

THE POST ADOPTION EXPERIENCE

Mary C. Rizzo

"I was a mother who gave up her rights, but not her feelings, about the daughter she gave up for adoption. I would like her to know that I didn't give her up because I didn't want her, or love her..." (The Adoption Triangle)

"What struck me is the fact that there is no one in my world who looks like me, other than by coincidence..." (Being Adopted: The Lifelong Search for Self)

The Post Adoption Program at Marywood was established in response to numerous inquiries and personal accounts from individuals much like those quoted above. Requests were noted from adoptive families and adult adoptees seeking genetic background information, and from birthparents requesting updates on the children they placed for adoption through the agency. Marywood also recognized that adoption is a lifelong experience and began to provide a communication link between our adoptive and birthfamilies in 1984.

Since 1990, Marywood's Post Adoption Program has evolved and expanded to serve an ever-growing, diverse clientele. The program remains responsive to the voices of adoption triad members; it seeks to maintain sensitivity and flexibility, while it adheres to a code of ethics that acknowledges the rights of all concerned. These goals are not always easily achieved, but with a sharp focus on quality services, commitment to our clients, and creative problem solving, the program has enjoyed a large measure of success—as defined by the people we serve.

Services offered through the Post Adoption Program consist of de-identified social-medical histories, post adoption counseling, search assistance, ongoing contact between birth and adoptive families after finalization, support groups and workshops, and a compilation of resources and referrals. Requests for services continue to multiply, as our 1993 statistics indicate. The program processed over 4,000 inquiries and contacts last year and facilitated 45 reunions between adult adoptees and birthparents.

Because of its seventy-two year history, Marywood is home to over 5,200 adoption files and each chronicles a narrative of separation, grief, hope, joy, and bonding anew. There are common themes found in all adoption files, yet every one is as unique as each birthparent, adoptee, and adoptive family. Our files literally spring to life with every phone inquiry. With a request for service, they are transformed from dusty manila folders protecting the typewritten notes of long absent so

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PAT MOORE ADDS LUSTER TO MARYWOOD LEGACY

Cindee Segal

Marywood has always been known for its dedicated staff but other than a brief chat on finalization day, most clients have a limited understanding of the role Pat Moore has played in their lives for the past eighteen years. This article will attempt to shed some light on a very important gem in Marywood's crown.

Born in Amsterdam, New York, Pat was raised the middle daughter of a roofing/siding businessman and a former glovemaker. Her interest in the legal profession developed out of an eleventh-grade business law class she found interesting and challenging. Pat completed business college and followed up with a position in an estate planning and wills office. She

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A Marywood Reunion

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PAT MOORE

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temporarily quit work in 1970 to marry Rob Moore and they were relocated to San Angelo by the Air Force. When Rob shipped out to Japan, Pat joined him and they spent 2-1/2 years in Tokyo and Okinawa where Pat worked in civil engineer and communication group offices.

The Moore family, which now included six-month old Sean, moved to Austin in 1973 so that Rob could attend UT. 1974 found Pat once again scouring the legal community for employment. During a brief stint at another firm, Pat noticed the red brick building on the corner of Guadalupe and Eleventh Streets. When a revised work schedule interfered with her family life, Pat fatefully opened the yellow pages in search of a new employer. A second inquiry produced an interested attorney practicing in the charming building she'd admired and, thus, began a tight partnership between Travis Blakeslee and Pat Moore which lasted until Travis's death in 1990.

Mr. Blakeslee was eased into the role of agency attorney by his uncle, George Zimmerman, who worked with Marywood's earliest adoption records. Travis was an active participant on Marywood's Board of Directors and instrumental in getting the court to make changes which affected Marywood, such as assigning different cause numbers to the termination and adoption decrees to insure information would not be released to anyone unauthorized to receive it.

The first few years under Travis's tutelage were spent learning and filing casework. Travis always showed Pat the why and wherefore of each case, pointing out its correlation in the law books confident Pat would locate any areas needing correction or special attention. After operating closely with Travis for several years, Pat found herself capable of anticipating his responses. Pat worked more directly with Marywood when Sister Annalee Faherty took the administrative reigns; being with Travis for so many years, Pat understood his thought process and how the laws functioned. If Travis was ever unavailable, Pat could

thoughtfully convey complicated situations back to Travis on behalf of Sister Annalee and the rest of Marywood's staff, eager herself to benefit from his vast experience in this area. Both kept up with changes in the laws together.

Due to many years of exposure to adoption ideology, Pat has gained insight also reflected in the public's awareness of this subject. Secrecy has given way to the realization that adoptive parents are raising someone else's child to have a better life and that child has a right at some point in his life to find his birthparents. She thinks people don't realize what really goes on inside adoptees, particularly when being accused of overreacting to the sometimes belated knowledge of their adoption. She is glad adoption is handled the way it is now and thinks we are going to see an improvement in the mental health of people affected by adoption. Pat firmly believes clients benefit from Marywood's counseling program in making the transitions necessary to allow an adoption to occur and to occur in the best possible way, helping birth and adoptive families adapt to each other over the years as their needs change. Since she has become so involved in Marywood (and she anticipates learning even more), Pat thoroughly enjoys the work and feels like she is "helping somebody". She believes it bodes well for the state of adoption that the laws are being revised to require more extensive birthparent background information prior to placement and the immediate notification to adoptive parents when new information is received.

Pat remembers counting over 100 placements a year the first few years of her association with Marywood. Although the number of placements has dropped in recent years, Pat estimates she has personally been involved in a total of 1,400 adoptions. Pat derives great satisfaction from this work and says it is what she lives for. She has always loved children and her favorite day is "adoption day" when she sees all the babies parading through the courtroom in preparation for finalization.

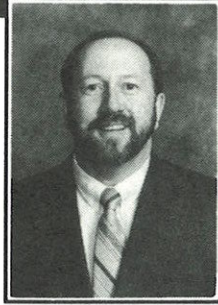
Pat stayed with Minton, Burton, Foster & Collins after Travis's death, assisting attorney John Carsey in this very specialized field. Pat points out that many attorneys leave the courtroom with their cases not finalized because they are not familiar enough with the procedures and constant changes that characterize this area of law.

Pat's services ceased with Minton, Burton, Foster & Collins in November 1992, which proved to be only a temporary set-back. Pat enlisted the assistance of Oliver Perkins, an attorney originally brought in about twelve years ago to assist with cases Travis's health did not permit him to execute, so that Marywood would not be left stranded. An interim arrangement between Pat and Oliver has now crystallized into a permanent partnership much like the one Pat shared with Travis. Pat and Oliver review the laws together and work as a team, which is to Marywood's great benefit.

Pat is also adept at working with older individuals on wills, estates, and guardianships. Over the years, her clients have noted their gratitude for Pat's compassionate style of case treatment. Pat now splits her professional time between Marywood and a law firm owned by two women who have left the legal "fast lane" and devote their caseload to assisting senior citizens requiring estate settlements. Pat jokes, "I get them coming into the world and get them going out."

A single mom now raising Mikaila, her teenaged daughter, Pat is interested in the paralegal and legal assistant programs and looks forward to receiving certification when she can carve some time out of her busy schedule. A gently humorous and generous person, Pat sums up her feelings as such, "The adoption field gives me more gratification than anything else I do." Pat's dedication to Marywood and her willingness to grow with the agency casts her as a valuable addition we hope to cherish for many years to come.

DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS



Steven Sweet

1993 was an excellent year in the life of Marywood. Programs and services were expanded, refined, and touched hundreds of lives. Residency, counseling, education, adoption, foster families, community based programs, and post adoption could be identifiers shedding light on Marywood. But these are what Marywood *does* not what Marywood *is*.

What is more important is what Marywood *is*. For over seventy years Marywood has been a light in the world. A light for children and a guiding light for families. Over time the light has flickered and shown brightly, yet, remains a beacon casting long shadows of friendship, tradition and love.

Dr. Karl Menninger, the dean of American psychiatry, said at a conference in Texas, "After sixty-five years in psychiatry I have come to realize it is more important what I *am* than what I *do*". Marywood hopes to continue to be a light unto the world and we thank so many of you for *being* the fuel that keeps the shine alive through your generous support of finances and friendship.

Pray for a brighter 1994 as we endeavor to serve children and families.

"Our Tree of Light"



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T h a n k Y o u

The Board of Directors, Marywood staff and clients would like to take this opportunity to thank all the wonderful people who sent donations for stars on our Christmas Tree and joined our "constellation of caring"!

Duffy Family
Gracedel Family
Allen Family
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Court Annunciation 1962,
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Reese Family
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McClarren Family
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Hurley Family
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Lein Family
Hartman Family
Palermo Family
Tydlacka Family
Callies Family
Beene Family
Broihier Family
Muller Family
Bauer Family
Young Family
Shirocky Family
Black Family
Lewis Family
St. Stephen's Catholic Church
Ebert Family
Weilert Family
Mc Auliffe Family
Andrews Family
Terry Family
Garcia Family
Valentine Family
Belter Family
Kline Family
Lohmeyer Family
Van Mourik Family
Bauer Family
Catholic Daughters of America,
St. John's Church, Fayetteville
Daigrepoint Family
Kohutek Family
Herring Family
Catholic Daughters of the Americas,
Court Sacred Heart #829
St. Mary's Altar Guild, Wimberley
Sullivan Family
St. Thomas More Ladies Club
Rising Star Baptist Church
Witherspoon Family
Butler Family
Vaughan Family
Kocis Family
Hollon Family

Pitts Family
Anders Family
Grounds Family
LeBlanc Family
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St. Mary's Altar Society, Bremond
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Williams Family
Johnson Family
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Litton Family
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Churchill Family
Fahrenthold Family
Ames Family
Etlinger Family
Black Family
Catholic Daughters of America,
Our Lady of the Lakes,
Court #2220
Dollinger Family
Masleid Family
Love Family
Schallon Family
Crosby Family
Eichorn Family
Stone Family
Jenkins Family
Frank Family
Hlavinka Family
Shilling Family
Gidley Family
Blakeslee Family
Simpson Family
Barbera Family
Benavidez Family
Gremillon Family
Brumley Family
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Bryan Family
Bodin Family
Moore Family
Florus Family
Catholic Daughters of America,
Court Annunciation 1962,
La Grange
Gus Garcia Campaign Fund
Fariss Family
Knights of Columbus
Auxiliary Council 8141
Halbach Family
Ware Family
Leaderer Family
Borowicz Family
Jacob Family

Perry Family
 Lefevre Family
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 di Donato Family
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 Chavoustie Family
 Gullahorn Family
 Yezak Family
 Bryce Family
 Whited Family
 Sanchez Family
 Hill Family
 Kutac Family
 Gonzalez De Mercado Family
 Turner Family
 Choffel Family
 Gentile Family
 Bauer Family
 McLean Family
 McClanahan Family
 Frazer Family
 Sehon Family
 Cumberland Family
 Nolen Family
 St. Mary's Mass Fund, Brenham
 Swenson & Weihs Partnership
 Stephenson Family
 Grieco Family
 Howell Family
 Holcomb Family
 Wiewel Family
 Butzer Family
 St. Monica's
 Ladies Society, Cameron
 McRoy Family
 De La Teja Family
 Key Family
 Youman Family
 Roberson Family

Joseph Family
 Pastor Family
 Willoughby Family
 Massad Family
 McKnight Family
 Brecht Family
 Freeborg Family
 Knights of Columbus
 Temple Assembly #1138
 Mayfield Family
 Valentine Family
 Hartman & Associates
 Moore Family
 Gregor Family
 Nelson Family
 Hanson Family

Walla Family
 Collins Family
 Swanson & Associates, Inc.
 Cuscurida Family
 Shilling Family
 Carpenter Family
 Kana Family
 Waters Family
 Breen Family
 Svoboda Family
 Rockwell Fund, Inc.
 Pollan Family
 Lewis Family
 Kons Family
 Bauer Family

1993 STATISTICS

Information and Referrals

Maternity Program - 780 contacts
 Post Adoption - 519 contacts
 Adoption - 142 contacts

Counseling Hours (1/2 hour increments)

Maternity - 1753 sessions
 Group Counseling - 356 sessions
 Family Counseling - 202 sessions
 Post Adoption Counseling - 124 sessions

Residential Care

131 clients served = 8670 days in residence

TARGET Program - 11 clients	330 days in residence
Maternity Program - 72 clients	4320 days in residence
Foster Care Program - 48 clients	<u>4020</u> days in foster care
	8670

Family Service Contacts

Placements - 28
 Searches - 190
 Completed histories/medical records - 53
 Reunions - 45
 Face-to-face meetings - 9
 Sharing - 1572 letters and packages
 Post Adoption Conferences - 28

Education Program

Tutor Hours - 13,923
 Hours in School - 1,955
 Foster Care Training Sessions - 9
 FLASH Presentations - 10 hours to 35 attendees
 Adoption Information Meetings - 16 hours to 124 attendees
 Adoption: A Lifelong Experience - 104 hours to 97 attendees
 School Presentations - 28 hours to 225 attendees

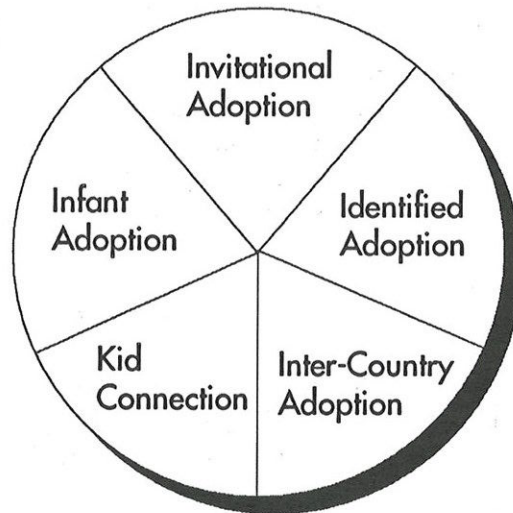
Marywood Child and Family Services



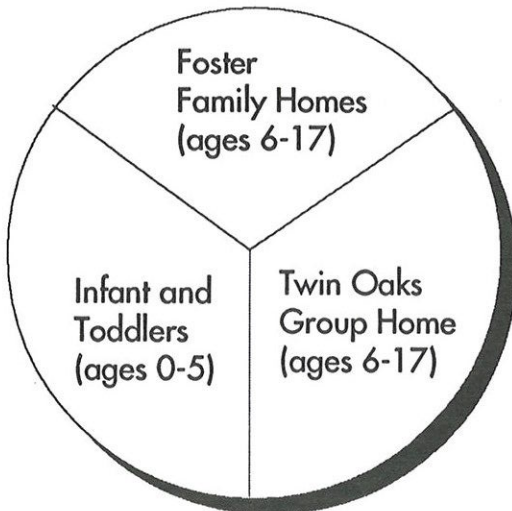
POST ADOPTION



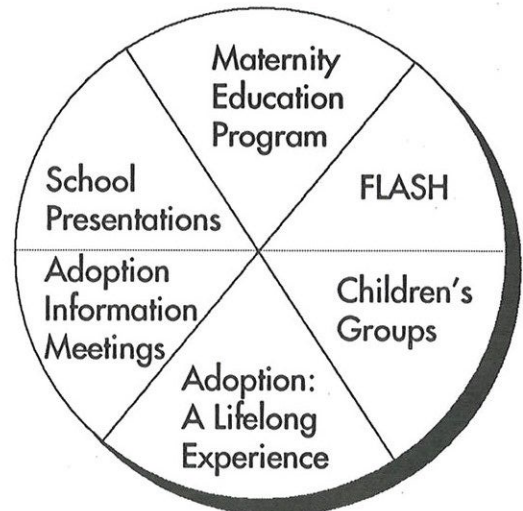
MATERNITY



ADOPTION



FOSTER CARE



COMMUNITY EDUCATION

LEGAL CONCERNS OF AGENCIES

Oliver C. Perkins

Probably the biggest legal concern facing agencies today is how to avoid the disaster of placing a child with prospective adoptive parents and subsequently being forced to remove the child and return the child to a biological parent. This can be easily avoided by placing only after termination has been done properly. If parental rights of both parents have been properly terminated, then the placement and subsequent adoption will be virtually unassailable.

Both parents. In the past the fathers of illegitimate children had no rights. However, the clear trend in the law is to afford equal rights to these fathers if they assert their parental rights. Also, there is a strong presumption in the law that biology is best, or that placing a child with a biological parent or relative is in the best interest of the child. In many instances we may strongly disagree with the presumption, but it should be accepted as a fact under the law. It dates back thousands of years. For example, when King Solomon ordered a child cut in half to settle a custody dispute he was only trying to ascertain the true biological mother. He was not concerned with which person would be the best parent.

From a legal policy point of view the presumption is favored because it establishes a "bright line" test that affords a great deal of predictability, and it allows the Courts to avoid comparing the biological parent to prospective, and often unidentified, adoptive parents.

The presumption leads to what you will often consider an unjust result when you lose a child to a teenage, drug abusing, juvenile delinquent daddy or his mother. It happens; fathers have rights too; accept it. For a "good" termination you must have a waiver executed by the birth father or at least personal service of citation and no timely response.

Birth mothers. The critical considerations are capacity and veracity. To get a proper relinquishment, mother must have mental capacity. To avoid later attack, it is imperative to document extensive counseling. If you document mother's decision both before and after execution you will have a great deal of protection. The more time the better.

Mother's veracity in identifying father is the most difficult issue you face. As a practical matter, given economic considerations, you determine mother's veracity through counseling, and someone makes a judgment call as to whether she is telling the truth. However, the most conservative approach would dictate that you go further and use, for example, polygraph tests, hypnosis, and DNA paternity testing. This may sound extreme, but if you have obtained a waiver from or citation of the wrong man, then the termination, the placement, and the subsequent adoption will be at great



legal risk until the child is grown.

There is no sure fire way of avoiding liability, but as a practical matter, you can minimize the risk by engendering positive feelings. If the person believes that you truly care, are concerned, and are trying to do your best, they are less likely to turn to a good plaintiff's lawyer for redress.

These are my "golden rules" for adoption agencies:

1. Accept the fact that the law presumes biology is best;
2. Be certain you have the right father;
3. Be careful; and,
4. Be nice.

NEEDS LIST

1. Office Supplies
2. Printing for Informational and Education Materials
3. Industrial Vacuum Cleaner
4. Infant Car Seats
5. Tuition for Summer Camps

CORRECTION

The Marywood Annual Picnic is SATURDAY, JUNE 25TH, mark your calendars!

THE POST ADOPTION EXPERIENCE

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cial workers, to three-dimensional faces whose expressions communicate the spectrum of human emotion—curiosity, wonder, fear, anticipation, grief, determination, hope, and trust. These adopted adults, adopted children, birthparents, birth grandparents, siblings, adoptive mothers and fathers, and adoptive grandparents are the essence of Post Adoption and they represent every age group, ethnicity, religion, and socio-economic level. The diversity of our clients is what dictates diversity and creativity in our program.

As Post Adoption Coordinator since the program's inception, it has been my privilege to participate in the most remarkable of human experiences. Even though it is my responsibility to prepare my clients for contact and (for some) to facilitate their first face-to-face meeting in 21, 30, perhaps even 50 years, I remain in awe of this process.

I can easily summon images of a "forty-something" birthmother, waiting at the agency for the arrival of the son she relinquished 25 years ago. I see her smoothing the minuscule wrinkles in her fashionable skirt, adjusting her make-up, and anxiously clutching a small handkerchief. I hear her ask me if she looks presentable—I smile and adjust her earring which is slightly askew. She thanks me for this gesture and I tell her how lovely she looks. When I introduce her adult son to her, it is quite obvious to me that he is not focused on her apparel, nor on her make-up; he does not even notice

her earrings. He is finally face-to-face with the woman who gave birth to him and his whole being emanates astonishment and joy. After they struggle through those first awkward moments and I sense their diminishing apprehension, I take my cue to leave and allow them to begin the personal task of healing the separation and loss that is inherent in the adoption experience.

Other images consist of nervous young adoptive parents, who vainly attempt to placate their energetic toddler, while waiting for the arrival of her birthmother. Adoptive parents and birthmother have met once, prior to placement. They have remained in contact through the agency and have established a rapport through correspondence and the sharing of photographs and gifts. In this case, the birthmother has requested another meeting and would like to see the child she has entrusted to this young couple. After some consideration, the adoptive parents feel comfortable with the decision to visit with their daughter's birthmother and a meeting is arranged at Marywood. While the lives of these individuals converge briefly, many things are accomplished. The birthmother's decision to place her child for adoption is affirmed by the healthy dynamic that is visible between the adoptive parents and their child. Any fears or concerns that may linger in the minds of the adoptive

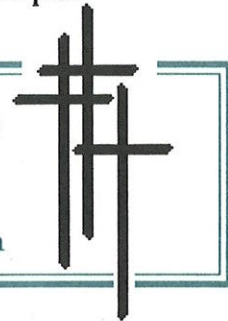
parents regarding their daughter's birthmother are resolved; she is at peace with her choice. At the conclusion of their visit—their concerns abated—they decide that they will meet again next year on the toddler's birthday.

In a somewhat different scenario, an adoptive couple and a birthmother come to Marywood seeking mutual support and solace for the loss they each experienced when their young child's life came to a tragic end. I observe the two mothers gravitate toward each other—one who had given the boy life and one who was present when his life ended. Their meeting is a testimonial to the resiliency of the human heart. Among these exceptional persons, I witness an extraordinary healing and a unique bonding—rooted in grief, compassion, and mutual forgiveness.

These few cases illustrate how Post Adoption Services impact the lives of adoption triad members. It may also be said that the experiences of triad members impact the lives of Post Adoption workers. We acknowledge that some of our most valuable lessons and professional challenges are presented to us by our clients, who trust that we will have not only the expertise to address their concerns and help them meet their needs, but the courage and capacity to grow according to their example.

IN MEMORIAL

Joseph M. Green, Jr.
Gertrude M. "Trudy" Rudman



Marywood

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