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Russia Update

By Larisa Mason

In April 2010, Torry Hansen placed seven-year-old Justin on a plane bound for Moscow, unaccompanied by an adult, with a note saying that she was returning him to the orphanage and voiding the adoption. Justin Hansen was sent to Moscow alone, and was met by a driver with whom his adoptive grandmother had arranged to transport him to the Russian Ministry of Education. He arrived unannounced at the Russian Ministry of Education on April 7, 2010, triggering an international outcry on his behalf.

Much of what has been happening in Russia today is a direct result of this woman's actions. Initially there were calls for a suspension of all adoptions by Americans. In fact, many in the media were erroneously reporting that such a freeze had indeed taken place and would be in place until such time as a bi-lateral agreement between the two countries was achieved.

The US Department of State delegation were initially scheduled to meet with the Russian officials in the end of April, however this meeting was delayed due to the volcano eruptions and air traffic problems. At this writing, there have been 2 meetings that occurred between the two governments on the topic of tightening controls for international adoptions. After the May 12, 2010 meeting, the two governmental entities had come to an agreement to pursue an official bi-lateral agreement between the two countries regarding international adoption. While the details of the agreement have not been made public, many assume that additional steps will be taken to ensure the proper preparation of families including educational and psychological requirements. In addition, there is speculation that additional post adoption reports will be required and the conditions of such reports will be tightened.

All of these efforts between the two countries do signal a willingness to continue adoptions and work through the challenges facing both countries. In fact, Russia is continuing to allow international adoptions while the talks are in process despite media accounts to the contrary. However, as anyone who has been involved in Russian adoption knows, there are many regional variances which can create confusion.

Please contact IAG or your Case Manager if you have any questions with regard to the status of adoptions in the regions where IAG works.

Editor's Note

Please include Justin in your thoughts and prayers. He deserved better.

Kennywood Picnic July 19th

Visit the website www.iagadoptions.org for more details

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Post Adoption Help Available IS Through IAG

As a result of the Torry Hansen incident, many articles have been written regarding Russian adoptions and many news shows have focused on adoption. Many of these media outlets have highlighted the problems that many of the Russian children have and the challenges faced by adoptive parents in meeting the needs of their new family member. Many speculate that perhaps if Ms. Hansen had reached out to her agency or to some other area resource, this tragedy might have been averted.

International Assistance Group, Inc. wants to encourage families to contact us if you are experiencing problems with your child. Perhaps we can offer some advice or resource or direction for you to pursue that could save you time and anguish. Many parents may feel reticent to contact the agency that placed their child for fear that they will be judged as not being "good enough" as a parent.

Anytime someone is experiencing difficulties, it is always helpful to reach out to other parents or to professionals. Sometimes it's nice to hear that we are not alone...that someone else has the same problem with their child. Other times we are given some advice from a parent who has "been there, done that". In both cases the simple act of talking to someone about your problems eases the stress just a little.

For any families experiencing problems after they have brought their child home from Russia, please do not hesitate to contact Mary Graber at mgrabber@iagadoptions.org or at (412)828-5800. Mary is the Director of Family Resources and is also an adoptive parent. She has worked with IAG for 15 years and her own children are teenagers (adopted as infants). She may not have all the answers but perhaps she can point you in the right direction; or simply listen.

Congratulations Graduate

Congratulations to Nikolai Scott, adopted through IAG in 1993.

Nikolai is graduating from Shaler Area High School in PA. He will be attending Northwood University in Midland Michigan on a partial academic scholarship in the fall. He plans to major in business and automotive marketing.

IAG wishes Nikolai the best of luck and a very bright future!

Please feel free to submit your graduate's accomplishments to Mgrabber@iagadoptions.org. We would love to help you celebrate!



Welcome Home Lexie



Please welcome Lexie Slaybaugh into her new family.

Adoptive mom Julie Slaybaugh brought Lexie home in February from the Moscow Region, Fryazino Baby Home.

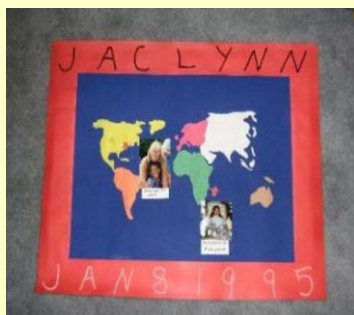
She certainly looks at home!



CHECK OUT THE WORLD WIDE WEB!

www.CaptureALegacy.com-

Create and publish your very own books, cards, posters, cookbooks etc. to honor your family. The program features simple to use templates and interactive features. They offer free basic membership or a premier membership for a fee



www.journeyhomeadoptionquilts.com-

This web site features quilts customized to show your adoption journey from your birth country to your forever family. They can be made complete with pictures and addresses.

www.adoptivefamilytravel.com-

Helping children know the people with whom they share their heritage are warm, wonderful, genuine people. Traveling to your child's country of birth as a family will be one of the most profound, bonding, identity building opportunities in your family's life experience of adoption. For more than 17 years in twelve countries, the Hallmark of The Ties Program has been our ability to create an experience that allows you to travel with a community of adoptive families and trained professionals, and at the same time, have your individual family dreams and needs met.

Adoptive family heritage journeys are available to Cambodia, China, Chile, Guatemala, India, Korea, Peru, Paraguay, The Philippines, Russia, Romania and Vietnam. Programs opening in Colombia, Ethiopia, Kazakhstan and The Ukraine.

Talking to Your Three- to Five-Year-Old About Adoption

Three-to-five-year-olds are curious. Their burgeoning cognitive and language skills are tools for figuring out what life is about. The questions they ask offer insight into how much they want to belong, to be accepted, to be safe and secure. They have short attention spans and will change the subject or ignore us once their curiosity is satisfied or our talk goes on too long.

The best approach to adoption questions is to answer only the questions your child is asking, in the simplest possible way. Offer words for expressing feelings, and let your child know that you're always game for talking. Talking calmly and matter-of-factly about adoption sends your child the most important message of all: that adoption is okay and he can feel completely comfortable discussing whatever is on his mind.

Here are some questions children are likely to ask, along with some answers you might offer:

"Why wasn't I born in your tummy?"

"Your dad and I couldn't make a baby, but we wanted a baby to love and take care of very much. You were born from your birthmother's tummy, and then Daddy and I adopted you."

"I wish you'd been born in my tummy too."

“Why did you adopt me?”

“We wanted a child to love and take care of.”

“Why didn’t my first mother keep me?”

“Sometimes a man and a woman give birth to a child, but they can’t take care of any child right then. It’s not because of anything about the child. It’s for grown-up reasons. So they find another family who can take care of the child.”

“What does my first mother look like?”

“You are wondering what your birthmother looks like.” If you know what she looks like, once you’ve acknowledged the questions, describe her. If you don’t know, you might say something like, “She must be very beautiful if she looks like you.” Imagine together what she looks like, or invite your child to draw a picture.”

Say It Simply

- *“Every baby is born to a man and a woman.” (A key concept to impart at this age.)*
- *“Families form in two ways: Babies can live with the family they were born in, or they can live with the family that adopts them.”*
- *“Sometimes a woman can’t grow a baby, so she adopts a baby.”*
- *“Sometimes a mom and dad can’t take care of a baby who is born to them, so they find another family to raise their child.”*
- *“Sometimes families adopt children from far away.”*

A Sample Conversation

When my three-year-old, Sasha, adopted as an infant in Florida, first noticed a pregnant woman, our discussions of life and birth began.

Sasha: *“I was in your tummy too, Mommy.”*

Me: *“You were in Linda’s tummy. Your birthmother gave birth to you, and then Daddy and I adopted you.”*

Sasha: *“But how did you and Daddy get me from Linda’s tummy?”*

Me: *“Linda couldn’t take care of any baby, and we needed a baby to love and take care of. So we adopted you to be our baby.”*

What if a child doesn’t ask about adoption?

Some of us believe that if a child does not ask about adoption, she does not want to know. In fact, a child who does not ask may simply be keeping her thoughts to herself. Your casual mention of adoption – *“Did you know that Janie was adopted from Guatemala?”* – gives her permission to ask.

Talking Strategies

Make sure you know what your child is really asking before answering a question.

Offer concrete ways of expressing feelings. Suggest that your child dictate a letter to a birthparent, to send or to put in a special place. Have her draw a picture. Use dolls to act out feelings and questions.

Read books together about adoptive families. Bedtime reading can be a warm and affectionate experience – a time when your child feels secure and open to ask questions.

Reflect and repeat what your child says. Paraphrasing her words demonstrates that you are paying attention and are interested.

Why is Talking Important *Children at this age need:*

...to know they were wanted and loved - and that nothing they did or didn't do led to their being placed for adoption.

...to know that we are here for them. As they grapple with what adoption means, help them understand that they can bring any question to you.

...to know that adoption is forever. They will not be un-adopted if they don't behave well.

...to know they have two families. (The details can come later.) My daughter delights in listing all the family she has, both birth and adoptive, even though she has met only a few of them.

...to hear that adoption is not shameful or secret. This is just one of the ways families are formed.

... to normalize adoption as a way to build a family. Even though most children are not adopted into their families, adoption has been around since human beings first formed communities. Children are remarkably clear about relationships and accept as normal what we present as normal.

... to hear our respect and compassion for their birthparents. Even if we know troubling information about birthparents, we should send the message that they did their best. Our children need to feel that they were born to good and loving parents.

... to hear our acceptance of their ambivalence or sadness about having been adopted. Sad feelings don't compromise our family's closeness. Talking about them only brings us closer.

...to hear positive adoption language. They were not "given up," "put up," or "given away." Their birthparents made a plan so that they could be cared for. When we hear adoption concepts stated in a negative way, by other people or even by our children, we can rephrase what they say in positive terms.

... to be assured of our willingness to keep discussing adoption, even as they grow and the questions and feelings become more complex and difficult to express.

Susan Saidman is a mother by adoption to Sasha. She directs a domestic adoption program for Adoptions Together in Silver Springs, Maryland. From Adoptive Families magazine "Clip and Save Guide"

Adoption Books for Three- to Five-Year-Olds

- *Tell Me Again About the Night I was Born* by Jamie Lee Curtis (HarperCollins)
- *Susan and Gordon Adopt a Baby* by Judy Freudberg & Tony Geiss (Random House)
- *How I Was Adopted: Samantha's Story*, by Joanna Cole (William Morrow & Company)
- *We're Different, We're the Same*, by Bobbi Jane Kates (Random House)
- *Love You Forever*, by Shelia McGraw (Firefly Books)
- *Through Moon and Stars and Night Skies*, by Ann Warren Turner (HarperTrophy)
- *The Day We Met You*. by Phoebe Koehler (Aladdin Paperback)

The Russian Rendezvous

By Mary Graber

The Jubilee Christian School in Mt. Lebanon, PA held a very special event in March to celebrate Russia and its culture and history. The school children receive passports in kindergarten that they use during their time at the elementary school. Each year they "visit" a different country. This year they visited Russia! The gym was decorated with large murals of St. Basils' Cathedral and the Summer Palace while the children were escorted through various exhibits. There were plenty of "guest speakers" on hand to discuss Russia's rich history. The teachers incorporated Russian themes into their classes during the entire month to encourage a full understanding of the country. Special thanks to Jennifer Kellam (adoptive mom to Joshua and Ben) for sharing this great event with me!

WHITE NIGHTS GETS RESCHEDULED

After much consideration, IAG has decided to postpone the White Nights Weekend Fundraising Event to the weekend of August 28, 2010. The reason behind the postponement is that our Russian guests (Baby Home Directors, Representatives, and Drivers etc.) were experiencing difficulty in obtaining airline tickets to come to the US due to the problems with the Iceland volcano. As you know, one of the purposes of the event is to reunite our Russian friends with the families whose lives they have touched through the miracle of adoption. We felt that we simply could not hold the event without them.

So, please still plan on attending the event! You can simply use the response card in the original invitation that you should have already received. The location and times indicated in the original invitation will remain the same. The Brunch will be held on Sunday August 29, 2010 in the same location.

Please feel free to contact John Wilson at jwilson@iagadoptions.org or (412)828-5800 if you have any specific questions/concerns.

Taming the Wild Child

Too often, traditional treatment proves disappointing for badly behaving kids whose misbehaviors are often diagnosed as Reactive Attachment Disorder (RAD), Conduct Disorder (CD), Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD), Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Bipolar Disorder (BPD), Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), or depression. Talk therapy often disappoints, and medication doesn't treat the source of the child's anti-social behavior.

Is your child: controlling, bossy, manipulative, defiant, sneaky, argumentative, demanding, impulsive, explosive, oppositional, lying, stealing, and underachieving? Do you feel: out of control, helpless, demoralized, guilty, inadequate, and emotionally exhausted?

The Solution - Using the approach offered by The RAD Consultancy, LLC, parents usually find significant improvement in their child's behavior and attitude within four to six weeks, and complete turnaround within months. The consultancy achieves this goal by working with one of the parents (usually the mother, natural or adoptive) rather than working with the child. There is no need for face-to-face meetings. Instead, mothers are coached over the phone in providing their problem child with unique and easy corrective communications. Each week, the counselor suggests a simple act or a communication to deliver to the child.

For more info check out the web site: <http://www.radconsultancy.com/>

Where I am From

I am from cold wind,
from the other side.
I am from cabbage soup,
and brown bread.
I am from stone streets,
and the numbers six and
seven.

I am from Kalseva and Korn,
from the unknown.
I am from the bricks full of
secrets,
from the street no one
knows.
I am from sadness and hope,
from many others like me.

I am from galloping hooves,
from the smell of sweet
hay.

I am from loud music
and from laughter.
I am from paper,
from many emotions.

I am from love,
and from trust.
I am from acceptance,
and many warm
welcoming's.
I am from all of the
memories I'll never lose,
that helped me move on in
life.



...a poem written by Maiya Kolesova Korn, an IAG adoptee.

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Editor AMF

Save This Date!
2010 White Nights - August 28,
2010
For more info call IAG

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Oakmont, PA 15139

