



**CARING HOMES  
FOR ORPHAN CHILDREN**

# HOMeward BOUND

The Caring Homes for Orphan Children

*Newsletter*



Vol. 6, Issue 1. Winter 2008. Page 1 of 5

## A LOOK BACK AT 2007

A year full of changes, patience and hope.

After almost a year of waiting, finally in mid-November, we received the good news: our Russian accreditation. This time there is no specified term. However, this doesn't mean that it is a forever accreditation: we will still be required to continue in representing our agency as a reliable and responsible organization, completing all Russian requirements that may be implemented from time to time.

We would like to thank all our adoptive families for understanding the importance of the post-placement reports and submitting them on time. These filings were all important in establishing us as a responsible agency. We are now one of only 39 agencies world wide accredited to work in Russia's international adoptions.

### MAJOR NEWS in Ontario in 2007:

The Ministry of Children and Youth Services implemented the SAFE (Structured Analysis Family Evaluation) homestudy model and PRIDE (Parent Resources for Information, Development and Education) this year.

These tools are widely used within the adoption field throughout North America and other parts of the world. Ontario is the first province to implement the comprehensive SAFE/PRIDE practice model that provides a standardized approach to assessment, training and education that builds upon family competencies. Ontario has been approached by several other provinces (British Columbia, Newfoundland, and Prince Edward Island) that are considering a similar practice model: A key principle of SAFE is the use of a standard homestudy assessment for prospective adoptive applicants. As well as providing education and supports for adoptive parents, SAFE and PRIDE were noted as key components for improving adoption practice across Ontario; A key principle of PRIDE is its integration of family assessments with adoptive applicant training to enable more accurate assessment decisions, and reduce the likelihood of placement disruption and further losses for children. Full implementation for the use of SAFE and PRIDE occurs in the private adoption sector as of December 31, 2007.

### MAJOR NEWS in Canada in 2007:

The possibility of immediate citizenship for internationally adopted children became effective on December 23, 2007: The new Citizenship Act (C-14 process) brings the following major changes:

1. grants Canadian citizenship to children adopted by Canadian citizens outside Canada
2. no need to sponsor adopted children for immigration to Canada
3. adopted children will not be subject to admissibility based on medical requirements.

Notwithstanding, the Canadian Embassy in Russia will continue to offer the old (IRPA) process as an option; as this process is familiar to all, eliminates/reduces risks of adoption of a seriously sick child, avoids the requirement of parental presence and shortens the process (for visa vs. emergency passport process), and still allows for citizenship to be obtained in Canada. More information will be available later at [www.chocadoption.com](http://www.chocadoption.com) or [www.cic.gc.ca](http://www.cic.gc.ca)

### SOME NEWS FROM RUSSIA:

Some of you may have heard that girl proposals involve a longer wait than for boys. One of the reasons for this is an increase in domestic adoptions in Russia. Nevertheless, at the present (granted changes can occur at any time), our representatives inform that in most of our regions, we can still expect proposals for girls within a reasonable time frame.

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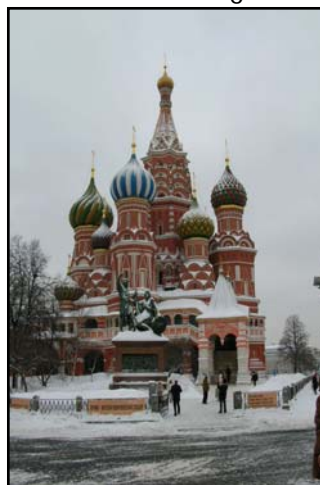
*The following narrative by Sofia's parents was planned for our summer newsletter, which we kept postponing in hopes of including the good news of our Russian re- accreditation. Sofia may be a bit older now, (the bottom photos are recent) but we are sure you will still enjoy her family story.*

## ***"NEVERENDING JOURNEY"***

***by Silvia Z. and Tony H.***

My how time flies, Sofia recently celebrated her 2<sup>nd</sup> birthday! It has been just over a year since we arrived back in Ottawa with our new daughter. It is difficult to give a brief account of our experience and the joy of having Sofia become part of our family. We will attempt to capture a fraction of our adoption story, and the excitement we have been living since returning from Russia with our wonderful, beautiful, intelligent daughter.

Following a long delay due to reaccreditation politics, we received a call from Anna at CHOC that we were to be in Moscow in a week. We scrambled to get visas and make travel arrangements for the first of our two trips to Russia. We went "blind" to Russia, which meant we knew nothing of the child that would be assigned to us. The following Monday



(February 20<sup>th</sup>, 2006) at the Ministry of Education in Moscow we received a brief profile of our daughter. We then headed off to Orekhovo-Zuyevo where the orphanage was located with our facilitator, driver and the international physician. We were overwhelmed with emotions; the joy was coupled with fear; would we bond with her, and would she bond to us? Regardless of the home study and all the reading we did nothing could prepare us for the emotional turmoil that was being

experienced, our imaginary pregnancy was about to end. When we first laid eyes on Sofia, oh my, we wondered, is this tiny human being going to be part of our family, she was so real, so scared, so near. During Dr. Downing's examination and for the next few days we were desperately trying to keep our emotions in check for fear there would be some serious health concerns. She was so perfect, so fragile, and so beautiful; please let her be healthy enough to meet Canadian regulations so we may take her home. We couldn't take our eyes off of her; we were falling in love with this defenceless little child! Great news, the results were overwhelmingly positive; Sofia Yulia was a healthy child.



During our stay in Moscow we tried to visit as much as possible of Sofia's homeland.

We toured around Moscow by taxi, subway and bus; we also made a weekend trip to St Petersburg and visited the famous Hermitage museum. We returned home on March 10<sup>th</sup>, after a side trip to visit relatives in Europe with many stories to tell. We anxiously waited for the next phone call for our second trip and court date to finalize the adoption process and bring Sofia back to Canada.

The call finally arrived and we were to return to Moscow on April 30 2006. Just when we thought we finally had everything under control, we received a sympathetic phone call from Henry and Anna. There is yet another hurdle; the Russian courts are now requiring that our dossiers include medicals with signatures of 8 specialists,

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two of which we have never heard of. How are we going to find the known specialist let alone the ones we have never heard of? It is Friday afternoon and the documents need to be completed over the week end! Fortunately one of us works at the hospital and within a short period of time we were able to get 8 understanding physicians to sign the documents. The following week we headed to Moscow for our scheduled court date.



The proceedings went smoothly, our request to adopt Sofia Yulia was accepted and she would officially become part of our family after the 10 day waiting period. We picked up Sofia on May 16<sup>th</sup> after which the CHOC team in Russia worked miracles and got the final paperwork (passports, visas etc ...) completed in record time. Can you imagine, our first experiences as parents were as tourists in a foreign country; what a surreal experience! We are on the subway in Moscow, it is rush hour and the train is packed. We are on our way to change our plane ticket home. We are sitting with our new daughter Sofia; people are polite and have offered us a seat. They



aren't sure what to make of us; Sofia is warmly dressed, we look as though we could be a Russian

family, but are definitely not locals. We are all too aware of the sentiments that caused the accreditation delay and do not speak out loud. We were insanely happy, proud parents, and the further the plane took us from Russia as we returned to Canada with Sofia, the more we felt she was truly ours forever. All the way through the adoption there'd been a nagging doubt that something could go wrong, some insurmountable bureaucratic obstacle. We also questioned if Sofia would adapt to her new environment, a bedroom of her own, all her own toys, new diet and our pet cat?

The excitement of becoming parents carried through the flight and immigration control as we landed back on Canadian soil at Pearson airport. The happiness in our eyes was clearly evident. The moment was captured with many photos. We returned home over the moon with joy. There are of course many fond memories of the people that helped make it happen and memorable photos of the places visited along the way. We were ending one journey and starting the next.



This everlasting journey to parenthood has reached a climax, and the questions have been answered; we could not have imagined loving a biological child any more than this bundle of joy. We are thrilled and so lucky that this long path has given us such a beautiful child. Sofia settled in so quickly, a very bright loving happy little girl, fast to learn, dearly loved by all her aunts, uncles, grandparents, cousins and a source of great joy to all. Taking a leap of faith and building a family through international adoption has been an enriching experience. Her biological mother, in another land can rest easy that her daughter is secure and well.

**Sofia will celebrate her 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday January, 2008!**

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## ***EDUCATIONAL CORNER : The paperwork***

## **Validity of documents in Russia**

### **Documents validity on Ontario:**

As of July 1, 2007, the Letter of Approval for all intercountry adoptions will be valid for 24 months from the date of the letter.

Regardless of the date of the Letter of Approval, the Adoption Unit must be immediately informed, through consultation and a homestudy update, of any important changes in the applicants' circumstances, such as a major illness, criminal charges, separation, unemployment and other significant developments that may potentially alter an applicants' approval to adopt

For some countries it will take longer than 24 months to identify a child proposal. In this circumstance, the applicants will need to have a new Letter of Approval issued prior to the expiry of their first Letter of Approval. If the arrival of a child proposal will extend beyond the expiry of their current Letter of Approval, the agency should advise the applicants accordingly as they will need to prepare for an update with their adoption practitioner.

An update to a homestudy is required in order for a new Letter of Approval to be issued. The new Letter of Approval will be valid for an additional period of 24 months.

For the homestudy update and new letter of approval, the following is required:

- A home visit with the applicants is required;
- Significant changes in the applicant's situation, such as a change of residence or employment, health difficulties or improvements, should be addressed in the update report;
- New local police clearances are required;
- New medical reports are required;
- References should be re-contacted (a telephone call and notation is sufficient or an e-mail response from the reference) to determine if they continue to support the applicants' adoption plan.

Almost all documents in Russia are valid for one year, except for those ones that have a fixed validity period, as for example the letter of Approval. The Russian medical reports are valid for 3 months; the local police reports may be valid from three to six months depending on the region in Russia you are adopting from. If a document doesn't have a validity period, such as a copy of a passport, birth or marriage certificate, then the validity date is one year from the time of document notarization by a notary public. The notarization period is also valid for one year.

## **Recommended literature of the month**

### **Raising the Post-Institutionalized Child Risks: Challenges and Innovative Treatment by Dr. Ronald S. Federici**

Extract from the article

#### **"Introduction and Background**

Adoptions have always been a very important part of American culture with a recent "evolution" to a higher volume of international adoptions as opposed to adopting from our United States social systems. Many people have chosen to adopt a child from a foreign country as they find the procedure quick and cost effective with very little waiting time and an abundance of younger children readily available. Furthermore, many people choosing international adoption have the belief that adopting an infant or even older child from another country will spare them the pain and hardship of waiting for a child to become available or, more commonly, having the opportunity to "pick and choose" from a large volume of children who the family believes will rapidly "fit in" to their current family structure, physical appearance, and greatly appreciate all what they can offer them in our somewhat extravagant and over stimulating American lifestyles. American families also believe they will be spared any possibility of involvement with the biological parents if they adopt from another country as there have been numerous high profile cases in the United States in which the biological parents come forward after an adoption in an effort to reclaim their child based on a defence of incorrect adoption, improper legal proceedings, or even a "change of heart".

The rest of the article can be found at our website:

[http://www.chocadoption.com/links/links\\_edu.html](http://www.chocadoption.com/links/links_edu.html)

or at Dr. Federici's website:

[http://www.drfederici.com/raising\\_child.htm](http://www.drfederici.com/raising_child.htm)



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## *Upcoming events from FamilyHelper.net*

**Toronto, London, Alliston** -- "How to Adopt" seminars.

Twice a month. Dates and locations at [www.adoptontario.ca/news.aspx](http://www.adoptontario.ca/news.aspx). Adoptive parents and professionals discuss options, costs, homestudies for local or international adoption. \$85/family.

Pat Fenton, Adoption Council of Ontario, 416-482-0021, [www.adoption.on.ca](http://www.adoption.on.ca)

**Toronto** -- FACE Support Group.

Families of Adopted Children from Eastern Europe meet at family homes. Information, speakers and social events with our children. Louise LaRocca, 416-484-4588.

**Feb. 23, 2008, Toronto** -- One-day International Adoption Seminar. Prepare for adoption; medical issues; attachment; talking about adoption with your child; mixed race adoptions. Videos, presentations, hand-outs, breakfast, lunch. \$215; \$350/couple; +tax.

Sofie Stergianis, International Adoption Centre, 416-483-0003, [www.whatisadoption.com](http://www.whatisadoption.com)

**Mar. 1, 2008, Toronto** -- Seminar for Extended Family and Friends of Adopting Applicants. Topics include: Positive adoption language; How to answer questions; Adjustments of internationally adopted children; Understanding open adoption relationships;

Loss and the older child; What the growing child understands of adoption. 1:30-4 pm. \$40. Sofie Stergianis, The Adoption Centre, 416-483-0003, [www.adoptioneducation.ca](http://www.adoptioneducation.ca)

**May 3, 2008, Toronto Seminar on Talking to Children about Adoption.** Learn ways to empower children (adoptees) to answer questions about adoption. As well, learn how to respond to the questions of children of family and friends, including neighbours and classmates. 1:30-4:30 pm. \$70. Sofie Stergianis, The Adoption Centre, 416-483-0003, [www.adoptioneducation.ca](http://www.adoptioneducation.ca)

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# Thank you!!!

*We would like to thank everyone for attending the CHOC picnic! It was a great pleasure to meet you all there! Pictures can be seen at our website at [www.chocadoption.com](http://www.chocadoption.com) Hope to see you all next year!*

## SEASON'S

## GREETINGS TO

## ALL!!!

**MAY THE NEW YEAR**

**BRING LOVE AND JOY.**

**HEALTH AND HAPPINESS.**

**AND, A FULLFILLMENT OF ALL**

**OUR WISHES FOR GOOD!**



More updates can be found on our website at [www.chocadoption.com](http://www.chocadoption.com)

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