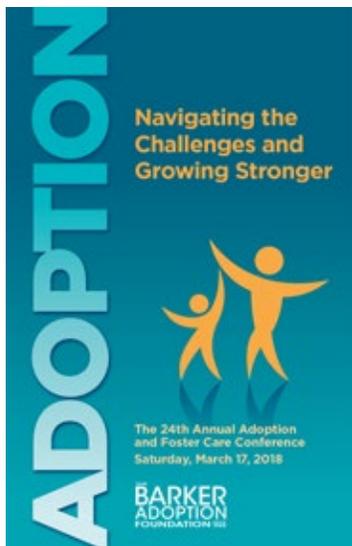




SPRING 2018

Barker's 24th Annual Adoption and Foster Care Conference Educates, Energizes, and Inspires



On March 17, more than 300 people joined us at the Universities at Shady Grove in Rockville, Maryland, for the opportunity to hear from some of the nation's leading adoption experts at Barker's Annual Adoption and Foster Care Conference. **Angela Tucker**, whose story was featured in the documentary *CLOSURE*, opened the conference with a thought-provoking and inspiring keynote address followed by a Q&A session. Panels of adoptees, birth parents, and adoptive parents spoke on the conference theme, *Adoption: Navigating the Challenges and Growing Stronger*, about the challenges they have faced and the internal and external resources they relied on to persevere. **Debbie Schugg**, back by popular demand, offered two workshops that were particularly helpful to those adopting and parenting teenagers, and **Maureen McCauley** and **Aselefech Evans** offered their perspective on



Members of Barker's Board of Trustees Michael McFarland, Gary Diamond, Lisa Ivany, Howard Menditch (Board Chair), Carolee Inskip, Benjamin Murray, and Kathy Bucher join Executive Director Sue Hollar at Barker's conference.

international adoptees' feelings and experiences as immigrants in today's society. Other workshops featured educational expert **Rich Weinfeld** and **Lisa Ellsbury** of the Love Without Boundaries Foundation. **Chauncey Strong**, adoptee and

child welfare expert, delivered the closing address, which included a message of profound gratitude for all those committed to caring for children. This year's event also featured the opportunity to hear from local service providers, including **Creative Counseling Connections**; **The Siena School**; **The Gil Institute for Trauma Recovery and Education**; **Calo Programs**; **Jennifer Fairfax, LLC**; **Au Pair in America**; **The Attachment Place**; **ASIA Families**; **Potomac Pathways**; **Wonders Early Learning & Extended Day**; **Rainbow Families**; **Carol Liu, LCSW-C**; **The Viva Center**; and **Pact, An Adoption Alliance**. We are grateful for their participation and their commitment to the adoption community. ■



Angela Tucker delivered an uplifting keynote address.



Members of the adoption triad served as inspiring speakers.



FROM THE *Executive Director and CEO*

Dear Members and Friends of The Barker Adoption Foundation Community,

It is an honor to write my first column as your Executive Director and to express my gratitude to the Board of Directors for their confidence in and support of my leadership of this remarkable agency, now in its seventh decade of serving adoptees, birth parents, and adoptive parents.

As many of you know, I came to Barker in 2006 after dedicating many years of my career to serving children and families in the foster care and adoption field at the local and national levels. For eleven years, I had the opportunity to work hand in hand with, and to learn from, Marilyn Regier, Barker's distinguished leader from 2002 to 2017.

While my image and words appear in this article, behind them are the faces of a dedicated,

talented, and passionate staff who believe in and work tirelessly to fulfil Barker's mission to provide lifelong services for all in the adoption constellation and to advocate for ethical, respectful, and child-centered adoption practices. I invite you to see their faces and learn more about their prestigious backgrounds by visiting Barker's website.

We face challenging times ahead as we navigate the current environment while staying committed to our mission. We have the ever-present responsibility to ensure that expectant parents know about Barker's ethical and no-cost services, which is increasingly difficult in the climate of competitive internet advertising and the proliferation of for-profit players in the adoption world. We also face an unfortunate geopolitical landscape, resulting in a continued decline in the number of children who will experience the love and stability of a family through intercountry adoption. We remain committed to working

with our state and federal leaders to ensure that intercountry adoption and its necessary oversight and regulation remain on their agenda.

Finally, we are very aware of the challenges that all families, including those by adoption, continue to face. With this in mind, we are committed to growing our Family and Post-Adoption Services to meet the expanding needs of our community. That focus motivated our choice of theme for the 2018 conference: *Adoption: Navigating the Challenges and Growing Stronger.*

Thank you for the privilege of serving you and your families. I look forward to seeing many of you at our Annual Meeting on May 17, at which we will honor Marilyn Regier and her outstanding leadership to our community.

Sue Hollan

Teens Explore Common Bonds Through Barker's Teen Connections Program

Barker welcomed a great group of teens to the National 4-H Conference Center in Chevy Chase for its annual Teen Connections program. The program provided high school students who are adopted the opportunity to connect with other adopted teens, participate in a service project related to adoption, attend engaging workshops exploring adoptive identity, and have fun participating in indoor and outdoor activities.

The program was facilitated by two experienced school counselors: Kristen Reighard (who was herself adopted as a baby from Korea) and Seth Solondz, MSW, and received rave reviews from participants and adoptive parents.

A special highlight of this year's program was that the teens wrote and created an impressive short video entitled "Adoption Is Not a Punch Line," which explored their feelings about adoption, some commonly held misperceptions, and questions they often receive. The Barker staff was so impressed with the video that it was featured (and very well received!) on Barker's Facebook page. At the close of the weekend, the teens who participated gave a thumbs-up to the program:

"It was great to connect to other adopted kids."

"To be honest, I wasn't sure about going at first – but I am really glad I did! I made a lot of new friends."

"I feel much more proud about my adoption and heritage!"

Barker is starting to plan for the fall 2018 Teen Connections program. If you would like more information about the program, please contact Varda Makovsky at postadopt@barkerfoundation.org. ■



Cody Kujawa and Matt Levell participate in Barker's Teen Connections program.

There Are Many Ways to Stay Connected to Barker

Continuing what has become an annual tradition, Pauline Calomiris, a Barker grandmother, lovingly prepared Easter Baskets for the children placed through PWNL celebrating their first Easter with their "forever families." Pauline worked with the PWNL team to create baskets with goodies that were perfect for each of the children, and the baskets were much appreciated! If you are interested in connecting with Barker or volunteering, please contact Anne Christman at 301.664.9664. ■



Pauline Calomiris stands with Easter Baskets she prepared.

Barker Families Celebrate Lunar New Year at the Chinese Embassy

On February 12, Barker families gathered outside the gates of the beautiful Chinese Embassy in Washington, DC, awaiting a celebration of the Chinese Lunar New Year and welcoming in the Year of the Dog.

Thanks to the work of Barker's Director of International Programs, Tina Ji, and the generosity of Ambassador Cui Tiankai and Minister Li Kexin, Barker's Chinese adoptive families were the honored guests at a spectacular Chinese Lunar New Year celebration in the halls of the gorgeous embassy designed by the world-famous Chinese American architect I.M. Pei.

Minister Li Kexin opened the celebration on behalf of the Chinese diplomats and their families, welcoming us to the embassy and remarking on the adoptions that brought our families together: "I think you would all agree that your children have brought much joy and love to your families and opened a window to China for you."

The Minister's warm welcome was followed by the engaging comments of guest speaker and Barker adoptive father Steve Innskeep, NPR's Morning Edition host. He was surrounded by a gathering of children, many of whom were dressed in traditional Chinese attire and responded to him in Chinese. "I am grateful and proud that my family includes an immigrant," Steve said in sharing his family's experience. "I am grateful that the immigrant in my family comes from China and connects our family to the great story of China."

These remarks were followed by performances of authentic Chinese puppetry, dance, and acrobatic umbrella juggling. There were traditional craft activities and a wonderful feast of Chinese delights to round out the evening. Our families enjoyed being welcomed to the Embassy and the opportunity for their families to connect with their children's Chinese heritage. ■



Cailin Schwenger Huffman and Andrew Gimblett enjoy the festivities.



Steve Innskeep provided opening remarks and celebrated the New Year with his family.



Chinese dancers entertained the crowd.

Congratulations to Our New Arrivals

Alan & Lisa welcomed Sebastian
Alberto & Lauren welcomed Sebastiano
Andy & Norma welcomed Ava
Angela welcomed Alexa
Anthony & Dorothy welcomed Samantha
Arden & Gloria welcomed Jacob
Ben & Amanda welcomed Jonathan
Brek & Kendell welcomed Gwendolyn
Catherine welcomed James
Christian & Elizabeth welcomed Samuel
Christy welcomed Sierra
Cody & Erin welcomed Finn
Colin & Karin welcomed Linus
Daniela welcomed Ava

Danielle welcomed Patience
David & Rebecca welcomed Jose & Jolette
Devin & Janelle welcomed Justin
Doug & Holly welcomed Rue
Douglas welcomed Tonorris
Edgar & Kim Kim welcomed Maggie
Eliza & Rachel welcomed Lena
Eric & Jeannette welcomed Gabrielle
Jason & Hilliary welcomed Eros
Jodi welcomed Aidan
Justin & Sarah welcomed June
Laurent & Brenda welcomed Bora
Lita & Vic welcomed Ellie
Loren & Karen welcomed Anna
Manfred & Stacy welcomed Aden & Mason

Matt & Jaylyn welcomed Greyson
Michael & Jean welcomed Lisa
Mindy welcomed Armani
Nate & Ariel welcomed Miles
Nathaniel & Aletheia welcomed Rhett
Phillip & Robin welcomed Luke
Richard & Ming welcomed Marie
Rochelle & Sioban welcomed Julia
Scott & Heather welcomed Shane
Thomas & Ashley welcomed Luci
Tim & Brian welcomed Autumn
Timothy & Jennifer welcomed Rachel
Tony & Jenn welcomed Mariah
Vic & Jan welcomed Lusi

Beverly Clarke Promoted to New Role

Beverly Clarke has been named Senior Director of Clinical and Support Services. Since 2010, Bev led and grew Barker's Project Wait No Longer into a nationally known program model committed to recruiting and supporting adoptive parents for older children whose birth family circumstances led to them being placed foster care.

In Bev's new role, she will oversee Barker's clinical programs, including continued oversight of



PWNL. In discussing her new role at Barker, Bev shared that she is looking forward to the challenge of leading new initiatives and taking on increased responsibilities within such a respected

organization. After eight years with Barker, Bev continues to feel fortunate to work with such a dedicated team that is committed to serving children and families and looks forward to being a part of the agency's future growth. ■

- With Sympathy -

We express our heartfelt sympathy to families who mourn the loss of their loved ones.

Mauro Pittaro of Bowie, Maryland, passed away peacefully at the age of 81, on August 21, 2017. Mauro is remembered fondly by his wife Agnes, daughter Lacie, and grandson Wayne. Agnes and Mauro adopted through Barker.

Robin Rogoff Star passed away on January 5, 2018, at age 65. Robin is survived by her husband Michael and her sons Matthew and Drew. The family designated The Barker Adoption Foundation as a memorial gift recipient.

Lois Hechinger England of Washington, DC, passed away on January 28 at age 92. Lois was the widow of Richard England and mother of Friends of Barker Board member Nonie (Larry) Akman, Cathy England (deceased), and Rick (Diana) England. Lois is survived by many loving family members, including eight grandchildren and three great grandchildren.

Jeanette Diamond of Silver Spring, Maryland, passed away on March 2, one day before her 92nd birthday. Jeanette is lovingly remembered by her children, including her sons Martin, David, and Gary (Jean Diamond), who is a longtime member of Barker's Board, and many beloved grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Richard Walters of Deer Park, New York, passed away on January 20 at age 83. Richard was the loving father of former Barker board member Monika Walters and grandfather to her son Devin.

Join Our Online Community



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Two Great Programs Combine Under One Talented Leader

For Barker, turning the calendar from 2017 to 2018 included welcoming Saara McEachnie to lead our Project Wait No Longer and Domestic Infant programs. Saara has more than a decade of experience working with children and families, primarily in the public child



welfare system. Her work there, helping children to achieve permanency through either reunification with their birth parents or adoption/guardianship with a loving and able caregiver, was perfect preparation for her new role at Barker. Saara's background also includes

implementation of evidence-based, trauma-informed treatment models to best serve the vulnerable population of children in the District of Columbia's foster care system. "Coming to work for Barker has been nothing short of an extraordinary experience," Saara said in discussing her role at Barker. "It is very uncommon when personal, professional, and agency values can seamlessly align,

and that is something that I have found at Barker. The dedication to serving the entire adoption triad (birth parents, adoptive parents, and children) makes it very easy and fulfilling to come work every day. I feel honored to be a crucial part of life-changing work." ■

Forging New Connections Among Adoptive Families at "Sundays at Barker"

Barker's Department of Family and Post-Adoption Services is experimenting with new ways to help foster connections and build community among new adoptive families. On Sunday, March 4, we were excited to host our first "Sundays at Barker" event for adoptive families with young children.

Unlike Barker's "New Parent Groups," which are held during the week and involve structured discussion, these events are on weekends and are designed as an outing for the entire family. What a wonderful scene it was at Barker! While the children played, the adults had the chance to relax, enjoy bagels and

coffee, and talk about issues of common concern to new adoptive families. Those included sleep (or lack of it!), day care, dealing with questions from others, and maintaining connections with birth parents. Families also enjoyed the opportunity to meet and interact with two teen volunteers, who

themselves were adopted through Barker. The teens openly shared information about their adoption experience and the connection they felt with Barker. Please visit Barker's website for more information about future "Sundays at Barker" events. ■

Save the Date

Reception in Honor of Marilyn C. Regier & Annual Meeting – May 17th, 6:30 PM, Rock Creek Mansion, Bethesda

Parent Workshop: "Navigating Contact with Birth Parents" – June 7, 7:00 PM, Maryland office

Barker Goes Nats – June 10, 4:00 PM, Washington Nationals vs. San Francisco Giants, Nationals Park

PRIDE (Parent Resources for Information, Development, and Education) Training – Saturdays, July 14 & 21 and August 11 & 18, 10:00 AM, Maryland office

Ongoing Events

Parents of Adopted Teens – 1st Tuesday of month, 7:00 PM, Maryland office

Parents of Adopted Young Adults Support Group – 2nd Tuesday of month, 7:00 PM, Maryland office

Birth Parent Discussion Group – 2nd Thursday of month, 7:00 PM, Maryland office

Adult Adoptee Discussion Group – 3rd Thursday of month, 7:30 PM, Maryland office

PWNL Waiting Parent Group – 4th Thursday of every other month (May, July, September, November), 6:30 PM, Maryland office
Contact Eileen Wharton at ewharton@barkerfoundation.org to register

In addition to accepting donations through our website, Barker accepts donations made through CFC (38208), Donor Advised Funds, gifts of stock, and additional giving coalitions. If you have questions or need assistance making a gift, please contact us at 301.664.9664. Thank you for your generous support of Barker!



TO RSVP PLEASE VISIT THE BARKER WEBSITE



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