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NJ•ARCH Features:

- Chat Rooms
- Lending Library
- Warm Line
- Resource Directory
- Buddy Mentors
- Support Group Advocacy
- Upcoming Events



[www.cafsnj.org](http://www.cafsnj.org)

MAY IS NATIONAL FOSTER CARE MONTH

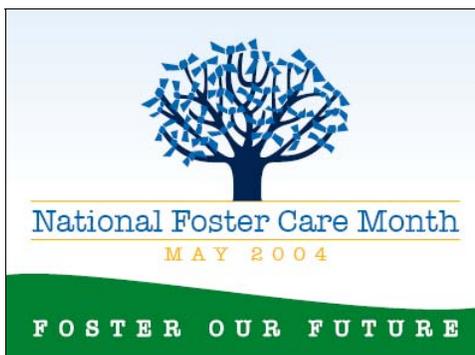
There are 542,000 reasons to get involved. They live in your community, attend the local school, and worship at the neighborhood house of faith.

May is National Foster Care Month where the nation spotlights the needs of children and youth in foster care and honors the compassionate people who make a real and lasting difference in their lives.

Currently, over half a million American children are not living at home because of distressing family situations often involving abuse or neglect. That number has doubled since 1987. Nearly half of the youth in foster care are over the age of 10.

Over 170,000 foster families nation wide provide loving homes for children when their own parents are unable to care for them. Foster families offer much more than the temporary shelter of four walls and a roof. They take on one of the greatest challenges our society generates: restoring a sense of hope and stability in the lives of young people whose families are in crisis.

Too often, the inspirational stories of these caring individuals are left untold. The role of a foster parent is intensive and requires many personal sacrifices.



National Foster Care Month recognizes the many supportive people: foster and kinship families, professionals and volunteers who help young people in care achieve their fullest potential despite their difficult circumstances.

**The campaign promotes Five Ways to Get Involved:**

- **Be a foster parent.** Every jurisdiction in the country has experienced a shortage of foster homes. There is a particular need to find families for adolescents and sibling groups.
- **Honor a foster parent.** Attend or organize a recognition event to express appreciation for foster parents, social

workers and others who make a difference in the lives of children. Consider making a donation to a local foster care agency as another way to show support.

• **Be a volunteer child advocate.** Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) volunteers are trained citizens appointed by judges to represent the best interests of abused and neglected children in court.

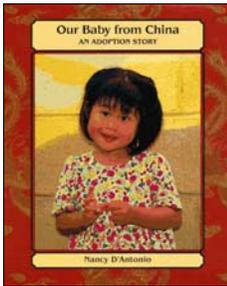
• **Mentor a youth.** Mentors make a difference. Research shows that children and youth with mentors earn higher grades and report improved relationships with their friends and families.

• **Hire a young person.** Help a youth in foster care explore career options and find a job.

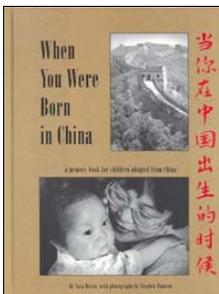
Throughout the U.S, there are hundreds of planned events and grassroots activities. You can make a difference in a child's life. For more information on how to get involved in New Jersey, contact [www.njfostercare.org](http://www.njfostercare.org).

*\*Excerpts from Casey Family Programs ([www.fostercaremonth.org](http://www.fostercaremonth.org)).*

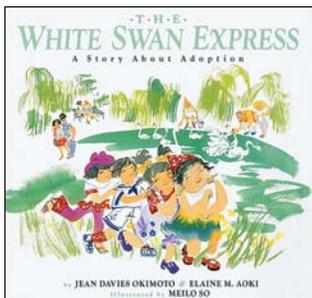
## BOOK CORNER: ADOPTION FROM CHINA



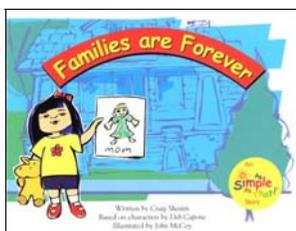
**Our Baby From China:  
An Adoption Story**  
By Nancy D'Antonio



**When You Were Born In  
China**  
By Sara Dorow



**The White Swan Express**  
By Jean D. Okimoto and  
Elaine M. Aoki



**Families are Forever**  
By Craig Shermin

Hello, Readers. Welcome to Natalie's Book Corner.

I have spent many a cold and wintry evening sitting cozily under a quilt in my warm apartment reading books about adoption from China. The fact is that more children are adopted from China than from any other foreign country. This month, I have chosen to whet your appetites with some snippets from my chair side travels.

The Chinese government has many stringent rules in place regarding the number of children a family unit is permitted to have. China is so densely populated that many of its people live in poverty at a level that we could not fathom.

Male children are expected to take care of their parents when the parents are no longer able to care for themselves. When a couple marries, the wife moves in with her husband and his parents and contributes to their care.

A family that lives in the city is only allowed to have one child. If the family lives in a more rural setting, it may be allowed to have two children. When the first-born child is a female, it is possible that permission might be granted to the family to have a second child in hopes that it will be a male. The value of the male child as old age insurance for the parents' care results in the fact

that most children adopted from China are girls.

The following books are written for children who have been adopted from China. All of these books, and many more are available through our lending library.

**Our Baby From China - An Adoption Story** by Nancy D'Antonio

With simple text and loving photographs, this book tells the true adoption story of Ariela. Her family travels to China to meet her. They see many beautiful sights, but the loveliest of all is their new daughter.

**When You Were Born in China - A memory book for children adopted from China** by Sara Dorow

This is truly a must-have book for any child adopted from China. In simple language and beautiful black and white photos, the reader will see China's grand country, its people, its historic sites and poor countryside. This book provides a clear and loving explanation about the circumstances under which parents place children for adoption or in orphanages.

**Kids Like Me in China** - by Ying Ying Fry with Amy Klatzkin

Ying Ying is an eight-year-old girl who was adopted from China. She writes this account of her experience when she returns to China to visit

her orphanage, meet her caregivers, and discover paths of connections with the orphanage children. Ying Ying makes other friends in their homes, on playgrounds and at school. She wrote her story so that other adopted children could understand their own lives.

**The White Swan Express - A Story About Adoption** by Jean D. Okimoto and Elaine M. Aoki

In China, four baby girls are fast asleep in their cribs at the orphanage. In North America, four families are getting ready to start an exciting journey. With tenderness and humor, this lyrical story tells how they all come together. This book is definitely appropriate for single parent families or couples.

**Families Are Forever - an "As Simple As That!" story** by Craig Shemin

Rain, a Chinese-American adoptee, helps us learn that a family's origin is only the beginning to what it means to be a family. In this heartwarming tale of family, love, and beginnings, Rain meets Bo and her Forever Mom and they become a brand new family.

I would also like to recommend the following books for adults.

**Intercountry Adoption From China - Examining Cultural Heritage and Other Post-adoption Issues** by Jay W. Rojewski and Jacy L.

*(Continued on page 3)*

## POST ADOPTION COUNSELING SERVICES (PACS) SUCCESS STORY (\*Names have been changed for confidentiality)

When the Smith's wanted to start a family, they turned to the Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS). After training and a home study, they were introduced to John and Mary\*, two toddler siblings available for adoption.

Mr. and Mrs. Smith realized that the family was experiencing some adjustment due to common adoption issues. So they contacted PACS, the Pre and Post Adoption Counseling Services in their area. This service was offered through the Jean Fredrickson Adoption Support Program of Family Service of Burlington County, located in Medford. They were given an appointment with one of their PACS counselors, Deborah Hill, MFT. Deborah is a marriage and family therapist.

"The couple was very clear from the beginning how they wanted to start a family," stated Ms. Hill.

Adopting older children was just fine with them. They wanted to adopt, not foster these children. While Mary was always seeking approval, John was presenting with behaviors that were challenging.

Ms. Hill and the family worked hard for seven months. "One of the keys to this adoptive family's success," stated Ms. Hill "was their awareness of the losses that occur in the adoption experience." The parents understood that part of parenting was addressing some attachment and loyalty issues surrounding the birth family. They were sensitive to the children's preexisting relationships with their birth family members and the value those relationships had in their lives.

Another contributing factor to the success of this family was their professional backgrounds. The father is an administrator

in the mental health field while the mother is a special education teacher. Their education helped them to understand that the behaviors and emotions surfacing in their children and that as parents they could facilitate those needs being met without taking things personally.

The children did not have an easy road; they had had numerous previous foster care placements, primarily with extended family members before being adopted. They also have a half brother still living with their birth mother. Therapy assisted the sister in the process of validating her feelings of loss and increasing an understanding as to why their birth mother could not care for them as well. The adoptive parents do not criticize the birth parents but provide a life story that is positive and filled with empathy for all parties. This invites the

*(Continued on page 5)*

## BOOK CORNER: ADOPTION FROM CHINA (CONTINUED)

*(Continued from page 2)*  
Rojewski

**Dim Sum, Bagels, and Grits** - A Sourcebook for Multicultural Families  
By Myra Alpersen

**Wuhu Diary** - On Taking My Adopted Daughter Back to Her Hometown in China  
By Emily Prager

My exploration into the world of adoption in China has provided me with a

treasure trove of information. I would be remiss if I did not include what is perhaps the most important book of all, that being

**A Passage to the Heart - Writings from Families with Children from China**  
Edited by Amy Klatzkin.

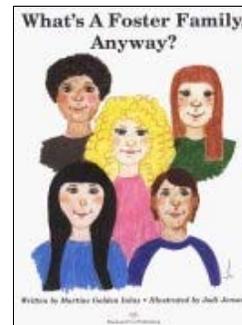
This is a compilation of articles taken from FCC (Families with Children from China). Chapter

newsletters discuss all aspects of adoption from China. These include: the waiting period, the adoption journey, settling in, health and development, adoption after infancy, single parenting, culture, language, identity, race, going back, birth parents, and much more.

NATALIE HAMILTON  
WARMLINE WORKER  
NJ•ARCH

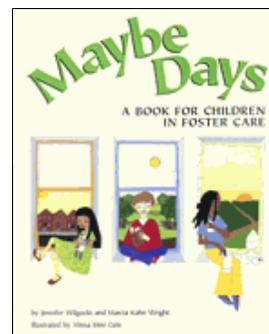
## DID YOU KNOW?

The NJ•ARCH Lending Library has a variety of books for foster families. Check out a complete listing at [www.njarch.org](http://www.njarch.org) or contact the warmline.



**What's A Foster Family Anyway?**

By Martine Golden Inlay



**Maybe Days**

By Jennifer Wilgocki and Marcia Kahn Wright

*NJ•ARCH currently has over 500 books, videos and articles available for loan. Each month we will feature a review of a book that is of interest. Log onto our website to view all the resources available to you from our organization. You will be glad you did!*

## ASK OUR EXPERTS

E-MAIL US YOUR QUESTIONS AT [WARMLINE@NJARCH.ORG](mailto:WARMLINE@NJARCH.ORG)

*Have a question that needs expert advice? E-mail or call the warmline; we would be happy to assist you! Frequently asked questions and responses from the staff will be published in future newsletters.*



*Comments or Questions about NJ•ARCH or this newsletter? Contact us at [warmline@njarch.org](mailto:warmline@njarch.org) or call us at 973-763-2041*

**Question:** *My husband and I received quite a bit of information about our son's birth parents. They were both addicted to drugs and my son was his birth mother's third child. The other two children are living with relatives. My son is now 10 years old and we have been reluctant to share this information with him. He has never asked about it. Should we tell him his history and how should we go about telling him? We don't want him to feel bad.*

**Answer:** Telling children their difficult histories is always a challenge for adoptive parents. The question is not whether to tell, but how and when to tell. If something is a secret it often follows that the information is somehow shameful. Secrets in families are toxic and children will find out the information one way or another. It is best that they hear it from their parents, not from a relative, friend or neighbor.

Holly van Gulden in her article, "Talking with Children about Difficult History", recommends several steps in telling children potentially painful information:

First, the facts should be checked. How reliable is the information? How much is fact and how much is speculation? Suppositions should be reported as such with the caveat that the information may or may not be true.

Second, adoptive parents need to sort out their own feelings about the situation. It is important not to make value judgments about birth parents' behavior. One must always remember there is a piece of the birth parents in every child. Being critical or judgmental is damaging to your child's sense of self. If necessary, seek help from a support group or professional to process your feelings about your child's origins.

Next, it is important to evaluate your child's developmental and emotional ability to process the information. Usually children in middle childhood have the cognitive and emotional maturity to process difficult material. They are less likely to internalize shame than adolescents and will have more time to work through any feelings of pain, confusion and self blame. Of course, as a parent, you know your child best and can evaluate readiness. Bear in mind that delay has its risks. Children can intuitively sense secrets and often react to them with acting out behavior. Some families use the help of an adoption professional to "facilitate" the telling.

Finally, plan carefully the language you will use in telling. Try to avoid language that reflects bias or moral judgment. Give your child time to ask questions and express feelings. Know that you will have to share the information

more than once. Children don't always take everything in on the first telling. They need time to process information as well as correct misunderstandings. This is also a good time to talk to your child about the difference between privacy and secrecy. You can help your child decide how and when to share this personal information.

As adoptive parents, we need to understand that we can not protect our children from the painful facts of their lives. By modeling our willingness to handle painful material, we can validate our children's feelings of loss and grief and help them to build a positive self image.

*Note: the complete article on which this advice column is based is available from NJARCH: 877.4. NJARCH.*



**Barbara A. Rall, LCSW**

## DYFS FEATURED CHILD: JENNIFER

Jennifer is a tall, attractive Caucasian girl who is friendly and outgoing. Despite having numerous disappointments during her years in foster care, she has made excellent progress in her behavior and emotional adjustment, and longs to become a part of a permanent family. Jennifer enjoys listening to music and creating her own dance routines. She has begun participating in Girl Scouts and enjoys the computer. She has been working to improve her skills with peers, as she

tends to display immaturity in her interactions. Academically, Jennifer has learning disabilities, which impact her ability to be on grade level. She is a child who needs motivation to complete her school work, although she has greatly improved in this area.

Jennifer currently resides in a pre-adoptive group home. She thrives on positive reinforcement and does well in one-on-one interactions. However, she is a somewhat needy child who requires a family



Jennifer: Born 10/15/91; age 12

to be patient with her attention-seeking behaviors.

For more information about adopting Jennifer or other children like her, please contact the Recruitment Specialist at 201.261.2800 Ext. 247

## DID YOU KNOW?

Since August 2003 NJ•ARCH received 188 Needs Assessments. These assessments are for those in NJ who have either been touched or have an interest in adoption. Here are highlights of our findings to date:

53% of all respondents are adoptive parents.

84% of all respondents are female.

50% of all respondents expressed "lifelong adoption" needs – the most common need expressed.

46% of all respondents expressed "parenting an adopted child" and "behavioral and emotional needs of an adopted child" as their second most common expressed need.

*If you would like to respond to our Needs Assessment online, please visit our website at [www.njarch.org](http://www.njarch.org). For a paper copy of our Assessment, contact our NJ•ARCH Warmline at 877-4-ARCHNJ*

## PACS SUCCESS STORY (CONTINUED)

*(Continued from page 3)*

children to view their history as maybe not perfect, but healthy.

The family would also encourage thought provoking discussions with the children. They work hard to have the family grow so they would have a good, positive story for all concerned.

According to Ms. Hill, the adoptive parents made sure they included the children's birth parents in discussing issues with the children. They never rejected the birth parents by saying: "We are your parents now." The family continues to have contact with the birth parents and the extended family. The children are now doing well at school and at home. This family is truly a success story.

Therapist's summary: The key to this family's success

was the adoptive parents' use of empathy. They were able to understand the problems the birth parents experienced and explain them to the children in a positive manner. This enabled the children to understand their birth parents' positions. It also helped John and Mary to see that it was not their fault they were placed for adoption.

There will always be "baggage" with children who are adopted after abuse or neglect. They will wonder, "Who am I?" "If my parents were 'bad', will I also be bad?" "Why didn't my birth parents love me enough to keep me?" Rather than express these worries verbally, children will often "act out" in school or at home. It is important for adoptive parents to encourage their children to express the feelings behind the behavior.

Ideally, adoptive parents should be enthusiastic, empathic and understanding of adoption issues. Being judgmental or angry about the birth family is never helpful. Adoptive parents need to be secure enough in their own identities to understand they will need to love and accept their adopted children long before they receive the same behavior in return. Children who have had losses need time to build trust.

\* PACS is a free service to any family in New Jersey with adopted children under 18. The adoptions can be public or private, international or domestic. For more information on the PACS Program of Burlington County or in other parts of the state, contact NJARCH at 877.4. ARCHNJ

# NEW JERSEY ADOPTION RESOURCE CLEARING HOUSE

76 SOUTH ORANGE AVENUE  
SOUTH ORANGE, NJ 07079

VISIT US AT [WWW.NJARCH.ORG](http://WWW.NJARCH.ORG)

EDITOR:  
DANA WOODS FRIED  
973.763.2041

WARMLINE  
877.4.ARCHNJ  
OR  
877.427.2465

FAX  
973.378.9575

EMAIL  
[WARMLINE@NJARCH.ORG](mailto:WARMLINE@NJARCH.ORG)  
[LALINEACALUROSA@NJARCH.ORG](mailto:LALINEACALUROSA@NJARCH.ORG)

[WWW.NJARCH.ORG](http://WWW.NJARCH.ORG)



*The one-stop  
resource  
for those  
touched  
by adoption.*

## IN THE SPOTLIGHT: NEW MONMOUTH AND OCEAN COUNTY SUPPORT GROUP

They may not have a name as of yet, but their vision is clear. They want to support those who are touched by adoption; whether their families cross over racial boundaries or not.

NJ•ARCH trained and assisted with the initial launch of a new support group that meets monthly in Colts Neck, NJ. Led by two ambitious and dedicated adoptive mothers, the Ocean and Monmouth County support group is meeting a big need in that area. The groups' initial goal was to begin a support group for

those who adopted children from a different race or culture. Inquiries to the group included



potential members in all parts of their adoption journey (pre, post and/or general support).

Their initial kickoff had more than 25 people in attendance; a very impressive beginning! This support group meets one Friday evening per month at St. Mary's Church in Colts Neck. Topics range from expert guest speakers to open discussion with the members.

For more information on this new adoption support group, contact NJ ARCH; we would be happy to connect you with their group leaders, Danielle or Liz. Happy networking!