

SPRING 2016

Come Share 70 Joyful Years with Your Barker Family

On March 5, The Barker Adoption Foundation celebrates its 70th anniversary with a grand gala featuring prestigious guest speakers, fantastic silent



Guests at the 70th Anniversary Gala will enjoy a seated meal in the beautiful National Women's Museum, just as they did at the 65th Gala.

auction items, live music and a stunning setting – not to mention dinner and drinks.

Many people feel numbers tell a cold, factual story with little excitement. But who can argue the deep emotion elicited by these numbers, especially for those of us so intimately affected by them.

- Nearly **7,500 children** placed in loving, permanent homes, creating forever families since 1945
- More than **7,000 birth mothers** counseled
- Approximately **35,000 inquiries answered** from prospective adoptive parents
- **70 years of counseling, serving and connecting** adoptees, adoptive parents, birth parents, foster children and others in the

adoption community – even outside of Barker families.

- And the potential to raise **half a million dollars or more** in one fantastic evening thanks to a generous matching gift for every cent spent on tickets, sponsorships, auction items and donations.

If those dramatic numbers alone don't move you to attend or support this jubilant and important event, there's more.

Do historic architecture and priceless art appeal to you? The National Museum of Women in the Arts offers both in one remarkable venue. The turn-of-the-century Renaissance Revival building originally served as a Masonic Temple and was bought to house the museum's extensive collections in 1983. Start the evening strolling the third floor galleries with a glass of wine, while engaging in lively bidding competitions for that idyllic getaway, spectacular seats to the big game, an irresistible hand-crafted piece of jewelry, or one-of-a-kind artwork. Enjoy the sounds of a

classical violin ensemble (coached by a Barker Dad) as you sip and bid. Then, move into the Grand Hall for an elegant dinner.

As you enjoy your meal, a familiar voice wafts through the two-story hall. Steve Inskeep – host of NPR's *Morning Edition* and a Barker Dad – acts as master of ceremonies for the evening's program. He'll introduce former senator Mary Landrieu. She'll tell about her experience serving as co-chair of the Congressional Coalition on Adoption. You'll also enjoy Barker's executive director, Marilyn Regier, as she talks about Barker's rich history, including 70 years spent serving all points of the adoption family triangle.

"I am honored to share my experiences as a Korean American adoptee with the audience at the Gala," says guest speaker Caleb Brenner, age 14. "Barker holds a special place for me, as it has helped to form my family." Caleb, along with other adoptees, share their stories with us. The poignant evening comes to a close with a

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Details for the Gala

Date: Saturday, March 5, 2016 from 6:30 to 10:30 pm

What: Cocktails / Seated Dinner / Silent Auction

Where: National Museum of Women in the Arts, 1250 New York Avenue, NW, Washington, DC

Note: Parking in PMI Garage at 1212 H Street, NW for \$10 or, if you're new to Uber, try it out free with our special code: Barker70.

Questions: email Courtney DeLucia at cdelucia@barkerfoundation.org or call her at 301-664-9664.



FROM THE *Executive Director and CEO*

Our milestone 70th anniversary year has been celebrated with an array of activities intended to bring together the Barker community and remind us of how deeply we cherish this remarkable agency and its core mission. The March 5th gala will be the culminating event, and I surely encourage everyone to participate. In particular, I would like to urge parents to bring

their young adult and adult "children," in order to start passing the baton to those who follow us. If we want Barker to endure for the next generation, we need to bring family and friends to inspiring events like the 70th anniversary gala.

Over the decades, there have been those who predicted that adoption as an institution would become unnecessary and even obsolete. But as you have heard me say many times, I believe that in a compassionate society, there will always

be a place for ethical adoption programs as a vital part of our child welfare practice. Barker's longevity and vitality testify to that reality.

Yes, we've come a long way from the Barkers' living room, where our agency had its humble beginnings. Come on March 5th and celebrate how far we've come!

Marilyn Regier

Milestone Placement for PWNL

*Beverly N. Clarke, Director,
Project Wait No Longer*

When Marilyn Regier joined the team at Barker in 2002, she shared with the Board her vision of developing a public/private partnership wherein Barker would leverage its years of adoption expertise and partner with the public child welfare system to help find loving families for older children who were languishing in temporary care.

After much hard work and effort on the part of the staff, Board, and supporters of Barker, Project Wait No Longer ("PWNL") was born, and the first child was placed through this then new initiative in October 2007. Through the years, PWNL

has continued to grow and develop, and we can now say that we have developed an expertise in the area of finding adoptive families for older kids who have experienced a great deal of trauma in their lives.

In recent years, we have been able to find loving families for sibling groups of three and four children and older teenagers (up to the age of 19). In one case, PWNL was even instrumental in reunifying a sibling group of 4 that had previously been separated from each other within the foster care system.

We were thrilled this past December when we placed our 100th child from the public foster care system into a loving family (just

in time for the holidays!). It is thrilling to see how much we have grown from our first placement in 2007. We are proud of the robust pre-placement training and post placement support services we currently offer our families and consider it an honor to have been part of so many life-changing adoption journeys.

As we celebrate this milestone placement, we remain inspired each

and every day by the kids we seek to serve and in awe of the parents who step up to meet their complex needs. We remain committed to our goal of not just helping to find families for waiting children, but of providing the support necessary to strengthen these families, knowing that each and every successful placement can change the life of a waiting child. ■

Come Share 70 Joyful Years with Your Barker Family

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video presentation of our Barker children through the years.

Another number that should inspire you – more than half of the 350 available tickets for the event are already sold! If you want to join the festivities and be a part of the incredible matching

gift opportunity, buy your tickets soon. You can reserve your tickets on the Barker website www.BarkerAdoptionFoundation.org or you may send in the response card from your invitation. ■

Shelley D. Hutchins

- With Sympathy -

We express our heartfelt sympathy to the Kurfess, Hardisty, McKay, and Otteman-Gelb families as they mourn the loss of their loved ones.

James D. Kurfess, died on October 27, 2015, at the age of age 74. Jim was the beloved husband of Mary Deffley Kurfess, Barker's former Director of Family and Post-Adoption Services. Together with Mary, Jim frequently attended Barker events. Barker extends deepest sympathy to Mary and her family.

John T. Hardisty, beloved husband of Merrily S. Hardisty, devoted father of Christine Hardisty Eldreth (Myles) and Kirk Taylor Hardisty (Kelly) and loving grandfather of Clare Della Eldreth, passed away on October 29, 2015, at the age of 76. Active in the Barker community for many years, John will be greatly missed.

James C. McKay, age 98, died on November 23, 2015. Jim is survived by his beloved wife of 72 years, Mary Anne, and by three children, and three grandchildren. A Washington trial lawyer with a heart for children's causes, he received The Richard B. Barker Award in 2006.

Lueza Thirkield Gelb, died on February 7, 2016, at the age of 84. She is survived by her husband of 63 years, Bruce S. Gelb. Her survivors include her four adult children, including Barker parent Connie Gelb (Scott Otteman) and grandson Daniel.

Barker Adoption Foundation's
70th Anniversary Benefit Gala

Celebrating a Lasting Legacy

22nd Annual Conference to Explore the Uniquely Connected Lives of the Family of Adoption

Connected Lives: A Complex Privilege for the Family of Adoption

What is your definition of family? When this question was posed recently to Barker adoptive parents of an unstoppable two-year old, they responded as follows: "Family is unconditional love and in our case, it's even larger, as our daughter has us, who love her to the end of the earth, and she has her birth mother and her family who all love her and want to help her be happy and live the best life possible."

As Barker marks 70 years of connecting and supporting families through adoption and education, it will fittingly focus its 22nd annual Conference on the connected lives of "families of adoption," the unique ensemble that includes birth parents, adoptive parents, and the child of adoption. Executive Director and CEO, Marilyn Regier, explains that "as increasingly more birth parents and adoptive parents work together on behalf of a child and embrace their connected lives, they learn what adoption teaches so powerfully and what the family

Alison Larkin whose appearance at Barker's 2009 Conference was met with great praise, and her return has been highly anticipated. Alison is an internationally acclaimed comedienne, best-selling author of *The English American*, speaker, audiobook narrator and Barker adoptee. And in what promises to be both a poignant and humorous talk, Alison will reflect upon her latest, and perhaps most important title: parent.

Also back by popular demand is nationally known speaker on the topic of transracial adoption, **Rhonda M. Roorda**. Her presentation will focus on a subject too-seldom explored: what black Americans think about transracial adoption. Rhonda, adopted into a white family, will discuss findings from her recently published book, *In Their Voices: Black Americans on Transracial Adoption*.

The day is filled with a mix of highly regarded national speakers and engaging panels. Additional speakers include **Debbie Schugg**,



skills participants can use to help adopted children and youth grieve their losses.

In addition, members of the Barker Leadership team will moderate a series of insightful panels made up of adoptive parents, adoptees and birth parents explor-

therapist, writer, and teacher who integrates her deep knowledge of each into a therapeutic writing process thoughtfully conceived to help those within the adoption constellation. In addition to teaching a hands-on writing workshop during the breakouts, Sarah will give the Conference Closing Plenary talk, *Constellation: The Adoptee's Journey Toward Wholeness*, made possible through the generosity of The Robin B. Allen Memorial Fund.

The Conference is made possible through the generosity of our wonderful sponsors. We express our deepest gratitude to **Chesapeake Management Group, CohnReznick, Gary D. Rappaport, Neighborhood Development Company, RBC Wealth Management**, and a sponsor who wishes to remain anonymous.

To register, please visit the Barker Adoption website homepage, www.BarkerAdoptionFoundation.org, where you will find a link to the Conference information page, downloadable brochure and to registration. For more information, email: kporter@barkeradoption-foundation.org. ■

Susan Campbell, Consultant



Alison Larkin

above expressed: that what makes a family is not only genetic ties, not racial and ethnic similarity, but a shared history of love, caring, and permanency."

Scheduled for Saturday, March 19, at the Universities at Shady Grove Conference Center, Rockville, Maryland, the Conference speakers and panels promise to challenge and inspire all who attend. The **Keynote speaker** is



Rhonda Roorda

who has 30 years of experience working with families of at-risk youth and those with special needs, and who herself is the mother of eight children from culturally diverse backgrounds. Debbie will lead a workshop for those considering and/or already parenting children adopted at an older age and from the foster care system.

Darla Henry, will present concepts from her 3-5-7© Model, exploring



Sarah Saffian

ing important topics including: the power of permanency and family to older adoptees; authentically celebrating a multicultural family; embracing the privilege of parenting, whether by birth or by adoption; the expectations and realities of post-adoption contact; and, finally, the uncharted process of life after reuniting with birth family.

The conference will close with **Sarah Saffian**, an adoptee,

A Barker Legend Plans to Retire

The longest tenured employee at Barker, Beth Kirby, has announced her decision to retire effective March 31, 2016, after 25 years of extraordinary service. Beth has served in many capacities, and her warmth and versatility are well known and greatly appreciated.

In August 1990, Bob and Beth Kirby were approved as foster parents in Barker's infant domestic program. The first baby came in September 1990, and altogether, the Kirby family loved and fostered 65 babies. The four Kirby sons were also involved in helping children start their life's journey.

By 1997 Beth was providing administrative help to social worker, Mary Beth Turska, with the foster care program. Eventually, Beth became the coordinator, though she admits to wistfulness about giving up direct service as a foster parent. Over the years, her responsibilities grew, even as she retained her foster parent oversight duties. She became Marilyn Regier's trusted Executive Assistant, served as liaison to the Board of Trustees, provided administrative assistance to the Department of Family & Post-Adoption Services, and took on

some HR duties, keeping personnel files in compliance with licensing. The Barker community knows Beth well through her assistance with Phonathon, the Family Picnic, the Annual Adoption and Foster Care Conference, the inaugural Barker Goes Nats game, the Annual Meeting, and countless other activities.

Reflecting back on 25 years of service, Beth says her "fond-est memory is still to witness the placement of a baby, a child being placed in the arms of a waiting family. It just never gets old... and it has been a privilege to be able to witness these moments my entire career here at Barker." Marilyn Regier describes Beth as "one of the most dedicated women I have ever known. Her eyes twinkle when she talks about the Barker mission in the community, and she personifies the 'spirit of Barker.'"

Surely nothing better captures Beth than the inscription on her Richard B. Barker Award, given in 2003:

"The Richard B. Barker Award, presented to Beth Kirby in recognition of her Empathy, Spirit, and Love for Every Child." ■



Beth and Bob Kirby always add enthusiasm to any Barker event! Here they are pictured at Nationals Park.



Beth enjoying the Barker family picnic with granddaughters Ella (9) and Camryn (19 months).

Coming Soon: Barker's Colombia Homeland Tour!

In 2016, Barker will once again lead its highly acclaimed Colombia Homeland Tour. Join other adoptive families on this week-long, unique and life-changing journey to beautiful Colombia. The trip, which will take place June 20–28, is geared toward families with teens or young adults, ages 13–25. Participants will visit FANA, enjoy tourist attractions, traditional Colombian meals and shopping, and have the benefit of experienced adoption professionals to guide and support you and your family. For more information, call or email Sue Hollar at Barker (301-664-9664, ext. 223, or SHollar@BarkerAdoptionFoundation.org). ■

Embracing Culture at Barker's Hispanic Heritage Celebration!

Lisa Hughes, LCSW-C Family Specialist

On January 31st, more than 60 members of our Barker family gathered at Los Tios Grill in Alexandria, Virginia for a Hispanic Heritage Celebration! The snowy winter weather did not stop our Barker community from a fun, family friendly event full of live music, dancing, and delicious Mexican/El Salvadoran food.

Parents of Hispanic Children-adopted both internationally and

domestically attended to connect with other families and instill pride in their children's heritage. Several families of different cultural backgrounds joined the fun as well! Barker's own social worker, Bianchi Suarez, kicked off the fiesta with an engaging salsa lesson. Children also colored in flags from their countries of origin, and they especially loved decorating maracas with colorful

stickers. The event's hallmark, however, was a performance by Latin Grammy Award Winning Children's singer, 123 Andrés. Originally from Colombia, Andrés captivated the younger children through Spanish and English songs and games. He introduced a parachute and the children enthusiastically yelled "Arriba!" (Up!) as they lifted the parachute into the air.

At Barker, we cherish opportunities to celebrate the beautiful diversity within our adoption circle. In the growing era of 1-800 organizations and online adoption entities, we recognize that connecting through supportive community events such as this cannot be replaced. The Hispanic Heritage Celebration was thoroughly enjoyed by all who attended, and another new Barker tradition was born! ■



Barker staff and Hispanic Heritage Celebration planners, Bianchi Suarez and Lisa Hughes, dancing with Jonathan, Daisy, and Claire after the group salsa lesson.



Children gathered around 123 Andres as his performance begins. He incorporated each of their names into various songs and games!

Congratulations to Our New Arrivals

Joe & Kristen welcomed Henry
David & Dave welcomed George
Kelvin & Michelle welcomed Nicole
Nils & Sonia welcomed Mattis
Alex & Nicole welcomed Axel
Montserrat welcomed Leila
Jeffrey & Amy welcomed Emilia
Tim & Natalie welcomed Luke
Brian & Mary welcomed Tess
Paul & Lindsay welcomed Dominic
Kevin & Rebekah welcomed Theodore
Chad & Vanessa welcomed James
Barry & Michele welcomed Eric

Mark & David welcomed Lincoln
James & Marie welcomed Dorothy
Shane & Juliet welcomed Miles
MJ & Colleen welcomed Alana
Rich & Natalie welcomed Eva
Thoko & Jori welcomed Savannah
Richard and Annmarie welcomed Julia
Dan and Amy welcomed Edison
Todd and Shannon welcomed Grace
Anthony and Silke welcomed Cecilia
Carl and Tess welcomed Abigail
Kevin and Monica welcomed Daniela
Chris and Cara welcomed Thomas
Matt and Jackie welcomed Daniella

Bernie and Tina welcomed Kyle
Ben and Daniela welcomed Nicolás
Rodney and Dorothy welcomed Josiah
Laura welcomed Edwin and Dulce
Joel and Kathleen welcomed Bella Grace
Michael and Brook welcomed Olivia
Meredith welcomed Rebecca
Liz and David welcomed K'Lee, Samuel
and Joshua
Elaine welcomed Patrick
Becky and Darren welcomed Jerome, Carlos,
Cherish and Carmelo
Johnny and Michael welcomed Tyson

My Adoption Story

Marvin Lynch

What can I, an adopted son, say about my search for my birth parents? I reluctantly began my search twenty years ago while in my late forties. I guess I had a script in the back of my mind as to how this search was supposed to play out. Naturally, I expected to meet my birth parents and then be introduced to any birth siblings I might have. But that is not exactly how events unfolded.

It was a twenty year journey involving many players – including my wife, who encouraged me to consider the search because of our son, who was born with a bifid thumb on his right hand, a minor but hereditary birth defect. And although our son accepted this condition, it was always something we were curious about.

My adoptive father told me that our family physician, who was the first African – American doctor in our community in the 1950's, was involved in my adoption. My search began with conversations with social workers at the Michigan Department of Social Services adoption agency. After some research on their part, they became aware of where my birth parents resided, but were not permitted to disclose the location, since my birth parents had not granted permission to do so. I wrote letters that the social workers sent to my birth

parents. Partial /non-identifying information was sent to me describing my early years in an orphanage and a little about my family without revealing their identity.

None of us could have scripted what culminated in a beautiful story. After many years of silence from my birth parents, I received a letter from them, with a photo of both of them, along with a letter giving me a little more of their family history. I was astounded by the resemblance to my birth parents, especially to my father. Imagine walking through life looking into the faces of strangers, wondering if I were somehow related to them by blood.

My search became a family journey after a while. Armed with a little bit of information about my family and a photograph, my children (with my permission) began to search the internet. I had thought that all hope of ever connecting with my birth family was lost when I received an anonymous phone call with news that my birth father had died. My oldest son, who was a funeral director at the time, was able to secure additional information about my birth family. My daughter, who is very bold and adventuresome, used Facebook to contact one of the granddaughters mentioned in my birth father's obituary. Through that initial contact,



The poignant reunion between Marvin and his birth mother was meaningful for both. (Photos used with permission.)

my daughter eventually arranged to meet this granddaughter, who lived on the West Coast with her family. My daughter had already made plans to attend a wedding near the area where the granddaughter lived. Consequently, my daughter met two of my birth siblings even before I did in 2008. And this led to the beginnings of a relationship with my birth family in 2009.

On a recent trip to the southern United States in the summer of 2015, I met my birth mother for the first time, along with the remaining birth siblings that I had not previously met. My birth mother, although clearly showing signs of dementia, was lucid enough to carry on a conversation with me. She took hold of my hands and let me know that she knew this day would come. She also expressed how overjoyed she was that my life with my adoptive family in Michigan had been a very good one. She knew this from the letters that she had received from me early in my search. A couple of different times she asked me to forgive her for not being in her life all of these years, which of course I did. After I said, "I forgive you," Jackie (my wife) and I sensed that my birth

mother was released from any and all of the guilt and shame regarding her surrendering me for adoption over sixty years before. She also expressed that my late birth father loved me as well. "I love you, and Sam loved you too."

I'm sure that my birth mother had a lifelong experience like the ones written about in the 2006 book, *The Girls Who Went Away*, written by Ann Fessler, an adult adoptee herself. I believe my birth mother was also the victim of an adoption system which demanded that unmarried girls and young women, who birthed children in the 1950's to the 1980's, give up their babies and "move on with their lives." The result for the vast majority of these individuals was substantial guilt and shame for a lifetime, with some of them keeping secret the knowledge of an earlier birth from spouses, friends, etc.

However, even given the separation associated with my adoption, I believe that my birth mother and I made peace with the past by coming together last summer. It was truly a reunion that FAR exceeded my expectations for what such a reunion would look like. And for that I am eternally grateful! ■



A Barker Tradition: Teen Weekend

A group of lively teenagers had a great time participating in Barker's Teen Connections program on Saturday, January 9, at the 4H Conference Center in Chevy Chase, Maryland. Led by clinicians Kristen Reighard and Seth Solondz, the teens enjoyed recreational activities and attended workshops designed to help them explore their feelings about adoption and adoptive identity. Here is what some attendees had to say about the program:

- "I loved being able to talk about adoption with other adopted kids."
- "I would change nothing about this program!"
- "I loved the nature vs. nurture activity we did, because it is creative and lets people get to know who you are."
- "At first I did not want to come, but when I got here I had a great time!"

If you are interested in future events for teens, please contact Director of Family and Post-Adoption Services, Varda Makovsky, at: vmakovsky@barkeradoptionfoundation.org. ■



Images from Winter 2016 Teen Weekend

AGENCY News & Notes

In September we said goodbye to **Katie Willhauck**, who served as Barker's International Program Assistant for three and a half years. Katie and her husband, Stephen, moved to upstate New York to be closer to their extended family. With the Katie's departure, we welcomed **Katie Quinn** to the position of International Program Assistant.

On November 16, our first floor suite was flooded. While there was significant loss, we are grateful that our files and computers were spared. Our determined staff didn't miss a beat, and services continued in Suite 700. While not as large as our first floor office, the temporary office allowed us to function in the same building, thus sparing us a much more challenging move. For that, we are grateful to Douglas Development. Insurance companies are still making final decisions, but meanwhile, all services are continuing!

The Barker Adoption Foundation hosts quarterly "Waiting Parent Meetings" as an opportunity for families to meet one another and learn about various parenting and adoption related topics. In January 2016, 15 couples filled our office to attend one of the most popular topics; prenatal history and its potential impacts on children's health and development.

Dr. Richard Newman, Barker board member, OB/GYN, and most notably, proud Barker father, presented to families waiting in our Domestic Infant program. He discussed the latest research surrounding prenatal care, substance exposure, and environmental factors that potentially affect the newborns. Dr. Newman offered the unique insight of 30 years of medical experience. Families had an opportunity to ask questions and gain a great sense of reassurance as they wait for that life-changing phone call.

Save the Date

Kids Groups – led by Kristen England Reighard and Seth Solendz, February 27 and March 5, Virginia office. Contact Varda Makovsky at vmakovsky@barkerfoundation.org for more information.

Seventieth Anniversary Gala – March 5, 6:30 PM, National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, DC

Annual Adoption & Foster Care Conference – March 19, 8:15 AM to 4:30 PM, the Universities at Shady Grove Conference Center, Rockville

Barker Book Club – April 4, 7:00 PM, Maryland office

Parent Workshop: “Telling the Adoption Story in the Grade School Years” – April 19, 7:00 PM, Maryland Office

Parent Workshop: “Raising Resilient “I CAN” Kids” – May 16, 7:00 PM, Maryland office

Annual Meeting – May 17, 7:00 PM, Maryland office

Barker Book Club – May 18, 7:00 PM, Maryland office

Barker Day at National Park – June 12, 4:00 PM, Washington Nationals vs. Philadelphia Phillies

Barker Family Picnic – September 18, 1:00 to 4:00 PM, Cabin John Regional Park

Ongoing Events

Parents of Adopted Adolescents And High School-Aged Teenagers – 1st Tuesday of month, 7:00 PM, Maryland office

Adoptive Parents In Open And Semi-Open Adoption Group – 1st Thursday of month, 7:00 PM, Maryland office

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

Older Child Adoption Support Group – 2nd Wednesday of month, 6:30 PM, Maryland office

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

Adopted Person’s Discussion Group – 3rd Thursday of month, 7:00 PM, Maryland office

Barker accepts donations made through CFC (38308) and United Way (8806). Please send a copy of your completed pledge form to Barker’s MD office, so that we can recognize your gift. Thank you!

THE
BARKER
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FOUNDATION SINCE 1945

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