

LET'S

TALK

ABOUT

ADOPTION

APRIL 6

THE
BARKER
ADOPTION
FOUNDATION SINCE 1945

25TH ANNUAL ADOPTION & FOSTER CARE CONFERENCE

The Barker Adoption Foundation Presents

LET'S TALK ABOUT

ADOPTION

25th Annual Adoption & Foster Care Conference and Barker's Annual Teen Connections Event

Keynote Address:

Sean Anders

Film Director, Actor, Screenwriter, Producer, and Adoptive Father
Writer and Director of the dramatic comedy, *Instant Family*

Saturday, April 6, 2019

The Universities at Shady Grove Conference Center

Rockville, Maryland

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LET'S TALK ABOUT ADOPTION

Families are unique. In the constellation of family types in which today's kids grow up, adoptive families occupy a critically important place.

Adoption can link two families whose characteristics, including ethnic, cultural, and racial backgrounds, may be quite different. Those differences are sources of opportunity. When approached with knowledge, openness, and commitment, they may enrich all participants in the adoption circle. Dedicated adoptive parents empower their children in developing a positive identity informed by their adoption experience. Adopted children create a well-rounded self-image affected by understanding their birth family's characteristics and culture. Birth siblings widen their lens on the world through connection with an adopted brother or sister. And birth parents can be enriched through relationships with their child and the adoptive family.

Those outcomes are made possible through empathy, communication skills, and the desire to persevere. Barker's 25th Annual Adoption & Foster Care Conference is a place to begin or continue conversations that make those possible. On Saturday, April 6th, join us for those discussions:

- Hear from Sean Anders, writer and director of the dramatic comedy, *Instant Family*.
- Hear the perspectives of birth families who have maintained contact with adoptive families
- Learn from transracial adoptive parents about the unique obligations of parenting children in these adoptions
- Explore how to discuss adoption with your child to enable a healthy understanding of the adoptive experience
- Discuss the importance of adoptive parents maintaining connections with birth families
- Hear about the intricacies of adoption search in the age of popular genetic testing sites
- Gain insights on how to support children in addressing the joys and challenges of identity that arise from transracial adoption
- Learn about what's needed to approach adoption with an openness to the uniqueness of each adoptive child
- Get input from children who grew up in blended families on what they learned and gained from the experience
- Acquire skills for pushing through the most challenging times as an adoptive parent
- Hear suggestions for helping adoptive children build connections to their cultures as part of their identity formation

Finally, by popular demand this year's conference will feature a special program just for high school-aged teens. Adopted teens are invited to spend the day connecting with each other at a program designed just for them. The program, facilitated by Kristen Reighard and Seth Soldonz, will include engaging and fun workshops that explore thoughts about adoption, identity as an adoptee, feelings about birth parents, and peer and social issues.

GUEST SPEAKERS

Sean Anders

Sean Anders grew up in DeForest, Wisconsin, a small town a few miles outside of Madison. After barely graduating from high school, he frittered away what was left of his youth eventually moving to Tempe, Arizona, where he worked as a freelance graphic designer.



It was there that Sean decided to realize a lifelong dream of making a movie. It took two years to create a no-budget movie with his friends and family. The movie received just enough attention to land Hollywood representation. In 2007 he and his writing and producing partner sold their first script, *She's Out of My League*. Soon after, they directed their first studio comedy, *Sex Drive*. They went on to write and/or direct several comedies, including *Horrible Bosses 2*, *Hot Tub Time Machine*, *We're the Millers*, and *Daddy's Home*. In 2012 Sean and his wife Elizabeth (also from DeForest) adopted three siblings from the foster care system. Although the process and the experience were not easy, they hung in there and found that foster adoption was the best decision they'd ever made. In 2018 Sean was able to draw on this family experience to write and direct a dramatic comedy, *Instant Family*, about a couple who adopts three kids from foster care, including a teen girl. Making *Instant Family* connected Sean with individuals and families touched by the foster care system: social workers, kids in care, adoptive families, foster parents, and others. The experience of meeting so many amazing people in the foster care community inspired Sean to create *Foster Strong*, an organization dedicated to re-branding what it means to be in foster care.

Nabina Liebow, Ph.D.

Nabina Liebow is a transracial, international adoptee. Nabina works at American University as Director of the College of Arts & Sciences' Leadership and Ethical Development Program. In that role she seeks to make ethics education accessible to students from all backgrounds. Her academic research is focused on the intersection of ethics and race. She earned her BA from Carleton College in 2011 and her PhD in Philosophy from Georgetown University in 2017.



Nabina's personal history and identity as a transracial, international adoptee, experience as an educator, and professional background in race and ethics situate her to provide unique workshops on pressing and important ethical questions brought up by transracial and international adoption. With her workshops, Nabina hopes to provide participants with tools for thinking through the complexities of transracial and international adoption to inspire best practices.

Kristen Reighard

Kristen Reighard is a Nationally Certified Counselor who has worked with Barker for almost 10 years. She facilitates Barker's monthly Adult Adoptee Discussion Group and co-facilitates Barker's adopted kids' groups and annual Teen Connections event. Kristen is both a counselor and herself an adoptee. She was adopted as a baby from Seoul, South Korea. She is mother of a 2-year-old boy and has been married for 6 years.



Debbie Schugg

Debbie Schugg is a nationally known speaker with more than 30 years of experience working with families of at-risk youth and those with special needs. She has extensive experience offering individualized, trauma-informed coaching to adoptive families in crisis and training professionals who work with adoptive families nationwide. Debbie is a Family Coach and Trainer at the Kinship Center in California and a Senior Consultant with the National Center on Adoption and Permanency. She serves as a member of the Content Committee for the National Training and Development Curriculum, a project of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Children's Bureau.



Debbie also is the mother of eight children from culturally diverse backgrounds, seven of whom were adopted as sibling groups from the foster care system. She and her husband also provide a safe haven and permanent connections for a number of teens and young adults, many of whom are deaf and identify as LGBTQ.

Seth Solondz, MSW, LCSW

Seth Solondz has more than 20 years of experience working with children, adolescents, and adults. He has co-facilitated the Barker Teen Connections program since its inception and enjoys facilitating groups involving children who have been adopted and supporting siblings and parents. In his private practice, he provides therapy to individuals who have been adopted, including children, adolescents, and young adults. He also works in the school system as a school social worker, serving youth and families with a wide range of backgrounds, including those who are at risk and those with special needs.



Chauncey Strong, MSW, LGSW

Chauncey Strong is a child welfare advocate with 25 years of extensive experience in child welfare administration in the private and public sectors. He specializes in foster care and adoption training and consulting. Most recently he worked for eight years as a foster care supervisor with Fairfax County Department of Family Services in Virginia. He has also worked as an administrator, manager, supervisor, child welfare worker, mentor, and a community organizer.



Chauncey is the Executive Director of Strong Training and Consulting, LLC where he provides training and consulting in child welfare. He is currently consulting with The Annie E. Casey Foundation, The Capacity Building Center for States, and The Virginia Department of Social Services.

He has served on several national boards and committees and is also a motivational speaker and a committed advocate for children and families. He has dedicated his career to helping to improve the outcomes of children and families involved in the child welfare system.

Originally from Newark, New Jersey, in 1991 he earned his BA degree in Social Work from Elizabeth City State University in North Carolina. In 1993 he earned his MSW from Norfolk State University in Virginia.

Han Pan Korean American Cultural Center of Maryland

The Han Pan Korean American Cultural Center of Maryland consists of 30 or more members ranging from ages 5 to 60-plus. As a Korean American cultural performance group, they have learned their Korean traditional songs, dances, music, and instrumentation from their elders and have continued to pass that music down to the younger generations. Their mission is to enrich and promote cultural diversity and unity by introducing Korean traditional culture to local communities through Korean dance, drums, and song. Over the last several years, the group has gathered every week for several hours to learn and practice Korean cultural music and dance in preparation for their performances at community events.



Barker staff presenters include:

Beverly Clarke, LCSW-C, LICSW, Senior Director, Clinical & Support Services

Susan Hollar, LCSW-C, LICSW, Executive Director & CEO

Tina Ji, Director of International Programs

Varda Makovsky, LCSW-C, LICSW, Director of the Family & Post Adoption Services Department

Emily Marshall, LCSW-C, LICSW, Clinical Intake and Family Support Specialist

Saara McEachnie, LCSW-C, LICSW, Director of Domestic Adoption Programs

Eliza Niemann, LCSW-C, LICSW, Contracted Social Worker/Trainer

Barker staff bios may be found at <http://www.barkeradoptionfoundation.org/about-us/staff>

PROGRAM

- 8:15 – 9:00** **Registration, Resource Fair, and Breakfast**
- 9:00 – 9:15** **Welcome & Introductions**
Sue Hollar
- 9:15 – 10:00** **Sean Anders, Keynote Address**
Changing the Narrative around Foster Care and Adoption
- 10:00 – 10:30** **Networking and Resource Fair Morning Break**
- 10:30 – 11:45** **Breakout Session I**
- A. Exploring Openness Through the Lens of the Birth Parent
 - B. Things I Wish Someone Had Told Me About Transracial Parenting
 - C. Talking with Children About Adoption: An Ongoing Process
 - D. Navigating the Complexity of Birth Family Relationships
- 11:45 – 12:45** **Lunch**
- 12:45 – 2:00** **Breakout Session II**
- A. Genetic Testing and Adoption Search
 - B. It's Not "Just" Parenting: Special Obligations in Transracial Parenting
 - C. Loving You... Just the Way You Are
- 2:00 – 2:15** **Afternoon Break**
- 2:15 – 3:30** **Breakout Session III**
- A. Insights into Blended Families: A Dialogue with Siblings by Birth and Adoption
 - B. Pressing Beyond Your Breaking Point
 - C. Maintaining Cultural Connections and Building a Strong Identity
- 3:45 – 4:00** **Closing Remarks: Beverly Clarke & Kristen Reighard**
- 4:00 – 4:20** **Performance by Han Pan Korean American Cultural Center of Maryland**
- 4:20 – 4:30** **Closing Raffle**

THE
BARKER
ADOPTION
FOUNDATION since 1945

The Barker Adoption Foundation is a non-profit, comprehensive adoption agency serving all members of the adoption community – birth parents, adoptive parents, and adopted persons. For nearly 75 years, Barker has provided compassionate, professional counseling and support to more than 30,000 pregnant women and placed over 7,500 children with adoptive families. In addition, Barker has a long history of innovative leadership in adoption education.

To learn more, please visit our website at www.barkeradoptionfoundation.org

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Conference Location

The Universities at Shady Grove

9630 Gudelsky Road
Rockville, Maryland 20850

A facility map and parking directions can be found at www.shadygrove.umd.edu/conference-center. Onsite parking is available in the Traville Gateway Garage for a fee.



**Serving Adoptive Parents, Birth Parents
and Adopted Persons Since 1945**

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