



**CARING HOMES
FOR ORPHAN CHILDREN**

HOMeward BOUND

The Caring Homes for Orphan Children

Newsletter



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Our Adoption Journey

By Heather Hall of Ottawa.

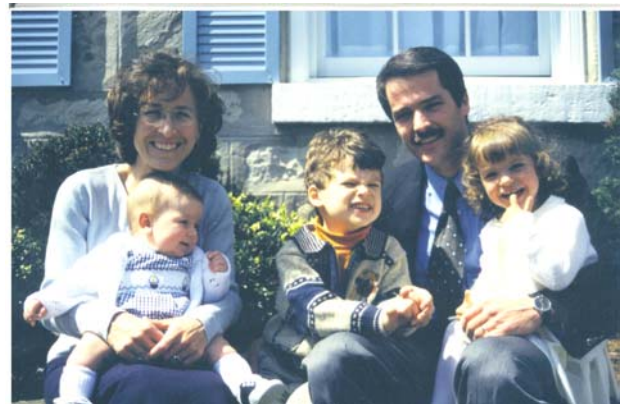
It is a joy for us to reminisce about our adoption story. Peter and I had been married for five years when we began to look into adoption. We shed many tears as we came to grips with the fact that we might never bear a child. After much prayer and soul searching we realized it was much more important to us to be parents than to “have a baby”.

We looked into domestic and foreign adoption and thought about all the children overseas waiting for loving parents to bring them home. After much inquiring we decided to follow the international adoption route. Little did we know what a roller coaster ride we would be on for the next 14 months. We came home from Russia with a beautiful 11 month old boy, ten days before Christmas, and everyone who had been praying for us and encouraging us over the time breathed a sigh of relief.

Twelve months later, we felt compelled to begin the process again. Some of our friends thought we were crazy, but we realized the process could be a long one and we so wanted several children. It was Christmas 2000 when we again began researching international agencies. Much had changed in 12 months and now agencies were being required to be licensed both in Ontario and Russia.

We zeroed in on **Caring Homes for Orphan Children** very quickly and were reassured that we were in good hands after meeting with agency director, Arnie Gotfryd for an hour or so one morning. We signed up in the middle of February having already met with our social worker in late January. By April 10th our home study was at the Ministry and we waited to hear of our approval. Once it came, around May 19th, things started going at a breakneck speed. Having gone through the process once before, we knew what needed to be done and knew how to expedite the process.

As fast as we got our international paperwork to Arnie he got back to us with more things to do. Our dossier was ready to go by the middle of June and we prepared to wait 2-4 weeks for an invitation from the Russian authorities. Only a week and a half later we were invited to come on either the 9th or 16th of July. Because of Peter’s work demands we waited until the 16th and traveled with another couple to Moscow.



For us it was incredible to be returning to the city of our son’s birth. This time we had requested a girl and two days later, on our 8th anniversary, we sat in the Ministry of Education office and were presented with a little, very little girl, Yelena. We were told she had been born at just under two pounds and though we were delighted by a picture of her, our hearts dropped a little that night as we read about the prognosis even in Canada for premies.

The next day we traveled to the orphanage with the Canadian doctor who told us on the way he didn’t hold too much hope. He had never heard of a child so small surviving there. When our little girl – sixteen months old and 17 lbs. was handed to us we felt exactly the same way we had with Andrew – she’s perfect!! Even green eyes like her brother! The doctor was amazed at her development, especially considering her prematurity as well as



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the lack of one on one attention at the orphanage. She was walking holding an adult's hand or cruised around the furniture, and showed no signs of vision or hearing problems or cerebral palsy. The doctor saw no reason to say "no" to this recommendation and after another evening of thought and prayer we said "yes".



We named our little girl Erika Elaine – a name we had had in mind for years – incredibly 'Elaine' is the English equivalent of 'Yelena'. We had two more visits with our little girl, as well as a day of paperwork in, and a great tour of, downtown Moscow. That night we ended the day off eating at McDonald's!

When we returned home we showed our video to our family and they quickly fell in love with our Erika Elaine. We waited for several weeks before being invited to return to Moscow for our court date. We left on Aug. 29th and were able to visit Erika four times. The weather had changed from 35 C in June (with no air condition anywhere), to being below 10 C in late August. The children were

dressed in snowsuits for us to take them outside for a walk!

This might be a good time to mention how impressed we were with the orphanages we have been in in Russia. Both times we saw children who were fed quite well, had large 'playpen' areas to play in and interact with the other children and care givers, toys to play with, *exersaucers* and built in steps and ramps to learn how to negotiate these things. The care givers seemed genuinely interested in the children and spoke of a particular child's attributes or personality.

As we drove away from the orphanage with Erika in our arms we felt we left a bit of our hearts in this little town two hours outside Moscow. Erika cried as we left, and voiced a Russian syllable that meant "take it away" – meaning she didn't like the movement of the car. I snuggled her close to me and she soon fell asleep. The next few days of paperwork, driving and caring for a new child were hectic but served to build Erika's trust in us. We arrived home on September 8th, just three days before 911 and were very grateful to be home safe and sound.

The following months were quite challenging as we realized we had added one determined little girl to our family. She was 18 months going on 3 years old and had her own mind about how things should be done. Erika is now 3 ½, just 13 months apart in age from Andrew and has grown and developed so well. She is still tiny, our 'little peanut' but what a girl!! She is beautiful, spunky and very bright. She sometimes says "Mommy I have a secret" then whispers in my ear, "I love you". It is a dream come true to have these two children in our home.

And... our dream grew even bigger last October 31st when we gave birth to our 3rd child, William, just 13 months after coming home with Erika. Three children in 33 months! God has a wonderful sense of humour!!



"Caring Homes for Orphan Children" is a trade name of Tzivos Hashem Canada, Inc., an intercountry adoption agency
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Moshiach is on his way. Make the world a beautiful place with acts of goodness and kindness.



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Upcoming Events

Oct. 18, 2003, Markham, Ont. -- Barbara Coloroso - Kids Are Worth It! (Behaviour Workshop) Children's Bridge. Donna Paonessa, 613 226-2112, donna@scsonline.net, **Ottawa, Oct. 19** Contact: Cathy Murphy, 613 226-2112, cathymurphy@childrensbridge.com, www.childrensbridge.com

Oct. 18, 2003, London, Ont. -- "How to Adopt / Getting Started in Adoption", seminar. Westmount Public Library, 3200 Wonderland Rd. S. 10-12:30pm. By Adoption Council of Ontario. Your domestic and international adoption options, procedures, costs, homestudy, role of professionals, support networks, resources available and finding a child. \$50/family includes take-home package, refreshments. Register: ACO, 416-482-0021, aco@adoption.ca, www.adoption.on.ca. Or: Leanne Beattie, 519-640-7749 (day), 519-652-7615 (evg), creativelifebooks@rogers.com

Oct. 25 and 27 Nov 15 and 17, 2003, Toronto -- The Adoption Paradigm. Fri. 7 – 10 pm, Sun. 9:30am – 3:30pm. Perspectives on the role of adoptive parents in local or international Toddler or Older Child Adoption. 12 Birch Ave. Suite 210 (Yonge and Summerhill) 416-964-3669 or 1-888-535-2111 **Ottawa, Oct. 22, 29, Nov. 5** 7 – 9pm. 370 Wilbrod St. (Sandy Hill Area) 613-231-7930 or 1-888-535-2111

Oct. 30, 2003, Toronto -- FACE Support Night. 8 pm. 6 Woodhouse Dr. Jan Silverman, Women's Health Clinic, has many years' experience facilitating support and information groups. FACE support group (Families Adopting Children from Eastern Europe), face.adopt@sympatico.ca, or Louise La Rocca 416-484-4588

November is Adoption Awareness Month throughout North America

Nov. 6, 2003, Ottawa -- ODS Parents-in-Waiting Evening. 7 pm. For all singles or couples thinking about adoption or who have already adopted. An opportunity to meet others, share ideas and explore

adoption in all its forms. Meeting the first Thursday of every month. Info: ODS Ottawa, 613-860-1749. RSVP: Stephanie Stewart (stephanie4@rogers.com), Catherine MacLellan (cmaclellan@sympatico.ca)

Nov. 8, 2003, London, Ont. -- "The Adoption Option, Adopting Internationally": all-day training session for adoptive parents, by four adoption practitioners in the London area. 8:30-4:30. Windermere Manor, 200 Collip Circle, on the University of Western Ontario campus. Hotel attached for weekend stays. Program covers: Pre/post Placement Process; Risks and Rewards; Loss as a Common Theme; Adjustment - Attachment and Bonding; Adoption as a lifelong process - helping your child adjust and thrive, the mixed-race family and growing up adopted; Adoption Stories - panel of adoptees and adoptive parents. \$250/couple, \$125/single includes lunch, coffee, snacks and resource materials. Good training for adoptive applicants as part of their adoption preparation. Organized by Elly Freund-Bell, Linda McKnight, Kim Gray and Rosanne Ryan. Elly Freund-Bell, 519-675-0362, fax 675-0362, danny.bell@sympatico.ca

Poem

The Gift

I didn't give you the gift of life
but in my heart I know
the love I feel is as deep & real
as if it had been so.

For us to have each other
is like a dream come true.
No, I didn't give you the gift of life
Life gave me the gift of you.

(Adoption Week e-Magazine)

