



## CHOICES Staff

**Sandra Scarth** has been appointed as our interim Executive Director while Cheryl Fix is working with an adoption agency in London, England.  
**Anne Carin**, our Clinical Director, supervises our in-house and contract social workers.  
**Jae Ranschaert** is one of our in-house social workers, specializing in birth parent work.  
**Rachel Warren** is our part time in-house social worker, coordinating our Russia program and birth parent work.  
**Laura Thompson** is our office manager.  
**Agnes Fraser** is our administrative assistant.  
**Michelle Burrows** is our part-time administrative assistant, who is also working at finishing her Social Work degree at the University of Victoria.

## New Staff

CHOICES hosts Swedish student Jenny Arrhenius, a social work student from Sweden, came to CHOICES on January 19, 2004 to complete her practicum in the adoption field. She will remain working full-time, performing a host of adoption-related duties, until June when she returns to Sweden to complete her schooling. We have all greatly enjoyed having Jenny; she has been a special addition to Choices, bringing enthusiasm, unique perspective, and a remarkably open attitude to learning.

## CHOICES welcomes new members to the Board of Directors.

CHOICES is pleased to welcome Annemarie Travers, Jana Zacijek and Marline Halischeff to the Board as of October 2003. All of our board members have a special interest in adoption, and bring unique and valuable perspectives to the organization. CHOICES is always looking for more enthusiastic and committed individuals to serve as members of our Board of Directors to compliment our existing group. If you are interested in joining CHOICES' Board, please contact the Chairperson, Peter Berrang or Tuija Stevenson at choices@choicesadoption.ca

## Changes in Adoptions from India

As of October 1, 2003, relative and non-relative adoptions completed in India will be done under the Hague Convention. This will mean significant changes to the process and procedure to adoptions from India. More information will be posted on the website as it becomes available.

## Message from the Executive Director

The most wonderful thing about working at CHOICES is meeting with the families involved in adoption. This means both birth and adoptive families, including grandparents, aunts and uncles and others concerned about helping to make the adoption successful. We work with so many families who recognize how important it is for the child to maintain connections to family and culture. You will meet one of the families in this newsletter. We hope their story will inspire others to consider adopting older children who are waiting for families in British Columbia or abroad. As a start, read their heartfelt article A Little Something? Not Our Family.

## Upcoming Adoption Information & Conferences

**Between Two Worlds - Intercountry Adoption April 24 and June 5, 2004** Burnaby BC.  
Find out about medical issues, race, culture, heritage, institutionalization and attachment. You should be referred by your agency and must have an understanding of intercountry adoption. The process, countries or laws will not be discussed. Cost \$75.00 p/p. Call AFABC at 604-320-7330.

**NACAC 30th Annual Conference "30 Years of Celebrating Families" July 28-31, 2004** Minneapolis MN  
This is the largest adoption training conference in North America, and includes a meeting of the Canadian Issues Task Force. Contact North American Council on Adoptable Children (651) 644-3036, www.nacac.org.

**National Adoption Conference "Building Lifelong Connections: Permanency Options for Children and Families" October 14-16, 2004** Saint John, N.B.  
For the conference brochure, contact Adoption Council of Canada, 613-235-0344, 1-888-542-3678 www.lifelongconnections.ca

**Conference on International Adoption May 4-5, 2004** organized by the Secrétariat à l'adoption internationale. Register by fax at (514) 873-1709 or at www.msss.gouv.qc.ca/adoption

## CHOICES has moved

On November 1, 2003, CHOICES moved to a new location, #100-850 Blanshard Street, Victoria. We were able to move, in part, due to an incredibly generous donation from our new landlord, Quality Inn Downtown. Please drop in and see us if you are in the Victoria area.

## British Columbia's Waiting Children Profiles

These profiles feature children in the care of the Ministry of Children and Family Development who are available for adoption. Their names have been changed to protect their privacy. To inquire about these children, call your local Ministry office or phone 1-877-ADOPT-07 for the number of the Ministry office in your area.

**Child's name and birth date:**  
Jessica March 1993  
Marcella August 1999  
Race: Caucasian

Jessica describes the type of family she wishes for herself and her sister Marcella as "a special family" that would provide "loving care". These sisters are an active pair who enjoy arts and crafts activities. The engaging with other children and adults. They are a pleasure to be with.

Jessica is an easygoing, pleasant and sweet girl who is shy when you first meet her. She is affectionate, happy and is quite engaging. Jessica has a friendly, comfortable and bubbly. Jessica is an athletic girl who enjoys swimming, soccer, and outdoor activities. She attends school full time and her athletic and artistic talents help her to excel in art and gym class. Jessica is receiving extra help in reading and writing, and is responding well to the one-to-one attention. She was exposed pre-natally to drugs and alcohol. Jessica sees herself as a good friend and enjoys playing with the children in her neighbourhood.

Walter, Shania and Garret would benefit from a non-smoking home with a consistent and structured environment that would support their many talents, needs and interests. Each of the children would love a family with pets and that would support some form of openness with their birth mother and foster families.

**Child's name and birth date:**  
Riley December 1993  
Wayne February 1992  
Race: Aboriginal / Caucasian

Introducing Riley and Wayne! These two active brothers would like a permanent home where they can grow up together. Riley is an endearing, polite and imaginative young fellow who usually wears a smile on his face. He does quite well at school, enjoys singing in the school choir and is an exceptional reader. Riley is a very creative young boy who enjoys art class, crafts and beadwork. Riley is a truly a lot of fun to be around - imaginative, happy, and lively - he is really a likeable guy! This charming, polite and easygoing young man gets along well with other children and adults. Outside of school hours, Riley keeps busy with cycling, roller-blading, soccer, and floor hockey. Riley has a diagnosis of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, which is effectively managed with behaviour modification and medication. He receives good marks at school for behaviour and participation.

Older brother Wayne is an outgoing, respectful, and trustworthy young boy. He is quite a talented athlete, and is proud of his achievements in this area. He plays all sports and has particular interest in soccer, football, cycling, roller-blading and skateboarding. Wayne is an intelligent boy who enjoys school and excels in Math and Science. He is engagingly talkative and polite, and relates well to other children and adults. Wayne is a spiritual boy who describes himself as "good at sports and a good friend". He can be quite sensitive to the hurtful words and actions of other children.

These dynamic brothers need an active family that either shares their Aboriginal heritage or would be committed to keeping them connected to their Aboriginal community. They would do well in a family with or without other children and would enjoy having pets, as both boys love animals. Riley and Wayne would also like to maintain contact with their current foster family, and with their birth grandfather.

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Shania March 1993  
Garret March 1995  
Race: African/Caucasian

Marcella is a happy, helpful, and active little girl who enjoys arts and crafts and likes to help with tasks around the house. She is playful, lively and sociable, and gets along very well with other children and adults. Marcella enjoys swimming, playing on swing sets and riding her bike. She attends pre-school three days a week and really enjoys all the activities. Marcella can be spunky and strong-willed, and can be quite demanding at times. Behaviour management techniques are used to manage this occasional tendency. Marcella is working on developing her gross motor skills and has some fine motor skill issues with her left hand. She sees herself as fun to play with and says she loves the colour pink, her best friend, and her foster family's cat.

Jessica and Marcella need to be placed with a loving family that will support various levels of openness with the girls' birth mother, birth brother and current foster family.

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## Russia Program

We are pleased to announce that we are beginning to receive increasing numbers of proposals for our families adopting from Russia. Congratulations to the families who have recently arrived home with their children from Russia! Please contact Rachel Warren if you would like more information about adopting from Russia.

## United States Hague Update

At this time, the USA has still not officially ratified the Hague Convention, and the speculation is that it will not occur until early 2005.

## China Information Night

On March 18th 2004, CHOICES held an informative evening for all community members interested in adopting from China. Several families came to hear Yulin Deng, adoption facilitator with Family Outreach International, speak about the process. Information about homestudy requirements, dossier preparation, children available, fees, and timeline was presented. We were also fortunate to have several parents who have been through the process speak about their experiences, and some also brought their beautiful children along to show us the end result of the adoption process. They certainly stole the show.

Thank you to Yulin Deng, to all of the families who spoke, and to those who attended the evening. If you would like more information about adopting from China, please call CHOICES.

## A Transracially Adopted Child's Bill of Rights

- Every child is entitled to love and full membership in her family.
- Every child is entitled to have his heritage embraced and valued.
- Every child is entitled to parents who are not adopting to save the world.
- Every child is entitled to parents who know she will experience life differently than they do.
- Every child is entitled to parents who know that transracial adoption changes the family forever.
- Every child is entitled to parents who know if they are white, they benefit from racism.
- Every child is entitled to ongoing opportunities to connect with people of his or her race.

Adapted from Liza Steinberg Triggs from "A Bill of Rights for Mixed Folks," by Marilyn Drame.

## A Little Something? Not Our Family

Wayne and Judy Renzetti

When we were asked to write a little something for CHOICES Newsletter, we thought it would be easy. Well, we found it wasn't that way, as after our adoptions of six beautiful children, and our daughter's adoption of her son, all from Russia, how could we put our thoughts and feelings into a "little" article.

We raised three biological children, but knew we wished to continue parenting. Like so many, we felt we should adopt the youngest children possible. We brought home our first two at 7 months and 9 months. However, for these trips, friends and various businesses donated so much good clothing, medicines, and new toys for toddlers, that we were fortunate to be able to deliver them and see for ourselves the many gorgeous and eager little faces of children, who are not infants, waiting for families.

In a very few months, we found ourselves hosting a brother and sister for a holiday to Canada from Russia. The holiday turned into a rush to process documents and the following January, we found ourselves bringing our three older children into our family: two eight year olds and a seven year old.

One might think, that would be sufficient, but we again met a younger sibling, and documents were quickly processed to bring home our most recent placement, a son of four years of age. Yes, that totals six children added to our family within a year and a half. As foster parents, we were used to rapid additions of children with various difficulties, but after a couple of weeks of adjustments, we were amazed at the smooth transition that we experienced. Quite the contrary to what we expected and were prepared to deal with.

What would we say has been the most difficult adjustment? For us, the language barrier in the beginning, as anything that any of the six children wanted had to be acted out, shown, or pointed to in a picture dictionary. With four children fluent in Russian, and our decision to home school, we were challenged to develop a means to teach English, but hopefully enable the children to retain their Russian language.

Attachment has always been a topic of concern when parents consider older children adoption. In our experience, time and a persistent demonstration of love overcomes any challenge we have faced. It is approaching two years since our final son entered our lives. Are the children bonded? Absolutely! They are bonded not only to us, but also to one another. We are often asked if any are "real siblings". Our answer: they all are, as the care and love they show to one another is demonstrated every day. Do they quarrel? Of course! Isn't that what "real siblings" do? But, we must add that we note that the time the older children have lived at the Children's Homes have provided them with amazing skills of independence, patience towards others, and responsibility for themselves and for their family.

Last fall, our eldest daughter, with CHOICES assistance, brought home her son from Russia. Another amazing little boy who adds more sunshine, if possible, into our lives.

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This terrific trio has energy to spare! Walter and his siblings, Shania and Garrett, dream of growing up together in a permanent family. Walter is quite an athlete and loves all sports, especially swimming. He is a dynamic young man who strives for approval and acceptance. Walter is artistic, imaginative and creative. He is compassionate and considerate, and relates well with other children and adults. Walter is a busy guy! Some of his favourite activities are cadets, reading, crafts and cooking. He is affectionate and easygoing yet, sometimes his strong-willed side can get the better of him. He has also been diagnosed with Oppositional Defiance Disorder and Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder. Walter takes medication to help manage his behaviours. He attends regular classes at school and is proud of being a "B" Honour Student. True to his determined and diligent nature, Walter strives to be an "A" Honour's Student. He is charming and charismatic, describing himself as smart, athletic and handsome.

Shania is an artistic, imaginative and intelligent young girl who enjoys singing, swimming, reading and crafts. Shania can be quite shy and sometimes needs encouragement to engage in conversation. However, at other times she is bold, talkative and disruptive. These behaviours are managed with medication and therapy. Shania has some difficulty in maintaining friendships with children and in relating to adults, yet, she is polite and with assistance is learning more social graces and manners. She is clever and curious and like her brother, is proud to be a "B" Honour Student. Shania is excelling academically, specifically in reading and writing. She attends Girl Guides and particularly enjoys the outdoor activities.

Garrett is an affectionate, cheerful, and considerate young boy. Like his siblings, he is physically active and particularly enjoys swimming. He also likes playing soccer, tag, Nintendo and listening to music. Garrett is happy, thoughtful and likeable, and though he usually

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