that are always so much fun. Before the picnics, we used to have Christmas parties, as well as kids' Christmas craft parties, that were delightful. The mini conferences that we have held have also been fantastic, mainly because it is our adoptive families who make up our panels and share their unique experiences, making the conferences so special. The moms and tots groups have also been great. A couple of times, we have brought in guest speakers to present on various topics.

What has not changed over the past 20 years is the thoughtfulness, insight and compassion that birth parents and adoptive parents show as they work together to build an adoption plan that is perfect for the child whose life they are sharing. What has not changed is willingness of people to step outside of their comfort zone, the heart warming generosity of spirit, and the incredible trust, that we see with all of our birth parents and adoptive parents at ABC. What has not changed is the commitment that every birth parent and every adoptive parent makes, to do what is best for their child, even if it wasn't what they thought they had signed up for.

A year ago, we said farewell to Carol Lamb, who started ABC and built it into the great agency that we have today, and we welcomed Ramone Kindrat, whose enthusiasm and vision will lead us into the next 20 years of open adoption with ABC. We feel so privileged to have been a part of all of your adoption plans, and we love the yearly photos and updates from our adoptive families. We also treasure the updates and photos from our birthmoms, many of whom have kept in touch for the past 20 years!

Happy 20th Birthday ABC!!!

**Hannah and
Janet Patterson**



20 Years at ABC—A “Child’s” Perspective

~ by Hannah Patterson

What is it like to be adopted? I have been asked that question lots of times in my life, and over the years my answer has changed, just like lots of other things in my life have changed: like my aspirations, my hobbies, my friends and my dreams. Even though my feelings about being adopted have changed, one thing that has stayed pretty much the same has been the way I feel about Adoption By Choice. Sure, my mom has worked there since I was born, so I have had more to do with ABC than some adopted kids, but I feel like the people at the agency have always been there for me. There were always really cool people who worked there who were willing to talk or listen, and if that wasn't what you were looking for there were always children's books about adoption that you could read. If I dropped into the agency I would usually hear laughter and I would be invited to stay longer and chat about what had been happening in my life.

I will always remember the picnics that ABC put on for all the families who have been part of the agency. These picnics were a chance to completely blur the lines of adoptive vs. biological and to make everyone feel like they were all part of a bigger family. I liked that. I also really liked being part of the panel discussions at the ABC conferences. Being allowed to talk about my life growing up in an open adoption, and giving me the chance to answer questions from both children and adults at those panels, made it easier for me to live with some of the not-so-great times that sometimes come along with open adoption. I also met some cool adoptive kids!

All in all, I would have to say that if it wasn't for Adoption By Choice and the people who work so hard to keep it as amazing as it is, I probably wouldn't be the confident and proud adoptive daughter that I am. Thanks!

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:
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and much more!**



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