



**CARING HOMES
FOR ORPHAN CHILDREN**

HOMeward BOUND

The Caring Homes for Orphan Children

Newsletter



Vol. 2, Issue 8, August 2004. Page 1 of 3

Our Russian Adoption Experience

by Joel G.

It's been three months since we returned from Moscow with our daughter Alexandra, but my wife Karin and I frequently find ourselves, usually late in the evening, stunned and bewildered that we are parents. In all honesty, we often remark to each other, sometimes at the exact same quiet moment, that it seems like yesterday we were knee-deep in the process of adopting from Russia. I think it's a result of the enormous amount of focus and energy we exerted during that time.

Our family, friends and coworkers often express their amazement at the fact that we travelled half way across the world to find our child. Even more so that our choice was Russia. I guess to many Canadians, Russia seems to inspire thoughts of a mysterious culture and history, myself included.

That might explain why the most common question people ask us is "why did you choose Russia?" After so many times telling the story I think we're getting good at it, mixing in different tidbits and anecdotes for variety. I suppose our story is not too different from most couples who adopt from Russia, starting with a lengthy chain of events and numerous conversations with each other and adoption professionals.

International adoption wasn't in our plans until we met with a local lawyer who specialized in domestic adoptions. Much to our dismay, it wasn't a very positive experience. We left the meeting with more "cons" than "pros" – most notable was the waiting periods that commonly take 5 to 7 years, and the expectations amongst birth mothers for "open" adoptions, which was a concept we were not comfortable with.

Nonetheless, we contacted a local Adoption Practitioner to start working on our home study. As luck would have it, Marcy was a phenomenal resource who gave us objective information about domestic AND international adoption. The more we heard about the international possibilities, the more we believed that this was the choice for us. The

options were laid out for us... China, Korea, Russia... and each prospect seemed a little daunting.



Marcy introduced us to international adoption agencies, and shared some of her clients' experiences with Caring Homes. After talking with some of these couples and meeting their beautiful children, we had an excellent consultation with Caring Homes that answered many of our questions about adopting from Russia. But it was the Russian adoption seminar, hosted by Caring Homes in Toronto, that convinced us to choose this path. We realize now that all of these events were taking place before our daughter was even born!

Without going into all of the process details, let me say that the months between that decision and our first trip to Moscow were filled with medicals, police checks, income statements, passports and visas. Caring Homes laid out a confident path for us and we eagerly jumped on each new task. We were impressed how the timelines matched the

"Caring Homes for Orphan Children" is a trade name of Tzivos Hashem Canada, Inc., an intercountry adoption agency
3727 Chesswood Drive, Toronto ON M3J 2P6 Canada. Tel (416) 630-2472 e-mail: caringhomes@hotmail.com

Moshiach is on his way. Make the world a beautiful place with acts of goodness and kindness.



**CARING HOMES
FOR ORPHAN CHILDREN**

HOMeward BOUND

The Caring Homes for Orphan Children

Newsletter



Vol. 2, Issue 8, August 2004. Page 2 of 3

expectations they set with us. We started the home study in February 2003 and our proposal arrived 11 months later from Moscow Region. Our first trip was the last week of February, and the second trip followed four weeks later. We arrived with Alexandra at Toronto Pearson airport on April 21st.



Thinking back on the journey certain moments and feelings stand out more than others. It is hard to describe the feeling we experienced when they first handed our daughter to us. There is no grand presentation. There is no announcement. One minute I was sitting in a hot orphanage office with my wife, and the next minute the orphanage director brought our daughter in and we sat there together. No bells or fireworks for anyone but us. We were overwhelmed with joy when we met our child, but to her we were just two strangers who don't look or sound like her caregivers. Alexandra was curious but hesitant. Despite being held close she would lean back and just stare at our faces, with a stern expression on hers. I remember the uncomfortable feeling of having our translator and the orphanage director staring at us measuring our reactions (this insecurity persisted throughout our entire time in Russia), but even that didn't take away from the joy of the moment. I think the only thing that stopped us from reaching a state of pure

elation was our fear to acknowledge she was ours. That fear persisted right up to the day the judge presented her verdict in the small Moscow Region court room a month later.

We remember our amazement at the (very American) hotel we stayed at in Moscow, and joked that it could promote its services to both businessmen and to adoptive parents. Every breakfast table that was not occupied by a traveling business person was taken by a young adoptive couple, with or without their baby, nervous and stressed. It made us feel like we were not alone, and we knew the camaraderie and bonds we established will last a very long time. A few weeks ago a gift of infant clothing arrived by courier, sent by the couple from Atlanta we shared breakfasts and evenings with in the hotel.

I'll never forget the surprise luncheon the orphanage director hosted when we arrived to take Alexandra home. It was touching to think of the effort required to assemble the odd collection of desks and tables into a workable dining area with little salami sandwiches, cookies, chocolates and tea. It was even more touching when you realize how little food or money the orphanage had to make it possible.

Alexandra is almost 16 months old now, a very healthy and happy girl, walking around the house with her incessant toddler babble and squealing with delight every time she dumps the dog dish or presses the TV remote control. It's more than we ever could have hoped for. But what truly surprised us were the precious relationships and memories we gained from the experience, which we will treasure forever.



"Caring Homes for Orphan Children" is a trade name of Tzivos Hashem Canada, Inc., an intercountry adoption agency
3727 Chesswood Drive, Toronto ON M3J 2P6 Canada. Tel (416) 630-2472 e-mail: caringhomes@hotmail.com

Moshiach is on his way. Make the world a beautiful place with acts of goodness and kindness.



HOMeward BOUND

The Caring Homes for Orphan Children

Newsletter



CARING HOMES
FOR ORPHAN CHILDREN

Vol. 2, Issue 8, August 2004. Page 3 of 3

Upcoming Events

Sept. 25, 2004, Toronto -- One-day International Adoption Seminar. Prepare for adoption; meeting your child; medical issues; attachment; talking about adoption with your child; mixed race adoptions. Includes videos, presentations, hand-outs, breakfast and lunch. \$294/couple; \$197/single. Sofie Stergianis, International Adoption Centre, 416-483-0003, sofie@ica.net

Sept. 26, 2004, Toronto-- FACE: A Support Group for Families Adopting from Eastern Europe and the Adoption Council of Ontario invite you to ***Bonding with your Baby/Child: Promoting Attachment after Adopting Your Child***

With Dr. Arthur Becker-Weidman,

At 5100 Yonge St., North York Civic Centre, Council Chambers, Lower Level, 10.00 am, September 26, 2004.

Arthur Becker-Weidman, Ph.D. received his MSW from the University of Maryland at Baltimore and his Ph.D. from the University of Maryland's Institute for Child Study. He is the Director of the Center For Family Development, an internationally recognized center for the evaluation and treatment of adopted and foster children and children with attachment issues. Dr. Becker-Weidman lives in Western New York with his spouse and three children, the youngest of whom was adopted from China.

Arthur Becker-Weidman, Ph.D. has achieved Diplomate Status in Child Psychology and Forensic Psychology from the American Board of Psychological Specialties. He has Registered Clinician status with the Association for the Treatment and Training in the Attachment of Children. Dr. Becker-Weidman has been consulting with the families of adoptive and foster children for over two decades. As Director of the

Center For Family Development he consults to Departments of Social Services, Residential Treatment Centers, and Mental Health Clinics. He provides training and workshops to parents and professionals across the U.S. and Canada. The results of an empirical study demonstrating the effectiveness of his approach can be found on the website www.Center4FamilyDevelop.com.

Dr. Becker-Weidman is an adjunct Clinical Professor at the State University of New York at Buffalo. He has published over a dozen papers in peer-reviewed professional journals and has presented at numerous international, regional, and local professional meetings.

For additional information about the upcoming event e-mail to: face.adopt@sympatico.ca or aco@adoption.ca

Or Phone: Lisa Nerman at 416-398-9010 or Louise LaRocca at 416-484-4588 or the Adoption Council of Ontario 416-482-0021

August Birthdays!



Happy Birthday to:

Brittaney C. on your 7th birthday on August 6th
Valentina C. on your 7th birthday on August 6th
Julia Y. on your 7th birthday on August 8th
Myles D. on your 7th birthday on August 9th
Shelby K. on your 9th birthday on August 15th
Joshua K. on your 10th birthday on August 20th
Kyra M. on your 8th birthday on August 21st
Lauren T. on your 9th birthday on August 28th
Joshua O. on your 14th birthday on August 30th
Kaitlyn O. on your 8th birthday on August 30th

Sorry if
we
missed
yours!
☺

"Caring Homes for Orphan Children" is a trade name of Tzivos Hashem Canada, Inc., an intercountry adoption agency
3727 Chesswood Drive, Toronto ON M3J 2P6 Canada. Tel (416) 630-2472 e-mail: caringhomes@hotmail.com

Moshiach is on his way. Make the world a beautiful place with acts of goodness and kindness.