

AFFINITY

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ABRAZO
Adoption Associates

Straight from the Heart



The children ran rampant in a joyous array of ages and sizes, yet closely supervised under the watchful eye of loving parents who surveyed the scene proudly, remembering when (not so long ago) the very idea of “keeping an eye on the kids” was a dream too distant to contemplate. Strangers in the park that hot July day watched bemusedly as nearly a hundred orange-t-shirt-clad folk gathered for greetings and photos. “Looks like the pumpkin patch reunion,” said one bystander. “You sure can tell they’re all family,” remarked another.

And so we were. This summer, scores of Abrazotots, their parents and birthfamilies gathered in San Antonio for one wild, wonderful family reunion—our 7th Annual Camp Abrazo weekend. Spread across three hotel sites, we met on Friday night to reminisce over pizza and ice cream treats. The dozen or so birthmothers who braved this event met privately to share stories, thoughts and remembrances, like veterans of a painful personal pilgrimage which enabled their children to reach the promised land. The adoptive families frolicked in the pool, where jubilant children’s shouts of “watch me, watch me” serenaded successful graduates of past orientation groups dating back to March, 1994.

The children ranged in age from 6 months to 9 years, and their families had come from all over Texas, Georgia, Tennessee, Michigan, Maryland and West Virginia. The next day, Saturday, found them racing around Fiesta Texas, Six Flags’ amusement park, with loving family members close in tow. On Sunday morning, we met for the Golden Binkies brunch, where a touching awards ceremony left many in tears, recalling the countless sacrifices of self made by so many in order to ensure that these little ones truly would find “a better hope for a brighter future.”

Staff members marveled privately at the growth factor; not just at the children’s development, but particularly, that of their parents, birth and adoptive. We fondly remembered their stories, the challenges they faced, and the fears they conquered. And we celebrated the love and faith represented by the ranks that did join us, as well as those unable to attend but with us in spirit.

It was certainly a hot weekend. It wasn’t an inexpensive venture for so many to come from so far. There are those who would’ve liked to come but couldn’t, as well as those who might never consider participating and don’t. There are those for whom memories of loss were still too fresh, and those for which continued ties with the adoption community perhaps seem somewhat pointless. But for the children who were there, for those who could make the trip, it was a gathering that affirmed who they are and how they got to be where they are. For children whose birthparents are no longer in touch, it was an opportunity to meet other kids’ birthmoms and come away with a comforting sense of what “birthfamily” is all about. For children whose adoptive parents honor their open adoption covenants and raise them with the honest truth about their origins, it was about being with other kids whose beginnings started out “just like” and not “other than.”

And this is what supporting the Abrazo adoption community is truly all about: it’s about the kids. It’s not about simply writing a check each year at Christmas (appreciated and needed though the Angel Account contributions truly are). It’s about upholding the needs of Abrazo’s parents after adoption, to continue helping them acquire the tools they need to meet (and conquer) the rigorous, ever-changing challenges of parenting. It’s about continuing to honor the loving choices made by Abrazo’s birthfamilies, standing by them as they weather the joys and sorrows of life after placement. It’s about helping them build bridges to better tomorrows by keeping them assured of the well-being of the little ones they’ll always and rightfully love so.

It’s about participating in opportunities like Camp Abrazo, Abrazo’s Forum and the Prayer Chain, joining the efforts to educate others and embrace our community, in recognition of the blessings we ourselves have gained. It’s about giving back to the system that continues to offer support to our children and their children, over and across the lifespan.

To those who have attended Camp Abrazo, thank you for being there. By your presence, you affirm the process that does so much for so many (please, do come back!) For those who wanted to be there but couldn’t, do plan ahead for next year—we’d love to have your face in our 2002 group photo. And for those don’t see the purpose of continued connections with the village whose support made your dreams reality, remember the children. After all, when it’s all said and done, our children are our future—and their lifelong comfort with the choices we’ve all made on their behalf is surely worth the effort.

Elizabeth

Nursery News

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

Say "dream come true" in Spanish and you're describing a 6 lb., 3 oz. miracle now named baby **SHANA**... The breaking news in North Carolina is surely a towhead called **ZANE**, the newly-born and much-adored son of a Charlotte anchorman and his beautiful wife... Seven adopted Texas tots and their oh-so-capable single mom are celebrating the homecoming of precious new baby brother **ANTHONY**... Several failed adoption attempts elsewhere were surely God's way of telling an Alabama family to head south to Texas, where their family grew with the addition of darling new girlbaby **MAYA**, her doting birthparents and proud birthsister... Two San Antonio couples met at a local hospital to celebrate little **ALEXIS'** debut into society, surely the first of many soirees for this budding social butterfly... Faithful favorites of the Abrazo family from Arkansas (by way of Tennessee) are shouting **HALEIGH-luia** from the rooftops, since returning home with their firstborn daughter's biological sister, age three, newly added to their loving family tree... One Washington family was entrusted with a blessing named **WILLIAM** just one day after Abrazo's Prayer Chain lifted their failed adoption in prayer, seeking divine comfort for them and peace and guidance for their baby's teen birthmom, who subsequently found the courage to complete her placement plan after all... The circle of love surrounding baby **ETHAN** includes not only the three parents present at his birth but a proud new big sister, birthsiblings in Texas and Wisconsin, a host of relatives from St. Louis to Dallas (and even an aunt and uncle in Florida whose children are both Abrazotots, as well)... Againers from north Texas find that their home is twice as nice now with the addition of a second son, this one a newborn named **ANTHONY**... Just 12 weeks after orientation, a childless couple returned to Texas to become family with a loving birthmom, her two sons, and the just-born wonderboy for whom they now share bragging rights, baby **RYAN**... Two-day old **MELEA** was welcomed home by excited little big brothers and qualified againers who completed Abrazo's orientation just the weekend before!... A North Carolina couple is reveling in the long-awaited pleasures of dirty diapers and late night feedings as they get to know their newborn son, **JOSEPH**... and as we go to press, a West Virginia abrazotot and his mom are proudly introducing the world to their new addition, 7 lb., 8.5 oz. **TYSON**...

Congratulations, all!

Letters

"One is an act, and the other is an attitude."

Dear Abrazo,

I just wanted to say thanks for the "Camp Abrazo" weekend. During the Sunday brunch, I was a little overwhelmed at how blessed I am to have such a wonderful family. I truly feel that God handpicked each one of our boys just for us.

I'm sending along these pictures of our son Braden's visit with his birthmother Lauren last month. I was really proud of her and her willingness and ability to meet with us—she did great! We took the boys and met her for dinner. I know all situations are different, yet I'm still amazed at adoptive parents who see a threat in the love of another parent who chose a better life for their child. Even over Reunion weekend, I talked to people who felt they'd "done their open adoption duty" by doing all that they'd promised to do (but not one thing more). I was surprised at this, given the education folks receive from your agency. My husband and I talked about it on the way home and we decided there are at least two different kinds of open adoption. One is an act, and the other is an attitude. The first leads you to certain actions, and the other leads you to a lifestyle.

I am not sure what makes the difference in what path adoptive parents choose to take, but please let me know if there is ever anything I can do to assist you in your passion for openness in adoption. I see such a benefit to my children that I can only assume there would be equal blessings for any child brought into a home through the miracle of adoption.

Sincerely, Susan

PROFESSIONAL PRAISE

Dear Abrazo:

I just wanted to send a note to tell you how much I appreciate the time you spent with the birthparents our hospital recently referred to your agency. Regardless of their final decision, your seemingly endless patience meant so much to them, and to me! As a facility, we cannot tell you how much we appreciate the quick response time and the respect you have for birthparents.

You were a joy to work with.

Sincerely, Misty Wall, L.M.S.W.

"You were a joy to work with"

"We are real parents"

A NEW MOM'S PERSPECTIVE (WHY OPENNESS MATTERS)

Every kid knows the best climbing trees have lots of big, wide-spreading branches and no kid is happy only getting to climb on one branch of a really good climbing tree. Any child suffers a loss from being cut off from a part of his family, and this happens when a separation exists between birth and adoptive families. It is surprising how strange the words "real parent" sound now—we haven't used that kind of phrase for so long. We are real, based on how much we give and how much we love. What makes us real parents is not the biological process of conceiving or giving birth to a child, but what role we play once a child is on this earth—whether we first begin the role on that child's first day in the world or when he or she is ten.

Emily Donahue

With Love, From Camp Abrazo!



Team Abrazo!

Staffers, L_R: April, Angi, Elizabeth, Rox, foster parents Gloria & Hugo, Barbara, Kelly)



Finalizing the Future

Four happy Abrazo families start Reunion Week-end with freshly-granted adoption decrees.



Daddies Do Pool Duty!



Tweety & the Abrazotots

(sounds like a hot new dance band!)



The Golden Binkies Awards

Once again, by popular demand! For those who missed the show (or didn't attend Camp Abrazo, a prerequisite for consideration by the nominating committee), the directors of the Academy proudly announce the winners of Abrazo's esteemed Golden Binkies awards for Excellence in Adoption for the year 2001! (Houselights dim... drum roll, please.)



It was a plot straight out of celluloid classics! Sweet young couple seeks to become parents and survives a whirlwind of paperwork. They persist and work their way down a yellow brick road of adoption procedures. Profile looks great! And results in a quick placement the first go-round, with a teenage birthmom supported only by her mother, since no one else knows of her adoption plan. They build a loving friendship that is maintained over the years to come. Couple comes back, full of hope and assuming success will soon come their way again. This time, however, they begin to question the right way to the Land of Oz. A house drops on them from out of the sky when an anticipated placement ends in failure. Plot twists strike like flying monkeys, but in the end, the way back to the Emerald City becomes clear (and it's in the direction of Fort Worth.) Summoning up the best of heart, courage and brains, they travel north to meet their new daughter. Then clicking their heels three times, they affirm "there's no place like home!" because home is truly wherever they are, together, with their greater family made up of relatives, children and birthfamilies. With a nod and a wink to Judy Garland, we send our Golden Binkie for Best Double Feature over the rainbow to Scott & Karen Stumbough, their daughters, Amanda & Alexis, and Amanda's birthmom, Kathy Pack & her family, who also enjoyed Camp Abrazo's reunion.



Our next honorees traveled many miles to find their way to parenthood. He hailed from the Land of the Queen Mum, to seek fame and fortune, and along the way, found a beautiful young bride to take home to his castle (previously ruled only by felines!) They decided that adoption would be their ticket to parenting, and launched the voyage by attending Abrazo's orientation in May of 2000. The waves were choppy at times, and on occasion, made them seasick, but sure of their itinerary, they held fast to the dream and late last year, it led them to Houston, where a darling newborn girl

awaited their loving arms. Now they are traveling through life together and for journeying back to Abrazo, where it all began, the Golden Binkie for Best Travelogue goes to Gordon & Melissa Bartley, adventurous folks of dear baby Fiona.



Here's the plot! Downhome parent-wannabes saddle up in Memphis to come down South and meet the Texas gals from the Adoption Corral. With country charm and being right good-lookin' besides, they don't linger long in the wannabe barn. Pa's a good ole boy whose city-girl missus shines him up for their first visit with their son's real-purty birthma. But two-steppin' their way into a genuine relationship of caring and respect, they find themselves in a hospital in cow town (Fort Worth), a most fittin' start to the tale of how the West was won! With their hearts lassoed around one precious baby boy, they've roped in a whole new life for themselves, in a circle of love that'll forever include their son's loving birthkin. As they ride off into the sunset together, we give the Golden Binkie for Best Western to David & Melanie Parham, happy wranglers of the cutest cowpoke east of the Mississippi, baby Joshua!



Graduates of the November orientation here in San Antonio this past fall, this couple matched shortly afterwards but found their efforts in vain, as a midnight call heralded the sad end of that placement plan. They kept the faith, however, and held fast to their dream of expanding their family. Their confidence in the process paid off, leading them to the most wonderful of birthmoms, a brave and determined college co-ed from a coastal town. She'd birthed her son at home by herself and loved him fiercely through the first week of his life, until she felt certain she had the right adoption plan in place for his future. A weekend spent in a local hotel getting to know this fabulous family confirmed her intentions, and the next week, even People magazine had a photographer on the scene to capture this dream come true on film. For giving their all, for living out their open adoption promises to both sons' beloved birthmothers, and for answering The Call, the Golden Binkie for Best Supporting Role goes to Win & Dorothy Scheel, proud parents of Ryan & Ian.



The best-selling motion picture soundtrack begins with a mellow version of "Georgia on My Mind" which was surely playing in this couple's heads as they traveled to Texas for orientation in November, 2000. A rousing rendition of "Happy Birthday!" follows, as their baby was born just over a month later and because Placement Day just happened to be this baby's new dad's birthday. Other cuts include the beloved ballad "Deep in the Heart of Texas" (commemorating their enjoyment of being stuck here during the Compact period), which segues into the "Hallelujah Chorus" (upon receiving the news that the Compact had cleared), "Leaving On a Jet Plane" (the tune they whistled as they left for home with their new son), and finishing up with a final and happy refrain of "Endless Love" at the start of this Family Reunion weekend, as they finalized their adoption in the Bexar County courthouse. Because this baby's life will always be harmonious, our Golden Binkie for the Best Soundtrack in family-building in the key of life goes to Cliff & Laurie Wilson, proud parents of baby Maxwell.



Sometimes even the greatest of cinema classics require a number of rewrites before they reach the silver screen, and this birthmom persevered throughout! Some scenes didn't always work as intended... at times the script was hard to read... and sometimes it may have seemed that the casting was all wrong... but this loving mother knew that theirs was a picture destined for greatness, and sure enough, her birthson is happy, healthy and blessed to have all the parents he does, today. For keeping on keeping on, and for proving that the best interests of the child truly do matter above all else, the Golden Binkie for Best Editing goes to Lacie Narduzzi, loving birthmom of baby Jake.



They kept us laughing through orientation, and knowing all the funny twists and turns life takes for us all, we knew their adoption story couldn't be anything less than riotous. Already the parents of a fun and fabulous daughter, they had the parenting

gig down, and all they needed was one more child to fill their home with giggles and guffaws. Their dream came true with the introduction of a spirited young woman who'd parented her best, yet wanted more for her son—including a fulltime dad, a stable home, and a life of greater opportunity. Together, they built a friendship that has survived the test of time, and thanks to them, the life of the son they share truly is a bowl of cherries—with whipped cream and candles on top, given that he's soon to celebrate his third birthday! So it is that our Golden Binkie for Best Comedy goes to the proud parents of the Antics Prince, Jared: Harry & Carolyn Walsh, sister and birthmom Melissa Schuler.



It's the one film credit we all notice on the screen but which few can define, so we think the Best Grip award should rightfully go to the family who had the best grip on things and handled a rollercoaster of emotions and experiences with patience and love, enduring several unsuccessful placement plans which were never meant to be, in order to be truly available to the little girl who was, in fact, meant to be their precious daughter. For sticking with it when things seemed hopeless, for giving their best and for saying "yes" at a moment's notice when the right opportunity did come along, our Golden Binkie for Best Grip goes to Jeff & Martha Janosko, doting mom and dad of the ever-darling, curly-haired Catherine.



It was as if a screenwriter showed up in a Hollywood office shouting "Picture this! Newcomers to Texas arrive in hot air balloon to find baby of their dreams after overcoming legacy of loss, and live happily ever after!" This family had just barely moved from New Mexico and gotten their feet wet in the adoption pool when their love of ballooning took second seat to a call about a scared birthcouple, desperate to find a better life for their baby girl. These adopting parents rose to the occasion, flying to San Antonio to meet them and soaring to new heights of joy upon meeting their gorgeous new daughter. Initial fears of too much openness have given way to comfortable meetings with the birthdad and a longing for any word of the birthmom's welfare. They now continue their involvement in Abrazo's Dallas-area support group, helping other adoptive families learn and grow and thrive. For producing a life of security and love for one very special little girl, the Golden Binkie for Best Production goes to Rob & Dianne Smith, devoted parents of precious McKenzie.



It's never an easy show to direct—parenting requires extraterrestrial patience, subhuman strength and divine fortitude, a village of support, and a mountain of maintenance (and that's with two pulling the cart!) This doctor, however, is such a dynamo, she manages the responsibilities of two on the power of one, and makes it look simple, she does it all so well! Coming first to Texas from Maine to achieve motherhood as a single parent, she so excelled at the quest, she became ready for a second child and has since moved her family to Michigan, where she surely qualifies as Mother of the Year every year 'round. We've adopted the family into our Abrazo clan, as well, and so it is with love and affection that we bestow the Golden Binkie for Best Direction upon Dr. Ellen Kehoe, much appreciated momma of Marisa and Christopher.



With movie star looks and a Hollywood showplace for a home, this couple came to the process already well-versed in adoption and with all their lines memorized. They'd adopted twice before and done a bang-up job of it, with two handsome little fellas to show for it. This time, they knew, God would send them the child they should have, but why wouldn't she come in a pink blanket, we wondered? The answer was clear. Although they had opportunities to take a baby girl home along the way, it turned out the perfect addition to their already-perfect family was a goodlookin' little guy born to a local birthmom. She needed adoptive parents who already knew what they were doing, who could embrace her own mama with patience and humor and who could step into place with little rehearsal. They quickly became the answer to her prayers and for their compassion, their winning parenting skills and their willingness to spread the open adoption gospel to others far and wide, the Golden Binkie for Best Picture naturally goes to Jim & Susan Mittan, proud ma and pa of Austin, Dillon & Braden.



Picture a far corner of west Texas. Throw in some red dust and thirsty cotton fields, a site where Buddy Holly memorabilia takes on religious

meaning, and where a scarlet "T" is a sign of pride. (See the Edge of Nowhere!) Now: scene change! Pan to snow white hospital room, where single mother and nervous couple are celebrating the start of a lifelong friendship while marveling at the wonder of the birth of a gorgeous baby girl. And one more scene, before it's a wrap: see the happy new home, with a long-empty nursery is now filled with the dream of a lifetime! (and the cutest cowgirl armchair, ever!) For "winging it" with what was in 1994 a brand-new agency and being part of Abrazo's first-ever orientation weekend, for offering now two precious daughters a safe, cozy corner in the world and countless new scenes of love and opportunity in life, the Golden Binkie for Best Set Design goes to Troy & Diane Vickers, devoted parents of Anna & Maggie.



Some Hollywood productions are months and years in the making, but this gal was such a quick study, we knew she was ready for early release! Yearning to become a single parent, she contacted Abrazo in March of 2000, leaping into action to attend orientation in Charlotte just a week or so later. Her blockbuster hit the theatres just days afterwards, when a homestudy done in record time enabled her to become the mommy of a bouncing, beaming baby girl born in San Antonio to a birthfamily who loved this woman's verve, vim and vigor! For putting her trust in Abrazo and being where she needed to be and when, the Golden Binkie for Best Short Film goes to Dr. Mary Curtis, superb parent of vivacious Caitlyn.



As with any production, when unforeseen challenges arise, the show simply must go on! This couple came to Texas from New Jersey, prepared for a process they thought they understood, adorned with the colors of the rainbow (since she was working for the Crayola company at the time.) Although the production turned blue for awhile, they accessorized and were soon tickled pink to take home a lovely little girl already born, who they dressed up like the princess that she was. The eye of fate was caught by their elaborate costuming—or maybe it was a divine payback for all the wonderful boxes of outgrown clothing they donated to Abrazo for other children's use. Either way, when the opportunity arose for this family to outfit their home with a second precious daughter, their closet size doubled, and so it is that our Golden Binkie for Best Wardrobe goes to David & Kathleen Kankel, best-dressed parents of best-dressed darlings Brianna & Amy.



This picture begins with the light of love, which flickers faithfully through the brutal glare of infertility, the dimming beam of hope and the renewed flow that comes with new possibilities and unexpected options. It surely did for this couple! Just after orientation, they found their way being illuminated, and the light of day lit their way to a loving birthmom whose secret pregnancy was being kept in the dark from her family. Their lives were brightened by her presence, and have since taken on a distinctly rosy hue with the responsibilities of parenting one very bright and beautiful baby boy. For following a dream that shone bright even in the darkest of days, the Golden Binkie for Best Lighting goes to Jesus & Bridget Muller, proud parents of little Jesus.



It was a fairytale based on a real-life tragedy, young woman in the prime of her life marries her longtime love, only to lose him to cancer, all too soon. She dedicates her life to teaching other people's children, but has none of her own, until one Abrazo family shares with her the story of their adoption, and a torch is then lit within her heart. She begins the quest to find a happy-ever-after ending for herself, but it is not an easy trek. She must first endure a failed adoption plan in a remote location on Christmas Eve, and a second mismatch, to truly appreciate what this gift will mean, if and when it does occur. And it does, in the nicest of ways and in accordance with the Good Lord's timing! A stunningly handsome baby boy is born in the town in which the first plan failed, and this time, a family is born, as well. For believing and enduring, for giving and receiving, and for teaching us all something about the power of one, the Golden Binkie for Best Docudrama goes to Sabrina Rohmiller, mother extraordinaire of little guy Taylor.



As with most great films, the question is always whether the first and second pictures can be equally brilliant—and this family answered that challenge with a resounding "of course!" Their epic story was marked with adventure, tear-stained by loss and yet, fueled by faith. They'd been with an adoption agency in their hometown for way too long with far too few possibilities, and thus came to Abrazo in December of 1995, determined to find new direction. Answers came quickly, with the homecoming of a three-month-old boy nearly six weeks later. Feeling The Call to adopt again, their prayers were answered with an introduction to a courage and darling birthmom, who likewise wanted more for her child's future. For strength, fortitude, and faith in the process which has joined their lives for a lifetime, the Golden Binkie for Best Sequel goes to John & Tana Heckel, proud parents, to brothers Ryan & Cody, and to Tonya Fields, Cody's birthmom, who joined us for this celebration.



She went for the natural look, herself. And when it came time to choose the right parents for her child, she sought out someone who could be themselves, as well. She found the adoptive couple of her dreams in San Antonio, and spent the pregnancy learning to trust in the idea of open adoption, despite her partner's discomfort with that concept. When her son was born, she weathered a horrific hospital experience and the opposition of the birthdad's family, in order to guarantee her child's future welfare. The journey has been long and the outcome sometimes painful for her, but she's kept the faith and continued the friendship, and for entrusting the future of her son without dwelling on the past, the Golden Binkie for Best Makeup goes to Emmie Tidwell, proud birthmomma of angelbaby Jack.

Help Wanted

Seeking fresh insights and new perspectives for Abrazo's Forum, an Internet adoption community, located at "<http://www.abrazo.org>"

Must be motivated, energetic and willing to share. Interest in adoption issues (and those affected by them) a plus. Birthfamilies, adoptive parents, adoptees and professionals especially welcome. Benefit package includes free membership; affirmation, answers and support; stimulating online discussions; fabulous friendships; and ample opportunity to exchange questions, thoughts and feelings. Interested in applying your personal wisdom and adoption expertise? Simply log on and join up, for the best job you'll ever enjoy.

W E L C O M E T O A B R A Z O !

Meet Our Wonderful Staff



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



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Roxanne Campos
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Angi Moller, L.M.S.W.
Family Services Coordinator



Barbara Weichel, B.S.
Maternity Services Coordinator



Kelly Gilbert, B.S.
Administrative Assistant

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 INSIDE Scoop

BIENVENIDOS to the graduates of this year's orientation groups, the Diaper Warmers (1/01), the Lucky Leprachauns (3/01), the Wannababies (5/01) and Duck Blind Faith (8/01)... **MEDIA MANIA:** Abrazo was recently invited to appear on a Kingworld talk show and has also been contacted about participating in a second international documentary on adoption! MSNBC continues to rebroadcast the BBC special featuring Abrazo, as well, but rest assured, we're keeping our sights set on family-building and not on fame nor fortune...

CONDOLENCES: The Abrazo family extends its sympathies to birthmother Lauren on the drowning death of her son; to adopting couple Bruce & Nikki on the loss of her brother; to birthmom Tonya and adopting parents Pat & Misti on the tragic death of their daughter's birthfather in Houston; to adoptive mom Jane who lost her grandmother recently; and to adopting parents John and Nancy and their two children on the passing of their beloved mom and grandma... **KUDOS** to mommas Portia, our beloved Houston-area homestudy specialist whose daughter just started college, to April whose son Darion is just beginning kindergarten, and to Roxanne, proud "grand-diva" to her eldest daughter's new baby, Elena... **PRAYERS, PLEASE** for little Alexander, his parents and birthfather as they seek to work out differing plans for this beloved boy's future! And also for

the staff of Marywood Adoption Agency in Austin, weathering fallout after a particularly devastating legal case... **SHALOM!** Our hearts go out to all Abrazo family members impacted by recent terrorist attacks in the U.S., and especially military personnel, including Martin Weichel, (husband of our Maternity Services Coordinator) and Abrazodads Mark Rodriguez, and Major Win Scheel... **NEW KID ON THE BLOCK:** Abrazo is tickled to welcome summer hire and new college grad, Kelly, who's been manning the front lines and learning the ropes from the phones on up (and whose little sister was herself adopted once)... **NEW ARRIVALS:** Best wishes to Michael and Jada, adding a son to their family this fall; to Mike & Bernadette who are reportedly "re-expecting"; to Jeff & Shana, proud parents of a "homemade" addition; to Jon & Stacey, who adopted their firstborn's bio-sib during the spring months; and to former staff Shannon Mahan and husband Earl, celebrating the birth of their second child... **MANY THANKS** to Morgan Stanley for its generous summer donation to Abrazo's Angel Account, enabling the agency to expand its charitable outreach throughout the adoption community, and also to local supporters Ben Brooks, North Star Mall, adoptive mom Lisa Desko, Fiesta Texas, Chili's and Residence Inn, all of whom contributed to our Camp Abrazo goody-bags, sent home with each participant to commemo-

rate the big event... **HOUSEWARMING:** Looking for a lovely place to stay in San Antonio during your next visit, call up Angi and listen to her rave about her new "home sweet home," because who knows! You might just wrangle yourself an invite... **COVERGIRL KUDOS:** Hurrah for birthmom Katherine, who competed in a "Third Trimester Bikini Contest" sponsored by a local radio station in her last week of pregnancy. Katherine, a stunning blonde and beloved member of our birthparent support group, took third place and was cheered on by a crowd of admirers which included the adoptive parents she'd chosen for her son, born the next day! You GO, girl! And all your sisters out there, as well!... **GREAT READ:** Lost touch! Need help reconnecting an open adoption? Patricia Dorner's latest book, "How To Open An Adoption: A Guide for Parents and Birthparents of Minors" is available at the agency with a tax-deductible Angel Account donation of \$10 or more... **GIFT THIS:** Contact Roxanne also regarding availability of 2001 Camp Abrazo t-shirts, copies of Steve Sesskin's "Everybody Wins" C.D., or Penny Partridge's adoption poetry tape, "Pandora's Poems"... **WHITE HOUSE GREETINGS:** Back by popular demand; to receive an presidential baby card, send your child's name and address to the White House Greetings Office, Room 39, 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, Washington, DC 20500... **THREE CHEERS** for Abrazomom Pat Rice, R.N.C., B.S.N., now helping to educate others by coordinating St. Mary's Health Center's annual adoption conference, being held in St. Louis on November 3. For more information, call 314/768-8017.

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.

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