

AUTUMN 2013

Barker Gives Support to New Adoption Legislation

On October 1, significant new adoption legislation took effect in Maryland, strongly supported by The Barker Foundation Board and Staff. The new legislation will greatly assist expectant mothers seeking to make an adoption plan who are unable to support themselves due to their medical circumstances. Maryland was one of the few states not permitting help with housing, food, clothing, and transportation, and the new revised law is patterned after the existing Virginia statute which allows assistance with reasonable and necessary expenses, as supported by a physician's note. The old statute, originally intended to protect prospective adoptive parents, had been rendered obsolete by unlicensed internet consortiums

that entice pregnant women to waive their Maryland rights in order to receive a multitude of services, while simultaneously offering adoptive parents few protections.

Given the increasing ethical concerns about unlicensed internet facilitators, Barker Executive Director & CEO Marilyn Regier contacted Maryland Delegate, Kathleen M. Dumais (D), to seek her assistance in addressing these concerns through legislative reform. Del. Dumais, Vice-Chair of the House Judiciary Committee, and an attorney and legislator with strong interests in family law, children's issues, and social justice, ultimately sponsored a new statute and gave compelling introductions of the bill in both the House and the Senate. Testifying for Barker were Marilyn

Regier, Executive Director/CEO; Lisa Hughes, Pregnancy Counselor; and Sarah Cesnik Mejac, Board of Trustees; as well as colleagues from Adoptions Together.

In her testimony, Dr. Regier stated: "Those of us trained as social workers are strongly focused on the social context of our clients. Yet as the adoption statute is currently structured in Maryland, we really cannot do that. We have little flexibility to meet even short-term or emergency needs of our clients. Often there is little congruence between what the clients need and what we are able to give. Into that reality, into that service vacuum have descended the internet facilitators, the consortiums, the dot coms." In her testimony before

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Celebrating the signing of HB 563 in Annapolis.

Front row, l to r: Mike Miller, President of the MD State Senate; Governor Martin O'Malley; and Michael Busch, Speaker of the Maryland House of Delegates.

Back row, l to r: Del. Kathleen M. Dumais; Barker Foundation staff: Lisa Hughes, Cecilia Racine, Marilyn Regier, and Sue Hollar; and Susan Ogden and Laura Teeter of Adoptions Together.





FROM THE *Executive Director*

Readers will note from our cover story that Barker has been busy in

Annapolis. We were mobilized to do so primarily because of the growing impact of the Internet on pregnancy counseling and infant domestic adoption. We live with the reality that we are an online nation, with the Internet a powerful force in adoption. Many of us remember when, close to twenty years ago, photolistings of waiting children first appeared on the web, initially to protests that agencies were "marketing children." President Clinton then used his position to call for expanded use of the Internet to shine a light on children waiting in the public foster care system. Over time, adoption professionals have come to realize that there are many benefits

to the Internet, which include a permanent family for many of the children featured in the photolistings.

Nonetheless, the negatives of the adoption-Internet mix require vigilance to assure best practices and ethical adoptions. This is a responsibility that we take very seriously at Barker. As international adoptions decrease, and as U.S. birthrates decline, prospective adoptive parents seeking to adopt an infant wait longer. It is at this juncture that profit-driven virtual facilitators have found a niche, and both expectant parents who are considering adoption, and also hopeful prospective adoptive parents, may fall prey to incredibly aggressive and enticing internet based marketing techniques.

That is why we journeyed to Annapolis. The new adoption statute will, under certain

circumstances, allow agencies like Barker to assist expectant mothers with tangible resources, which in turn helps to assure the delivery of healthier children. This is only part of the solution, though. We must continue to study the complicated and profound effects of the Internet on adoption, harness its power for good, and simultaneously educate our community about the negative consequences of aggressive financial incentives in the absence of professional counseling and lifelong supportive services for all in the adoption circle. These core values are still the hallmark of Barker's services.

Marilyn Regier

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the legislators, Lisa Hughes shared powerful examples from her work at Barker with pregnant women, many of whom have a dire need for housing.

Sarah Mejac provided riveting testimony from her multiple perspectives as a birth mother, adoptive parent, early childhood teacher, and adoption advocate. Noting that "it makes perfect sense that caring for the needs of the mother during pregnancy increases the health and well-being of her child," Sarah underscored the reality that "the current restrictions on reimbursing housing, living and necessary expenses mean that young women in Maryland who have serious financial difficulties may have to leave the State to afford the costs in giving birth while making their adoption plan. Prospective adoptive parents in Maryland wait even longer for a child when birth mothers opt to leave and have their children elsewhere."

Regier concluded her testimony by urging a favorable report on HB 563: "Let us then strive to provide reasonable resources and services *in Maryland* to Maryland women who are in crisis, so that they do not leave our state, but can rather benefit from the legal protections and ethical counseling so abundantly offered here."

Others lending support to the bill through written testimony were Adoption Attorney and member of the American Academy of Adoption Attorneys, Peter J. Wiernicki; and Barker Trustee,

Dr. Monika Walters, of Bethesda Pediatrics, an adoption medical specialist for the tri-state area. A coalition of The Barker Foundation and Adoptions Together staff members spent many hours in preparation for presentation of the statute.

The bill passed unanimously, with no amendments, in the House Judiciary Committee, the full House, the Senate Judiciary Committee, and the full Senate, and was signed into law by Governor Martin O'Malley on May 16, 2013.

Those readers interested in further understanding the environment in which expectant parents considering adoption now make decisions are referred to a December 2012 research and policy paper published by the Donaldson Adoption Institute in New York, "Untangling the Web: The Internet's Transformative Impact on Adoption."

Maryland Delegate Kathleen Dumais and Marilyn Regier, Executive Director of The Barker Foundation, enjoying a quiet moment after the ceremonial bill signing at the State House.

The Barker Foundation continues to provide strong counseling supports to expectant parents and their families, and the Birth Parent Support Group begun by Kate Coopersmith more than 20 years ago remains a unique and invaluable resource. Those seeking additional information about our counseling and support to birth parents may contact Cecilia Racine, Director of Domestic Programs, at cracine@barkerfoundation.org. ■



Filming “Building a Legacy”.... Behind the Lens with Barker Families

By Maureen Golden

Proposed Project

Develop a video that the Barker community could use to share information about the agency’s mission and recently-launched *Legacy II* campaign.

- **Videographer:** Quinn, a college student adopted through Barker as an infant
- **Photographer/Editor:** Maureen, Barker adoptive mom

Featured Participants

- Sarah, a woman who made the courageous decision to place her child for adoption
- Adoptive mom Christine and her daughter Aoife
- Korea adoptive parents Joe and Erika and their children Pascal and Chaerin

- China Waiting Child adoptive parents Alan and Lindy and their daughter Xiao Ya
- Project Wait No Longer adoptive parents Greg and Veda and their daughter Ebony
- Colombia Adoptee/Homeland tour participant Suzi
- Adoptive father John, his son Alexander, and grandchildren

When the Barker Endowment Steering Committee put out the call for a video to help launch its second endowment campaign, *Legacy II: The Next Generation*, the photographer in me knew just the right person to capture on video the concept of “Building A Legacy” – Quinn Wolverton, a 21-year-old film student and Barker adoptee.

During six months of planning and editing and over seven hours of unscripted filming, the stories,

insights, personal reflections, memories, and heartfelt hopes and dreams about what being touched by adoption means to the families we filmed – ourselves included – actually turned out to be the most precious and lasting of legacies we could ever have hoped to preserve.

One such poignant moment occurred while filming Erika and Joe’s two energetic children. Attempting to recapture their attention, I offered each child the chance to “interview” their parents. Standing with Quinn behind the camera, first one and then the other asked with great seriousness, “What is the best thing about being a family?” And Dad, followed by Mom, answered with equal seriousness to their by now very attentive interviewers, “Watching you grow up.”

It’s great when the process of creating a project is as special as the end result.



Quinn Wolverton with Pascal and Chaerin

What can you do to help?

Check our website in November during National Adoption Month to see the video and see how Barker and the families it serves are truly creating a legacy for the next generation.

Share the video with friends, family and anyone else who may be touched by adoption. ■

– With Sympathy –

We extend our heartfelt condolences to families who mourn the loss of the following loved ones:

- Ralph Ochsman, 7-3-12, father of Jeffrey (Linda) Ochsman
- Martin Raak, 9-15-12, father of Judy (Rick Heuwinkel) Raak
- Frances Freeman, 3-25-13, mother of John (Sally) Freeman
- Fred Freilicher, 3-27-13, husband of Miriam, father of Mollie and Louis
- Richard England, 4-1-13, husband of Lois, father of Nonie (Larry) Akman
- Les Scherr, 4-4-13, husband of Susan, father of Sloan and Nikki
- Audrey Perry, 5-31-13, mother of Nena, William, Richard, Aimee
- William Wittan, 7-14-13, father of Joan Wittan (Mark Schiffman)
- John Nairn, 8-19-13, father of Bruce (Cindy) and Sandra Bowes
- Evelyn Kaitz, 9-29-13, mother of Phyllis (Sam) Blum and Jean (Gary) Diamond

We are grateful to those who named *The Barker Foundation* as recipients of memorial gifts.

Barker’s Annual Conference Comes Early this Year!

The 2014 Adoption Conference will be held February 22nd at the Shady Grove Conference Center in Rockville, Maryland. By popular request, we reprise the theme of the 2009 Conference, *In Our Own Voices: Adoptees and Foster Youth Speak Out: Round II*. The “experts” serving as speakers and panelists will be those who have experienced life as an adopted person or a foster child/youth.

The keynote speaker will be dancer and actress Victoria Rowell, who co-starred for eight seasons on *Diagnosis Murder* with Dick Van Dyke, as well as fourteen seasons on *The Young and the Restless* as the iconic Drucilla Winters. In 2007 Rowell received critical acclaim for her memoir, *The Women Who Raised Me*, becoming a NYT bestselling author and receiving multiple awards.



Victoria Rowell, Keynote

Victoria served as spokesperson for the Annie E. Casey Foundation’s direct service arm, Casey Family Services, for thirteen years and remains passionate about raising awareness and advocating for foster and adopted youth.

Watch Barker’s website for further information about the conference program. ■

The Colombia Homeland Tour 2013

By Carlos and Sheila Nagy,
Barker/FANA parents

With a great deal of trepidation we were about to embark on a trip that our daughter – now age 20 – had so desperately wanted to take for the last two years. Why would we be so hesitant to return to the place that holds some of the best and dearest memories of our lives and the place where we became a family? Fear of the unknown had us guessing and afraid of how our daughter would respond to the wonders and highly emotional experiences that awaited her. How would she react after reading her adoption file and seeing a photograph of her birth mother for the first time? How would she feel knowing that it would be impossible to search for her birth mother during this trip even though she desired so much to do so? How would she feel seeing FANA and its beautiful children and knowing that this is where she came to us and where we became the family we are today? What would be her reaction to meeting and speaking to some of the mothers currently staying at the birth mothers' home? These and countless other questions that constantly came to us are what created our anxiety about taking this trip.

From the first day in Bogotá we knew we had made the right decision to bring our daughter back to her homeland. To witness her excitement and happiness at seeing Colombia for the very first time was an incredible experience. Barker families began the trip by going to Usaquen for sightseeing and shopping, and enjoying a great meal in the countryside. This was a perfect day for the teenagers to immediately start bonding together and a perfect respite to prepare all of us for the visit to FANA the very next day.

Experiencing FANA was awe-inspiring to say the least. What Mercedes Rosario de Martinez was able to create is a testament to a life filled with determination, care,



Tour participants spend time together at their hotel before enjoying a farewell dinner with FANA staff

love and devotion to children that will long be remembered as her legacy and is now so proudly being continued by her daughters Elena and Maria Lucia. The children at FANA were as excited to see us as we were about being there. We toured FANA, ate lunch with the staff, spent the afternoon playing with children, and met with Flor Angela Rojas to go over our daughter's file. We were also fortunate to see a Colombian family receive placement of their son during our visit. A special moment occurred when a FANA nurse ran down the hallway calling after tour participant Joe Megel by his Colombian name. Sixteen years later she still remembered and recognized Joe just from his lovely eyes. By the end of the day we were exhausted but grateful for what we had just shared together.

In anticipation of our visit with the mothers at the Hogar Marguerite d' Youville, FANA's home for birth mothers considering adoption, Sue Hollar and Carolina Kenrick spent time meeting with all the teenagers to prepare them for the conversations that would take place and the questions that could arise during the visit. We were so grateful for the counsel that Sue and Carolina offered our children before the trip and every night during the tour

when they would meet together as a group. They remained available at all times for our kids and the parents and were attentive to everyone's needs throughout the tour.

The visit to the Hogar was highly emotional. Our meeting with the mothers started out with everyone seated in a small room and soon the mothers were asking the kids some very poignant questions such as: Do you hold any resentment towards your birth mother? Do you want to find your birth mother? Please tell me about your lives, and are you happy? In turn the kids asked the mothers questions concerning their decision for choosing adoption and if they would like for their children to search for them. They all let the mothers know that they are happy and grateful for everything they have and that their birth mothers will always hold a special place in their hearts. There were many tears shed that afternoon, on both sides, but it was one of the best experiences of the entire trip. The children came away with a better understanding of their own mothers' decision and grateful that their mothers had been protected and cared for during their time at the home.

After two full days of emotional experiences, we spent the day at a coffee plantation on the outskirts of Fusagasuga, which was beautiful,

quiet, relaxing and offered the chance to unwind and to eat a great Colombian meal. During our tour in Bogotá, we also visited the Gold Museum, Botero Art Museum, walked in the historic colonial neighborhood of La Candelaria, participated in a fabulous guided tour of the presidential palace, and rode the cable car to the Santuario de Monserrate, which is located over 10,000 feet above sea level and offers an incredible panoramic view of the entire city of Bogotá. Of course, every time we turned around we were eating delicious food. Barker representative Maria Teresa de Perez made all of the arrangements for us and served as our tour guide during our stay. She could not have done a better job. Everything was taken care of and well organized, which allowed everyone to relax and enjoy the entire experience.

The last night in Bogotá we all had dinner together in celebration and were joined by Elena, her husband Cesar, Flor Angela and Maria Teresa de Maldonado. It was very special to be able to spend some personal time with them outside of FANA. They are all wonderful kind people, and we thoroughly enjoyed the meal and getting to know them better.

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Images of Annual Conference and Annual Meeting



Gary Rappaport (at podium), newly elected Chair of the Board, and Kathryn Bucher (seated at table), Immediate Past Chair, addressed the Barker community during the business portion of the Annual Meeting.

At right: John Duff, Former Chair of The Board of Trustees, presents Trustee Jelani Freeman with the Richard B. Barker Award at the Annual Meeting on May 14, 2013. Jelani's award reads: In recognition of his inspiring gifts of leadership in the child welfare field, his advocacy for children who must "wait no longer" for permanent homes, his supportive role with the Annual Conference and as a bridge to policy makers, and his strong constant presence as a member of the Barker family.



Above: Following a workshop on impact of the internet on adoption, John Duff, Rachel Firschein, Maureen Golden, and Pascal Luck engage in animated conversation.



Enjoying a conference break at the 4H Center are sisters (l to r) Amy Palumbo, Karen Brown, and Jen Fosko. Karen traveled from South Dakota and was welcomed by those who remembered her as Karen Shaw, formerly of the Barker social work staff.



Above: The second Barker Award was presented by Trustee John Freeman to Darrel Regier, "in deep appreciation of his wise professional guidance, generously given, his uncommon gifts of problem-solving, his transformative contributions to our international programs, and his sustained commitment to Barker's mission for four decades."



Above: As is so often the case at Barker Conferences, younger members of the adoption circle get the final word at the plenary panel on stage at the 4-H Center. L to R: Marilyn Regier, moderator, Marc Regier, Tessa Hersh, Joey Coffinberger, Rosalie Froom, Ashley Alford.



At left: David and Amy Rhodes celebrate with their daughters Aya, Tala, and Sarah after the Annual Meeting. Tala (center) addressed the crowd before introducing her family. The sisters, once featured on NBC4's Wednesday's Child, joined their adoptive family through *Project Wait No Longer*, and have become ardent advocates and spokespersons for others who wait for a family.

The Colombia Homeland Tour 2013

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We left our home filled with anxiety and returned charmed by Bogotá and its people, grateful, humbled and our hearts bursting with joy and love. Our daughter is extremely happy for having had the experience for which she had waited so long, and says she now feels

whole as a person. This was one of the greatest family experiences we have ever had, and we cherish every moment spent together.

Our Homeland Tour group consisted of David and Robin Megel, with their daughter Ana and son Joseph; James Stann and

Gerry Oliveto with their sons, James and Ruben; and our family, Carlos, Sheila and our daughter Elise Nagy. Barker representatives included Stefan Wilkinson – Youth Assistant; Sue Hollar – Associate Director; and Carolina Kenrick – International Program Coordinator. ■

For more information about Barker's next homeland tour, please contact Barker's Director of Post Adoption and Family Services, Varda Makovsky at vmakovsky@barkerfoundation.org.

Barker Welcomes Four New Trustees

In May, we were incredibly fortunate to welcome four new members to Barker's Board of Trustees. Each brings significant experience and a commitment to the agency's mission. Lorna Abernathy's experience includes two decades in marketing, financial planning, and budgeting for America Online (AOL) and Time Life, Inc. She is also President of LMMA, Inc., a Marketing

Consulting agency. Karen Brown is employed by the Department of Health and Human Services as a Branch Chief in Financial Management Services. Karen is also Co-Owner and CFO of Total Financial Independence (TFI), a real estate venture dedicated to providing rental opportunities to low income residents. Jonathan Gimblett is a partner in the law firm of Covington & Burling LLP, where

his practice focuses on international arbitration and antitrust law. He received his J.D. from Georgetown University Law Center in 2004, where he continues to teach as a member of the adjunct faculty, and a B.A. in History from Cambridge University in 1987. Christopher Young is a Principal in Deloitte Consulting. He is a graduate of George Washington University, where he continues to mentor and

recruit students. He is a current member of the School of Business Dean's Advisory Council and has served as the President of the GW Alumni Association. Unanimously elected and heartily welcomed to the Board, Lorna, Karen, Jonathan, and Chris are all proud parents of children who joined their families by adoption. ■



Lorna Abernathy



Karen Brown



Jonathan Gimblett



Christopher Young

AGENCY *News & Notes*

A warm welcome to the following talented staff who recently joined Barker: **Alexandra Altman**, *Project Wait No Longer* Placement Coordinator; **Anna Beers**, *PWNL* Program Assistant; **Ebony Davis**, Pregnancy Counselor; **Heather Gleason**, Director of Development; and **Maricela Metraux**, Domestic Program Assistant. We also welcome back **Varda Makovsky** as Director of Post Adoption and Family Services. Varda is well-known to the Barker family as the Post-Adoption Director from 2008–2010, and most recently as a contract social worker providing home study and post-placement services. **Eliza Niemann**, also well-known for her tenure as Director of Domestic Programs,

is now Clinical Specialist, International Programs. **Lisa Hughes**, who served as Barker's pregnancy counselor for two years, has been appointed to the newly created position of Domestic Family Specialist.

Congratulations to **Katie Willhauck** (nee Peeso), International Program Assistant, who married Stephen Willhauck at an outdoor ceremony in Virginia on July 13th.

Please send your current email addresses to **Heather Gleason**, Development Director, hgleason@barkerfoundation.org. You will help us go green and save postage on certain communications. Thank you!

Barker's Annual Family Picnic

The weather was perfect but the company of the Barker families was even nicer! Hundreds were on hand on May 19th to enjoy burgers, hotdogs, playground rides and a feeling of reunion at Barker's annual family picnic at Cabin John Park in Maryland. Those who attended the event were warmly greeted by staff and volunteers. Kathie Lehner, domestic program assistant, said,

"Attending the picnic provided a wonderful opportunity to celebrate with Barker families. As staff, we do not often have the privilege of spending time with the families after placement. It was heartwarming to see the glowing faces of our families as they proudly introduced their children. It was also a great pleasure to watch Barker families connect with one another." ■



Scott, Greg and Cameron – three boys placed with *Project Wait No Longer* families – enjoyed fun times together at Barker's picnic.

Take Me Out to the Ballgame

Barker Board members, staff and their families, and Barker friends from the business community attended *Barker Day at Nationals Baseball Park* on Sunday, June 23. While the Nationals lost to the Colorado Rockies, Barker was a big winner.

The 150 guests yelled cheers when Barker was recognized with the Nationals Spirit Award. Executive Director & CEO Marilyn Regier, and Board members John Duff, John Freeman and Jelani Freeman walked out on the field to accept the award and waved to the 40,000 sell-out stadium crowd while they were projected on the jumbo screen scoreboard and the agency's mission was described. The Nationals' 7-foot

tall eagle mascot, "Screech," gave Marilyn Regier a hug and posed with the Board members. What a big hit!

Barker friends and family members were welcomed again on the scoreboard between the 4th & 5th innings; and after the game, a number of young children from the Barker fan group went down to the field to run the bases. A great time was had by all.

Barker Day at Nationals Park provided wonderful promotion for the agency's important mission to build families through respectful, child-centered adoption practices. Six Board members and fourteen business sponsors made this fun afternoon possible and a financial success for Barker. ■



Barker representatives wave to the sell-out crowd while their images are projected on the scoreboard. Left to right, John Freeman, Marilyn Regier, John Duff, and Jelani Freeman.

At right: Bev Clarke, Director of *Project Wait No Longer*, enjoys a day at the park with nephew Edgar, daughters Zayna and Zamara, and husband Michael.



At far right: Bob and Beth Kirby get ready to cheer on one of their favorite teams. The Kirbys and Mary Reyner helped organize the terrific event.



Congratulations to Our New Adoptive Families

Bethany & Mike welcomed Anabel
 Crystal & Gary welcomed Zachariah & Ryan
 Michelle welcomed Maria-Lucille
 Lauren & John welcomed Nathan
 Daniela & Matthias welcomed Emilia
 Leslie & Blake welcomed Phoebe
 Allison & Ian welcomed Tre
 Michelle & Wesley welcomed
 Eleanor & Henry
 Beth welcomed Miles
 Connie & Emma welcomed Keelyn
 Kaadze welcomed Lucas
 Matt welcomed Aaron
 Kevin & Rebekah welcomed Judah

Melissa welcomed Sophie
 Tulin & Mark welcomed Sevgi
 Taruna & Don welcomed Katelyn
 Tricia & Dan welcomed Robin
 Shane & Juliet welcomed Quinn
 Sarah & Jeff welcomed Owen
 James & Rosario welcomed Matias
 Michael & Jill welcomed Riyan
 John & Joanna welcomed Kai
 Kiran & Smriti welcomed Meera
 Daniel & Fonda welcomed Addison
 Tony & Gigi welcomed Grayson
 Bret & Deborah welcomed Clare
 Joseph & Stacey welcomed Eva

Vinni & Shareen welcomed Avi & Jai
 Ajayanand & Sonali welcomed Aanya
 Harish & Nelle welcomed Bharat
 Mike & Jennifer welcomed Hwijun
 Phil & Ann welcomed Seohun
 Walter & Lisa welcomed Ashlee
 Missy welcomed Jasmine
 John & Angela welcomed Adrian
 Hilary & Daniel welcomed Kevin
 Nancy welcomed Keijer
 Spencer & Debra welcomed Ashley
 Louis welcomed Jager
 Ulises & Meg welcomed Daisy,
 Jonathan & Jose

Save the Date

The 20th Annual Conference – Saturday, February 22, 9 AM-4:30 PM. The Universities at Shady Grove Conference Center, Rockville, Maryland. For more information, visit our website: www.barkerfoundation.org

Kids' Groups for children in grades 1-5 – Saturday, March 15th, and Saturday, March 22nd, at Barker's Bethesda office. For more information and to register visit our website at www.barkerfoundation.org

Parents of Adopted Adolescents Discussion Group – 2nd Tuesday of month, 7 PM

PWNL: Older Child Adoption Support Group – 2nd Wednesday of month, 6:30-8:30 PM

Birth Parent Support Group – 2nd Thursday of month, 7 PM

Adopted Persons' Discussion Group – 3rd Thursday of month, 7 PM

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
FOUNDATION since 1945

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