



Friends in Adoption

# journeys



Successfully creating families since 1982 through Compassionate Adoption Spring 06

Not just the two  
of us anymore.

## It's a girl!



Before leaving school on December 9th, I spoke briefly with a colleague about my hopes to be celebrating Christmas as a family and, given the date, the unlikelihood of that becoming a reality. With just 16 days till the big day, Kris and I had conceded that, unfortunately, it would be just the two of us. We went about the business of putting up the lights and decorations the next day hopeful of that placement yet-to-be, but with a twinge of disappointment. In the afternoon, I paid a visit to a friend who had delivered a baby girl the day before. She'd also been through fertility treatments, and we had challenged each other to see who would have their baby first. When I left her, I told that she'd won fair and square, and we said a prayer that I'd be next. Little did we know....

I drove from the hospital to Wal-Mart to pick up a few items, and my mood immediately soured as I noted the crowded parking lot, crazy shoppers, and holiday chaos. While I was circling to find a parking space, my cell phone began to ring. When I was finally able to answer it, I found that it was Kris. I launched into a tirade about people and carts and cars all over the place, and when I finally asked why he was calling, he said simply, "The agency called. We've been selected." There is no better way to adjust a bad attitude. I laughed out loud, said, "Well, why didn't you say so,"

pulled out of my hard-earned parking space and flew home. Mary had asked that we call her at FIA to get the basics (like, it's a GIRL!), and then she gave us the number at the hospital to speak directly with the birth parents. For the first time, I wondered just what it is you say to them knowing that it's a monumentally difficult moment for them but a ridiculously joyous one for us. Mary coached us on that, and we placed our call to Jessica and Brendan.

I'm not sure what I expected, but I was surprised at how comfortable it felt right from the start. Kris and I were so impressed with these birth parents who had clearly given the adoption a lot of thought and who were so certain about what they wanted for their child. Playing it cautious, we offered to drive out to meet them to which Jessica responded,

"It won't be a wasted trip. This is what we want to do." It is impossible to describe the flood of emotions and activity that followed. We laughed. We cried. We ran in circles trying to figure out what to take. We hugged. It was wonderful! With all the adrenaline running through our systems, we decided that we could do what needed to be done for an early morning departure and still attend a previously scheduled Christmas party.

We had been coached by Mary not to share any news just yet, but it was just impossible to keep all that happiness bottled up. Our friends and family

*Continued on page 7*



## Staying the course on the journey.

Dear Dawn and Everyone at FIA,

We were recently clearing out some papers and going through our carton that, over the years, had become filled with FIA-related documents. We looked through a stack of white postcards and handwritten notes related to potential situations that had not worked out over the past three years. Though they once seemed each to signal failure and disappointment, we realize now that they were necessary steps in a challenging, emotional, life-changing journey toward the formation of what was, without question, the family we were meant to have. As you promised, our baby found his way home to us.



*Continued on page 9*



# dawn's desk

## New Bill Introduced Extends the Adoption Tax Credit and Raises the Amount to \$15,000

### Write your local Congressman via the internet.

You may do so by pasting  
or typing in this link:  
<http://www.house.gov/writerep>

Last Sponsor Date: Sept. 20, 2005  
"To amend the Internal Revenue  
Code of 1986 to expand the  
incentives for adoption and to  
amend part E of title IV of the  
Social Security Act to increase  
adoptive incentive payments."  
4/12/2005 – Introduced.  
Childhood Adoption Act of  
2005 – Amends the Internal  
Revenue Code to:

- (1) increase the tax credit for  
adoption expenses from  
\$10,000 to \$15,000;
  - (2) make such tax credit  
refundable; and
  - (3) increase the exclusion from  
gross income for employer-  
paid adoption expenses  
from \$10,000 to \$15,000.
- Amends title IV, part E (Federal  
Payments for Foster Care and  
Adoption Assistance) of the  
Social Security Act to increase:  
(1) levels of adoption incentive  
payments payable to States  
under the adoption assistance  
program; and (2) funding for  
adoption incentive payments  
for FY 2006 through 2008.

*FIA is excited to announce a new section in our  
Newsletter. Our FIA kids are growing older and  
they have a lot to say so we are hoping that many  
of them will want to become published authors and  
contribute to the Newsletter.*

*I thought it fitting to begin with a poem that my  
daughter wrote many years ago. This brought fresh  
tears to my eyes when I read it. How did a 10-year-  
old have the depth of understanding to articulate the  
emotions of adoption?*

*I asked Aura to answer this question as she is now  
a beautiful, gracious and kind adult who still holds  
the sensitivity of understanding the complexity of the  
emotional components of adoption. Her comments  
are on the next page. She added that she is hopeful  
that she will find the time to write another poem for  
our next publication.*

*Enjoy the Spring and Summer months.  
Dawn*

## welcome home

### our family welcomes

Rob & Gina	Isabel
Dave & Deb	Calleigh
Craig & Michael	Geoff
Daniel & Monique & Winston	Duncan
Rich & Melanie & Adam	Madeline
Patrick & Robin	Annalie Lynn
Brink & Tami & Maggie	Andrew Conner
Paul & Michelle & Sydney	Collin Anthony
Bob & Heidi	Jackson Robert
Kris & Lauren	Maryn Ruth
Rich & Karen	Ryan Alexander
Doug & Diane & Kyle	Kiera Grace
Sherri	Zachary
Fran & Barb & Ian	Lanie Ann
Robb & Vinnie	Luca Marc
Michael & Judith	Ezra Marcus
Ellen & Leslie & Sophie	Lauren Elisabeth
Jeff & Jeanne & Teddy	Harold Rowan

## Seeking Volunteers



Are you available one day a month? If so, FIA is seeking  
volunteers to help with the delivery of FIA's literature to  
designated areas. If you are interested, please contact Mary  
at [mary@friendsinadoption.org](mailto:mary@friendsinadoption.org) or at 1-518-371-9910.

*Journeys* is published two times a year by Friends in Adoption.  
Send your letters, photos and comments to Mary Walsh Snyder,  
Friends in Adoption, 653 Plank Road, Suite 200, Clifton Park, NY  
12065, [mary@friendsinadoption.org](mailto:mary@friendsinadoption.org). Letters may be edited for space.



# fia kids

## elizabeth

### A Time for Tears

A time for tears is when a baby is born.  
A time for joy is baby's first words.

My Mom & Pa have told me that I would wake up in the morning and practice one sound; I'd get that down and then I would start with another one. Now I know them all.

Another time to have joy and pain is when two special people meet again. A baby and birth mother share joy, tears, and sometimes pain.

I have now met my birth sister, birth mother, birth grandmothers and birth aunts. At first it was a little awkward but now we are just family.

A time for tears is when things have been finalized.

Are things ever final...

A time for tears is saying goodbye.

Now that I have said hello again I don't worry about the good byes.

Adoption is good, even when it is sad. Maybe I will write another poem about where I am now with my adoption but now it's time for work. It's kind of interesting - I manage a picture frame shop and get to use my artistic talents to help people preserve what is important to them; my other job is doing mannequin and store displays with my birth sister.

Dedicated to FIA and birth mothers and clients.



## aura

Hello! My name is Elizabeth, and I am adopted. Being adopted isn't bad, or doesn't mean you weren't loved. Actually in a way being adopted is better than anything. This way, I sort of have two families. I have my family who I am a part of now thanks to adoption, and my birth family who had to go through the difficult decision to put me up for adoption.

I don't really remember being adopted. After all, I was still a little baby. I was only six and a half months old when I was adopted and made part of my adoptive family. We still keep in touch with my birth parents. We have get together at restaurants, and also at birthdays. I also lived with another woman who took care of me for a little while. Her name was Ann. (My family now calls her Grandma Ann). She was my foster mother. This means she took care of me in her home until I could be permanently adopted. We still keep in touch with her too.

I also have a sister who is six years old, and adopted, just like me. We still keep in touch with her birth parents too. I couldn't imagine not having her to play with, and I can't imagine not having the wonderful family I do now. I was so blessed to be adopted, and I am truly thankful.

Written in 8th Grade.

Hi! My name is Matt and I am 13 years old. I was adopted when I was 6 weeks old. I don't know anyone in my school that is adopted. Most kids feel sorry for me and ask me if I wish I wasn't adopted. I just simply reply, "Nope, it's no different." Sometimes I wonder what it would be like not to be adopted. I wonder what I would have or what I wouldn't have. My parents now are really supportive. They let me play hockey, baseball, piano and the drums. Don't get me wrong, it's not like I don't care that I'm adopted. I still want to meet my birth parents some time in my life. Most people want to meet their real parents. But my parents now are great and I love them a lot. It's different to know that I am adopted, but I don't feel any different. I'm adopted and I am proud!



## matt



One of the things that I am most proud of is the strength of the support groups that we offer to our prospective adoptive parents.



It has been an exciting winter! FIA has been asked recently to do interviews for a public access station, a radio station and Channel 9 and 10 news in the Albany and Syracuse, NY areas. I will admit that it was incredibly fun to spread the word about adoption and what makes FIA so special. Some of the pregnant women we are working with even saw the clip and called to congratulate FIA. It was outreach at its finest and the FIA staff always feels so proud and honored to work at FIA.

support. We also thought it was just a group of people sitting around complaining about their lot in life and we didn't need that.

Well we couldn't have been more wrong! We got through the process, but we sure would have had a much easier time with the support of others that knew first hand what we were going through. Kate Kaufman Burns (who does home studies and birth parent counseling) and I facilitate the support group in the Clifton Park, NY



One of the things that I am most proud of is the strength of the support groups that we offer to our prospective adoptive parents. I remember when my husband and I were going through the adoption process; we didn't think we needed a support group. We figured we had our big families and close friends that could provide

area and I admit that I look forward to these meetings every 6 to 8 weeks. Of course, my favorite part is when our families come back to the group to share their baby with us. I admit I usually spend the whole time holding the baby. I also love it because, when the family shares what they went through to have their dreams

come true, they provide a source of hope for the others still waiting.

Everyone was incredibly moved at the first meeting we had in 2006 as we listened to the rocky roads that some of our clients had recently traveled on. I was in awe as our waiting families and the families they brought along to the meeting offered encouragement to hang in there and assured the struggling clients they would make great parents. Imagine everyone's surprise when they went to the February support group and the guest speakers were two people they had encouraged the month before, who were now there with their new son. People can't wait until each support group meeting to see who the guest speakers are. They will all reconnect at the FIA picnic once the baby for each of our clients finds their way home to them. My family makes a weekend out of the FIA picnic (3rd Saturday in July) and I am overwhelmed to tears every year by the number of wonderfully happy families FIA helps to create through compassionate adoption.

So, if you are reading this and have any questions, comments or just want to say hi please give us a call (1-518-371-9910). We also love when people stop by our new office, so feel free to just drop in.

Happy Spring!

Mary

# Meet the Staff of Friends In Adoption

## Put a face with a name!



**Dawn**

**Founder and Director**

- Vermont office
- the heart and soul of FIA
- passions include her family, adoption and snowboarding
- she will retire when her rocking chair no longer rocks



**Jo Ann**

**Co-Director and Casework Supervisor**

- Vermont office
- assists with individual adoption plans after a match
- assists caseworkers in assessing overall adoption situation; helps caseworkers outline potential risks; coordinates with adoption personnel to make sure overall adoption plans are in place



**Mary**

**Director of Marketing and Caseworker**

- Clifton Park office
- has worked with FIA in various capacities since 1995
- in addition to doing casework, Mary is our advertising and marketing "expert" who can never resist an opportunity to speak with local high school students on the option of adoption



**Barb**

**Caseworker**

- Baldwinsville office
- was director of Open Arms Adoption and Family Center located in Liverpool, NY and social worker for Ellis Hospital in Schenectady, NY
- works with pregnant women/couples and conducts home studies and post-placement supervision for some of our New York families



**Lisa**

**Casework Assistant**

- Vermont office
- job shares with Kim
- works with pregnant women/couples, from initial call to follow-up
- provides support and consultation to prospective adoptive parents by guiding them with the development of their profiles



**Kim**

**Casework Assistant**

- Vermont office
- job shares with Lisa
- works with pregnant women/ couples, from initial call to follow-up
- coordinates FIA's Get Acquainted Workshops



**Tara**

**Senior Financial Analyst**

- Vermont office
- maintains the life behind the scenes in the business section of our organization
- in charge of the financial affairs of FIA; includes the accounting as well as managing client escrow accounts



**Jody**

**Caseworker**

- Clifton Park office
- has worked as an independent consultant for Adoptions from the Heart adoption agency for the last few years



**Kate**

**Licensed NYS Social Worker**

- Clifton Park office
- provides options counseling services to pregnant women/couples, birth families
- prepares home studies for our pre-adoptive families living in the Albany/Clifton Park area of NY



**Jan**

**Answering Service**

- Vermont office
- the friendly, knowledgeable voice who answers calls after hours



**Randi**

**Office Assistant**

- Clifton Park office
- helps keep the files organized and works with Mary on mailings to hospitals, doctors' offices and Planned Parenthoods



**Holly**

**Birth Mother Liaison**

- Clifton Park office, part-time
- a birth mom who made an adoption plan for her son in 2002
- Social Work major who speaks at local high schools and with pregnant women about her experience making an adoption plan



**Nancy**

**Office Assistant**

- Vermont office
- 3+ years with FIA
- 33 years experience in the field of child welfare (casework and administration)
- keeps the office running!



**Jacki**

**Director of Development**

- Vermont office
- directing FIA's first-ever \$1.25 million capital campaign
- also working to expand awareness about FIA in VT and NH
- 18 years of directing, raising funds for, and marketing several Vermont nonprofits



**Office Hours**

9 am – 4 pm  
Monday – Friday

During our office hours we will answer any questions and help solve adoption concerns. Please keep our office hours in mind and conduct your regular adoption business during this time.

**Please note**

On Fridays we try to catch up on paperwork. We can serve you best when calls to us on Fridays are limited to emergencies only. During office hours, we are also here to answer your incoming pregnant woman calls. After our working office hours, our trained answering service will be answering calls, with staff members serving as backup.

**Email addresses**

The staff may be reached via e-mail by typing in the first name of the individual and @friendsinadoption.org.

**Financial questions**

Contact Tara during office hours.

**Get Acquainted Weekend**

Contact Kim or Lisa during office hours.

**Status of clerical or checklist requirements**

In order to activate your file: Call the Vermont office during office hours.

**Adoption questions**

For advice on your resume, adoption ads, networking ideas and/or to check on potential calls, ask for Dawn, Jo Ann, Mary, Barb, Lisa or Kim.



# Tributes

Eileen, Ellen, Katherine,  
Renner & Shirley  
tribute to Mary in  
celebration of her birthday

Joseph & Michele  
tribute to Robin & Toby

Sara & Craig  
tribute to Bill & Mary Beth

Alison  
tribute to Johna in  
celebration of her birthday

Watt

Ted & Melissa

Elizabeth

Anne

Debra

George & Deborah

Bill & Andrea

Nicolas & Gisela

Roger & Rachelle

Alvin & Cheryl

Robert & Maria

Conio & Clifford

Robert

Joel & Louise

Daniel & Amy

Ed & Lynn

United Way

## Adopting a Second Time: Fears and Facts About Adopting Again

I sat in my office with a lovely couple from New York who were preparing to adopt a second child. It was a crisp but sunny January morning, and the couple huddled together on the couch in my office for warmth as they began to share their hopes and fears regarding adopting a second child. Their first child was now four years old and the light of their lives. Their adoption was closed in spite of the fact that they had always hoped to meet their son's birth family. They send pictures and letters to the agency in the hopes that one day, their son's birth mother will request them. To date, they remain in a file — undisturbed, unopened. Their greatest desire is to have a second adoption tell the same story as their first...

During a homestudy update, one of the most important questions we ask as adoption professionals is, "What child are you hoping for at this point in your lives, and why?" For families adopting a second time, it is only natural to long for an adoption that mirrors their first experience. We feel safe and comfortable in what is familiar, and as parents, we want to protect our children from disparities and inequality even though we know the world will teach our children these lessons in spite of our

grandest efforts. Often families who have a closed adoption want the same the second time around. The reverse is also true: families whose first adoptions were semi-open or open, often hope for the same depth of connection with birth families as they prepare to adopt a second time.

**Fear # 1: I'm afraid my child will be harmed in some way by experiencing a sibling having an open relationship with his or her birth mother when his own adoption is a closed one.**

**FACT:** Many children revel in the opportunity to witness and experience the role of a birth parent(s) in the lives of their sibling even when they do not have any contact with their own birth parent(s). Children are intuitive and resilient. If a birth parent is counseled to include both children in an adoptive family system when giving gifts, writing cards, or holding visitations, both children can learn how to navigate the relationship with a birth parent and to begin to understand their own unique thoughts and feelings with reference to their adoptive identities. It is an opportunity for the adoptive parents to gain insight and understanding into their children's innermost thoughts even though the connections to

Kate Kaufman Burns, L.C.S.W.  
NYS Licensed Social Worker  
FIA Clifton Park Office

the birth parent(s) involved are different. Don't be afraid. If you take this risk, you may find that the birth parent can be a gift to both your children.

**Fear # 2: I'm afraid I won't bond to my second child in the same way as I did my first.**

**FACT:** Whether they enter through birth or adoption, parents bond differently to different children. One of Mary Walsh Snyder's (FIA NY offices) favorite sayings from her own mother is, "I love all of my children equally, but some are easier to love than others..." The fact is, that each child that enters a family, either through birth or adoption, will bring a unique set of personality traits, temperaments, learning styles, and passions that will require parents to treat them as separate but equal members of the family. If a second adoption does not share the same story line as a first, if it lacks intimacy, if it lacks longevity in pre-adoptive placement connections, or if it has different standards in reference to openness, a family may fear that their bonding process will be different when the child is ultimately placed in their home. That's okay. Real love happens in a realistic amount of time, and every child deserves to be loved in his or her own, unique, special way, and in his or her own time.

Enjoy the differences that children bring, and use the opportunity of a second adoption as a chance to expand your own capacity to love.

# 2006 events

April 26 9 am–12 pm	<b>Siblings Connections</b>	Sponsored by Family Connections Training Institute, Center for Family Connections, 350 Cambridge Street, Cambridge, MA 02141, 1-617-547-0909, email to <a href="mailto:cffc@kinnect.org">cffc@kinnect.org</a>
May 7 7 am–5:45 pm	<b>Family Matters: The Fertility and Adoption Conference</b>	The New York Grand Hyatt Hotel Call the American Fertility Association
May 11-13	<b>Adoption 2006: “There’s No Place Like Home”</b>	Marriott Hotel, Albany, NY Sponsored by the New York State Citizens’ Coalition for Children, Call 1-607-272-0034
May 18-19	<b>FIA’s Attorney, Agency &amp; Social Worker in Partnership Semi-Annual Meeting</b>	Middletown Springs, VT Call FIA at 1-802-235-2373 for more information or email at <a href="mailto:fia@friendsinadoption.org">fia@friendsinadoption.org</a>
May 20 8:30 am–1 pm	<b>Domestic Adoption: How to Make it Work for You</b>	Princeton Hyatt 102 Carnegie Center, Princeton, NJ 08540
May 24 9 am–12 pm	<b>Transitions and Endings</b>	Sponsored by Family Connections Training Institute, Center for Family Connections, 350 Cambridge Street, Cambridge, MA 02141, 1-617-547-0909, email to <a href="mailto:cffc@kinnect.org">cffc@kinnect.org</a>
July 9-13	<b>21st Annual Adoption Resource Center (ARC), Summer Intensive</b>	1-617-547-0909, email to <a href="mailto:cffc@kinnect.org">cffc@kinnect.org</a>
July 15	<b>Friends In Adoption’s Annual Picnic</b>	Hapgood Pond, Peru, VT For FIA Alumni, invitations to be mailed in May 06
Oct. 19-20	<b>American Academy of Adoption Attorneys 2006 Mid-Year Conference</b>	<i>Agency Adoptions and Foster Care: Emerging Legal Issues for Attorneys, Social Workers, Foster Parents and Other Adoption Professionals</i> , Denver, Colorado
Nov. 4 8 am–5 pm	<b>15th Annual Conference</b>	Sponsored by Adoption Resource Network (ARNI), Believe in Possibilities, Bay Trail Middle School, 1760 Scribner Road, Penfield, NY 14526 For more information, please call 1-716-586-9586
Nov. 6 6:30 pm	<b>11th Annual AFCR Adoption Fair</b>	Marriott Hotel, Albany, NY For more information, please call 1-518-448-5295

*It’s a girl...continued from page 1*

were as thrilled as we were (well, almost), and within hours we had amassed everything we would need — bassinet, clothes, gas in the car, and heartfelt words of support and encouragement. Though neither of us expected to, we both managed to get some sleep that night. And then, at 8:00 the very next morning (nine months and a day after becoming active, oddly enough), we began our trip to Hudson, New York to meet our daughter.

We talked the WHOLE way — thought of a thousand questions and a thousand reasons to ask “Can you believe it?”. Mary had told us that the baby was beautiful. Well, of course she was — all babies are beautiful! But our first look at this child, our child...beautiful didn’t begin to describe her. And meeting the birth parents in person was just as comfortable as it was over the phone. They were wonderful — caring and supportive of each other, tender with the baby (at that time, referred to as “Peanut” — they wanted to let us select the name), open and honest with us. The time passed so quickly that afternoon, and suddenly we were on our way out of the hospital with our little Maryn Ruth in tow. It wasn’t until we got to the car that the enormity of what we were

doing suddenly hit me. I was so painfully aware of the responsibility entrusted to us that I had to fight the tears. My thoughts raced, my prayers were jumbled, I had to struggle to keep my wits about me. We finally made our way to an Albany hotel near FIA and lawyers’ offices, and we settled in for the night. Of course, sleeping was just not a possibility when there was this precious little girl to keep staring at. Fortunately for us, she was (and still is) such a good baby that, by morning, we were already feeling like we could be successful parents.

FIA did some magic with all the paperwork and got us home in just a few short days, so we were able to have our family Christmas celebration after all. Christmas and babies — we thought it couldn’t get any better. Now, three months later, we know that it just keeps improving. Maryn is in that very delightful stage where everything makes her smile, she’s “talking” up a storm, and she’s sleeping through the night! We’re so immensely proud of her (and ourselves, too — this was huge!), and we’re very much looking forward to all those new experiences yet to come.

*Kris & Lauri*

# family album



# Shattered hearts put back together



We couldn't believe how lucky we were to have gotten "the call" only five months after becoming active with FIA. Less than 24 hours later, we were on our way to Western New York to get the baby boy who we named Jack Quincy. We knew that his insta-baby status was risky, but we were willing to take almost any risk to give our five-year-old son, Ian, a baby brother or sister. We fell in love with Jack right away and he fit perfectly into our life. He was a great baby and we loved him so much. Three weeks had passed and as we were anxiously waiting to pass the 30-day point, we got the call that we dreaded the most. Jack's birth mother had changed her mind and we had to give him back. We were devastated. In an instant, our

**Our grief was deeper than we expected, but life has to go on...FIA was very supportive**

hearts were shattered and we didn't know how to tell Ian. Luckily, we had listened to everyone at FIA and we had told everyone that we were only babysitting for now. It was still almost unbearable to tell Ian that the baby he had also grown to love had to leave us forever. Our grief was deeper

than we expected, but life has to go on. We cried every day for a while, put away all of the baby stuff that had taken over our home, went back to work, and allowed each other to grieve in our own way and time. FIA was very supportive. Someone said something to us that we have ultimately held on to... For some reason, Jack needed us for that time in his life. We'll never know why, but we do believe that it is true. We also knew that we couldn't give up. We so much wanted another baby and tried to believe that "our baby" would find his or her way to us (as FIA says.) Five months after Jack left, we finally got ourselves to an FIA support meeting. Everyone was so supportive and we felt re-energized.

Then it happened again! Less than two weeks after that January support meeting, we got 'the call.' This time an insta-baby girl was waiting for us! We asked for some advice about the risks, but we knew instantly that we were going to get her! The next day we were on the road again. We fell in love with her immediately and now that we have survived the 30 days (it wasn't easy), we are a family of four! We are Barbara, Fran, Ian, and Laney!

We can not possibly say "Thank You" enough to everyone at FIA for all of their support and guidance, but we will try! As many of you have, we felt an instant comfort with FIA and we just trusted their guidance. That trust has brought our daughter to us and we are eternally grateful!

*Barbara & Fran*

*The journey...continued from page 1*

Though there were many days, and even long stretches of weeks and months, when your assurances that the right baby would come to us were difficult to believe, we stayed the course. Thank you so much for helping us find the courage to wait.

Of course, when we first received the call from Lisa in early May telling us that a pregnant woman in D.C. was interested in talking to us, we didn't immediately assume "this is the one." However, after we flew down to D.C. to meet the birth mother, we found that we clicked with her in a comfortable way that made spending time together easy. As the delivery date moved closer, we remained in contact, and allowed ourselves to entertain the possibility that this time things just might be working out.

**Though there were many days, and even long stretches of weeks and months, when your assurances that the right baby would come to us were difficult to believe, we stayed the course.**

The wonderful, caring way in which Derek was welcomed to the world affirmed for us just how right this was for us. We came to Holy Cross Hospital in Maryland a bit apprehensive about how we would be received as a gay couple. Instead, we found everyone at the hospital incredibly compassionate and understanding of our special circumstances, even if it meant bending a rule or two to allow us all to be together throughout the hospital stay.

This enabled us to be with Derek's birth mother not only throughout her grueling 12 hours of labor, but for the entire night after he was born, as we camped out on couches in the labor/delivery room with Derek in a nearby bassinets. And we spent the entire 2-day hospital stay together, enjoying takeout dinners from local restaurants and visits from the birth mother's friends and family. We were

delighted to establish a rapport with her aunt, who told us how thrilled she was that we were the ones her niece had chosen and what wonderful parents we would be.

As a result of this emotionally intense time together, we forged a particularly strong bond with Derek's birth mother, who shared all kinds of stories about herself and her family that we'll be able to tell Derek when he's older. We'll also be able to tell him about the various qualities we saw in his birth mother that we respect, value, and connect with — her creativity, sense of humor, inner strength, maturity, and clear love for him and hope for his future.

There were other signs that this was meant to be — things like the tropical storm that erupted the day Derek was born that transformed into the most breathtaking sunset by day's end. Or the fact that our niece — Derek's new cousin — was born a mere 12 hours after Derek. Or, most of all, that Derek came at a particularly chaotic time in our personal lives, something that our attorney assured us always bodes well for an impending adoption.

Like assurances that our baby would one day find his way home, assurances that we would forget the waiting period once we held our child in our arms were just words in which we often could find little comfort. We now realize how true they were. We just needed to come out on the other side of the process to see it. During our first few hours of parenting, we realized the three-year wait had melted away and the advice you offered was true. Thank you again for not giving up on us and not taking our pessimism as an excuse to let us slide.

Now, not a day goes by that we don't look at Derek in complete amazement that this incredible, easy-going, funny, adorable child is our son. We feel so lucky to have him in our lives — and fortunate that so many kind, smart, supportive people, including all of our friends at FIA, helped bring him home to us. Thank you for everything!

*Steven, Mark and Derek*



# mail

## Birth Grandmother

I am a Birth Grandmother. My beautiful, then 19-year-old daughter, Heather, gave birth to my gorgeous grandson, Jackson, on March 4, 2005. Heather and her boyfriend had already made the decision to place the baby for adoption. I was afraid I would never see my grandson again.

I was SO wrong about that. I didn't know much about Open Adoption until Jackson was born. Mary was wonderful—she took her time and explained everything to us. Heather allowed Mary to pick the adoptive parents for Jackson. Mary, we thank you so much every day for the decision you made. It has been such a perfect match for all of us. Jackson's adoptive parents were even willing to meet me and my husband, and our younger daughter at the hospital.

Jackson has just celebrated his 1st birthday. It is hard to believe a year has gone by already! Jackson's adoptive parents have been truly wonderful—they have welcomed us into their hearts and lives. We have a very close relationship.

We look forward to every bit of communication we have with them—phone calls (both to Heather and to me), pictures, emails, visits, etc. This is, indeed, what Open Adoption is. We are very lucky—this amount of openness may not be right for every family but, for our family, it has been just perfect.

We are truly blessed. Thank you so very much, Mary!

Sincerely,

Lori-Birth Grandma to Jackson

## Adoptive Parents



Dear Friends at FIA:

We are sorry that this letter has been a long time in coming, but we got a little busy overnight thanks to all of your hard work. Rob and I are so overjoyed with our precious gift, Isabel. We want to thank all of you for standing by us through thick and thin and continuing to believe in us. Isabel is more than we ever hoped for us. She certainly makes us realize life is precious. She has brought so much joy to us and to everyone who meets her.

We will see all of you at the picnic and we have enclosed some pictures. Thank you again. You all are truly angels.

Lots of love, Gina, Rob & Isabel



Dear Mary,

At a time like this, the words "thank you" seem so inadequate. As devastated as we are to have lost Jacob, we are equally blessed to have you on our side. It is so comforting to know that you believe in us. You help us to believe that our dream to adopt will come true (hopefully sooner—than later)!

Thank you for everything!  
Fondly, Lisa & Anthony

Dear Barb,

This note is long overdue, but both Tom and I still wanted you to know how much we appreciated your making yourself available to us over the Christmas holiday to discuss the birthmother situation we were spontaneously confronted with here in Connecticut. We were very conflicted and emotional and really needed a good listener, and you were so there for us. Your words were extremely helpful and comforting, and it meant the world to us. It also makes us so very happy to be working with all of you at FIA.

We promised you we would let you know how things went, and as it turned out, we threw our names in for consideration, but did not get chosen in the end. Looking back, it was a growthful experience for us, and one that we hope will carry us closer to making our adoption dream come true. Thank you Barb, so much, for being there for us.

Sincerely,

Zoe & Tom

## Birth Mother Day

Dear Friends at FIA:

As another Birth Mother Day draws near, I want to thank you for recognizing a day that is very special to me.

When I received a card from my son's parents wishing me a Happy Birth Mother Day, I was thrilled.

FIA does a great job of educating adoptive parents about how to treat us birth mothers.

Thank you,  
Hannah

## Open Adoption

Dear Dawn and Staff,

I wanted to write and thank you again for being led to continue blessing those desiring to add to their family. We have been so blessed by God and your efforts. Margaret is now nine-years-old. We have seen twice this year how God has used open adoption in a most wonderful way.



After a week of "flu-like" symptoms in February, Margaret was diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes. We knew first-hand from medical records and from on-going contact that Gerry, her birth father, was diagnosed as well when he was 14. He was and has been a source of comfort, encouragement and information for us.

Margaret will be using an insulin pump soon and Gerry started on one last year. Margaret is doing very well and beyond what you would believe a 9-year-old is capable of.

Secondly, we all had the privilege to attend Sara's (Margaret's birth mom's) wedding in July. Margaret was so delighted to be in the wedding party. Our ongoing contact with Sara and her family have been wonderful. Many are amazed about the level of openness that we share but when God has blessed it, it is such a natural and comfortable feeling. They are truly our relatives heart and soul.

Thank you again. We love you all.

Mary Beth and Family

## Begin with a Get Acquainted Weekend

# Is FIA right for you?

To The FIA Gang,

WOW! When you first said we had to go to Vermont in order to learn about adoption, I will confess it was all my wife's idea and I was not so thrilled. But I wanted to make her happy so I said fine, let's go! Now I am the one pushing to get everything done yesterday. I know our baby is out there and can't wait!

Let me tell you the setting for the GAW is perfect... the Barrow's House is beautiful, with some great shops nearby, food was excellent, other couples were nice and funny and easy to talk to (not what I expected), and it was great to know the FIA Gang will hold our hand through this whole process. We may need it and we trust you when you say that you will be there for us!

Thanks for the referral to the social worker for the home study. We talked to Kate and she is fitting us in this week. Talk to you by the end of the week.

Kim and Kevin

Before you make a decision about whether FIA is right for you, we feel it's important for you to understand who we are, how we work, what we expect from clients and how we view the adoption process. There's so much to tell, and we think there's no better atmosphere in which to accomplish this than here in Vermont.

So we ask you to start your journey at an FIA Get Acquainted Weekend. The weekend will give you a chance to meet our staff, ask questions and relax in a casual, rural setting while exploring the adoption options offered by FIA.

Attendance at a Get Acquainted Weekend is mandatory for all clients. The cost of the weekend is \$275 per couple or single. This fee covers all meetings and lunch on Saturday. Weekends fill up quickly and are booked on a first-come, first-serve basis.



Complete this Registration Form and return it to FIA. Pick your date carefully, FIA has a no refund policy. Your payment can only be applied to the workshop you register for.

**Questions? Email Kim at [kim@friendsinadoption.org](mailto:kim@friendsinadoption.org).**

To the Staff at FIA,

Just a quick note to thank you for an unbelievable weekend. If you had told us a week ago that we would have had fun at an adoption weekend, we would have thought you were strange.

We have been wrestling with the adoption decision for a long time, but never had all the information about domestic adoption in one place before. The weekend was just what we needed to figure out whether adoption is for us.

We can't believe that we thought that there were no Caucasian infants to adopt in this country and that we would have to wait 7 years to adopt.

We are so glad we went to the weekend.

Sincerely,

Amber and Dave

## Get Acquainted Weekend Registration Form

Name 1 \_\_\_\_\_

Name 2 \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Work Phone 1 \_\_\_\_\_

Work Phone 2 \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

May we call you at work (we identify ourselves as FIA)?  Yes  No

How long have you been in the adoption search process? \_\_\_\_\_

Special circumstances you would like us to know about. \_\_\_\_\_

How did you learn about FIA? \_\_\_\_\_

Would you consider adopting a child of race other than your own?  Yes  No

FIA offers a "reflections on race" segment in our workshops for families considering adopting outside of their own ethnic background.

If there is a cancellation for the weekend or your choice, would you be available on 24 hours notice?  Yes  No

Are there any children currently residing in your home?  Yes  No

**Due to the nature of the weekend, we cannot accommodate children.**

Please indicate your 1st, 2nd and 3rd choice for workshop to attend. The following dates are set for FIA's 2006 Get Acquainted Weekends.

\_\_\_\_\_ April 28-30

\_\_\_\_\_ June 9-11

\_\_\_\_\_ August 25-27

\_\_\_\_\_ October 27-29

\_\_\_\_\_ December 1-3

### Method of Payment

\$275 fee per couple/single includes meetings and lunch on Saturday.

Personal check payable to Friends in Adoption

VISA  Mastercard

CC# \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. Date \_\_\_\_\_

Please return this form as soon as possible to reserve your space. Reservations may be made via email or fax with a credit card. A letter confirming space in the first available weekend will be sent to you upon receipt of this completed form. Fax to Kim at 1-802-235-2311.

**Dates and rates subject to change without notice.**

Mail this form to: Friends in Adoption  
44 South Street, PO Box 1228  
Middletown Springs, VT 05757-1228  
Phone 1-802-235-2373, Fax 1-802-235-2311  
[www.friendsinadoption.org](http://www.friendsinadoption.org)