

SPRING 2015

Annual Conference Ushers in 70th Anniversary Year



Michaela Pereira, Keynote Speaker

As befits an agency known for its adoption education, Barker's first major event of the 70th Anniversary year will be the Annual Adoption and Foster Care Conference. Scheduled for March 21, 2015, at the Universities at Shady Grove Conference Center, Rockville, Maryland, the conference features a wonderful mix of national speakers and inspirational panels. Under the thematic banner of *The Commitment of a Lifetime: The Adoption Journey*, the conference promises to speak to both the mind and the heart.

Keynote speaker is **Michaela Pereira**, an award-winning news anchor for CNN's morning show, *New Day*. Adopted as an infant, Michaela has become a passionate advocate for all adoptees, foster children, and at-risk youth. She recently returned to Jamaica, the birth place of her birth father, as part of the CNN "Roots" project. While she has covered news stories on many major issues, surely no subject is closer to her heart than that of adoption.

Renowned for his longitudinal research on openness in adoption, **Dr. Harold Grotevant** of University of Massachusetts Amherst will honor us with two lectures. Through the generosity of The Robin B. Allen Memorial Fund, he will present "Navigating Open Adoption from Placement to Young Adulthood," which derives from the Minnesota/Texas Adoption Research Project. Dr. Grotevant and his colleagues have

followed 190 adoptive families and 169 birth mother (who have had varying degrees of openness and contact), since the study began in the mid-1980s. The results are sure to be relevant to all members of the adoption circle, as well as to professionals in the field. He will also offer a workshop on "Adoptive Identity: What Difference Can Open Adoption Make?"

Back by popular demand from the Chicago area are adoption therapist, **Judith Stigger**, and her son, **Aaron Stigger**. At Barker's 2011 Conference, the Stiggers brought profound insights to the audience, and this year's sessions promise no less. Speaking on NPR and NBC, they have highlighted the issues of transracial families.

Those with a special interest in older child adoption will not want to miss the presentation by **Lisa Highfield**, founder of Healing Hearts, and her co-presenter, **Cristen Shepherd**. Traveling from

*The Commitment
of a Lifetime*
THE ADOPTION JOURNEY



Canada, they offer the Washington area a rare opportunity to hear these authors and counselors.

Other presenters include **Joan Wittan**, an independent educational consultant, who will offer adoptive parents strategies for fostering their children's independence; **Varda Makovsky**,
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Harold Grotevant



Judy Stigger



FROM THE *Executive Director and CEO*

Once every five years, Barker celebrates an often-called “milestone year” with an array of special events throughout the year. Having now been a part of this wonderful organization for over twelve years, I have enjoyed participating in a number of these special anniversaries.

Another such milestone year is now upon us! Barker marks the 70th anniversary of its 1945 founding throughout 2015 and into the early months of 2016. Seventy years is a remarkably long life for a non-profit adoption agency; indeed, we can count on one hand the number of similar agencies who have such an enduring history. To mark the 70th anniversary, we have

planned a number of special events, some serious, others more social. All are designed to inspire and foster connections within the Barker community, as well as within our wider community.

For these events to be successful, we will surely need your volunteer spirit. Our dedicated staff is small in numbers. During this special year, I also hope that you will give thought – if you have not already done so – to contributing to our second endowment campaign, *Legacy II: The Next Generation*, so that seventy years from now, our children and grandchildren will be celebrating many years of seamless service to children and families in our sphere of service and influence.

At these special times, I am reminded of someone’s observation that ceremonies are “the punctuation marks of life, which help us to pause and possess our lives, rather than simply being rushed along by them.” So, with all the gratitude of one who is both an adoptive parent and an adoption professional, I invite each of you to pause, reflect, and celebrate this 70th anniversary year, while also rededicating your volunteer energies and your financial resources to the work of ensuring that Barker is there for the generations yet to come.

Marilyn Regier

Annual Conference Ushers in 70th Anniversary Year

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Lisa Highfield

Barker’s Director of Post-Adoption Services, highlighting openness in international adoption; **Sue Hollar**, Associate Director, who together with panelists will speak to the challenges of sibling adjustment when a new child by adoption enters the family; and **Ann Morrison**, Director of the Infant Domestic Program, who will moderate a panel on engaging extended family in support of adoption. Always inspiring, a birth parent panel moderated by **Leslie LeBlanc**, who facilitates Barker’s Birth Parent Support Group, and **Lisa Hughes**, Family Specialist, will share their unique perspectives on the evolving birth parent role.



Aaron Stigger

The conference will conclude with a plenary panel moderated by Executive Director, **Marilyn Regier**, “The Last Word: Our Experts



Joan Wittan

Reflect on Conference Themes and Challenge Us.” Throughout the day, our popular book tables will be open for browsing and purchases.

The conference is made possible through the generosity of our wonderful sponsors. We express our deepest gratitude to **CohnReznick; Chesapeake Management Group; Gary D. Rappaport; Neighborhood Development Company; RBC Wealth Management; Linowes and Blocher, LLP; the Minehan-Luck family; and an anonymous donor.**

To register, please see the Barker website homepage, www.BarkerAdoptionFoundation.org, and scroll to the “Barker Spotlight,” where you may download the brochure or register. For more information, email: info@barkeradoptionfoundation.org. ■

Join Us for Barker’s Colombia Homeland Tour

If you have children between the ages of 11 and 25 who were adopted through FANA, the time may be right for your family to visit FANA and Bogotá. There are still a few spaces available for Barker’s June 20–27, 2015 Colombia Homeland Tour, which includes a visit to FANA and the

Hogar (the home for pregnant women considering adoption). In addition, families will have an opportunity to experience Colombia’s rich culture, touring Bogotá, visiting galleries, open-air markets, a coffee plantation, and so much more. The Tour, led by Sue Hollar and Carolina

Kenrick, is designed as a family trip, with parents accompanying their children. If you would like more information about Barker’s 2015 Colombia Homeland Tour, please contact Sue Hollar at shollar@barkerfoundation.org or 301-664-9664. We hope you can join us! ■

A Magical Evening at the Colombian Ambassador's Residence

The night was crisp and the stars were out, parents came home early from work, children and youth were transformed in beautiful formal wear, musicians were playing as the crowd arrived, and NBC4 and Barbara Harrison were there to film. The occasion was the Novena Navidena on December 16, 2014, at the historic residence of the Ambassador of Colombia, Luis Carlos Villegas, and Mrs. Carmela de Villegas. Together with the Ambassador's staff, seventy-five Barker Colombian adoptees and their families had been invited as the Ambassador's special holiday



Clare Jessey enjoyed conversing in Spanish with Ambassador Villegas at the Novena.

guests. Representing Barker staff were Sue Hollar, Carolina Kenrick, and Marilyn Regier.

Barker families were warmly welcomed as they arrived. Many of our families and youth put their Spanish to wonderful use! After the readings and songs concluded in the gorgeous ballroom space with vaulted ceilings, Ambassador Villegas spoke briefly of how meaningful the evening was, and he particularly welcomed the Barker families. He invited Executive Director, Marilyn Regier, to the podium, where she thanked the Ambassador for opening his residence and invited the Barker families to rise, at which point they were roundly applauded. Marilyn then added that Barker places great emphasis on maintaining cultural connections, including through the Homeland Tour. She invited

Carolina to add her thanks in Spanish, which Carolina did in her very special and gracious way.

After desserts, families lingered, enjoying the hospitality of the Colombian people, as well as reunions with Barker families.

Clare Jessey, now a first year student at the Rhode Island School of Design, expressed her feelings this way:

"Celebrating the Christmas novena at the Colombian Ambassador's residence was a memorable evening for many reasons, but my most special memory was meeting and talking with Ambassador Villegas. I gathered up the nerve to introduce myself in Spanish, to show him how proud I am to be Colombian, but I had nothing to worry about because he was so approachable and friendly. He even asked me if we should take a selfie, and we did! I also really enjoyed reconnecting with some other FANA adoptees I hadn't seen since we visited FANA to celebrate its 35th anniversary about 7 years ago. The other memory I will hold onto for a long time was participating in the novena prayers and songs. That was a first for me, and it made me feel even closer to my birth country and culture. Thank you, Barker!"

James Stann, who together with his family participated in last year's



Pictured, left to right: Carolina Kenrick, Kathy Bucher, Marilyn Regier, Clare Jessey, Steve Jessey

Homeland Tour, also found the evening special:

"I enjoyed the Novena Navidena because we were able to take part in a cultural celebration that was obviously very special to the members of the Embassy staff, their families, and friends. Everyone joined in the songs and listened to the readings. The musicians were

excellent. Afterwards, it was nice that Ambassador Villegas mingled with us and took pictures with the Barker families. He and I talked about soccer, and especially about my favorite Colombian player, James Rodríguez. I was happy to see some friends from the 2013 Barker Homeland Tour and from
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Barker Staff, Carolina Kenrick, Marilyn Regier, and Sue Hollar conclude a beautiful evening with a photo with their host, Ambassador Villegas.



Hope and Jack Dennis dressed in their finest at the Ambassador's residence!

A Magical Evening at the Colombian Ambassador's Residence

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the Barker Teen Program. I am glad I went, and I hope they do this again next year!"

Barker father, Mike Dame, was there with his six-year-old son, Sam, and reflected on the evening:



Even our younger children seemed to be enjoying putting on their finest and meeting up with friends. (left to right) Elena Rath, Lilliana Rath, Sam Dame.

"Sam and I were honored to attend the Novena Navidena, at the Colombian Ambassador's official residence. It was a wonderful evening with beautiful songs and prayer in preparation for Christmas.

Sam really enjoyed the experience especially with his [Barker] friends, Elena and Lilliana Rath. The Novena brought back so many memories. It was exactly five years before the Novena that my wife, Bethany, and I prepared to depart Colombia with Sam as his new parents, following our month-long stay in Bogota. We so enjoyed learning about Colombia and its culture. The day following the Novena was the fifth anniversary of Sam's becoming a U.S. citizen, when he passed through Immigration at Dulles Airport. While his citizenship changed, he will always be Colombian. It is so reassuring that his country of birth still views him as Colombian, too."



James Stann, shown here on a recent college visit, enjoyed his time speaking with Ambassador Villegas at the Novena.

Colombia was Barker's very first international program, and the Board, Staff, and Barker community are deeply committed to keeping our children's culture alive. The unforgettable event at the Ambassador's Residence surely did just that. ■

Congratulations to Our New Adoptive Families

Sonia welcomed Josie

Jon & Laura welcomed Alexander

Dan & Rachel welcomed Gretchen

Adam & Laura welcomed Benjamin

Nicolas & Myriam welcomed Luc

Chris & Julia welcomed Michael

Marty & Gina welcomed Austin

Barry & Beth welcomed Bryce

Andy & Natalie welcomed Matthew

John & Michael welcomed Rosario

Ken & Jennifer welcomed Sascha

Dave & Amy welcomed Pierce

Kurt & Robin welcomed Isabella

Barry & Michele welcomed Marcus

Brian & Margaret welcomed Summer

Kyle & Soma welcomed James

Bryce and Mavryn welcomed Hikma

Lynda welcomed Leah and Lauren

Russell and Yolanda welcomed Kimani

Sally and Andy welcomed Isaiah,
Nyima and Catrina

Salvatore & Penny welcomed Jiana

Matthew & Maura welcomed Genevieve

Mary Fran welcomed Kai

Gus & Liann welcomed Kendall

Andrew & Paula welcomed Emma

Robert & Dawn welcomed Ella

Seth & Katie welcomed Cecily

Steve & Patti welcomed Daniel

John & Holly welcomed Cooper

Ethan & Laura welcomed Zoe

Ajay & Neelam welcomed Sia

Desikan & Vaishali welcomed Jay

Steven & Leana welcomed Benjamin

Norm & Heather welcomed Sophia

Mark & Karen welcomed Kai

Tracy & Amy welcomed Saphron-Eun

Brian & Monica welcomed Adam

Brent & Jennifer welcomed Jacob

Jeffrey & Allyson welcomed Michael

Patrick & Melissa welcomed Charles

Scott & Heather welcomed Seana

Patrick & June welcomed Jai

Calvin & Annie welcomed Elliot

Erik & Emily welcomed Elijah

Alexander & Meredith welcomed Moncef

Duane & Kristen welcomed Rebuma

Michael & Sandra welcomed Lucas

Jeffrey & Marie welcomed Michael

Caleb Brenner Speaks of Adoption at His Bar Mitzvah

Note: The following passage is excerpted from Caleb Brenner's longer presentation on the occasion of his Bar Mitzvah. Caleb is the son of Drs. Richard and Andrea Brenner.

... In Exodus, a Hebrew baby named Moses was born to Jochebed and her husband Amram, who were unable to take care of their child, as they were fearful that their baby would be killed or enslaved by the Egyptians. They made a desperate choice to place Moses in a watertight basket and send him down the Nile, near the spot where Pharaoh's daughter bathed. It truly pained them to let their son go, but they had faith that God would lead Moses to a more fortunate family. Moses was born a Jew, became an Egyptian through adoption, and was later able to lead the Jews out of Egypt because of his identified position among both of these peoples.

Like Moses, I too was adopted. I was born in Kwangju, South Korea. My birth parents, like Jochebed and Amram, were faced with a difficult decision to let their son go in order to bring him into an environment where he could succeed throughout his life. My birth parents were not in a position to take care of a baby that had come into their lives. Adoption is one of the hardest decisions for anyone to make, but it is one of the most selfless decisions, as well. Both Moses' birth parents and my birth parents made their decisions out of the love they had for their son.

Today I find myself to be in a unique situation as an Asian American Jew standing on the bima today. I am one of the few at my temple. Many of my new friends at school were surprised when they found out that I was Jewish, and some of them might not have known until they received my Bar Mitzvah invitation.

Like Moses, I too have multiple identities. I am American. I am Korean. I am Jewish. I am an adoptee. These different identities



Caleb Brenner at Temple Sinai on the occasion of his Bar Mitzvah

have helped me throughout my life as they did for Moses by welcoming me into diverse communities. I have been fortunate to be able to use my many different experiences within these communities, whether at my Jewish sleep-away camp, or at my Korean language and culture class, to capture the perspectives of different groups and combine them to form my own opinions.

It is now January 2015, and to this day, Americans are still divided by race and social class. Those of us who are fortunate enough to be a part of multiple communities can act as bridges, and help bring together people of different groups.

For my Bar Mitzvah service project, I wanted to commit myself to a topic that held meaning to me. When I thought about the important aspects of my life which influence who I am today, the first thing that came to mind was my adoption.

For this reason, I've spent two afternoons each week for the last several months volunteering at The Barker Adoption Foundation, a non-profit organization that helped to create my family. Some days when I work there, I simply file and make

copies of adoption documents for social workers. Other days, I have helped organize papers for Barker's information sessions for parents looking to adopt children. Most importantly, I have helped to lead workshops for 1st and 2nd graders by teaching the kids how to talk positively about their own adoption stories.

I am unique because of my multiple identities, but it is not enough to make a difference. In

order to create change and unite diverse communities, those of us with multiple identities must step forward to lead, even if like Moses, we are fearful, or question what we have to offer. We must not forget that Moses was still chosen and was able to make a difference, not only for the Jews that he freed from Egypt, but also for the generations that followed. ■

Caleb Brenner

AGENCY *News & Notes*

We are delighted to welcome **Kate Simpson, MSW**, who joined the staff as Pregnancy Counselor, providing counselling and support to expectant parents, birth parents and their families. Kate brings to Barker expertise in maternal and child health and experience working with unaccompanied minor refugees and survivors of abuse.

The Barker Board of Trustees and Staff send sincere thanks to our Board Chair, **Gary Rappaport**;

to **Norman Jemal** and **Douglas Development**; and to **Gerald Smith** and **Debbie Charles** of **Smith-Charles Associates** for their generosity in helping us refurbish our Bethesda office. After ten years, the suite looked quite worn, but now we work in a bright and beautiful space that inspires us each day! We are very grateful for the donations that made this possible. We invite you to come and visit the refurbished offices.

The Long Road Home

Hikma first came to the attention of the Project Wait No Longer (PWNL) program at Barker in September of 2014. She was an 8½ year old girl, who was initially adopted from Ethiopia, but sadly, her adoption was disrupting. She had already been through so much in her short life and was now in a strange country, losing the only connection she had. An initial review of the waiting families in PWNL did not result in any potential matches for Hikma. The PWNL team was, however, determined to do all that they could to find her a forever family.

“There was just something about her story, the description of her personality and her eyes, that drew us all in,” said Beverly Clarke, the PWNL Program Director. Her staff immediately went to work creating a “child specific” recruitment plan for Hikma. They reached out to the Barker community as a whole, to prospective families at general information meetings, and created flyers that were distributed at recruitment events. Another PWNL family saw Hikma’s information and immediately decided to share it with their

friends, Bryce and Mavryn Cooper, who had previously adopted children from Ethiopia.

The Coopers recall reading these words about Hikma on the flyer:

“Hikma is an 8½ year old girl adopted from Ethiopia at the age of 7. She is described as bright and cheery, as you can tell from her beautiful smile! She loves soccer, singing and horses. Hikma speaks some English. She likely didn’t receive formal education in Ethiopia, so she has some academic delays. However, Hikma enjoys school and her best subject is math! She would greatly benefit from supports, like tutoring and a family willing to advocate for her educational needs, to get her caught up to her peers. The best family for Hikma would have a patient and flexible parenting style and an understanding of the impact of trauma on children. Hikma will also need a family willing to seek therapeutic supports as she adjusts to the transition of placement with a new family and grieves all that she has lost.”



Left to Right: Hikma, Eyerus, Tsion with Parents Bryce and Mavryn

If you think that you could be the family that we are seeking for Hikma, please call us for more information.”

After much discussion and prayer, the Coopers “made the call” to Barker for more information. Beverly recalls, “Mavryn called and shared with me that they had been considering adopting another child, but did not know when or how this would happen. When they heard about Hikma, they felt certain that she was supposed to be their

daughter. The Coopers were exactly the family that we were looking for – a family that truly had the experience, knowledge, and desire to be a parent to a child who had experienced so much loss.”

This call was the start to a whirlwind of paperwork, visits, and activity that led to Hikma’s finally joining her family in November of 2014 and finalizing her adoption in February of 2015.

The Coopers are now a family of five. They have their ups and downs like any other family, but their house is full of unconditional love and acceptance. Beverly shared, “This is what Barker is all about. We believe that every child deserves a loving family, and we are never willing to give up! We love getting pictures from the Coopers – every smile is worth a thousand words.” The Coopers know that they are just at the beginning of their journey, that they will have many challenges ahead, and will face them together because everyone is clear that Hikma has finally found her way home. ■

Honoring our Cradle Care Families

With a holiday-themed brunch featuring delicious food prepared by our domestic staff, Barker celebrated its Cradle Care families on December 4, 2014. This annual gathering recognizes the deep commitment of families who love and care for Barker babies before they are introduced to their adoptive parents at placement, or are reunited with their birth parents – a crucial piece of the adoption process that is sometimes overlooked.

The event was a joyous occasion for our Cradle Care families to reunite, socialize with staff, and catch up with Cradle Care Coordinator, Beth Kirby. It also served as a safe space to support

one another emotionally. After a birth parent signs a consent to adoption, it can take between one



Cradle Care mother, Janice Quinn

week and thirty days (depending on the jurisdiction) to become irrevocable. In this interim period, the infant lives with one of Barker’s Cradle Care families and is loved and cared for as one of their own. At the December meeting, Director of Domestic Infant Programs, Ann Morrison, facilitated a discussion on the natural attachment that develops during this time, and the grief families feel when these infants leave.

Cradle Care families shared the immense joy of welcoming a newborn into their home – whether it be in an “empty nest” left behind by adult children, or a home still filled with children eager to help care for a little one. Families

described the difficulties of unconditionally loving a child without knowing the circumstances of their placement, and the uncertainty of not always knowing what becomes of them later in life. The strength, commitment, and emotional vulnerability shown by each of our Cradle Care families when they welcome a Barker baby is not for everyone – but they all agree that each baby takes a piece of their heart with them when they leave, and that’s how they know they’ve done their job right. ■

Maricela Mertraux

Barker Celebrates the Year of the Goat/Sheep/Ram!

Lunar New Year is a traditional Asian holiday that ushers out an old year and welcomes the arrival of a new one. Through centuries of agrarian tradition, Lunar New Year was the one period of the year when farmers could rest from their work in the fields to visit family and loved ones. And, today, even as this region undergoes rapid change in so many aspects of society, people still travel far and wide to celebrate the Lunar New Year with loved ones.

This year, over 125 members of the Barker family traveled from around the Washington, D.C. region to celebrate the Lunar New Year in the company of friends and family at Hollywood East Cafe. Most of the families in attendance had adopted children through Barker's China or Korea programs; one had returned home as recently as December 2014! Some "travel groups" reunited with their children several years after sharing a life-changing trip to form their families. A traditional Chinese banquet was served and an acrobatic lion and drum troupe dance entertained many (and overwhelmed some of the littlest guests!) Many children and families also posed in their traditional dress in a pop-up photo studio.

In addition to the celebration, the event was a fundraiser to support Barker's China Waiting



Cailin Huffman and Andrew and Clara Gimblett were enthusiastic participants in the Lunar New Year celebration. The event served as a reunion for the Gimblett and Huffman families, who traveled to China together in 2010 to welcome Andrew and Cailin into their families.

Child program. Specifically, money raised will help purchase new cribs for the 26 special needs infants and toddlers residing in Barker's partner orphanage in Hezhou province. Barker parents Steve and Carolee Inskeep graciously shared their

inspirational story of adopting their daughter through Barker's China Waiting Child program in 2012.

As one Barker parent commented, the best part of the event was the "spirit and happiness of everyone being together" – much

like the many Lunar New Year celebrations happening around the world. In honor of a centuries old traditional holiday, it seems that a new Barker tradition has been born. Happy New Year! ■

Heather Mayes Gleason



Far left: Barker Board Member, Nicole Adams, and her four-year-old daughter, Sadie share their love of Korea at Barker's Lunar New Year Celebration

Left: Following a bountiful Chinese feast and festive Dragon Dance, Xiao Ya Heymann and Ana Inskeep take a break to celebrate their friendship and their shared Chinese heritage.

Save the Date

“The Commitment of a Lifetime: The Adoption Journey” Barker’s 70th Anniversary Conference – Saturday, March 21, 9 AM to 4:30 PM, The Universities at Shady Grove Conference Center, Rockville, Maryland. Register online at www.barkeradoptionfoundation.org

Spring Kids Groups – May 2nd and May 9th. Grades K–5. Falls Church Office. Register online at www.barkerfoundation.org or contact Varda Makovsky at postadopt@barkerfoundation.org for more information.

Annual Meeting – Tuesday, May 26, 7 PM, Bethesda Office

PRIDE After Placement Training – Friday, May 29th, 6:30 PM, Bethesda Office. For more information or to register, contact Anna Beers at abeers@barkerfoundation.org

Barker Day at National Park – Sunday, June 7, 2:30 PM. Washington Nationals vs. Chicago Cubs

Columbia Homeland Tour – June 20 to 27. For more information or to register, contact Sue Hollar at shollar@barkerfoundation.org

Barker Family Picnic – Sunday, September 27, 1 to 4 PM, Cabin John Regional Park.

Ongoing Events

Parents of Adopted Adolescents and High School Aged Teens (13–17) Support Group – 1st Tuesday of month, 7 PM, Bethesda Office

Parents of Adopted Young Adults (18+) Discussion Group – 2nd Tuesday of month, 7 PM, Bethesda Office

Older Child Adoption Discussion Group – 2nd Wednesday of month, 6:30 to 8:30 PM, Bethesda office

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

Adoptive Parents in Open and Semi-Open Adoption Discussion Group – 1st Thursday of month, 7:30 PM, Bethesda Office

Adopted Person’s Discussion Group – 3rd Thursday of month, 7 PM, Bethesda 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
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FOUNDATION SINCE 1945

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