



**CHOICES**

Fall 2005 Newsletter

Issue 7

*Every child deserves  
a permanent and loving family*



*Welcome home to the following children who have been united with their forever families in the last few months!*

- Alina
- Jake
- Jessica
- Jayme
- Saijho
- Julia
- Victoria Lin
- Devin
- Oliver
- Dominick
- Ethan
- Devante
- Michael
- Deandre
- Ellie
- Julian
- Alexander
- Lukas
- Theodore  
(Teddy)
- Madeleine



*UPCOMING*

## Russia Adoption Program Update

While other agencies across North America are facing delays in their re-accreditation process, CHOICES has recently received several child proposals from both Perm and Vladivostok, and our first family will soon be traveling to meet their child in Kostroma, near Moscow. The State Duma is continuing to review international adoption, and a report is expected to be released in late October. Rachel Warren, our Russia Program Coordinator, will be traveling to Russia in October to meet with CHOICES Russian Coordinators in the regions we work Perm, Kostroma, and Nizhniy Novgorod. She will also meet with Ministry and Embassy staff in Moscow to gain a clearer picture of the future of adoptions in Russia. Please refer to our Russia Adoption Site for more information, or contact Rachel Warren at [rachelwarren@choicesadoption.ca](mailto:rachelwarren@choicesadoption.ca)

## Ukraine Program Update

Our first family to adopt from Ukraine using CARC facilitation services is traveling this month to Kiev to meet their child and complete their adoption process. While we have recently received mixed reports concerning adoptions from the Ukraine, it seems that families using CARC, facilitators for the Ukraine, have had good success in receiving proposals of healthy children. Also, there is no longer a requirement to have a tourist visa to visit the Ukraine, which simplifies the process for families.

However, an announcement has recently been issued by Tracey Vansickle, Immigration Program Manager at the Canadian Embassy in Ukraine regarding adoption in Ukraine. The National Adoption Center (NAC) of Ukraine has suspended the acceptance of new adoption files from a number of countries, including Canada. Files already received by NAC will not be affected, (however, cases where prospective adopting parents have failed to register and provide reports about a previously adopted Ukrainian child would not be processed).

Suspension was based in large part on past non-compliance of some families with their signed agreement to register the child within one month of arrival in their adoptive country, and to provide Ukrainian consular officials with yearly post-adoption reports, as required by Ukrainian law. The Embassy is trying to obtain more information about the purpose and length of the moratorium, and to open a dialogue about alternative ways to address NAC concerns which have led to the suspension. The Embassy will keep us informed as information becomes available. **AT THIS POINT, THE CLOSURE IS EXPECTED TO BE SHORT TERM.**

Please look in the next issue of CHOICES quarterly newsletter for a first-hand update from our family who is currently in the Ukraine. Please also contact CARC or CHOICES for updated information about adopting from the Ukraine.

## A New Adoption Story

by Sylvia Barton

It is with deep respect for enduring and delicate human relationships that I share our experience in order to illuminate a personal form of living, in which interpretations of family and community relations have become clearer through a new adoption story. And it is reflective, further, of an experience that is creating between a mother and daughter, something that is primordial in its understanding of social relatedness as evolutionary and timeless. For in the first few days of being with our daughter, we were interpreting the secrets of life in new ways.

The trip began after months of waiting. With the assistance of local and international agencies, our decision to adopt a child from China was coming to pass. During the Chinese Moon Festival, my husband and I traveled to the city of Wuhan located in Hubei Province of central China to receive our daughter. She was a courageous little girl, who when placed in my arms cried honest and frightened tears. For as I held her warm, soft body close to mine,

## EVENTS

### Adoption Fair In Victoria

Come and celebrate the  
joys of adoption

**October 29, 2005**

**8:00 am– 5:00pm**

Queen Alexandra  
Centre

Contact CHOICES for  
more information and  
registration

### Adoptive Family Fun Day

In Victoria

**November 19, 2005**

**1:00-3:00pm**

at Cedar Hill

Recreation Centre

Join other adoptive  
families this fun day in  
recognition of **Adoption  
Awareness Month**

- Gym equipment

- face painting

- balloon animals

and lots of fun and food

### And Later...

for those interested, join  
CHOICES staff after this  
event in the **Victoria**

**Santa Claus Parade !!!**

We will have a float  
entered this year and  
would love to have  
families to join in the  
fun!

For more information,  
contact CHOICES  
RSVP required to  
register for these events



## Meeting Groups

the wheels of attachment were spinning. And I could feel them turning in the presence of three people who had begun to be gently entwined.

As I consider and reflect on the experience of being with a newly adopted child, it is not easy to comprehend everything that is going on. We are in the middle of something wonderful, where days are soaked up and time is stolen at night to revisit the pictures that have been created in our minds. During our last week in China, we did not just visit the Summer Palace, the Great Wall, and Tiananmen Square (Gate of Heavenly Peace). And we did not just experience the Beijing Zoo, Pearl Market, Silk Alley, or the dinners we shared with the children and their new families. We were seeing the world through new eyes – the loving, innocent eyes of our daughter child. Madeleine Hui-Jian was already sitting on the tail of a dragon – a view of the world that was unfolding with fury and fire before her. Such were the moments that marked the joy that had entered our lives, now enriched by a little girl from China. And it left us with a deep sense of awe and wonder at how we had actually arrived at the crossroads we were living. For associated with our uncertainty was a knowing that we had been declared a family, which had been in the making with the efforts of many people in different communities many moons ago.

## China Journey

by **Jae Ranschaert**

When Yulin Deng of Family Outreach International suggested that I accompany one of our families on a trip to China to become familiar with the experience that families have when adopting a Chinese child, I was elated.

While I had been looking forward to seeing the process and experiencing China first hand, I was not prepared for the impact of seeing 10 babies being taken into the arms of their forever parents. The impact on my emotions was phenomenal. Each parent held their child, the biological child of a Chinese father and mother who were unable to parent their child, and the child and parents began the process of attachment immediately. I was not prepared for that process to begin so quickly. Adopting parents have a great deal of love to share, and the bus that floated us back to the hotel was filled with it. The babies could not help but be enveloped with that love.

That is not to say that there was not a great deal of crying on the part of the babies. There was, but no one noticed as parents looked adoringly at their new family member and held them close. When we returned to the hotel everyone went to their hotel room. In the morning, when children were left at the table with one parent, the child searched for the parent who had left the table. In less than 24 hours, some of the children appeared to miss the parent and recognize the parent upon returning.

The bonding process that starts with the child advising their caregivers that they have a need and continues with the caregiver satisfying that need had clearly begun. The children received much eye contact, the dreamy smiles, the “you are the cutest smile”, hugging, holding, and feeding. The adoptive parents received from their child an awareness that they could grow in so many ways. They became more flexible, more patient and more loving. They were able to experience themselves in a new way.

In addition to being able to witness the bonding process, I enjoyed making new friends. The sights that we saw and the shopping made for a very memorable trip. I would like to thank FOI and CHOICES for having provided me with this wonderful opportunity.

## British Columbia's Waiting Children Profiles

The following children are currently in BC's foster care system and are available for adoption. For more information, please call 1-877-ADOPT-07. These profiles are provided by the Ministry for Children and Family Development.

### Jerome

Birth date: July 1998 Cultural background: Caucasian

This cute and smiley guy is Jerome. He is usually in a good mood – generally happy and very energetic. Jerome is attentive, affectionate and curious about his environment. He likes buses and also has a very good memory when it comes to people's names and places.

Jerome is a very active child who may have been exposed to drugs and alcohol in utero. His development is delayed in all areas and Jerome has multiple diagnoses, including Autism Spectrum Disorder. He has visual impairments and he has undergone surgery to correct some of the vision problems. Also, Jerome has orthopaedic challenges such as impaired foot alignment and stability. A team of specialists works with Jerome currently, and his forever family will need to continue with ongoing involvement with professionals.

Jerome attends school with supports and is integrated into the regular classroom with the support of a full-time learning aid. He learns best with lots of repetition. In the past Jerome displayed

**Single Parent Group**  
Offered by AFABC  
For more information  
contact Lyn at  
(604) 317.7359

**Waiting Parent  
Support Group**  
CHOICES offers a  
Support Group  
on the second Thursday  
of every month  
starts at 7:00pm  
at CHOICES office  
For more information  
contact Jae Ranschaert  
at our office

**THANK YOU for the  
amazing contributions  
we have received  
from:**

- ★ *McNeil Consumer  
Healthcare*
- ★ *Brenda Ollis of  
Chateau Victoria Vista 18*
- ★ *Compassionate  
Warehouse*
- ★ *Thrifty Foods*
- ★ *Lifescan Canada*
- ★ *Save On Foods*
- ★ *Uptown Pharmasave,  
Saltspring Island*
- ★ *Rexall Pharmasave,  
Brentwood Bay*
- ★ *All our adoptive  
families who have  
spoken at the  
Information Sessions*

*we greatly appreciate  
your support!*

**Mandarin Classes  
for non native  
speaking adoptive  
parents & children**  
are available at UVIC in  
Victoria  
Contact CHOICES for  
more information

aggressive behaviour towards other children, but this has improved and Jerome is able to recognize when his behaviour is inappropriate. Behaviour management has been successful in helping Jerome to curb his aggressive behaviour. However, Jerome still requires constant supervision because he has little sense of danger.

An affectionate two-parent family with one parent able to stay at home would be a good place for Jerome to belong. Jerome's new family would need to be comfortable working with medical professionals on an ongoing basis. Jerome would like his new parents to help him maintain relationships with his foster parent, and possibly with his birth mother.

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## Max

Birth date: January 1996 Cultural background: Caucasian

This affectionate and endearing boy is Max. Max's personality characteristics include being gentle, genuine and sensitive. He has been described as being introspective, but he is also very friendly and has the ability to easily engage with peers and adults.

A physically healthy child who is growing appropriate to his age, Max enjoys playing sports, especially soccer. As well, he thrives on activities like swimming and bike riding. In his quieter moments, Max likes to draw.

He attends an alternate school where academically he is at the same grade level as his peers. At this school Max is given added emotional support to assist with social development. He can have high anxiety and be hyperactive, yet Max is making steady progress in his supportive educational environment. He also receives therapeutic services to help him better manage. Max will need ongoing consultation with a pediatrician for his emotional difficulties. His forever family will need to provide extra supervision for Max and also help him with socialization skills.

Max had traumatic early experiences in his life and has had multiple moves in foster care. He needs to be part of a permanent family that understands the effects of trauma and can provide the nurturing this child needs to heal and to flourish. This appealing and sincere boy would do best with a forever family in which he is the youngest child. A family with pets would be great, as Max loves animals. His adoptive family will also need to support ongoing contact with his birth sister.

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## Open Adoption on the Rise

### Sandra Scarth

The increase in open adoption practice has been gradual and has evolved because of the changing demographics of adoption and the pleas from birth parents and adult adoptees for the right to have information about each other.

### The Decline in Public Adoptions

There have been dramatic decreases in the numbers of infants available for adoption across Canada since the 1970s because of changing social conditions including the increased availability of birth control and legal access to abortion. In many provinces the status of "illegitimacy" has been repealed, so that children have the same rights as those born to married parents and there is less stigma attached to single parenthood. Unmarried parents, usually single mothers, are offered support services and social welfare benefits if they wish to keep their children. As a result, fewer children are relinquished for adoption by their unmarried parents.

The number of infant adoptions in Canada declined from 3,521 annually in 1981 to 1,698 in 1990 and now is closer to 700. These numbers reveal a striking change in the role of public agencies. In the 1970s, the vast majority of infant placements were handled by public (government) agencies. In 1981, they handled 78% of infant adoptions, but by 1990 private agencies were placing approximately 60% of available infants. Today, most infant adoptions are processed by private agencies, with a very few infants placed by provinces that do not yet allow private agencies to take on this role.

The decline in numbers resulted in long waiting times for prospective adoptive parents seeking infants. Many decided not to wait for up to six years in some provinces for public adoptions and adopted from outside Canada. Intercountry adoptions increased during this period and have remained steady at approximately 2,000 annually over the past decade.

### The Move Toward Openness

The other major trend in infant adoptions is the move away from secrecy towards openness in adoption. I believe that the increase in private agency facilitation of infant adoptions is largely due to the willingness of the agencies to offer birth parents much stronger involvement in the selection of prospective parents and in the placement process. The research is clear. The more control birth parents have over the placement, the exchange of information and the possibility of some type of continued contact, the better their adjustment to the decision to place their child.

Almost all of the adoptions processed through CHOICES are open to some degree. I can think of only a couple of traditional "closed" adoptions in the past five years, and they were usually at the request of the birth mother. The adoptive parents will be open to contact if the birth parent change their minds.

The legislation in B.C. and two other provinces supports the practice of open adoption. B.C. legislation focuses on informed choices, openness and the rights of children. It allows for

## CHOICES WEBSITE UPDATE

Keep posted on upcoming events and information on our website  
[www.choicesadoption.ca](http://www.choicesadoption.ca)

Our new Russia Adoption Site is also available to view for more specific information about the process of adopting from Russia and with personal stories of families who have adopted from this country.

Our Nepal and China sites are still under construction and will be available soon.



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voluntary openness agreements to be negotiated between the birth and adoptive families, and the contacts can include extended family members if the adoptive and birth parents agree. These arrangements are not enforceable in law, so they are made consensually, and often with the assistance or mediation of agency social workers. The arrangements can and do change over time, as the birth and adoptive families work out any difficulties or requests for changes.

### Research and Practice

We know from our experience, and from research in the United States, that birth parents report less worry and more positive feelings towards placing the baby if they have even a moderate form of openness. Equally important, Hal Grotevant of the University of Minnesota and Ruth McRoy, University of Texas, have found in their study that adoptive parents have less fear of the birth parents reclaiming the child in those circumstances where the birth mother is in direct contact with the adoptive family. This study also indicates that in those families with contact, higher levels of collaboration between the adoptive parents and birthmother predicted better emotional adjustment of the child. Since this study followed children only into adolescence, more research needs to be done on the long term effects of openness on the child and circumstances that may contraindicate full openness.

Often adoptive parents and birth parents are nervous about the impact of openness. CHOICES will put those birth parents and adoptive parents in touch with other birth and adoptive families who have had successful open adoptions so that their questions and concerns can be answered.

## Domestic adoption story

By Colleen and Pete

Adoption was not our second choice, it was the right choice, and it has enriched our lives and our families in so many immeasurable ways. We adopted both our children from British Columbia and are particularly grateful for the mutual openness of the process and the subsequent relationships we now have with both birth parents and their extended families. CHOICES sustained, guided and nurtured us throughout the adoption journey and their support has been heartfelt.

Our daughter Charlotte is our little angel and came to us in October of 2003. She was born in Northern British Columbia and is a constant, lively reminder of all that is pure and precious about new life. She has big rosy cheeks, shining blond hair and eyes as big as the moon whose radiance is felt by everyone she encounters. Her inner spirit and curiosity about life is a constant blessing in our lives. Despite the fact our adoption journey had a few twists and turns, in the end we all grew and learned to treasure the importance of all life's experiences. Nothing compares with the precious moment when your child is placed in your arms and your eyes meet for the first time.

We were pleased to be able to meet Charlotte's birth mom the night before we adopted our daughter. We knew then both our lives would never be the same again so strong was the connection felt between us. Our "tummy mommy" as we call her gave us the most important of all gifts, the gift of life, and we marvel at her courage and strength, and consider her an important part of our lives. She has visited us a few times and we value her presence in our lives. She has also been very supportive of our desire for another child, a sibling for Charlotte, and her understanding has been much appreciated.

This June we received wonderful news about the possibility of another child in our lives. This journey was different in that the birth parents lived in our own community and wanted to meet us before the actual delivery. Emotions were understandably intense as we all experienced the excitement, nervousness and anxiety of what lay ahead. The initial meeting with the birth parents and their extended family was more than we could have asked for and as the time for delivery drew near we met again and introduced Charlotte to them. Three days later we received the call that a healthy baby boy had arrived and we rushed to meet him at the hospital. Everyone was delighted with the new arrival and needless to say there were many tears, both of joy and apprehension. The cameras were working overtime as both birth parent families and ourselves recorded the wonderful event. Our new son Oliver will always know how much he was loved by all his family on the wonderful day he was born and on the day we took him home.

The homefront is frantic at times with "two under two" but we would not change a thing about our precious gifts. We have already met with Oliver's birth parents once and look forward to seeing them again in December. We have also accidentally bumped into one of the birth grandparents in town and it truly feels right and natural to have them as a part of our lives. Charlotte is thrilled to have a baby brother and she can't stop kissing him. We know the feeling. During the Christmas time we also hope to see Charlotte's birth Mom.

Without the support, understanding and encouragement from friends and family, our journey may have been quite different. They too have felt the wonder and blessings of our children's lives in their own lives, so contagious is such love.

Being able to adopt our two children has made all our dreams come true and we are so blessed to know how loved our children are by so many people and we will nurture that love all our lives. Charlotte and Oliver will no doubt reap the benefits of this wide circle of love in years to come. What more could a parent ask!