

AFFINITY

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ABRAZO
Adoption Associates

10th Anniversary Edition

Straight
from the

Heart



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Executive Director

This summer, I lost my mom.

Not in the literal sense, because being a person of faith, I think I know where she is now. But in a real life, day-to-day sense, there is a mother-sized crater in my world these days, and I miss her very much.

We'd spent 41 years together, my mom and me. She'd worked as a registered nurse for most of that time, and I have childhood memories of her nursing caps starched to the refrigerator door between shifts. Fiercely loyal to her vocation, she belonged to an era in which nurses still rose to their feet when a doctor entered the room, and she took personal offense when fashion dictated that white nylons could be worn by any woman, medical professional or no. She'd planned to be a medical missionary, but upon being assigned to first render one year of service to a Presbyterian university in Dubuque, she traveled from California to Iowa, met a seminarian I call "Daddy" and gave up that dream to become a pastor's wife, instead.

My mother was a hands-on parent, and a multifaceted woman, with a passion for music and exceedingly high expectations of herself and those around her. She was constantly in motion, whether working at the hospital, directing church choirs, leading Girl Scout troops, transcribing books into Braille for the Library for the Blind, typesetting for a local publishing company, or monitoring her children's music lessons (violin for her son, piano for her daughter.) She enjoyed challenges, whether formulating recipes to replicate restaurant specialties, crossword puzzles, or the Internet, which she took up as a hobby later in life. She authored a medical dictionary for nurses, and worked part-time for a local department store.

She was a doting grandmother. She took great pride in her husband's vocation, as well as her two children's adult careers, and appointed herself the unofficial PR director for Abrazo, leaving the agency's business cards on bulletin boards throughout the medical establishment in her community, and promoting Abrazo's mission to anyone who would listen.

Perhaps she had an inner sense of the importance of our work, because she, herself, was the product of an unplanned pregnancy. It wasn't discussed in polite circles, of course, but my mom and her twin sister were born in Los Angeles to a movie starlet-wannabe in her teens, who had hurriedly married the older, Russian prizefighter for whom she'd fallen. He was Jewish, she was Catholic, and neither had intended to become parents, a reality that was painfully obvious to their girls over time. They constantly competed for their parents' attention and affection, and it instilled in both a drive to achieve and a quest for approval that would never be satisfactorily met. Much later in life, one twin was diagnosed with breast cancer and then ovarian cancer, and then, the other. It was this diagnosis that eventually claimed my mother's life.

I got word at Camp Abrazo that Mom was back in the hospital. She hadn't been well, lately, but I couldn't imagine we were as close to the end as we were. I drove up to see her on Sunday after Camp let out, and spent Monday and Tuesday in a bedside vigil with my father, keeping my brother in Chicago informed by phone as her condition worsened. On Tuesday, I held her hand as I explained that I was returning to San Antonio to check on the agency and my boys. I told her I'd be back for the weekend. Then we recited together the Biblical words of comfort we'd both come to treasure: "The Lord watch between me and thee, while we are absent, one from the other." She passed away the following afternoon, after one final phone call with each of her children to remind us that she would love us forever.

She wasn't always the perfect mom. But she didn't have to be. She did her best, when she could, and she knew her own failings all too well. She lived a full life, fought the good fight, and left behind a legacy of creativity and faith.

I have witnessed countless losses in my profession, standing by and bearing witness as loving mothers say their goodbyes in maternity wards; as infertile couples part with their dreams, then refashion them to include adoption. I am painfully aware that for me, that legendary bus I talk about in orientation, the one now bearing my loved one, has pulled away from the curb and is never coming back. But I trust that it has not all been in vain, that what my mother began lives on in me, and that He is watching between us in this time of absence. May He grant all families, mothers and daughters who grieve the loss of a loved one that peace that passes understanding, and the certainty of a loving reunion, one day to come.

Elizabeth

Nursery News

Hugs and kisses to the newest members of Abrazo's family!

The only Abrazo's family to date who celebrated their match on the Bacardi family yacht with the actual Bacardi family and a champagne toast, baby **TEAGUE** is sure to go through life with a silver spoon in his mouth (and a Bacardi racing cap on his little noggin!)... Having walked over hot coals in their first adoption story, the family of baby **SPENSER** found their second adoption was like a little piece of heaven... An Abrazo business card stuck on a hospital bulletin board made placement happen in record time for the recent orientation graduates who took home a darling B.O.G. named **JAMISON**... Two little boys are twice as nice, as a Texas family learned upon adopting a second son they named **MATTHEW**... Like the phoenix rising from the ashes, a North Carolina couple kept the faith after a heartbreaking placement failure, and fate rewarded them with a precious baby girl they named **KAYLEE**... For a local couple, dreams came true with the homecoming of newborn **JOSHUA**, and a forever-after friendship with his dear birthmom... Memphis may be known for the King, but it's also now the kingdom of a precious little princess named **ELIZABETH**... The courage of a birthmom who wanted a better life for her daughter made all the difference for one little girl in Maryland now named **JAMIE**... One Texas couple literally turned their car around and headed for Houston upon word of a B.O.G. there who soon became **THOMAS**, their firstborn son... Despite initial fears of openness, a birthfamily opened their hearts to a Minnesota couple, uniting forever the four parents of newborn **ANTONIO**... A local doctor, her husband and their daughter followed a rainbow that led them to one lucky charmer named **AIDAN**... Two Texas schoolteachers know that A is for Abrazo, B is for Baby and C is for "come visit anytime," the loving offer they extended to the beloved birthmom of their second daughter, **MIKAYLA**... Sometimes the best surprises in life come in little packages, as the proud parents of baby **ZACKERY** can attest to... A mutual love for NASCAR helped bond the parents of newborn **HUNTER**, who zoomed right into his new home not long after orientation... Pretty little **SIERRA** is bound to be Miss California 2024... Just two months after orientation, a Texas weatherman and his wife found atmospheric conditions just right for the arrival of newborn **SAMUEL**... Two Oklahoma doctors joined hands and hearts with a Texas teen to plan a happily-ever-after future for the daughter they named **JORDAN**... A B.O.G. named **GABRIELLE** gets lots of T.L.C. from her new big brother and V.P.P. (Very Proud Parents)... Alabama became a state of greater assets with the arrival of baby **ANDREW**... Againers from Tennessee came South with their two daughters to meet their newborn son and brother, named **HAMPTON**... For two Arizona schoolteachers, the sun is always shining when they admire their bright baby **BRADEN**... Baby **RIAN** was welcomed into the world by her loving birthmom, and a competent hospital team that included her new nurse mom, doctor dad, and beautiful birthaunt (herself a birthmom)... They barely dared to hope a placement could happen in time, but God's perfect timing enabled the adoptive parents of newborn **SAVANNAH** to treasure 3 glorious weeks together as family before he was deployed to Iraq... A Dallas area family now sees life through rosy glasses since becoming the parents of pretty-in-pink girl baby **KATHERINE**... Baby **GARRETT** conquered several weeks of NICU care to earn a ticket home with his elated new family... Back for Number #2, our docs from Michigan found a second daughter the perfect prescription for their loving home... A brave Corpus-area birthmom hid her pregnancy from everyone in order to give baby boy **DYLAN** a new life with wonderful Wisconsin parents... The new "big" sister of baby **CRUZ** thinks he is the most awesome Valentine's present a girl could get... One Iowa couple and their Texas birthfamily took up residency together in the Lone Star State as they waited on the birth of their much loved daughter, **AMAYA**... The Church of Christ was the golden thread that ordained the holy match between the teen birthparents and faithful adoptive parents of handsome baby **QUENT**... This placement happened so quickly, the Idaho couple who'd come to orientation graciously shared their joy at the arrival of infant **FORREST**, given that their entire group was there to witness placement at the end of the Saturday session... With her lilting twang and his irascible humor, againers from North Carolina kept the birthparents laughing before and after the homecoming of their mutually-adored angelbaby **AVA**... Just weeks after enduring a failed adoption plan, our againers from Utah were thanking God for twin blessings named **JEREMY** and **JAELYN**, their newborn sons... Baby **CAMERON** is living the good life in Minnesota with his grateful new family... Illinois is the home of the Windy City, the Chicago Bulls, and the greatest superstar of all, one little guy named **MATTHEW**... A desperate mom in a local hospital made a brave decision for newborn **CHARLES** which proved to be the answer to prayer for one upstanding Wisconsin family... Michigan againers brought their little girl back to San Antonio to meet her biobrother, **CHRISTIAN**, both of whom are blessed to be growing up together due to the sacrifice of their loving Texas birthfamily... Her name means "star" in Spanish, and that truly reflects the role of **CITLALI** in the lives of all four of her parents... **ALANA** is the center of the universe for her grateful Tennessee parents, who would have journeyed to the ends of the earth to find her... A Texas cancer survivor and his wife, herself an adoptee, found the true

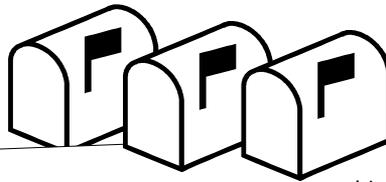


meaning of life in their long-awaited son, baby **LOGAN**... Benevolent birthmom birthed beautiful baby baptized by bliss **ZELLA**... Some say adoption is a rollercoaster, but the Florida family of newborn **SHANE** might have found parts of the experience more in keeping with a hurricane, just with a happier ending... They never expected it, but when Tennessee againers who'd recently taken placement learned their daughter's birthparents needed a loving home for another newborn, they answered the call and raced back to Texas for newborn **HUDSON**, the fourth (and final?) addition to their family... Two Texas attorneys who came back to Abrazo for a second child found baby **DOYLE** to be clear and convincing evidence that the best things in life truly are worth waiting for... Baby **JACOB** ... 5 lb., 11.9 oz. **JOSHUA** is small but mighty, and headed for great things in life, given the great home he's growing up in... Two Texas couples hitched their wagons to encircle baby **JACKSON** with love from birth and beyond... A doctor mom from Minnesota returned to Abrazo for newborn **TAYA**, who's got 3 big brothers and 1 eager sister back home doting on her every move... The parents of newborn **MEGHAN** had the best possible reason for missing Camp Abrazo this year—her birth!... Tiny preemie **CORY** was in such a hurry to meet his new ma and pa, he arrived way early, but he's growing like a Texas tumbleweed nowadays... New Mexico is the Land of Enchantment, made even moreso by the addition of enchanting infant **ALEXIS**... Baby **BRITON** is lighting up the lives of her mommy and daddy and an admiring public, wherever they go... Two single moms embraced at placement in a loving tribute to newborn **JOSHUA**, the son they share, one by birth and the other by adoption... A couple of Idaho boys brought their folks to the Lone Star State for baby **HANNAH**, the sister they always wanted... Little **JENNA** was the light at the end of the tunnel for her relieved adoptive parents, who waited just three months to find her... Newborn **WILL** is lucky to be able to grow up knowing his birthmother, a young woman of grace, strength and uncommon courage... **ISABELLA's** welcoming party in the delivery room included a brave birthmom who'd endured 3 days of labor and her new Iowan parents, who went out of their way to care for both mom and baby... **STEVIE RAE** is not a legendary male guitarist, but rather, one beautiful baby girl whose sweet cries are surely music to her new family's ears... A Tennessee couple made such a big impression at orientation that days later, they were invited to return to Texas to become mom and dad to titian-haired **TEAGAN**... Our little world traveler, **ALESSANDRA**, came to San Antonio with birthmom by bus (in utero), traveled to California with her new mom and dad to meet new relatives, then flew home to Germany by airplane; a very intercontinental child, indeed... **PEARCE's** new Louisiana family brought along one very excited grandpa, to help celebrate Placement Day with them... A college co-ed made an educated choice in placing newborn **MARY** for adoption with a Pennsylvania family devoted to her every need... Four-month-old **AYDIN** has his delighted new folks wrapped around his little finger, now that they're home safe and sound in Louisiana... They were already talking about adopting again, but before they could send in the paperwork, a B.O.G. named **ABIGAIL** came along, and within days, this diligent West Texas family of three had become four!...and as we go to print, a Chicago doctor and his wife have decided adopting in the Lone Star State is twice as nice, as they celebrate their placement of nine-week-old twin daughters, **SAMANTHA** and **SAMYRA**.

Congratulations, all!



Letters



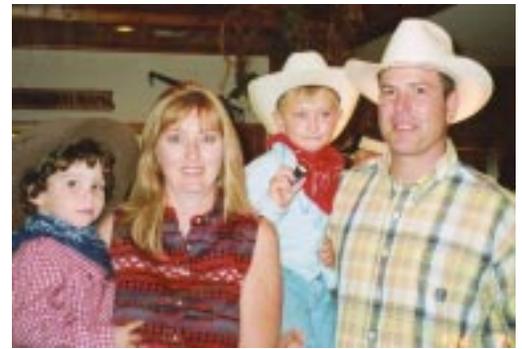
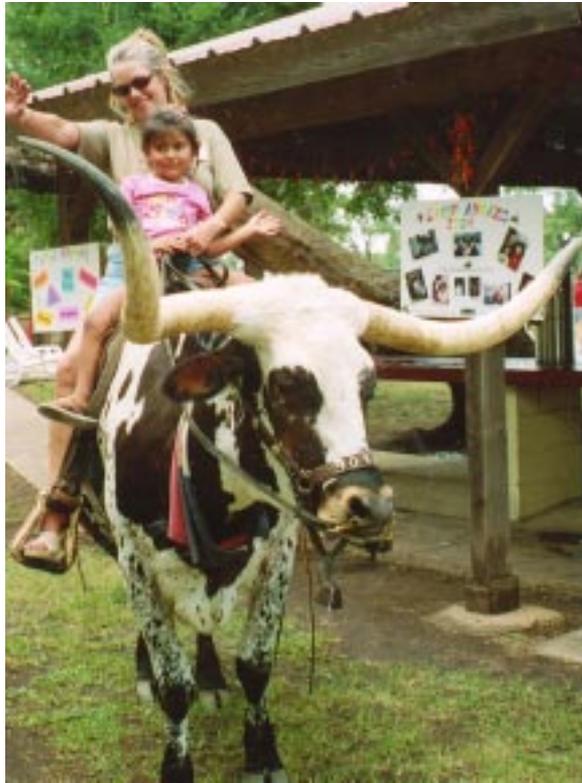
Dear Abrazo: Thank you all for all your time, support and help. You have helped find my beautiful son Will find a wonderful loving family as well as helped me and my son Matthew start a new life and get on our feet. No words can express how happy I am because of your help. Thank you so much.
Christina & Matthew

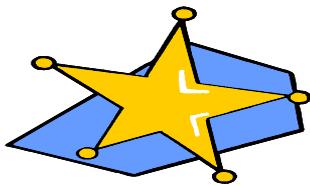
This letter is to thank each and every one of you at Abrazo. Thank you for your support through this time of my life. I don't know what I would have done if I had not reached out to you. All of you were my guardian angels and helped me make the right choice. My baby is with a wonderful family and she will have a life full of love and support. Thank you. I will always be very thankful for the rest of my life.

Norma

Reunion Report

Camp Abrazo 2004 was a roaring success, by all accounts! Held at the rustic Flying L Ranch in Bandera, TX, nearly a hundred Abrazo alum attended, ranging in age from two months to seventy-something gathered for a weekend of learning, friendship and fun. Goody-bags were provided each family at registration, thanks to the generosity and hard work of Abrazomoms Jennifer Burns and Karen Stumbough, while Abrazo contributed a copy of our speaker's book for every home. Keynote speaker Patricia Martinez Dorner, co-author of "Children of Open Adoption", offered inspiration and advice on the importance of openness across the lifespan of the adopted child. Calamity Pam and her sidekicks brought alive the Legend of the Silver Lasso, an open adoption story for all kids in attendance, and each tot received their own 100% genuine cowboy lasso, kindly donated by Fred and Holly Yancy. Birthparents and adoptive families enjoyed touching reunions, while Abrazotots of all shapes and sizes ran joyfully from one activity to another. From the petting zoo to swimming, horseback riding, arts and crafts, hayrides, line-dancing, Cowboy Olympics, lasso lessons, smores roasting and even a calf scramble, there was no end to the fun. Saturday night, campers gathered in a ring at dusk for an emotional candlelight ceremony, honoring all those birthparents that have made Abrazo's families possible. Sunday morning was our renowned Golden Binkies Awards Brunch, and for us who missed the show or didn't make it to Camp this year, we proudly announce the winners of the 2004 Golden Binkies Awards for Excellence in Adoption!! (See page 6)





W E L C O M E T O A B R A Z O !
Meet Our Wonderful Staff



Elizabeth Jurenovich M.S.
 Executive Director
 Licensed Professional Counselor
 Licensed Marriage & Family Therapist
 Certified Open Adoption Practitioner



Angela Martinez, M.S.W.
 Family Services Coordinator



Holly Yancy
 Legal Services Coordinator



Pamela Zinmeister, M.A.
 Maternity Services Coordinator



Estela Guerrero, B.A.
 Agency Services Coordinator

We're happy to be here to serve your needs and your child's throughout the adoption process. At Abrazo, we consider you family! Please help us know what we can do to meet your individual needs more effectively.

THE GOLDEN BINKIES



Best Lighting

The scene is set, but the lighting is dim, reflecting uncertainty and fear. A nervous young couple is considering all possible options for the future of a baby they love but are unready to parent. They open a phone book: a spotlight falls on Abrazo's number. The call is made, and a new day dawns, bathing the scene in rosy hues. A couple is chosen, a baby is born! but then, the light fades in time, as the birthparents grapple with their loss and grief and the adoptive couple moves on, limiting contact. Like a candle, this birthfamily's hopes of re-connecting with their son and brother and his adoptive family flicker bravely, kept alive by the promise of a rainbow-bright reunion one day to come. Our Golden Binkie for the Best Lighting goes to Michael, Sarah, Brandi & Kara, beloved birthfamily of Joshua.



Best Set Design

The scene is set, in the Garden State: happily married couple seeks to become parents, but as everyone knows, a sterile doctor's office is no place to begin a family! Shift focus to a San Antonio hotel conference room for orientation, then to a Mexican restaurant with mariachis and all. Back home, it's hurry up and wait, until they find themselves rushing back to the Alamo City, where they meet the baby boy—and birthmom! of their dreams. Final scene: a happy homecoming, with proud relatives gathered at the airport to say hello. For the best set design, our Golden Binkie goes to Joe & Nancy, proud parents of Nathan.



Best Costume

This dapper dad wore the hat of local tour guide during orientation weekend, commanding a bus to take fellow graduates to see the Alamo. His svelte wife dressed up their profile to picture a stylish couple, way ready to become parents. A wardrobe of memories of a quick placement in Houston and many awesome family vacations since now feature a tiny daughter who's dressed to the nines (and preparing for a sibling) and so it is that our Golden Binkie for Best Costume goes to Patrick & Misti, fashionable folks of best-dressed beauty Presley.



Best Docudrama

Who say there's no good news on TV?! When this energetic couple puts their mind to something, amazing results soon follow...so when they came back to do Adoption #2 and found themselves

matched with a birthdad with movie star good looks and a birthmom bound for American Idol, it was sure to be a film-worthy tale. Together, they shared their journey to placement with thousands of grateful viewers on Discovery Health channel's Adoption Story, showing the true benefits of open adoption. For being so gracious to open their lives and their hearts to so many, our Golden Binkie for Best Docudrama goes to birthdad Stacey, birthmom Amanda, and Doug and Jennifer, ever-so-proud parents of angel baby Delaney Claire.



Best Soundtrack

This bestselling soundtrack was both Christian and country and full of unforgettable tracks, from beginning to end. Although this teen didn't plan the circumstances by which she entered the adoption process, her parents helped launch a search for a family whose Sundays already ring with songs heard in the Church of Christ. A nationwide hunt ensued, before Abrazo found the perfect family in the Land of the King—Elvis, that is. The adoptive couple, who visited both birthparents during pregnancy, were present at the birth and have been singing his birthmom's praises ever since, so our Golden Binkie for the Best Soundtrack is acoustically awarded to Erin, proud birthmom of baby boy Quentin.



Best Picture

Theirs was an epic that began years ago, when one fair maiden faced her own adoption decision, one steeped in secrecy and shame. Like Cinderella, however, she found her way in life, as well as Prince Charming (by way of jolly old England.) Fate led them back to adoption, where they became the magical solution for another family, whose teenage daughter had likewise birthed a baby girl in secrecy but shunned the openness that could free her from a castle of shame. Someday, we hope, she'll find the glass slipper that leads her to a happily-ever-after relationship with the princess she placed and the adoptive couple who reigns over Abrazo's Forum! But in the meantime, Your Highness, we proudly crown Lance & Lisa, and their golden-haired maiden Kayleigh with our Golden Binkie for Best Picture.



Best Comedy

These were the people who always seemed to have a smile on their faces and a punch line around the corner. Although their first adoption was done privately and had some moments that were not a laughing matter, they persevered, and came to Abrazo for a placement plan with a darling birthmom who kept them in stitches. For knowing that

laughter is truly the best medicine and finding reason to chuckle throughout both their adoption stories, our Golden Binkie for Best Comedy goes to Bruce & Stephanie, good-humored parents of giggly girls Maddy & Mikayla.



Best Short Film

They weren't with us for long, but it was for the best of reasons: just weeks after first submitting their inquiry, this busy young couple found their sleep schedules cut short, not by his law school studies nor her casework duties, but by a tiny, baby boy in need of loving parents. These motivated folks got their application in and their homestudy done, lickety-split, and before you could say "freeze frame!" they were at Abrazo cuddling their precious new son. For being where they needed to be when we needed them there, our Golden Binkie for Best Short Film goes to Les & Tina, tired but happy new parents of dear baby Joshua.



Best Production

Ten years ago this month, they were sitting in Abrazo's orientation workshop in Charlotte, NC, dreaming of a family that didn't even exist, yet—their own! Could it happen? Would they truly be parents one day? The answer was a resounding "yes!" when, just 2 months later, their lives were forever changed by two wonderful birthparents and three awesome children (then aged 3, 2, and 3 months.) The kids have grown somewhat since then, but the loving bond between these two special families is strong as ever, and it is with great joy that we award our Golden Binkie for Best Production to Bryan & Allie, birthparents, and Brian and Karen, proud parents of Cassie, Brian and Hillary!



Best Direction

They say adoption is a rollercoaster, and this family was certainly up for the ride. They put their hearts, souls and savings into the placement of their firstborn, a son whose case entailed legal challenges that tested the very fiber of their beings, but love prevailed, and when it came time to find him a sibling, they were blessed with another bouncing baby boy. Bound to be both brothers and buddies, we think they're destined to add a little sister to their lives somewhere down the road! But for now, our Golden Binkie for Best Direction is bestowed upon those who have so directly impacted the futures of two adorable little boys: their parents, David and Katharine.



Best Casting

Adoption makes relatives of the nicest of folks, and these two couples were destined to be family, although it took the birth of a beautiful baby girl to bring them together. The adoptive parents had just graduated from orientation, and the birthparents had just opened a phone book, but one long-distance call was enough to connect the dots. They waited until this very weekend to meet for the first time, and here's hoping this is their first of many family reunions to come. For being four loving parents with the best interests of one very blessed little girl at heart, our Golden Binkie for Best Casting goes to birthcouple Michelle & Steven, and David & Juany, proud stage parents of the star of the show, Citlali.



Best Screenplay

This one had it all, intrigue, adventure and plot twists to boot. They were first seen on the scene at Camp Abrazo 2002, our Dallas/Fort Worth weekend, when the future mom attended on her own, to support the team and see others' success stories. Their birthmom was both a delight and a challenge, but they stayed the course and in due time, found themselves at a San Antonio hospital admiring the son they'd dreamt of all their lives. Whatever their early fears of openness, they saw the light and have worked to maintain open lines of communications since placement, so it is that our Golden Binkie for Best Screenplay is given, happily ever after, to Don & Fhonda, proud parents of Cole.



Best Western

Being ruggedly independent, they initially thought private adoption was the trail they should follow, but getting bucked off the horse, they came to their senses and came to Abrazo! Theirs was a "hot profile", attracting much attention, and just three months later, the "right" one came along, a rootin' tootin' B.O.G. in the heart of Houston. Their birthmom had a heart of gold and a love for fishin', so these downhome kinda people hit it off right from the start. No shoot out at the O-K Corral for these kinfolk; together, they rode off into the sunset, the start of a fine new family. Our Golden Binkie for Best Western this year goes to Derrick and Jennifer and their 'lil buckaroo, Blake.



Best Supporting Actors

They were good-lookin', local and just a bit apprehensive of open adoption when they hit orientation, but they came around quickly, in time to match with the first birthmom they matched

with. They did lunch almost weekly, hit the malls, went to movies; all the things good friends do! And when an AWOL birthdad suddenly reappeared, they included him, too. Within months, they found themselves in a local delivery room, then welcoming a precious new daughter into their home, and now, with a family tree that's blossomed beautifully, their lives are complete. For being open to change and supporting their birthfamily so generously, our Golden Binkie for Best Supporting Actors goes to Steven and Laura, newly permanent parents of baby girl Rian.



Best Editing

As a frightened teen, she moved several states away to pursue a private adoption plan intended to give her baby girl the best of both worlds. That little girl is now six, and is privileged to know personally the brave and loving birthmom who made her future possible. Open adoption relationships, like any other, take work, effort and patience to grow over time, and this little girl's birthmom has given her all. It's never been easy, but always worthwhile, and she's gone the extra mile to share her experience with others joining the cause, so with gratitude and admiration, our Golden Binkie for Best Editing is awarded to the birthmom Abrazo adopted as its own, Sasha, dear birthmom of Michaela.



Best Foreign Film

They hailed from Canada, and matched with a birthcouple from Uganda—how's that for a global cause? Theirs was an international success story that would do the United Nations proud. They keep in touch and visit when able, and so it is that one very lucky little boy is growing up in a world that embraces all who love him best. For coming together and demonstrating so ably the spirit of cooperation that most superpowers could learn from, our Golden Binkie for Best Foreign Film goes to Tom and Pamela, Steven and Sheila, united families of baby boy Nathan.



Best Makeup

A gorgeous young family with a history of pregnancy loss, they were parenting one beautiful daughter and longing to give her a sibling. Fate led them to Abrazo, where they knew they were destined to find their next family member. He was a B.O.G., and they welcomed him home with open arms and loving hearts. Knowing that God is the color of water, they thank Him from whom all blessings flow, and so we thank Him for them. With one freckled daughter and a bronze baby boy, their family's complexion is one of unity, and so our Golden Binkie for Best Makeup goes to Jason

& Ammie, fair parents of Ashlynn and Aidan.



Best Double Feature

Picture perfect in every way, this duo of docs joined Abrazo in 2001, and became new parents in record time. Last summer, they came back to finalize that first adoption, and made their first appearance at Camp Abrazo, where they happened to mention to staff their interest in doing Adoption #2 before too much time passed. From their mouths to God's ear! We got them back just in time, because within months of their second orientation, their second daughter was born, and they're celebrating finalization with us once again! We've told them we think 3 times is a charm, but until their next go-round, our Golden Binkie for Best Double Feature goes to Paco and Millie, doubly blest with Esperanza and Cristina.



Best Sequel

They came to Abrazo in our early days, in 1994, when the staff was green and the agency was new. The birthmom was supported in her decision by her loving, late mother, but was not then ready for openness or a meeting with the adoptive parents. The baby went home with them and grew into a handsome, intelligent son, who recently asked to be able to meet his birthmom. Always committed to meeting their children's best interests, his parents made the trip here, and with thanks to them all for sharing the weekend with us, our Golden Binkie for Best Sequel goes to birthmother Robin, adoptive parents Ron and Joyce, and Will, the handsome son they all love so.



Best Travelogue

She made a journey of a million miles by taking one small step, which led to adoption, and it was truly the trip of a lifetime. After finding the family she knew would be right for her baby boy, she went on to find the husband of her dreams by way of the Worldwide Web. He got called up to Iraq but was back in time for Camp Abrazo at Schlitterbahn (talk about world travelers!) and this weekend, they're back at the Flying L with their sojourners to celebrate the roads that led them to open adoption, so our Golden Binkie for Best Travelogue goes out to Maria, first class traveler and proud birthmom of Anthony.

THE INSIDE Scoop

AHOY, MATES: A warm welcome to this year's orientation grads, the Fab 9 (1/04), the ForresTears (3/04), the Tremendous Ten (5/04) and the Woo Woo Parenthood Club (8/04), all fast-tracking their way to family... **WEDDING BELLES:** Hearty congratulations to former staffer April Beatty, who wed love of her life Jay Savoy this summer; to former birthmoms Lisa J., Melissa S., Miranda B., and Shyla W. on their recent marriages; and to former staffer Kelly Kane and husband Landon, who celebrated their first anniversary in September...

BIENVENIDOS: Congrats to orientation grads David & Jeannette, Edgar & Veronica, and David & Blanca, on their "home-grown" additions this year; to alum Paul & Kathy, who have adopted again in their homestate; and to Abrazo's webmaster, Paul and wife Sarah, on the birth of

their second child, Emily, this past July... **A FOND ADIEU** goes out to T.D.P.F.S. licensing rep Pareatha Madison, who recently left the department to take a new, improved position within the state medical school system. Pareatha was a brilliant source of information and advice, and will be greatly missed by us all... **ANGEL GRANT:** Many thanks to the Sol & Fannie Halff Memorial Fund, which is administered by Frost Bank, for a \$3K grant awarded to Abrazo this summer for capitol improvements... **READ THIS:** Abrazomom and celebrity novelist Jacquelyn Mitchard recently published her first children's book, *Baby Bat's Lullabye*, available at quality bookstores everywhere and also on amazon.com... **HEARTFELT CONDOLENCES** to Abrazo's foster family, the Burkes, on the death of Hugo's mother, a dear soul who was all about family! And will be

greatly missed... **OUR FORUM ROCKS!** Aww, shucks, maybe we are bragging, but our Forum (which underwent a major overhaul this year) recently gained its 406th member, and boasts 6,587 posts on a host of adoption-related subjects. Haven't been there recently? Check it out, at www.abrazo.org/forum... **PRAYER CHAIN:** We're in the process of updating our prayer chain. If you're willing to help lift prayer requests received via Abrazo's Online Chapel, please send a "count me in!" message with your current email address to webmaster@abrazo.org, and we'll add you to the list of folks receiving periodic prayer requests from the agency. Bless you!.. **ADOPTION U:** Abrazo is co-sponsoring the Adoption Knowledge Affiliates' annual fall conference in Austin on November 12-13, featuring birthmother Carol Schaefer (author of book-turned movie "The Other Mother") For registration information, call AKA at 512/442-8252. **SAVE THE DATE!** Camp Abrazo 2005 is set for July 22-24 at the Flying L Dude Ranch in Bandera, Texas. Make your reservations now by calling 1-800-292-5134; payment plans are available for those making a \$200 deposit by 12/1/04.

Check it out: Abrazo Forum @www.abrazo.org

Online exchanges between birthparents and adoptive families on a variety of important-to-you topics and issues! Log on today!

Abrazo . . . A Better Choice for a Brighter Future.

AFFINITY is a triannual newsletter of Abrazo Adoption Associates, a private, nonprofit child placement agency licensed by the State of Texas.

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