



*Every child deserves
a permanent and loving family*

CHOICES
Adoption &
Counselling Services

*Working locally and
globally for children to
have permanent loving
families*

*Thank you to our
newest sponsor
**McNeil Consumer
Healthcare**
for their generous
donation of supplies
to give to the
orphanages in Russia
on our upcoming visit
this fall – we greatly
appreciate your
support!*

Message from Executive Director

Working in adoption is always exciting and challenging, but the past six months have been particularly gratifying for CHOICES. Our staff members have travelled the globe to meet with foreign adoption officials, visit orphanages and work directly with our coordinators in three programs. I travelled to Russia last November, visited six cities, and finally had a few days in St. Petersburg for some personal tourist time. Our embassy in Moscow paved the way for meetings with officials involved in re-structuring adoption services in Russia. It was a difficult time, as the officials were dealing with much anti-foreign adoption sentiment, both in the Duma and the media. It was helpful for them to see pictures of families that had adopted successfully and to hear how well the children were doing here in Canada. Jae Ranschaert was the next traveller, heading off to China with a group of adoptive parents, experiencing the entire process with them. Anne Carin and Laura Thompson shared their trip to Nepal with us on an Internet blog, so we were able to follow along on their adventures. And adventures they were, including the purchase of goats to assist one poor community. You can read more about these trips and other articles in this newsletter, and on our website.

We now have a much better understanding of the pressures facing birth parents in poor countries struggling with little infrastructure, and we can now better help adoptive applicants prepare for their adoptions.

A bit closer to home, we have also been doing some ground-breaking work, placing older children with special needs from several American states, some with adoption subsidies.

The best part of this job is meeting the children and seeing that they are obviously thriving in their new families. We are also starting to fund-raise to assist some of the orphanages we have visited that are the most needy.

I wish you and your family the best of summer adventures, and look forward to seeing you at one of our upcoming events.

Sandra Scarth

Russia Program Update

In May, CHOICES was re-accredited by the Ministry of Education in Russia to continue to conduct international adoptions. We were the first Canadian agency to be re-accredited, and are seeing increasing numbers of proposals coming from the various regions of Russia. We are now sending families to Perm, and this region promises to offer proposals within 6-9 months of a family's dossier being submitted. Vladivostok continues to be our most active region, and several families have recently returned home with their adopted children.

We look forward to maintaining a positive working relationship with the Russian adoption officials, and will be sending Rachel Warren to Russia in the fall to meet with various officials in our new regions, Kostroma, Perm, and Nishni Novgorod.

If you would like more information about our Russia Adoption Program, please contact CHOICES and ask for Rachel Warren.

Welcome home to the following children who have found their forever families in the past six months!



Anastasia
Anton
Polina
Maria
Theodore
Daria
Natalia
Willem
Sheela
Nikita
Anton
Aliyah
Isabelle
Michael
Lei
Julianna
Lukas
Mei-Li
Julian
Alexander
Ellie
Kate



Intercountry Program Update

We are now working with experienced adoption facilitator, CARC, from Ontario to facilitate adoptions from the Ukraine. All children available for adoption in Ukraine live in orphanages. Both boys and girls are available. Only children who have been registered in the national databank for one year may be adopted internationally. All children will be at least 12 months of age at the time of proposal, and are usually over 15 months of age upon adoption finalization. Adoptive parents can be married or single, and must be under the age of 55.

Please contact CHOICES for further information

Message from Clinical Director

In April, Laura Thompson, our Office Manager, and I travelled to Kathmandu, Nepal. You can read about our adventures on our web site under the News section. The cultural and geographical differences for us were amazing and wonderful. Goats on top of one another in the back seat of a taxi, cows lying in the middle of the street while traffic works around them, and incessant honking.

We were touched by the beauty and gentleness of the Nepali people. Their history, geography, religion, and art are very spiritual. Here, Buddhists and Hindus walk hand in hand, drink tea together, play together and worship in separate temples that are built at the top of the same stairway, side by side. They share one another's and accept and respect the other's ways.

Approximately 52% of the population of Nepal is under the age of 18. We saw children everywhere. There are more than 200 orphanages in Kathmandu. The government run orphanage, Bal Mandir, has over 300 children, ranging from newborn to 18 years of age.

We visited three orphanages, and have arranged a contract with one of them for adoption. This orphanage is extremely well run by a mother and her daughter. There are 55 children. All were clean and well groomed, and they all go to school. The children were very polite and well behaved. It was very clear that they are loved.

We also met with our lawyer who arranges family adoptions. Families come to him to find a home for their child. We met one of the families who was placing a child with one of our clients. This was their 11th child, and they could not cope. They were very happy that their son, who was 4 months old, would get the opportunity to be raised in a Canadian home. All of the Nepalese people whom we met were equally delighted that he was being adopted.

The poverty in Nepal is extreme. We visited one village that was a 3 hour drive from Kathmandu and then a 3 hour walk. People in this village have to walk for 3 hours to get water. Food is scarce. There are many unemployed people. And yet we found them all to be gentle and polite. Tourism is down by about 40% due to media reports about the Maoists. We spoke with a number of trekkers who had encountered Maoists. These trekkers were asked for a donation of about \$20 US and then given a receipt in case they met any other Maoists. We had no problem around the Kathmandu valley.

If you would like more information about our Nepal Adoption Program, please contact CHOICES.

Anne Carin

Staff Updates

We are happy to welcome **Holly Allen** to the team at CHOICES. Holly has a background in marketing and public relations. She has been hired part-time with CHOICES to assist us with advertising for the agency, and has done a fabulous job at marketing our upcoming events. *Welcome Holly!*

We are sad to be saying goodbye to our Social Work practicum students, **Sheryl Shermak** and **Jessica Alptun**, who have both completed their practicum time at CHOICES. Thank you for all of your hard work while you were with us...*you will be missed!*

To inquire further, contact any Ministry of Children and Family office or phone 1.877 ADOPT 07

EVENTS

Waiting Parent Support Group

For couples waiting to adopt, CHOICES offers a Support Group on the second Thursday of every other month at 7:00pm - CHOICES office in Victoria, For more information contact Jae Ranschaert at our office.

Adoptive Family Fun Day & Picnic

June 25, 2005 12-4:00pm

Come out for pony rides, tug-of-war, scavenger hunts and a picnic lunch.

Hot dogs, hamburgers & drinks will be available.

at: Centennial Park
Wallace Drive
Central Saanich

Please RSVP at CHOICES if you wish to attend

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.

Anita

Birth date: January 1999 Race: Caucasian

This little princess is an irresistible mixture of sugar and spice with an extra helping of energy! Anita likes to dance, swim and play with her Barbies. She also enjoys crafts, coloring and playtime. She is strong-willed and animated but she also has a sensitive and sweet side to her personality.

Anita is physically healthy but she was exposed to an unknown amount of drugs prenatally. She has behaviours in common with Reactive Attachment Disorder and works with a therapist and receives medication to help modify her behaviour. Anita can be aggressive with other children and adults she does not know. She needs a lot of attention in order to minimize negative behaviour and to ensure her safety. Anita has worked with a speech therapist in the past but is currently meeting her developmental milestones.

This bright little girl would be best suited to a family with no other children, or a family with one older child. She needs a home that can provide a high level of supervision to keep her safe and provide her with the nurturing love and attention she requires to thrive. Anita's foster family would like ongoing contact with her and her new adoptive family.

Nalani, Devon & Jacob

March 1998 - April 1999 - September 2000

Ethno-Cultural Background: Aboriginal

This playful threesome can light up a room with their infectious smiles.

Nalani is a bubbly little girl who likes to play outdoors and with her peers. She is cheerful, outgoing and talkative, and loves to run, ride her bike and skip. Nalani is playful and helpful, and relates well to children and adults. She attends school full time, loves books, playing with her classmates, and likes to wear her glasses. Nalani can be controlling at times and has been assessed as having a moderate intellectual disability.

Nalani's brother Devon is athletic, determined and eager, and likes to play soccer and ride his bike. He is a playful young boy who relates well to other children yet can be stubborn and strong willed at times. He attends school with assistance from a childcare support worker and speech therapy. Though Devon requires assistance within the school program, he enjoys attending and loves to play with all the toys. Devon's speech is delayed, yet he is quite expressive.

Youngest brother Jacob is a joyful, happy and affectionate little fellow who loves to laugh and giggles a lot. He is amusing, humorous and playful, and his relations with children and adults are excellent. He attends playgroup and likes to work on puzzles, singing, climbing and riding in his big play car. Devon is quite expressive and his speech and language development is fine, however, he is quiet, shy and sometimes bashful.

A family with a strong support network, that shares their cultural background and that does not have younger children would be best suited for Nalani, Devon and Jacob.

Study Says Foreign Children Adapt Well

LINDSEY TANNER, The Associated Press

A surprising new study disputes the notion that children adopted from other countries tend to be badly damaged emotionally because of the hardships they had to endure. The analysis of more than 50 years of international data found that these youngsters are only slightly more likely than nonadopted children to have behavioral problems such as aggressiveness and anxiety. And they actually seem to have fewer problems than children adopted within their own countries.

"Our findings may help them fight the stereotype that is often associated with international adoption," said researchers Femmie Juffer and Marinus H. van Uzendoorn of Leiden University in the Netherlands.

They pooled results from 137 studies on adoptions by parents living in the United States, Canada, Europe, Australia, New Zealand and Israel.

In the study, adopted children in general had more behavior problems than nonadopted youngsters, regardless of where the adoption took place - a result that is not surprising, since both groups often suffer deprivation and come from broken families.

CHOICES is planning a series of information sessions on topics of interest to families on Vancouver Island and the Lower Mainland, including parenting, attachment issues for families adopting from other cultures, etc. Watch our website for more information

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*we welcome your
comments*

But with backgrounds that often include abandonment, orphanages and civil strife, foreign adoptees are sometimes thought of as difficult, disruptive children - an image that the study does not support, the researchers said.

The results are generally reassuring for international adoption - an increasing phenomenon involving more than 40,000 children a year moving among more than 100 countries, the researchers said.

"Before adoption, most international adoptees experience insufficient medical care, malnutrition, maternal separation, and neglect and abuse in orphanages," the researchers said. But to their surprise, they found that these children do well and are largely able to catch up with their nonadopted counterparts.

The analysis involved studies on adoption between 1950 and 2005, involving more than 30,000 adoptees and more than 100,000 nonadopted children.

The study appears in Wednesday's Journal of the American Medical Association.

Excerpt from Executive Director's trip to Russia

November 2004

Moscow in November is dark and bleak, but my reception by Sima, our coordinator in Moscow was anything but. She was warm and pragmatic, admonishing me to wear a hat to keep warm and continually reaching into her bag to dole out snacks so that I would not go hungry. She took me on a tour of Moscow, walked me through the intricacies of the bureaucratic system and paved the way for meetings with officials in a whirlwind visit of three days. I was also helped by one of our applicants who lives in Moscow, and who offered his car and driver to make life safer and easier as I was transported to train stations, airports and meetings. We are very fortunate to have skilled and supportive staff at the Canadian Embassy in Moscow, who helped us to understand the current climate in Russia where there are strong anti-intercountry adoption sentiments amongst some government officials and in the media.

Sima and I visited Kostroma, our newest region, after an eventful five hour overnight train ride from Moscow. Our partners in the compartment climbed over us in the dark into the top bunks and then proceeded to snore loudly and continuously throughout the night. We found out the next morning that they had consumed the better part of a litre of vodka in the alleyway outside the compartment before coming to bed.

Our coordinator in Kostroma, a delightful and competent young woman named Tanya, met us in the middle of the night at the train station and took us to the hotel for a short rest before our meetings. We met with officials who advised us that only children over the age of seven would be immediately available for our applicants, as greater efforts were being made to place younger children with Russian families, if not for adoption, in long term foster care families. Although this was disappointing to applicants waiting for younger children, we agreed to try to find families for older, waiting children. Kostroma is a beautiful old provincial city, with many dark wood historic buildings, and an interesting monastery visited in the days of the Czars by many members of the royalty. The orphanages we visited in Kostroma were well maintained, and the orphanage directors took great pains to show us the results of their efforts to find educational toys and to provide an enriched environment for the children.

The flight to Vladivostok is long, but the sun shone almost the whole time I was there. Although it was cold, older people were swimming in the sea and others strolled bare-armed. I had on my warm fleece! I knick-named our coordinator Ludmila "the energizer bunny." She is tiny, but mighty. She zipped me through Vladivostok on a whirlwind tour and then we got down to work. We visited orphanages, officials, medical officers and the courts. We had dinner with officials and a judge and were on the go from morning to night. Ludmila cares deeply about the children, and takes great care to obtain as much information as she can to help them and their families. She works so hard, that she sometimes forgets to eat, so I learned to take along snacks...

Sandra Scarth