



CHOICES

Fall 2004 Newsletter

Issue 4

NOVEMBER is Adoption Awareness Month

Adoption Awareness Month

Events are being organized
across the Province.

*Please contact or visit
the following websites
for a current list of
events*

CHOICES Adoption & Counselling
1.888.479.9811

Adoptive Families Association BC
(604) 320.7330
www.bcadoption.com

Society of Special Needs Parents
1.800.663.7627
www.snap.bc.ca

November 6th "Family Fun Day"

Bring your children to this fun-
filled family event in honour of
Adoption Awareness Month

In Victoria: November 6th
2:30 - 4:30 pm
Cedar Hill Rec Centre

There will be face painting,
games, food & lots of fun!

Please RSVP @ CHOICES and
Join Us!! *We look forward to
seeing you there!*

November 20th Adoption Awareness Day in Canada & the United States

CHOICES is hosting an
Open House to celebrate this day.
Speakers will include a panel of
parents who have adopted from
Nepal, China, Russia, and
Domestic.

Saturday November 20th
3 - 6 pm at our main office

Victoria: Suite 100 - 850
Blanshard Street

Free childcare will be provided
during the panel 4 - 5 pm.

Orientation Sessions

by Adoptive Families Association BC

The following orientation sessions are presented by the AFABC.

Contact AFABC to register

First Steps - Your Adoption Options

December 11 - 9 am to 1 pm at Willingdon Church, Burnaby

Learn what you need to know before you start the adoption process.

Adoption Today, Moving From Infertility to Adoption, The Adoption Process, BC's Waiting Children, Domestic Adoption, Intercountry Options, Openness, Lifelong Challenges, Video, Your Next Steps

Between Two Worlds - Intercountry Adoption

December 11 - 9 am to 4 pm AFABC Office, Burnaby

Find out about medical issues, race, culture and heritage, institutionalization and attachment. Panel of adoptive parents. You should be referred by your agency and must have an understanding of intercountry adoption.

Building Skills for Transracial Parenting Series of Three Workshops

November 27 - 9 am to 4 pm AFABC Office, Burnaby

If you are raising children adopted transracially, or considering it, this session will help you put a few new tools in your toolbox. Topics: Special needs of transracially adopted/fostered children, impact of transracial adoption on child/family, parenting tasks in transracial adoption.

Russia Program Update

Congratulations to all of the families who have recently returned home with their adopted child from Russia! This year, CHOICES has been involved in the placement of several orphaned children from Russia, and there are a few families now making arrangements for their second trip to pick up their children. We have been continuing to develop the Kostroma and Ekaterinburg regions, however our most active region continues to be Vladivostok, with the more children being adopted from this region.

CHOICES is also now offering an in-house facilitation program, where you may complete your adoption from Russia without the use of an outside facilitator. We are excited to be able to offer families this service, and have already enlisted several families in the program whose dossiers are now being sent to Russia. Please contact Rachel Warren at CHOICES for more information.

Come to our Open House on November 20th to hear parents speak about their experience of adopting from Russia. Our parent panel will feature a family who recently returned home with their adopted child from Vladivostok.

DID YOU KNOW? *Adoptions from Russia usually take just over one year to complete after your dossier has been sent. There continues to be more toddlers than infants, and more boys than girls, so your wait time will depend on your request.*

Find out more about Bill C-246 that would provide a tax credit of up to \$10,000 per child for adoption costs.

**Please refer to Adoption Council of Canada website
www.adoption.ca for complete information.**

British Columbia's Waiting Children Profiles

Trina and Jonah

Trina birth date: May 1995 Jonah birth date: October 1991 Race: Caucasian

Introducing Trina and Jonah. This dynamic duo is polite, helpful and likeable! Trina says she is a good girl and a great helper. She loves to play with babies and dolls, and gets along very well with other children. She also enjoys riding bikes and playing at the park. Words that describe Trina? How about cuddly, tireless, warm and cheerful. Trina attends a full time specialized class in a community school and her teachers are very fond of her. She responds well to one on one attention and praise. Trina has been diagnosed with Fetal Alcohol Effects, and her cognitive abilities are just below average. She also has a cleft palate.

Jonah is an amusing and energetic guy! He is interested in sports, particularly dirt biking, but also enjoys doing puzzles and working on the computer. He is also resourceful and persistent. Jonah describes himself as "active, funny and a good helper". He also admits that at times he misbehaves.

Jonah is diagnosed with Oppositional Defiant Disorder and Fetal Alcohol Syndrome. This can affect Jonah's ability to take direction and curb his impulsiveness. These behaviours are effectively managed by therapy, medication and behaviour modification. Jonah also attends a full time specialized class in a community school and is enrolled in an extended learning program for next school year.

These children want a forever family and a sense of "belonging". A non-smoking, active family with no other children would be best for this sibling group. Pets would be great as Jonah would love to have a dog! Both children need a family who would advocate for support, and set clear limits and expectations. In addition, a willingness to support varying degrees of openness with birth parents, siblings and the current foster family would be essential.

Sereena

Birth Date: October 1993 Race: Caucasian

This spunky, amusing and witty young girl is full of energy and has a great sense of humour. Sereena is bold, intelligent and very athletic. She is a leader! She seems to be good at whatever she tries - snowboarding, swimming and skating, to name just a few. Sereena sings in the school choir, and enjoys movies, shopping and chocolate cake! Sereena attends a regular curriculum class and does well in reading and writing. She loves to play on the computer, and P.E. is her favourite subject. Therapeutic services help Sereena work on managing personal relationships and boundaries. She engages easily with adults and enjoys the company of other children.

A family with no younger children would be best for Sereena and maintaining openness with her foster family is important to her.

Sammy

Birth Date: October 2002 Race: Asian-Chinese

Adorable isn't adequate to describe this little guy. This cuddly, curious toddler is affectionate and happy. Sammy enjoys music and dancing while in his jolly jumper. He is starting to actively explore his world, react to sounds and is making eye contact. Kisses are his favourite things and he has a great little smile and laugh. Sammy responds when people engage him and seeks out repeated contact. Although Sammy is not yet walking he is certainly trying. He is starting to sit by himself and stands with assistance.

Sammy was born with congenital concerns involving his heart and kidneys and had operations shortly after birth to correct these. Sammy has a gastro-tube and is on medication for regurgitation when feeding. His new family would be willing to learn how to care for this special need and work with medical and developmental specialists. Siblings and pets are OK for Sammy as he enjoys interacting with other children and pets. Non smoking is a must as he is very susceptible to respiratory infection. Sammy needs a permanent family that is accepting of some form of openness with his birth family.

These profiles feature children in the care of the Ministry of Children and Family Development who are available for adoption.

To inquire further, contact your local MCFD office or phone 1.877 ADOPT 07 for further information.

Congratulations to all the families that have recently begun the amazing journey of parenthood!!!

You may wish to peruse the website www.parentsupportbc.ca This support network promotes healthy relationships, supporting parenting, families and communities

CHOICES is pleased to announce that we have a **Birth Mother's Support Group** for more information please contact Jae Ranschaert at our office.

We are pleased to introduce our new staff:

Sladjana Stojkovic
fluent in Russian and Serbo-Croatian, is working on our Russia program and collaborating on developing new programs in Eastern Europe.

Taya Ranschaert
Our Amazing volunteer and university graduate, assisting with research and developing liaisons with corporate organizations.

Trust

by Brenda McCreight

Recently, an adoptive father asked me for suggestions on how he could develop a trust based relationship with his seven year old daughter, adopted internationally from an orphanage two years previously.

"It's quite a problem," he said earnestly, "because no matter how hard I try, she holds herself back. She has to triple check everything and she's continuously asking me the same questions over and over."

"What kind of questions?"

He thought a moment, "Routine things, like will my wife pick her up after school. I can tell you, my wife picks her up every day, has the whole two years. And when she goes to bed at night, she asks ten times if she asks once, if I'll check on her after she's asleep. And even after all this time, she still hoards food under her pillow and steals little things from my wife."

"I'm curious, why do you think she should trust you?" I asked.

He stared at me as if I had suddenly sprouted horns (ask my teens, they'll tell you I don't need to grow any. I already have a set hidden under my bangs).

"Well, she should trust me because I'm her father and I've shown her I'm a good one....." he hesitated. "I mean, we're her parents forever now, and we tell her that all the time. We're doing everything we can, but if she could just trust us, it would be way easier to get along."

"Okay," I replied, "let me put it another way – what will change if she trusts you?"

"I thought I just answered that question," his voice was calm, even though his face was getting a bit flushed and his eyes were narrowing. I wondered if that's how he looked to his daughter the ninth time she asked him to check on her. "We'd be more like a real family, the affection would be more natural, she'd be able to give me a spontaneous hug once in a while, she'd stop stealing and hoarding."

He was on a roll now, but I interrupted. "Does she hug you at all?" I asked.

"Well, yes, but my wife or I always have to initiate it. Look, I just want some suggestions for building trust!" He really was a patient man; I could tell that by the way he knotted his hands at his sides instead of yelling at me.

To make a long story short enough to fit the allotted space – what I finally explained to this caring dad was that his daughter would not trust him for a long, long time, probably not until she was well into adulthood. Why should she? Her earliest and most formative years were focussed on learning how to survive alone, with no one trust but herself. Then, all of a sudden, she lands in a place so different that it might as well be another planet. And in this foreign place she is given to nice, but very strange, people who proclaim themselves as her mommy and daddy (and expect her to fully understand what those terms mean to them), and who want from her all kinds of things she had never imagined existed. For example, they want her to act like a part of the family before she can understand what a family is. They want to play with her before she learns what toys are for. They want her to keep her bedroom clean before she knows what the little room behind the door is (a closet, actually). They want to cuddle her for no reason whatsoever, and....they want her to pretend that her past never happened, that nothing ever changes, that good things never disappear without warning or reason, and that all she learned about surviving is never, ever going to be needed again.

I can tell you, as I told that well meaning dad, this is way too much for one little girl to learn in two short years. My advice to him was to back off. Stick with the cuddles, keep playing with her, and helping her, and teaching her, but let her keep her defences while she learns the survival rules of this new life. I also had to tell him that they were never going to be a "real family" in the way he meant it – that is – one which existed without a history of loss and abandonment, and without a child whose well developed sense of being alone was so strong it chewed up trust like a black hole eats stars.

I also told him that they can still be a "real" adoptive family. They can give her birthday parties, they can teach her how to make friends, they can coach her soccer team and take her to dancing lessons, they can cuddle her at night while they read to her, they can brag about her accomplishments to friends, and when enough years have passed that they have had the time it takes to fill her with stars, they will have earned her trust. Because that is how it happens - parents don't *build* trust with their children, they *earn* it by caring, by giving affection, by honesty, by being reliable, by providing safe discipline, and most of all, by simply being there for a long, long, time.

We would like to acknowledge the outstanding contribution from Sunstar Butler for their generous donation of dental supplies to the orphanages in Russia

CHOICES Adoption & Counselling Services

Working locally and globally for children to have permanent loving families

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we welcome your comments

Top 10 Ways to Raise a Creative Child

Creative thinking is essential for success in school and in life and it's our job as parents to nurture our child's innate desire to be creative. By providing children with activities that use their creativity and imaginations, we are also giving them an important tool to deal with life down the road.

Set a good example

Chances are, if you are a creative person, your child will be too. You display creativity in your everyday activities such as when you reason with a disgruntled child, change lyrics to songs, and maybe even do some interpretive dancing to entertain a toddler. It's a great idea to point out to your child how you use creativity in your daily life.

Give your child ideas from your own experience

Think back to what you did as a child. Did you write a diary, create elaborate puppet shows, or sing and dance for relatives? Share ideas from your own childhood experiences.

Offer creative writing exercises

Offer creative writing ideas such as writing an episode for a favourite television show or writing a new ending to a favorite story.

Provide craft kits that contain supplies and ideas

Craft kits, especially those from Curiosity Kits and ALEX, offer a wide variety of unusual and fun projects. They've brought us a long way from the sock puppets of our youth. These manufacturers offer ideas and supplies to make such things as scrapbooks, power balls, soaps, candy, sun catchers, dolls, planes, dinosaurs, jewellery treasures, and lots of decorative items. Children may gather ideas from the instructions, and then give the projects their own unique touches.

Frequent craft stores

Stores often have lots of activity ideas and many also offer classes that your child may take. Ask the management for a schedule or any other free literature.

Visit museums and watch the performing arts

Surround your child with culture. Expand their horizons with visual and performing arts. Maybe they will begin singing and dancing around home.

Page through books and magazines together

Pick up any typical parenting magazine and you will find lots of craft ideas. Check out your library for crafting books and magazines.

Give them the supplies

Provide your child with lots of varied art supplies. Add some unusual objects to see what they do with them. One person's trash is another one's treasure!

Keep an idea file

Keep a journal or file for magazine clippings and ideas as you find them. Stockpile so that you will know how to answer the whiny, I'm bored, call from your kids.

Give them freedom

Once you have given your child some suggestions and supplies, step back and see which they choose and where they go with them. This unstructured play time gives children an opportunity to stretch their creative muscles. Watch as they incorporate your ideas and branch out on their own.

Tips for Developing Your Child's Critical Thinking Skills

Encourage questions

Don't answer every question, instead ask what do they think. Asking questions stimulates conversation between you and your child. It also helps your child to be an independent thinker.

Don't criticize

Criticism invites low self-esteem. Children feel that they have failed or disappointed their parents when they are criticized. Find alternate ways of correcting the problem. A child will likely shut down communication if they feel that their parents are not supportive.

Respect your child's opinions

Your child is not an extension of you. Although it is difficult to accept at times, it is normal and healthy for your child to have their own opinions. Children who are confident in expressing their opinions are less likely to join gangs or succumb to peer pressure.

Teach your child to embrace diversity

Encourage your child to learn about different cultures and ethnicities. A well informed child will understand and respect other people's values.

Teach your child to set personal boundaries

Children need to have their personal space respected in order for them to respect other people's personal space. Help your child to establish their boundaries and insist that he/she enforce them with their peers.

Establish a nurturing environment

Children thrive in environments in which they know they are loved and respected. Remind them every day that you love them and support them.

Know your child's learning style

Understand your child's thinking process. In order for you to be an advocate for your child in school, you must know and understand how your child learns. Is he/she creative, logical, musical, spatial, interpersonal, intrapersonal, naturalistic? Know your child's capabilities and accept their creativity.

Let them think for themselves

Encourage independent thinking. Let your child decide (within reason) what is appropriate for them. Give them enough room to make decisions, but also be there in case their plans don't work out.

Teach them stress management skills

Help your child to effectively deal with stress. Try not to contribute to their stress with demands and unrealistic expectations. Make learning fun!

Teach your child to trust his/her instincts

In order for children to be successful in life, they must learn how to trust themselves. Your child needs to be confident in trusting his/her instincts and feelings and will be less likely to participate in unhealthy behaviours.