

Small Steps

Winter 1999



FRC's Mission

The mission of Family Resource Center is to find permanent loving family homes for children, here and around the world, through adoption.

FRC's Goal for 2000

Our goal for the coming year is to improve existing programs and to embark on new initiatives to provide educational programs and communication with our constituent communities.

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Want to hear about educational programs offered by FRC? Call the Education Hotline (773) 334-4258

FRC adoption program participants can call this number to find out about upcoming classes and events. Classes offered can be used to satisfy foster family home license training requirements.

Stay tuned to hear about FRC's workshop, **"Talking About Adoption and Parenting – Its Meaning In Our Lives."** This seminar will be for adoptive parents from our adoptive family community and offered in March 2000. Time, date and location to be announced.



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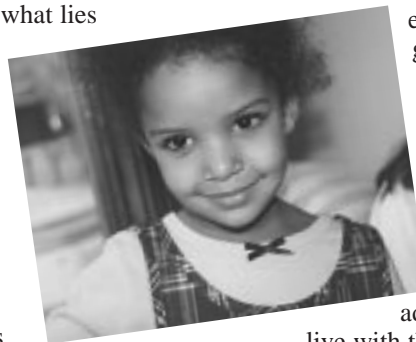
Looking Ahead

By Richard Pearlman, MSW,
Executive Director

As 1999 draws to a close, I find myself looking at Family Resource Center in amazement at everything that has been accomplished and with excitement about what lies ahead. It is very satisfying to have seen FRC grow over the last ten years from a "mom and pop store" into a vibrant organization that has touched thousands of lives and continues to support hundreds of children and families every year. Having moved beyond its infancy, Family Resource Center is now able to take a broader view of its work and purpose.

As an organization we continually examine who we are and how we conduct ourselves, and look for ways to improve our programs and practice. We have created an organizational culture that delights in challenge and is energized by healthy debate. We continue to pursue our mission of finding loving, permanent homes for children, here and around the world, through adoption. We want to be the kind of organization we would want to work with ourselves if we were considering adoption – whether as birth parents thinking about placing a child, or as people hoping to adopt.

FRC views itself as an oasis of inclusion – where one's political or religious views or ethnic background are respected. We celebrate diversity and advocate for people's right and prerogative to manage their own lives, to determine for themselves what will happen with their adoption. Time and time again we have seen birth parents and adoptive parents work cooperatively with one another, out of a shared desire to protect and provide for a child's future. Family Resource Center is



blessed with staff and volunteers who are dedicated to cooperation in adoption and who share a passion for justice, fairness and truth.

What has become exceedingly clear is how complex this work is. By its very nature FRC's work is laden with emotional intensity – being given responsibility to care for a child by a birth parent[s] and then transferring that responsibility to adoptive parents who raise that child for the rest of their lives. Everyone involved with FRC – my colleagues on staff, volunteers, birth parents, adoptive parents and children – live with the finality and irrevocability of adoption. What I see is that when a man or woman places a child for adoption, or adopts a child, this is just the beginning of a very long story.

Though there are differences between domestic and international adoption, the lives of birth parents and adoptive parents always are inexorably intertwined. It remains to be seen what



the experience will be for children who were orphaned overseas and who will not be likely to have the opportunity to discover the identity of their birth parents. These comments are directed primarily at domestic adoptions, where this subject is particularly poignant. Whether or not birth parents and adoptive parents have ongoing contact following an adoptive placement, more

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and more often there is contact when the child reaches adulthood.

In the beginning it appeared that FRC's work was to find homes for children. That was the "end of the story." We did not consciously look into the future. Now, ten years later, what begins to emerge is something different; a rich tapestry of questions, experiences, ideas and responses to questions from children, birth parents, adoptive parents, and adult adoptees.

How do people discuss adoption with their children? How do children speak about having been adopted? How do children's comments and questions change with age? How do adoptive parents respond to a child's questions about their origins? Why do some adoptive parents fear being contacted by birth parents and others do not? What are the characteristics of effective parents? What does it mean to "spoil" a child? How does that occur? What, if any, are the common experiences of birth parents, prior to placing a child for adoption, at the time of placement, and following adoptive placement? What is it like for

birth parents and adoptive parents as adopted children approach adulthood and a time when they might choose to find their "birth parents" – with or without the blessing of adoptive parents? Why do some adoptive parents feel anxious when their child seeks out his or her birth parents, and others excited? Why do some children search and others not?

While respecting that every situation is unique, my colleagues and I want to see FRC become the kind of place where all topics – family, parenting, reunion, emotional processes and adoption can be discussed in the open. One of the greatest challenges facing Family Resource Center in the coming decade will be finding new ways to talk about adoption with all members of the adoption triad.

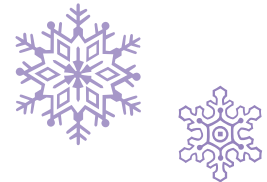
We welcome your ideas and involvement at Family Resource Center. It is through your participation that FRC grows and gets to make a difference in people's lives. All of us at FRC are looking forward to growing with you in the year ahead, and extend to you warm regards and best wishes. ❀

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A Birth Parent's Point of View

By Jennifer Cortesi

In December of 1996, I placed my newborn son for adoption with a wonderful family. Becoming a birth parent was a whole new experience for me. So is seeing the "adoption world" for what it really is. I have worked in many ways with FRC.

I have answered the phones, assisted with the annual fundraisers, spoken at conferences, and prepared Chinese dossiers. I have listened with compassion to the families who have waited for years, or have tried many fertility treatments and/or adoption agencies. I have been there to see the pain when a birth mom changes her mind and a family is left empty-handed and brokenhearted. I have been there to witness many births and the beautiful moment of passing on the new infant from mother to mother. I have held young women in my arms as they cried from their loss. I have guided and empathized with birth moms like me. I have also sat and talked to many prospective adoptive parents and adoptive parents about their true feelings. I have learned so much in these last three years that this one newsletter could not say enough. I am thankful though that I have had an opportunity to experience all of this first hand. It leaves me with better knowledge and comfort, instead of doubt and fear.

My honest opinion is that adoption isn't easy for anybody who is involved. We all face different issues everyday that are difficult. Being pregnant and nurturing a baby inside of your body for nine months and then letting go at the drop of a hat is not easy. Having to explain to family, friends, and strangers about adoption is not a simple process. Having no choice but to trust your instincts and believe in the family that you chose is not easy. And it goes the other way too. I can't imagine spending years doing expensive fertility treatments and just not being able to have a biological child. I can't imagine traveling to another country to bring home a child I could call my own. I can't imagine the anger and the hurt I'd feel if I believed we were going to become a family, and then it didn't happen.

If we just try to put ourselves in the other person's shoes for a moment and have a look at what it would be like to feel the way that they feel, then we might get past our own fears and see each other as human beings. I believe we are all led to one another, to pass through each other's lives at a moment in time for a definite reason. So many people have truly touched my heart throughout the years without even knowing it. I can only hope that I will do the same in the coming years. ❀

*We want to
hear from you!*

Do you have any comments or responses to something you've read in this newsletter? Do you have any thoughts about being a parent, family, adoption, that you'd like to share?

Please let us know. We want to hear from you.

You may write to us at:

Small Steps
c/o FRC
5828 N. Clark Street
Chicago, Illinois 60660

Or send us e-mail at
adoption@f-r-c.org.

Please include your name and telephone/e-mail so that we can speak with you about publishing your comments.



China Journal

By Jane Richmond, ACSW

Late in November I returned from FRC's most recent China trip with Group 19. I find it hard to write about powerful experiences like the one I have just completed, especially when I have invested so many hours and so much of my "heart and soul" into the event.

Group 19 left for China on November 5, 1999. It was less than a year ago that these families applied to the program. At long last, seven families were on their way, traveling to Guangxi Province to adopt their daughters. Four of the seven had been through FRC's China Program before and were adopting their second daughters from China (their Mei-Meis or 'little sisters'). From Chicago we took a direct flight to Hong Kong and on to Guangzhou, where we spent the night at the White Swan Hotel over looking the Pearl River. On Sunday, November 7, we traveled to the city of Nanning, in Guangxi Province and we stayed at the Mingyuan Xindu Hotel. We ate a quick dinner because five of the seven babies were soon to arrive. The orphanage director, caretakers and babies were to be at the hotel at 7:30. At 7:25 we heard squawking babies coming down the hall. The babies and their caretakers were taken into a room by our logistics coordinator, Wu Ga. The parents returned to their rooms to get ready to meet their daughters [and to get cameras ready]. Four of the five were peaceful and content, one protested loudly. I quickly made the decision that the protesting baby should meet her parents first! We knocked on the door and Mom and Dad met Yunwei. The caretaker told them that this baby had a reputation in the orphanage for being stubborn and predicted that she would cry for the next three of four days! She had a terrific robust cry and indeed did make her presence known for the next three days. The other children were taken to meet their parents – and one by one the children were surrounded by tears of joy, cameras flashing, lots of

questions for the caretakers and lots of loud robust cries of protest from the babies. Yes, one excited baby did throw up all over Mom. Welcome to parenting! Qiuyun, soon to be three years old, dealt with this transition with complete exuberance and giggling galore. Delighted and squealing, she pointed at the papers falling all over the floor when she saw Dad taking numerous Polaroids of his new daughter. A few hours later, when things were calming down, I found myself reflecting on the phenomenal events of the evening and what an absolute privilege it is to be a part of this work.



Monday morning the two remaining families proceeded to Guigang Mother's Love Orphanage to meet their daughters. Again I was able to witness those golden life moments of children meeting their Moms and Dads; Moms and Dads who have worked so hard and waited so long to be united with their children. After a short time at the orphanage, and a brief stop at the hotel, we went to our appointment with the civil affairs officials. New administrative changes in China necessitated that this meeting was quite long, but parents took it in stride as they were asked to complete multiple forms and use their best penmanship to complete their own adoption decree. [Sidebar: There's a new fashion item for children in China, the wearing of shoes that loudly squeak with each step the child takes. Note to self: ban all squeaky shoes from meetings with officials!] We headed back to the hotel to

host a banquet lunch for orphanage officials. Afterwards, there were several more hours of meetings with the notary officials. By this time it was 5PM and everyone was exhausted. But the day was not yet over, as family pictures needed to be taken for the adoption decrees. One by one each family posed for the photographer. The children fussed until Wu Ga saved the day by performing aerobic singing and dancing Chinese children's songs behind the photographer. Undoubtedly because of their utter enchantment with this entertainment, the crying stopped just long enough for the portraits.

The rest of the week was memorable as well and not quite as exhausting. Wu Ga arranged a special treat: we all had the privilege of having a beautiful, formal, sixteen-course lunch with the Mayor of Nanning and the Directors of Cultural and Spiritual Affairs. Young local women made the event even more special with the singing of traditional Zhuang songs. For families not used to Chinese cuisine, I noted that having a baby on your lap is a delightful excuse for less than expert use of chopsticks!

We completed the administrative work in Nanning and by Friday we were off to Guangzhou to complete the visa application process at the United States Consulate, every daughter's passport and adoption papers happily in hand. Here the trip became more routine: visa pictures on Friday night, the medical clinic on Saturday and consulate appointments the following workweek, before heading home to family and friends.

This was my fifth opportunity to travel to China. Every trip and every group has been unique, yet the delight of watching parents and children meet and magically transform into families never changes. In this season of giving thanks it is for this experience and privilege I give thanks. Thank you to Group 19 and to all the past and future groups for letting Family Resource Center be a part of your lives and families. 🌸

Temporary Care Angels

As many FRC families know, there may be a time when newborns, for a variety of reasons, require temporary care from one to three nights before he or she can be placed in their new adoptive home. Perhaps your child was cared for temporarily in someone's home during your family's adoptive journey.

Would you consider providing temporary care for an FRC child who is awaiting an adoptive placement? If you have a currently active foster family license you can!

HERE'S ALL YOU NEED TO DO:

- Call Kristen Michael and let her know that you would like to be added to our list of folks we can call.
- Know that you will be greatly appreciated by the entire FRC community!



FRC extends a hearty thank you to everyone on the team! You are wonderful!



Millennium Gala

FRC's most successful fundraiser to date, the Millennium Gala, was held at the Ruth Lake Country Club in Hinsdale on November 20, 1999. Nearly 300 supporters feasted, danced to a great band and took home the fruits of an outstanding live and silent auction.

Judy Linn, of FRC's Board of Directors, was the inspired and driving force behind this event. Her creative talents and boundless energy, teamed with a dedicated committee and FRC's Kristen Michael, created a memorable evening which will fund many of FRC's programs and initiatives. We at FRC are enormously grateful to Judy, her committee and to all those whose attendance and support made such a successful evening! THANK YOU ALL!



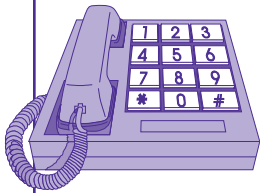
Congratulations to those who adopted from FRC this past year!

Jonathan & Cheryl - *Gabrella*
 Richard & Elizabeth - *Cole*
 Robert & Susan - *Bobby*
 Brian & Vicky - *Delaney*
 Samuel & Lori - *Page*
 Thomas & Pier - *Tegen*
 Garry & Catherine - *Dylan*
 Alice - *Jenna*
 Felix & Cynthia - *Alexandra*
 Lawrence & Colleen - *Mary*
 Lawrence & Cynthia - *Leah*
 Thomas & Diane - *Ann*
 William & Elizabeth - *Ashley*
 Joan - *Irene*
 Robert & Cindee - *Jenna*
 Mark & Randi - *Katherine*
 Jesse & Dianne - *Carlos*
 Robert & Myrna - *Katherine*
 Patricia - *Thea*
 Catherine - *Emily*
 Daniel - *Macario*
 James & Laura - *Maria*
 Joseph & Teresa - *Samuel*
 Hermann & Marjorie - *Charles*
 David & Melinda - *Adam*
 Mary Ann & Kathleen - *Margaret*
 Joseph & Christy - *Margaret*
 Monica - *Marleigh*
 Joseph & Mary - *Mai*
 Paul & Lisa - *Celeste*
 Lisa - *Lily*
 Kenneth & Koyla - *Katherine*
 David & Jerilyn - *Ruby*
 Robert & Laura - *Eve*
 Julia - *Kayla*
 Peter & Anne - *Andrea*
 David & Catherine - *Grace*
 Kenneth & Laura - *Daniel*
 Dianne - *Mollie*
 Richard & Joyce - *Sarah*

Lori - *Kaelyn*
 Patrick & Patricia - *Cara*
 Mark & Marybeth - *Bailey*
 Louis - *Alexander*
 Paul Jr. & Debbie - *Emily*
 Patricia - *Marlon & William*
 Declan & Delores - *Hannah*
 Joe & Pamela - *Molly*
 David & Xue Ying - *Rhiannon*
 John & Deborah - *Meilin*
 Bruce & Michelle - *Elizabeth Ann*
 James & Susan - *Hannah*
 William & Betsy - *Jin*
 Michael & Margaret - *Aidan*
 Randall & Carol - *Olivia*
 John & Diane - *Jamie*
 Melissa - *Jordan*
 Steven & Patricia - *James*
 John & Diana - *Frances*
 Leonard & Mary - *Nathan*
 Bradley & Janice - *Anna*
 James & Danielle - *Alexis*
 James & Carol - *Kasey*
 Bruce & Lynette - *Emma*
 Michael & Debra - *Rachel*
 Peter & Deirdre - *Mitchell*
 David & Devora - *Kaila*
 Josephine - *Catherine*
 Glynn & Catherine - *Clare*
 Steve & Cathy - *John*
 Fred & Carolyn - *John*
 Antoine & Yael - *Noam & Eyal*
 Paul & Mary - *Jeanne*
 David & Connie - *Matthew*
 Thomas & Susan - *Eric*
 Michael & Kim - *Lily*
 James & Christine - *Daniel*
 David & Andrea - *Tyler*
 Lawrence & Rebecca - *Elizabeth*
 Patrick & Ann Marie - *Julia*
 Matthew & Julie - *Nathaniel & Eden*
 Thomas & Nancy - *Claire*
 Eric & Ginger - *Samantha*
 Norman & Sonya - *Brandon*
 Anne & Jeanne - *Zoe*
 Nicholas & Anne - *Elenor*
 Eric & Mary - *George*



Volunteers make the difference! Phone Team answers the call!



For more than 11 years Family Resource Center has been answering its telephones 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. We have been able to do this through the miracle of "call forwarding" and the generosity of a team of volunteers who have been willing to answer FRC's telephone from the comfort of their own home.

This feature of FRC's activities has been of vital importance over the years. More than 50% of all adoptive placements have originated from calls made by birth parents outside of regular working hours, at night and on weekends and holidays.

Would you like to join our telephone team? If you can make a commitment to give as few as 5 consecutive hours per month to answer FRC calls from in your home – we want you! If you are interested or want more information, please call our Team Coordinator, Kari Saul at 847-918-7447.

Finding out about EQ – 'Emotional Intelligence' Quotient

On **April 2, 2000**, Robert Noone, Ph.D., Executive Director of the Family Service Center (Wilmette), will be presenting a workshop for Family Resource Center's adoptive parent community entitled, **"Boosting Your Child's EQ; Understanding Emotional Intelligence and Its Importance in Our Lives."**

Dr. Noone notes that "success in life is based on more than one's intellectual gifts. It is important to understand how family life contributes to the development of

emotional intelligence." This will be a thought provoking seminar that all are encouraged to attend. Location and time to be announced. For information about attending this seminar please call Family Resource Center at 773-334-2300.

Dr. Noone will also be presenting a series open to the general public on "The Family Emotional System: A Way Toward Knowing the Family and Increasing Emotional Intelligence" on the 4th Tuesday evening of each month beginning in February, through the Family Service Center in Wilmette. For information about this series please call 847-251-7350.



Help FRC by donating quality used and new materials for our office or housing program. Any items you contribute are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law. Because it is very costly and labor intensive for FRC to pick up items, please arrange for them to be delivered to FRC.

The following items would be greatly appreciated:

Office Items: Lamps, book shelves, laser printers and calculators.

Quality Household Items: Linens, blankets, pillows, clocks, radios, curtains, irons and ironing boards, clothing hampers, bed frames and mattresses, vacuum cleaners.

Children's Items: Clothing, books, blankets, children's furniture, car seats, portable cribs.

Miscellaneous Items: Strollers, videotapes, suitcases, clothing trunks, moving dollies.

Kitchen Items: Tables, chairs, microwaves, dishes, plates, glasses, silverware, pots and pans.

Your Support is Needed and Appreciated

Tax deductible contributions further the important work of the Family Resource Center. Please send your contributions to:

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Melissa Tropp

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Richard Pearlman, MSW, Family Resource Center's Executive Director

made two presentations at the 19th Annual Tri-State Adoption Conference in Mahwah, New Jersey on November 14, 1999. The conference was attended by more than 2500 people and Richard spoke about "Cooperative Adoption" and "The Experience of Adopting in China."

While in the New York area, Richard met several of a growing number of families who have reached out to Family Resource Center for help in facilitating adoptions.





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Holiday Greetings!

*Sending Wishes for Peace and Prosperity
In The Coming Year!*



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Dan Liska
and
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printing production of this newsletter.*