



Open Adoption

& Family Services, Inc.
creating lifelong connections



2008-2009 Annual Report

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Dear Friends,

Over the past year, adoption has changed tremendously, not only across the U.S., but around the world.

The U.S. recently ratified the **Hague Convention on International Adoption**, bringing stricter guidelines and regulations to international adoptions. As international adoption practices were examined closely, significant corruption was uncovered. It was determined that in many countries children were being placed for adoption without their birthparents' consent. Unable to meet new regulations, programs in nearly half of the 40 countries which provide international adoptions to the U.S. were closed, temporarily or permanently. Countries in which the global economy created an emerging middle class established their own domestic adoption agencies, enabling children to remain in their country of origin. These monumental changes resulted in a 20-50% decline in international adoptions to U.S. families, depending on the country.

Consequently, families in the U.S. are returning their focus to domestic adoption. As the Northwest leader of infant domestic adoptions, we welcome this attention. For nearly 25 years, **Open Adoption & Family Services (OA&FS)** has guided and supported birth and adoptive families as they create strong and healthy open adoption relationships that truly honor the needs of the child. **By educating the public about our unique adoption model, we have a lot to offer the changing world of adoption.**

In Oregon, new regulations require that prospective adoptive parents take an adoption preparation class. OA&FS specifically designed a class that brings our unique philosophy and experience to these families, who are commonly adopting through attorneys. Previously, these families have not had the benefit of our open adoption relationship preparation and guidance. We are very excited to be able to impact these adoptions in such a positive way.

We also brought our services to birthparents in Oregon who are at risk of having their parental rights terminated by the state. Through our very successful collaborative relationship with the **Oregon Department of Human Services (DHS)**, we have trained over 200 caseworkers and supervisors regarding the benefits of providing these birthparents with an alternative open adoption track. Last year 19% of the children we placed were at risk of entering the state foster care system. This year that number rose to 29%. We are extremely proud of this increase. Next year we plan to bring these trainings to Washington.

2008-2009 Board of Directors

- President Roy Abramowitz**, CPA;
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- Shari Levine**, OA&FS Executive Director
- Carol Merwin**, Adoptive Parent
- Kathryn Olson**, Adoptive Parent and Attorney at Law
- Mark Spaur**, Adoptive Parent and Senior Engineer; Kennedy Jenks
- David Tilchin**, OA&FS Adoptee and Computer Programmer
- Alex Trotter**, DHS Permanency Worker
- Melissa Valencia-Manerini**, Birthmother and Student

We are not the only ambassadors of open adoption: we share that honor with all of you. For the first time, the majority of prospective adoptive parents seeking services at OA&FS were referred by another family who has adopted through our agency. Simply witnessing the process unfold and seeing firsthand how the open adoption relationship benefits all of the parties involved, is the only testament they need to pursue building their family through OA&FS. **Thank you for inspiring other families to explore open adoption!**

As a member of the OA&FS family, we feel we can share our victories and challenges with you. Your ongoing support of our important work is invaluable. Although adoptive parent fees support our adoption program, in order to continue special projects, such as expanding our DHS trainings into Washington and the projects described in the "2008-2009 Highlights" section, we are reliant on grants and donations. **On behalf of the board and the staff of OA&FS, thank you for your contributions: together we are changing the world of adoption.**

Shari Levine
Executive Director

2008-2009 Highlights

Reaching Out to Professionals

In the past fiscal year, OA&FS conducted outreach presentations to over 2,500 health professionals, social workers, teachers, counselors, public health workers and state adoption caseworkers throughout Oregon and Washington regarding our unique open adoption services.

OA&FS has trained over 200 Oregon **DHS** caseworkers about our services. Having the ability to make a voluntary adoption plan through OA&FS supports birthparents in making a proactive choice, provides the child immediate permanency and diverts a case away from the already overburdened state system.

Every year approximately 25% of the estimated 13-14,000 females nationwide that voluntarily plan adoptions, are teenagers. In the past fiscal year, OA&FS has worked to ensure this age group receives up to date information about adoption. Agency staff reached out to the **Planned Parenthood Teen Councils** and teen parent support groups in the region. At last year's **Adolescent Sexuality Conference**, OA&FS counselor **Jodi Bernstein** presented a lively workshop. This year, OA&FS Executive Director **Shari Levine** continues to serve on the planning committee for the conference. In addition, OA&FS counselor **Satya Kline** presented a workshop at the **2009 Oregon School-Based Clinic Conference**, which was extremely well-received. Additionally, throughout the year, OA&FS counselors shared information about open adoption to over 350 teens attending public and alternative high schools, and the professionals that work with them.

Oregon and Washington have recently created state mandates for earlier and more comprehensive sex education in public schools. OA&FS saw this as an ideal opportunity to increase access to adoption resources for students and to increase adoption-related trainings for teachers, counselors and school nurses. As the Co-Chair of the **Teen Pregnancy and Young Parent Network for Multnomah County** and board member of the **Oregon Teen Pregnancy Task Force**, **Shari** has made great strides towards the inclusion of pregnancy options counseling (including adoption) as part of sex education in schools. Through these efforts, OA&FS has networked extensively and created trusting relationships with a variety of agencies that serve pregnant teens.

Reaching Out to the Latino Community

OA&FS began its Latino outreach program in 2006. Since then, the agency has hired a Spanish-speaking counselor in the Portland office, produced Spanish-language materials about the agency, and established a toll-free Spanish phone line. Current

research from the **National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy** has indicated that 53% of Latinas in the U.S. will have at least one pregnancy before the age of 20; and 69% of pregnant Latinas will drop out of high school. These findings have reinforced the need for our continued outreach to the Latino communities in Oregon and Washington.

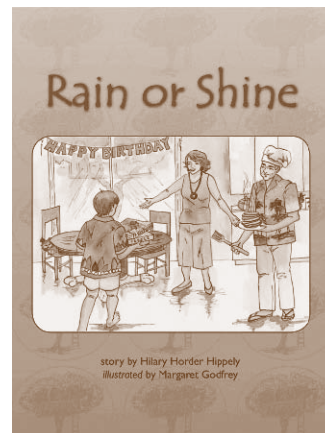
Throughout the past fiscal year, OA&FS staff conducted outreach to the Latino community and health professionals that serve this growing population. Among other venues, the agency shared information at the **Latino Health Fair** and the **Multnomah County Skills Fair**, both held in Portland, Ore. Additionally, OA&FS' bilingual counselor, Jessica Gibson, has networked extensively with other professionals that serve the Latino community by attending conferences and events, such as the **Latino Summit**.

Kristel Nelsen, president of **Picante Solutions**, generously donated in-kind consulting services from her Hispanic marketing firm. After working with Kristel, OA&FS placed Spanish-language advertisements in Oregon and Washington phone books and produced bilingual information panels to display at community events and during outreach presentations.

Rain Or Shine

In order to create a vehicle for families to discuss open adoption with their children, OA&FS published "**Rain or Shine**," one of the first children's books about open adoption families.

To promote the book, the agency listed its availability on the OA&FS Web site and sent an e-announcement about the book to over 300 adoption agencies, attorneys and adoption support organizations. OA&FS also sponsored a free reading of "**Rain or Shine**" by adoptee and OA&FS Board Member **David Tilchin** in an open house held at the Portland office as part of the **2008 Adoption Fair**.



Written by adoptive parent Hilary Horder Hippely and illustrated by birth grandmother Margaret Godfrey, "**Rain or Shine**" shares the story of Finn, who looks forward to gathering with his extended family on his birthday, including his birthmother Lisa.

Adoptive Families Magazine recommended "**Rain or Shine**" in its August 2009 issue

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Thank You for Supporting Open Adoption & Family Services!

Like all non-profit organizations, OA&FS depends on donors to expand and fulfill its mission. Thank you to the following donors and volunteers who have helped us grow and succeed in 2008-2009.

Gifts of \$1,000 +

Chris Chandler and Adam Baker
Kevin and Wendi Montgomery

Gifts of \$500-\$999

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Gifts of \$200-\$299

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Larry and Ann Willeman
Margaret M. Williams
Jean Zech-Manhart
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100% Giving!

***For the second year in a row,
every board member and staff member
donated to OA&FS. Thank you!***

Lifegivers:

Izzy Baldo and Ryan Warner
 Jodi Bernstein
 Benny and Wright Burnett-Smith
 Janet Buttenwieser and Matt Wiley
 Shelly and Rick Clough
 Susan Freeman
 Karen and Sean Gagne
 Margaret Godfrey
 Kim and Matt Heavener
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 Cynthia Lee
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 Aileen Murphy and Vincent Celie
 Liane Owen
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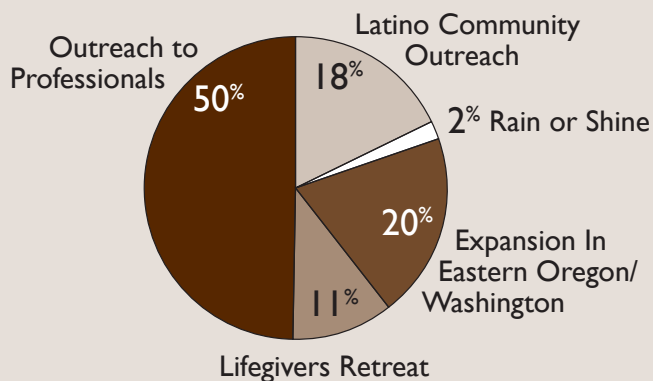
Recognizing Volunteers

OA&FS would like to thank the following individuals and organizations that supported the agency in the past year by contributing their time and expertise.

Ben Anderson-Nathe	Meg Jeske
Michael Anderson-Nathe	Rita Koehler
Autumn Apperson	Tricia Lambie
Shane Bangs	Cliff Leonardi
Chris Brown	Debbi Marshall
Lacy Brown	Carol Merwin
Dawn Cartwright	Mireille (Bilonda) Pappas
Jeff Chochon	Marija Peek
Michele Greco	Katie Stine-Hodges
Karie Herrlinger	Melanie Turnbull
Dr. Sig-Linda Jacobson	Melissa Valencia-Manerini
Denise Jarrett-Weeks and daughter Lily	Kelly Zakrzewski

Thank you to all OA&FS community members who donated their photographs in this year's Annual Report, the agency Web site and other publications. If you would like to volunteer or donate photographs, please contact OA&FS Marketing and Development Director, at information@openadopt.org or call 503-226-4870.

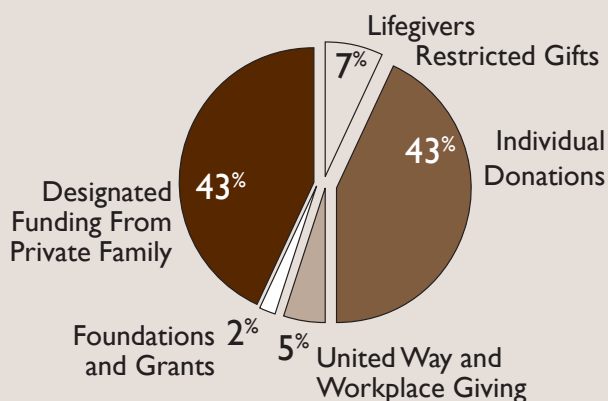
Special Projects Funded



Funding Special Projects

Funds generated by adoption fees cover most of the costs of the agency's adoption program. Donations and grants fund special projects like these.

Types of Donations Received



We could not continue this work without your generous support.

Thank you!

OA&FS is a charitable organization under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Contributions are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

Why Do You Give to OA&FS?



Left to Right: Heather, Ethan, Jack, and Sunny

Sunny Moore:

“I became a birthmom about six and a half years ago. It changed my life profoundly and I can't imagine having made a different choice. My son and daughter are a part of my life even if we don't see each other every day.

After attending OA&FS events, I decided to become involved with supporting the agency. For the past three years, I've spoken at seminars for prospective adoptive parents and last year I participated on the open adoption panel at the 2008 Adoption Fair. I hope that other women that are in a situation where they need to make tough decisions can learn through hearing my experience that it doesn't have to be an awful stigma that you have to live through: adoption can be a positive experience that enriches your life. I really believe in OA&FS. **I'd like to help make the world become the kind of place where people understand what open adoption is about.** If there's any way that I can help elevate the idea of open adoption, I will.”

Ben Anderson-Nathe:

“We've become involved in supporting OA&FS in several ways since we began our adoption experience in the fall of 2006. We raise **Sofie** in an atmosphere of generosity, asking people in lieu of presents to make contributions on her behalf to OA&FS and other organizations. We support OA&FS by being a resource for other adoptive parents building their families through open adoption and by speaking to prospective adoptive parents at seminars. **We hope to dispel myths that a lot of people have about adoption and to demonstrate that open adoption is an amazing, beautiful and powerful process.** OA&FS is bringing about a cultural shift and a change in social values by affirming that families are created in lots of different ways and for that, I think OA&FS needs support.”



Left to Right: Michael, Sofie, and Ben Anderson-Nathe

2008-2009 Highlights Continued...

as one of the best children's books on adoption. “**Rain or Shine**” is for sale on the *Adoptive Families Magazine* and OA&FS' Web sites, through **Amazon.com**, and directly from the publisher, **Xlibris.com**.

Expanding Services in Eastern Oregon and Washington

After social service agencies in the eastern regions of Oregon and Washington expressed a need for adoption services in their geographic area, OA&FS developed a sustainable growth plan to expand services for these often rural communities.

In 2008 OA&FS completed presentations to over 75 health care professionals in Eastern Oregon and Washington, including training about open adoption for child welfare workers working with families facing state involvement. The agency also conducted several outreach presentations in Eastern Washington. Goals for the next fiscal year include continuing to build a client-base in the eastern portion of both states.

Lifegivers

In the last fiscal year, OA&FS doubled its efforts to support birthparents, offering a **Lifegivers** retreat in Oregon and for the first time, in Washington.

Lifegivers offers OA&FS birthmothers the

chance to create support networks with their peers. For the past seven years, the event has provided activities and discussions that honor birthmothers. Thanks to monetary donations, in-kind donations, and creative writing donations honoring birthmoms, 42 birthmothers participated in the 2009 **Lifegivers** retreats.

Thank You Donors:

2008-2009 donations supported two **Lifegivers** Retreats.

Pregnancy Options Dialogue



In 2009, along with event partners **Backline**, **Planned Parenthood of the Great Northwest**, and the **Center for Health Training**, OA&FS organized the **Pregnancy Options Dialogue**, a workshop for healthcare professionals.

At the dialogue to be held in Seattle on **October 23**, providers will strengthen their ability to talk about pregnancy, parenting, abortion and adoption when offering services for women and families.

Service Statistics

July 1, 2008 through June 30, 2009

OA&FS Clients

- Last fiscal year there were an average of 46 families waiting in the OA&FS prospective adoptive parent pool.
- On average, adoptive parents waited 10 months before being chosen by birthparents.
- Gay and lesbian adoptive parents waited an average of 13 months before being chosen by birthparents. Placements with gay and lesbian families totaled 14 (30% of the total).
- Adoptive parents and birthparents agreed upon an average of three visits per year in their Open Adoption Agreements.

Nearly all families (98.8%) that have adopted through OA&FS speak about openness when discussing adoption.

From 2008 Survey of OA&FS Clients

- Birthparents received an average of eight weeks of counseling prior to placement.
- The average age of birthmothers was 25 years old, 28 for birthfathers and 40 for adoptive parents.
- Of the children placed, 87% were newborns.
- Of the children placed, 43% were female and 57% were male; 79% were Caucasian, 17% of mixed ethnicity, 2% Hispanic and 2% African-American.
- Nearly three-quarters (74%) of the children placed had zero to mild prenatal exposure to drugs or alcohol; almost half (49%) had no exposure; 25% had mild exposure; 11% had moderate exposure; and 15% had severe exposure.

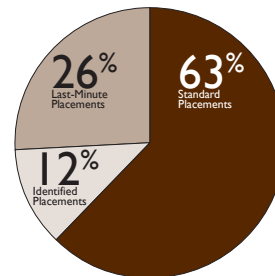
In 2008-2009, OA&FS:

- Responded to 220 calls from women facing unplanned pregnancies.
- Answered 360 information calls from prospective adoptive parents.
- Hosted events attended by 522 members of the open adoption community.
- Shared information about open adoption with over 2,500 professionals and students.

OA&FS Placements

- During the last fiscal year, OA&FS completed 53 adoptions.
- The agency also assisted three families with placements through other resources. On average the agency completes 45 to 60 adoptions per year.
- 14% of placements involved no pregnancy-related expenses; 86% of placements involved an average of \$904 in pregnancy-related expenses.

Type of Placements



Standard Open Adoption: The agency brings together adoptive parents and birthparents and provides adoption planning prior to the birth of the child.

Last-Minute Placement: Birthparents contact the agency to plan an adoption during delivery or shortly after the baby has been born.

Identified Adoption: Birthparents and adoptive parents find each other outside of the agency process and come to the agency for adoption planning and placement services.

Thank you for recommending Open Adoption & Family Services!

The 2008 Client Survey showed 90% of respondents specifically promote OA&FS when talking about adoption.



Open Adoption & Family Services, Inc.

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