

AFFINITY

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Straight from the Heart



She probably wouldn't have won any contests for Mother of the Year. Loud, unkempt, and on house arrest at the time that I met her, "Casey" was pregnant with her "nth" child, and struggling to feed and clothe the ones she already had. Yet her kids clearly adored her, playing happily at her feet in the small, chaotic trailer that she called home. Her state-issued ankle attire hardly hampered them, and she beamed down at them proudly as we visited, sitting at her crumb-strewn kitchen table.

Casey, as they say, was no spring chicken. She'd "been around the block a time or two," and she didn't exactly cotton to the idea of hanging out with some adoption agency social worker determined to do good here. (That being me, of course.) She and I were only years—but worlds—apart, and the mission that had drawn us together was to find the right home and family for a coming child whom she loved but could not raise. Casey's fate was uncertain: neither she nor her children's father could provide the life they both wanted for this new little spirit growing within her. Yet, their limited resources in no way limited their love or commitment to their coming child, and Casey took seriously the charge of finding just the right set of parents for this baby.

Because not just anyone would do. While some might have questioned the right of such a woman to make such a choice, Casey knew she had to, to be at peace with her decision. She could not, perhaps, compensate for bad lifestyle choices previously made, but doing right by her kids was a conviction she held sacred. She didn't look for the biggest house or the most exotic vacations. She didn't look for slim, pretty people with picture-perfect lives. She looked for the couple that looked most like the parents she wished she and her man could've been, and upon viewing the resume of the fireman and his wife, she knew. She just knew.

They knew, too, from the very first phone call. Hers might not have been the most savory profile, but in her laughter and in their conversations, they heard destiny speaking to them. And so it was that a flame of interest flickered into a forever friendship, unorthodox and precious. Together, they welcomed a fine new boy into the world, a healthy babe who'd come several weeks ahead of time. "Adventurous and nonconformist, just like me," Casey joked. Together, they counted fingers and toes and laughed and cried and picked out a name for this son they now shared.

It wasn't but weeks later that the police appeared at the agency. There'd been more to the story than we knew, it seemed. After placing her child, Casey had taken her sonogram with its still-pending due date and visited other placement resources, collecting handouts from each. The authorities had gotten involved, but just as they were about to close in, there was a horrible accident, in which Casey drowned in a local river bed. "Case closed," they reported. I was stunned. Casey's son's new family was devastated. How could fate so cruelly close what had just been opened? How to make sense of it all? What had begun as a unique relationship under special circumstances had become a lost opportunity, forever gone but for the memories. Or was it? Was "open adoption" a noun, an adjective, or a verb? Is it what we do, or how we do it? And what makes this matter so, to all of us and to our children?

Casey's birthson will never meet his birthmom in this lifetime, but thanks to his parents, he will still always know of her. They cannot erase the loss of her being in his life, but they have spent the last decade honoring her spirit and instilling in him the confidence that comes from knowing who he is—and who she was, and how he came to be where he's at. Because they loved her first, they love the memories of her they see in him; in his smile, in his wit and his mischievous bent. Thus Casey's legacy lives on, after all.

Here's to celebrating new life and new parents everywhere, to loving memories, and bright-shining tomorrows!

Happy 9th Birthday to Abrazo!

Elizabeth

Nursery News

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

The arrival of a bouncing baby boy named **SEAN** made a family of two out of a single mom with a dream... A North Carolina couple returning to Texas for their newborn daughter, **TALLEY**, treasure the time their son (also an Abrazotot) got to spend in reunion with his birthmom, who gladly baby-sat while they enjoyed time with the new baby's birthfamily... Tiny **ISAAC**, coached by two proud big brothers, is destined to join the Vikings one day, at the rate he's growing... A teen birthcouple and their loving parents placed their faith and their beloved **COLTON** with a Texas family living close enough for regular visits... Three times was a charm for Abrazo againers who, having already adopted two newborn sons with us, found the baby girl of their dreams with the home birth of angel **ERIN**... Right and ready, a young Minnesota couple traveled South to welcome their firstborn, **EPHRAIM**, with only a couple days' notice... The Garden State gained a precious new blossom with the arrival of new baby **MICHAEL**... Folks were all smiling especially big at a NC dental office when news hit of the birth of **GRADY** to their dentist and his wife just 8 weeks after their orientation event... Angelbaby **CHLOE** is surely the answer to prayers for a Wisconsin couple who'd endured a failed adoption plan months before... A Missouri family found **SYDNIÉ** at the end of a rainbow which followed considerable tempests in their lives... The newest poster boy for California cuteness is surely blonde-haired future surf king **CHASE**... One little babe named **JOSHUA** holds a special place in the hearts of four very loving parents... Two very handsome little brothers named **MATTHEW & JEREMY**, ages 2 and 4, made proud parents of their new folks just weeks after orientation... What was supposed to be one baby-on-the-ground turned into a wonderful "two-for-one" with the birth of twins **JOHN PAUL & MARY ANNE**... **NOAH** is the name of one little wonder boy whose birthparents and adoptive family missed each other so much after placement, they voluntarily reunited in Texas just months later, to revel together in his growth... Patience, faith and hope were the watchwords that brought newborn **JOSEPH** home to his thankful new parents... Three proud parents of little **JACOB** have found that living close to each other truly reaps the rewards of openness, not only for the grown-ups but especially for the little guy and his adoring birthsisiter ... Bouncing baby **JACKSON** is learning the ropes from a big brother and big sister whose adoption stories also began in the Lone Star State... Six-year-old **MALORIE** & three-year-old **DASHAWN** are proud to announce the addition of not just two new parents but two new siblings and a lovely new home, thanks to the courageous choices made for them by their ever-loving birthmother ... Baby **NATHAN** was in such a hurry to meet his darling new momma, he came before her scheduled orientation weekend, and actually accompanied her to that event... A sweet little bundle of blue named **WILLIAM** has a thing or two to teach the Dallas Cowboys about strength and persistence... A faithful Tennessee family took up honorary residency in Texas to get baby **GRACE** home, and treasured the quality time this afforded them with their new daughter's entire birthfamily in the interim... Newborn **JOSEPH** is sure to have a life filled with plenty of abrazos y besitos, thanks to the bilingual language of love shared with him by his birthmom and adoptive parents... **ERIC** was welcomed into the world by a loving birthcouple who left the hospital early just to prepare a celebratory dinner for his lucky new parents... Newborn **NATHANIEL** gave his thankful new parents the best possible excuse for having to spend the holiday away from home ... Tiny princess **KAYLEIGH** is already developing a reputation as the most photographed covergirl in all of Washington... Newborn **AIDAN** has his birthdad's independence, his birthmom's free-spiritedness, his new papa's intellect and his new momma's bright red locks... Two West Virginia physicians report that precious baby **EMMA** has fully filled their prescription for the happiest possible home... **MARIA ESPERANZA**'s homecoming was celebrated with masses in Italy, Mexico, Paraguay, Puerto Rico and the U.S., honoring both her new parents in Michigan and her loving birthfamily back in Texas... Two single moms conspired with fate to join their hearts in planning a beautiful new future for a sweet little girl baby named **CHARLOTTE**... Hope, faith and love united the adoring families of New Year's Eve baby **JULIA GRACE**, and just in time, since her loving new mom and dad waited nearly a year to find her and nearly exhausting their vacation time in the interim (and what a year it was)!... Beloved againers from Tennessee were stunned and elated when tiny new daughter **FIONA** found them just 5 weeks after orientation's end... New Mexico is home to fabulous art, great skiing and now, one handsome young dude named **ANTHONY**... Baby **BRYAN**'s birthmomma made the ultimate sacrifice, in hopes of ensuring him every golden opportunity life had to offer... At 10 lb. 13 oz, baby **JUSTIN** is set to climb every mountain and ford every stream in his beautiful new homestate of Montana... A single physician from Minnesota and one proud new grandma braved spring showers and rare Texas ice storms to drive down south to meet their precious new angel, **KYLA FAITH**... A future Miss Georgia for sure, newborn **AMELIA** has also been crowned "best baby sister" by her loyal new brother, himself an Abrazotot... A Discovery Channel crew stood by in the delivery room as baby **DELANEY** made her world debut, amidst a fan club that included both birthparents and adoptive family, as well... Baby **LUISA** claims five loving parents and four darling siblings, who joined forces to lovingly plot her course in life... Princess **MADLYN** has been holding court over her loyal subjects, Mom, Dad, and birthparents since birth, and they just couldn't be more enthralled by her little highness!... They waited long and the waiting was hard but according to an overjoyed New Jersey couple, newborn **NATHANIEL** was well worth it all ... Little **COLE** was in such a hurry to meet his proud new family, he showed up several weeks ahead of schedule... And as we go to print, **ZACHARY TYLER** is spoiling his new mom and dad rotten by nearly sleeping through the night already...

Congratulations, all!



Letters

They say "life is what happens when you're busy making other plans." I can truly relate to that!

I was 21 years old and going to college when I found out I was pregnant. Initially, I didn't ask myself "what am I going to do" because I only knew of two options: parenting or abortion. Up to this point in my life I had always worked in child development centers or with mentally-handicapped persons, both of which gave me a great appreciation for life, so I knew that abortion would not be my choice. I informed all my family and friends of my good news that a baby was on the way. I also spoke with the father of the baby, Marlin, whom I had been dating for three years. Some folks were happy for me, while others were not quite so pleased. As the pregnancy continued, the father became less enthused and finally he told me that he would not be able to commit to me or the baby. Marlin was about to graduate from college and had big dreams that didn't exactly include a pregnant girlfriend. He made it very clear that he would be only a part-time father, at his convenience. That hurt, but I appreciated his honesty.

I continued with my plan to parent and made all the necessary preparations one makes when expecting. I bought the needed furniture, car seat, baby clothes, bottles, diapers, etc. And at eight months pregnant, all I needed was the baby to be born. (Or so I thought, at the time.) Then one day, paging through the phone book in search of a hair salon, I stumbled across a subheading in the yellow pages: Adoption. Hmm. I thought to myself, what do others do in my situation, when they are about to become a single parent? So for educational purposes only, I called an adoption agency to see how adoption worked and what options were available. I met with a local agency counselor, who explained different degrees of openness and showed me profiles of what adoptive families looked like. I gave it a lot of thought and hard as it was, I realized this was the path I needed to follow.

Four weeks before the birth, I chose to make adoption plans for my son, because I wanted him to have a two-parent family, which I knew in my heart I could not provide him on my own. I chose his new parents-to-be and I met them personally. I asked them to be at the hospital, as I wanted them to share in those first moments of his life. I spent a lot of special time alone with my son, Adam, when he was born, and I never regretted my decision to do so. We needed to be able to say hello, before we could say any good-byes. Did I have second thoughts about letting go? Sure I did. When I did sign the legal papers to let the adoption happen, it was the hardest thing I have ever had to do. But somehow, I knew then that it was the right thing, and I know it still today.

Throughout the years, Adam's parents have continued to send me letters and pictures to keep me updated on how Adam is doing. When receiving those pictures I know I made the best decision a parent in my situation can make for their child, by putting my child's needs before my own. I do not regret my decision, as I have seen it benefit both of us. I have grown in ways I might not have, had I chosen to parent him.

After placing Adam with a loving family, I continued on with school. I received a degree in Human Development and Family Studies. Because of my own experience, I've always wanted to work in adoption. I had applied at several different agencies, always stating my claim that I have personal experience in adoption, but it never led me anywhere. I thought for sure agencies would want a birthparent working with birthparents but I found that many places didn't seem to want to hire anyone who'd actually been through this themselves before. So I dropped that information from my resume, and finally I got an interview with Abrazo. While interviewing I was so unsure if I should reveal who I was that I didn't, and as we were saying good byes the interviewer told me they had birthparents on staff. I informed her that I am also a birthparent, and at Abrazo, that mattered a lot, so we sat back down to talk some more, and as a result, I was hired. So for the past two years I have worked with other birthparents exploring all their options, and have guided them in making adoption plans.

Life has a funny way of working out, you know? During the time I've been with Abrazo, Marlin came to realize he finally was ready to make some lifetime commitments, and in a kind of fairy-tale turn of events, we have gotten married. I am happier now than I have ever been before, and Marlin and I are both at peace with the decision we made for our son so many years ago. My time here at the agency has been very rewarding and continues to be educational. There is part of me that is sad to see this chapter of life come to an end, but Marlin is in the military and we are now being transferred to Italy. Working at Abrazo with such fine women has been quite an experience, and has changed me in very special ways. I wish I could still be here to see all our future birthparents all the way through the process, and to support them and their adoptive families, as they take their new children into their arms. In closing, for those birthparents out there who need some advice from someone who's been there before: just take time to really think about the child's needs and the long term effects of whatever decision you make. Get some good counseling before the birth to help ensure the right plan is being made for the right reasons and afterwards as well, to help you through the grieving process. I wish you all the best... Arrividerci!

Barbara Weichel



The GOLDEN BINKIES

In a world of flux and change, some of the best things in life still do stay the same! Camp Abrazo 2002 was again a roaring success, thanks in huge part to Abrazo's Family Council members (Robby & Diane Smith, Terry & Joann King, Flonda Montgomery, Lisa Johnson & Melissa Schuler) who did most of the planning and footwork.

On a warm sunny weekend in September 2002, scores of children, parents and birthfamily members gathered in Irving, TX to laugh, learn and play together. This year's campers hailed from all over Texas, and came from as far away as Oklahoma, Illinois and New Jersey, ranging in age from months-old to fifty-something.

We gathered for a poolside pizza party the first night, taking over the hotel and keeping a watchful eye on splashing water babies. The next day, national motivational speaker (and Abrazomom!) Linda Snyder fired everyone up in the direction of their dreams, while agency foster family Hugo & Gloria Burke and assorted staff members bravely entertained legions of little ones with a slate of fulfilled kids' activities. That night, we dished up the best of Texas' barbecue along with the Golden Binkies Awards and a Silent Auction to benefit the agency's Angel Account.

Sunday morning dawned way too soon, with folks gathering at breakfast to exchange addresses and farewells before heading for home, tired but happy and looking forward to having you and yours join us for Camp Abrazo 2003.



The best tales are illuminated well, and so it was with this

one. A dim room, a frightened young woman considering her options. An open phone book, a beam of morning light highlights Abrazo's number. A call is made, the sun begins to peek between the clouds. A couple is chosen, but the light fades, and hopes fade as infertility issues resurface. The birthmom's faith in adoption, like a candle, begins to flicker, but the right family appears on the scene and suddenly, a rainbow lights up the sky as a beautiful baby girl finds her proper home among the two families who love her most. Our Golden Binkie for the Best Lighting goes to Cassandra Arreola, beloved birthmom of Gale Breann.



Picture this: lonely couple, done with fertility clinics,

wandering an empty grade school playground dreaming of children. Scene shifts to a San Antonio hotel conference room, then to raucous post-orientation dinner at a Mexican restaurant with mariachis and all. Back home, it's hurry

up and wait, until they find themselves rushing off to El Paso, dogs and all, to an El Paso hospital where they meet the birthmom of their dreams. Final scene: a gorgeous-beyond-words nursery, with a princess in pink and a happily-ever after future. For the best set design, our Golden Binkie goes to Ralph and Dorothy Gomez, proud parents of Gale Breann.



From showgirls to real estate magnates, from

Southern belle to striped pajama, their case was garbed in the fiber of life and when these Texans-come-latelies were introduced by fate to a Latina madre down on her luck in a border town, it was a perfect fit. Running a clothing store to keep busy until baby came home kept the adoptive parents busy and now their lives are full of tiny blue outfits and so it is that our Golden Binkie for Best Costume goes to Bruce & Nikki Ladden, fashionable folks of best-dressed baby Sklyar.



It was just one of those cases... faithful

couple seeks precious baby, birthmom agrees, birthdad doesn't, challenge is threatened, God prevails, dreams come true...and then couple joins the "lucky 5% club" becoming one of the rare families to follow a successful adoption story with a homegrown addition! For overcoming the odds and teaching us all a lesson about the power of perseverance, our Golden Binkie for Best Docudrama goes to Rex & Jen Westerman, ever-so-proud parents of Annie & Mollie.



The greatest tunes are written both in major and

minor keys, and this family's song was composed of both. Fertility efforts were made to the tune of "Climb Every Mountain" followed by "Impossible Dream" but they later came to Abrazo having "Heard It Through the Grapevine" and being willing to look at adoption from "Both Sides Now." They found themselves matching with a loving birthfamily whose devotion to their unborn baby was "Evergreen" and then before they knew it they were in a hospital delivery room humming the "Hallelujah Chorus". They've been waltzing through life to the strains of "Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee" and

this weekend, they are "Reunited (And It Feels So Good)" so our Golden Binkie for the Best Soundtrack is acoustically awarded to Pat & Kristy Mullins, proud parents of Erin Nicole.



Barbie & Ken had nuthin' on them! The winners of our Golden

Binkie for Best Picture surely won the prize for Golden Couple in high school, and two law school degrees later, they found themselves on the career track to success and looking to become parents. Round about the same time, a darling coed found herself pregnant and looking for the perfect family for her baby, and the Good Lord led her to Abrazo and to them. Open adoption jitters now set aside, they're expert parents on the search for number #2, so Your Honor, if it please the court, we present the recipients of our Golden Binky 2002 for Best Picture to Tom and Emily Donahue, proud mama and papa of handsome little John Patrick.



He was young and scared and doing his best, but life was not

exactly a laughing matter at that time. He kept on keeping on, though, and when it came time to step up to the plate and do right by his two small children, he had a courage of a man and the heart of a father and so it was that he agreed to a loving adoption plan that would give his little boy and baby girl a life full of love and joy and laughter. For doing the right thing and for pickin' and grinnin' in the face of hard choices and big sacrifices, our Golden Binkie for Best Comedy goes to Randy Linebarger, best birthdad of Christian & Haven.



She's quiet and shy and precious as pie, and the idea

of adoption was about as intimidating as the hunk of a waiter who served lunch at Applebee's the day she met Abrazo's staff in El Paso just before her baby's birth. She was waiting to find just the right family for her precious child and didn't find their profile until only weeks before her baby was born. But St. Louis held the key and thanks to her patience and Divine intervention, the right people were in the right place in record time and so it is that our Golden Binkie for Best Short Film goes to Rebecca Villalobos, proud birthmomma of Sydney.



They were sitting in a well-known Mexican restaurant

in San Antonio in '96 when a raucous group of parents-to-be came in with Abrazo's staff, and asked them to snap group photos. They did, and just a year or so later, they were back as clients themselves, and shortly thereafter, a loving birthdad made them the parents of his 3 year old son. It wasn't an easy road, nor a simple one, but it was, undoubtedly, worth the effort, and it is with respect and pride that we bestow our Golden Binkie for Best Production upon Mark & Sharon Davis, ever-so-worthy parents of best kid, Christopher.



They took us on in our very first year, and from our first

July orientation in Charlotte, North Carolina, we know this solid, Midwestern couple was destined to be one of our all time favorites. They were looking for any child that needed them and so it was that they found the daughter that love had meant for them all along. She was bright and precocious and beautiful to boot, and adopting her was such a wonderful experience, they did it three times again, including a second placement through Abrazo in July of 1999. For being the family that faith built and for having the best direction of any folks

we know, our 2002 Golden Binkie for Best Direction is honorably awarded to Bob & JoEllen Hoffman, parents of Abrazotots Haley and Joseph.



Their first adoption happened somewhere else but then they

came to their senses and came to Abrazo. (OK, we'll be nice.) And we're so glad they did! They came already knowing the ropes and ready to go, and they were so in the right place, they met a birthmom whose brother had gone to school with the adoptive mom. The birthmom worked in a barbecue joint and wanted active but mature and experienced parents for her baby-to-be, so these charming youngsters fit the bill just perfectly! For being energetic, young at heart and ideally cast for a second little boy, our Golden Binkie for Best Casting goes to Jim & Jean Rankin, mom and dad of Austin & Christopher.



As with any good screenplay, timing is everything and so it

was for our next recipients. When their story began, they were still bounding down the fertility trail, and found a bouncing boy along this route, but the second go-round was much more challenging, and a painful detour and water problems waylaid their entry into adoption. Wary of openness, they took their time and came to terms with their fears, and just about the time their hearts became ready, so did another beautiful baby boy. He's the answer to their prayers and the brother their son always dreamed of, and so it is that our Golden Binkie for Best Screenplay is given, happily ever after, to Eric and Jeannie Clarke, forever family of Michael & Andrew.



He's the real McCoy, a Texan male with class

and character and although he didn't have opportunity to join the adoption roundup before the birth, he had the grit to saddle up just in time to hitch a wagon along with his daughter's loving new family. They live off a spell, down Houston way, and theirs is a loving campfire that encircles not just mom, dad and sister but adoring grandparents, too. For having the git-along to git along with the plan for his child's best interest and for being a rootin' tootin' cowboy besides, our Golden Binkie for Best Western goes to Michael Storm, beloved birthdad of Alexis.



They come from 'Jersey and they're the kind of Easterners

who are so thought-ful, they posted a Forum message of assurance on behalf of Abrazo's Yankees to let the rest of the world know that all was still well in the wake of 9-11. Our recipients of Abrazo's Best Travelogue Binkie survived a failed placement in 1998 and went on to vacation in the tropics returning just in time to adopt a gorgeous Texas-born baby boy, followed by a second son just 5 months ago. For being willing to travel the world to find the children of their dreams and to climb every mountain and ford every stream, our Golden Binkie for Best Travelogue goes to Gene Horowitz and Anne Owens, well-journeyed parents of Kate and Abby, Joshua and Michael.



Young and green, they'd only been to orientation 2 months

before they got the call; Baby Boy Born, waiting at hospital for loving family, in need of good home. With their homestudy barely begun but a house full of room and hearts full of love, they leapt at the opportunity. The birthmom was not necessarily looking for an open adoption but they were looking to do the

right thing and so it was that they finished up their paperwork and found themselves in San Antonio in record time, building a friendship with the young woman who gave life to their new son. For being where they needed to be when they needed to be there and doing it all so well, our Golden Binkie for Best Supporting Actors goes to Doug and Jennifer Burns, ready parents of baby Miller.



They learned the ropes by doing their first adoption

with Abrazo, then followed it with a private adoption encore that underscored the importance of both openness and boundaries. This teacher and nurse have found that the best lessons of parenting entail both health and education, nurture and nature, and for learning to incorporate the best of both worlds, our Golden Binkie for Best Editing is awarded with pomp and circumstance, and a nod to the principles of Florence Nightingale, to Joe and Elizabeth Justice, the parents of John & Molly.



She may not have had much at the time of placement, but

this loving birthmom had grace, strength, courage and integrity, and her children were equally blessed. Hailing from a small-minded Panhandle town and wanting so much more for the offspring she loved so dearly, she was willing to suffer the ultimate loss in order to give her son and daughter the best of the best. She came to SA with her heart on her sleeve and her fate on the line, to make the best plan she could for her beloved children's future, and as a result, they are happy, healthy and thriving yet today. For teaching us all so much about self-sacrifice and the very lengths a mom will go to give her children what they need

most, our Golden Binkie for best props goes to Kristy Bishop, darling birthmom of Christian and Haven.



Picture perfect in every way, right down to the

Home Alone pose, this then-Dallas pair was ready for parenting and precious to boot. Recognizing them as doubly-talented, Abrazo tapped them to take home not one but two gorgeous children! Two grateful birthparents graciously concurred, and being the giving people that they are, they all consented to share their story with the media in order to better educate the public. Their tale became a gift which has kept on giving, and so with heartfelt pride and appreciation, our Golden Binkie for Best Double Feature goes to Christian, Haven, Jack and Cindy Waldrip.



Okay, so they didn't get their first homestudy done until

the week their first baby was already on the ground... but they turned out to be the perfect parents for the cause and so it was that we welcomed them back with open arms when they decided they were all set for Numero Dos. They'd moved further up North by then, and added a donkey to the family shortly thereafter, but knowing what fabulous folks they were, we couldn't hold it against them and sure enough, heaven had a second son in mind for them. Now they think they're finished but we know there's still a daughter somewhere in their future, so with hope and anticipation we present our Golden Binkie for Best Sequel to Mike & Jane Karleskint, beloved ma and pa of Gavin & Anthony.

ANGEL ACCOUNT

Blessings upon and thanks to the many beloved friends and families who made have generously contributed to Abrazo's Angel Account; supported our Silent Auction; volunteered to speak on our orientation panels; and donated Christmas stockings and Easter baskets, household goods, baby supplies and other goodies to cheer the less-privileged within our ranks. Our heartfelt appreciation goes out to:

The Eckert family
 The Cornish family
 Stephanie Morgan, in honor of
 Kayleigh Cornish
 The Saucedo family
 The Dooley family, in honor of
 Dean, Cheryl, Brittany, Haleigh
 & Tiffany
 The Craft family
 The Ferraire family
 The Corrigan family
 The Law Offices of Bob Estrada
 The Law Offices of Jack Efron
 The Smith family
 The King family
 The Montgomery family

The O'Toole family
 The Ritchey family
 The Ernani family
 The Waldrip family
 The Muller family
 The Hanson family
 The Berger family, in honor of
 Amanda & Alexis Stumbough
 The Karleskint family
 The Kankel family
 The Tate family
 The White family
 The Ladden family
 The Gonzalez family
 The Lindeberg-Tucker family
 The Warlick family
 The Laliberte family
 The McMillian family
 The Kohl family

The Holmes family, in honor of
 Jake's 5th Birthday
 The Starnes family
 The Ploof-Davis family
 The Ehrig family
 The Chow family
 The Holmes family
 The Neel family
 The Bradley family
 The De La Cruz family, in honor of
 baby shower hostesses Ana Baker,
 Kaye Hammond, Suzanne
 Hardage, Robin Markle, Nancy
 Rosenbury, & Stephanie Walker
 The Coffey family
 The Reyes-Medina family
 The Isbel family
 The Malaguti family
 The EquiServe Corporation

WANTED:

Missing annual reports and photos, which were due in our office 12/15/02 and are still very much needed. Please forward promptly, so that anxious staff –and birthfamilies awaiting word of their child's welfare— aren't kept waiting any longer!

Michael & Margaret Hounsell
 Robert Johnson & Chris Clair
 Thomas & Kim Mathews
 Francis & Cathy Poutier
 David & Christy Bare
 Joel & Tracy Rutledge
 Michael & Nancy Craft
 George & Debra Parrino
 Rob & Nancy Adams

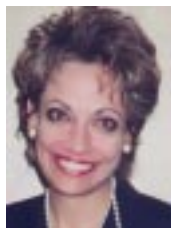
Ray Hepper & Hilary Tatem
 Bobby & Chareece Teague
 Paul & Ruth Ann Popp
 Joe Spinella
 David Stead & Rebecca Head
 Angela LeBlanc
 David & Joanne Kilmer
 Greg & Cynthia Daniel
 Kenneth Earhardt & Nancy
 Camajani
 Mike & Terri Panzarella
 Dan & Madeline Hamel
 Mike & Bernadette Tock
 Dan & Terri Murphy
 Fred & Mari Ruegsegger
 Jim & Amy Cimoeh
 Michael & Tracey Raftery
 Paul & Theresa Meuer
 Dennis & Susan Snyder
 Doug & Kim Conger
 Paul & Linda Thomas
 Kumud & Swati Mujumder
 Sam & Samantha Fincher
 Ted & Terri McCarron

Lawrence Camp & Holly Weimer
 Rhonda Shore
 Robert & JoEllen Hoffman
 John & Tammy Golwen
 Rebecca Gallego
 Lance & Terri Misner
 Scott & Dawn Swierski
 Sabrina Rohmiller
 James & Diane Hoppa
 Steve & Kathy Ehrle
 Scott & Kathy Hogewood
 Albert & Nancy Jackson
 Gary & Jennifer Violetta
 Paul & Lauren Iacano
 Lee & Diane Pence
 Tom & Pam Barnes
 Terry & Joanne King
 Steve & Nancy Foley
 John & Cheryl Wisdom
 Guillermo & Kathryn Munoz
 Len & Teri Ernani
 Rob & Tammy Davis
 Evan & Shelley Mann
 George & Teresa Tennant

Rod & Patricia Hosmer
 Phillip & Robin Hansen
 Mark Beauchamp & Luanne Lettieri
 Michael & Mary Olson
 Bob & Cathy Beatty
 Joseph & Marla Summerour
 Dennie & Priscilla Hamilton
 Dawn Kirk
 Terrence & Diane McDonald
 Tommy & Debby Gruber
 William & Shirley Hammond
 Steve & Cynthia Clymer
 Donovan & Jacelynn Couture
 Brian & Debi Zaas
 Juan & Rosa Lopez
 John & Leta Bogle
 Luis & Barbara Suarez
 Steven & Suzanne Leighton
 John & Sarah Carpenter
 Tim & Sylvia Ann Beyer
 Rob & Laura Boisvert
 Mike & Chris Russell
 Jeff & Karen Lowe
 Bryan & Ruth Kaminski

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



Ruth Stratton L.M.S.W.-A.C.P.
 Acting Assistant Director



April Beaty
 Legal Services Coordinator



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



Kelly Gilbert, B.S.
 Office Manager

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

WELCOME ABOARD

to Abrazo's latest orientation graduates; The Great BambinoFest of 11/02, Los Misionarios of 2/03 and Bruce's Great 8 Posse, of 4/03...

TAKING A STAR

TURN: Watch for the TV premiere of Discover Health Channel's new adoption series, set to feature an Abrazo placement and expected to air on June 23rd, at 10 am, 12:30pm, and 3:30pm CST...

BIENVENIDOS: Congrats to alums David and Karen and son on the arrival of their home-grown baby; to Abrazotot Mitchell on his parents' adoption of his biosister; to Shannon, Tera and son, on the homecoming of their new daughter; and to parents-in-waiting Joe & Elizabeth on their coming attraction...

FORUM: THE BEST

ADVICE, feedback and online support available anywhere! Log onto Abrazo's Forum at www.abrazo.org and check on the latest dialogue between the best of adoption experts, our own adoption community members...

PRAYER CHAIN: Those wishing to join Abrazo's Prayer Chain, lifting online chapel requests to heaven in the year to come, please fax or forward current email addresses to Abrazo in care of Kelly and we'll add you to our band of earthly angels participating in this special ministry of love...

MEA CULPA! Your overwrought Affinity editors offer apologies for the long delay between issues; production and mailing costs have necessitated that we downsize, causing our publication schedule to shrink from 4 issues a year to 2, but we hope you

still enjoy our little epistle, just the same!... **BOOK NOOK:** Abrazomom SuDawn Peters has self-published her family's adoption tales; "Hidden for Glory, Destined for Adoption" is now available at hidden4glory@juno.com... while Abrazomom and bestselling novelist Jacquelyn Mitchard's new tome "Twelve Times Blessed" has recently hit store shelves nationwide...

ALL STAR CHAMPION DO-GOODER: The Dominique Wilkins Foundation notified Abrazo that our agency was named one of the beneficiaries of the charitable proceeds of Foundation-sponsored events during the All Star Games this year; many thanks to one of our favorite ball-handling Abrazodads for his ongoing support!... **RETIREMENT ROCKS:** Best wishes and many, many thanks to Abrazo's longtime licensing rep, Sally Means, a gracious, hardworking bureaucrat now leaving TDPRS in search of some much-deserved rest and relaxation! We appreciate the long hours and diligent effort she put in, and wish her all the best!...

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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