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Editor's note

I do hope you were able to enjoy the summer.

I am pleased to say the new DVD and website are coming together nicely. We have the final drafts in the hands of some key users including Pregnancy Counselling and Pregnancy Help. Once we have their feedback, we can start producing the new DVDs and get the website up and running. We look forward to getting your feedback on the new look. Do drop us a line to let us know your thoughts.

Sue Kingham – Chair AOT



adoption option

New Look for the Trust

As part of our review last year we asked young women what they thought of our butterfly logo. The reply was that it was rather like a pharmacy logo and also the colour choice was not popular.

In response to this we had a couple of designers work on some concepts which were then shown to birth mums. The brief was to make it appealing to young women, in the vein of something that would be seen in a women's' magazine.

The chosen design was then worked up in line with feedback from the birth mums. The heart shaped symbol has two pairs of curls which could represent a Koru or two sets of parents. The smaller curl could represent a child. A number of colour ways were considered, with blue and gold being popular with some, but the most popular colour was hot pink. This has informed the colour choice for the website and DVD graphics.

We are very grateful to Caravan Media in Christchurch for the work they have put into this logo, as well as their great work on the new DVD, and to the Tindall Foundation for awarding us a grant to carry out this work. We would also like to thank everyone who took the time to feedback on the design. The new logo will be used to brand all the new resources, which we expect to be finished in the next couple of months.

Our Adoption Story

Sarah and her husband John adopted their daughter in January 2010; they agreed to share their story to help others considering adoption*



Q. Why did you decide to adopt?

After unsuccessfully trying to have our own biological children we decided that adoption would be a better option for us than further fertility treatments such as IVF. Coming from a social work background and having friends and family members who are adopted helped as we both had some experience with adoption. We also value relationships and family highly and believe that 'family' does not have to be conventional to be successful. For us it is the type of relationships we build with other people that is most important when we think about family, rather than it just being about biological ties. For instance, we consider our close friends part of our family and children who have been adopted by relatives are an integral part of our extended family network.

Q. How did you find the training in the adoption process?

At first it seemed a bit over the top, they covered so many areas in the two days training. But once we entered the adoption process, particularly when we adopted our daughter, I appreciated the training we had done. The information about how the process would be, issues with attaching to an adopted child and open adoption were very helpful. What was most valuable for me was hearing the stories of the

adoptive and birth parents who came to speak to us.

Q. How did you put your profile together?

Our first attempt was too wordy so our social worker gave us an example of someone else's to look at, which really helped. We started our portfolio by brainstorming a number of questions which became the main headings in our profile. The main headings we had were things like: *who we are, our relationship, reasons why someone might pick us, our stories, our values and beliefs etc...* We then fitted these around lots of photos. We finished with a hand written note. It wasn't until we got the profile finished that I realised it had been quite an emotional experience - but you are really putting your life down on paper so it's bound to be a challenge.

Q. When did you hear you had been chosen?

We had just got back from our summer holidays and were driving back from the supermarket when we took the call. I think the first thing I said to the social worker was *"really - really I can't believe it"*. Then we were really excited and had to go and get a coffee to take it in. We also rang close friends and family - but only a few people, as at that stage it was not final as the birth parents still had to meet us. Because we were meeting them the next day we had a pretty sleepless night.

Q. How was it visiting your daughter before you brought her home?

Our circumstances were a bit different; the birth mother decided to care for the baby

* For the sake of privacy John's name has been changed and the photograph is from stock photography and is not the baby mentioned in this article.

herself. She was living at home with her parents so we met our daughter with her birth mother, and grandparents at their family home along with two social workers. We were very nervous before we went to the house, but in the end it felt very natural and I found out later that they were just as nervous as us. Meeting our daughter for the first time was an amazing experience; I still get tears in my eyes when I think about it. My first thought was she is so beautiful I can't believe we get to be her parents!

The birth mother and her family made us feel very welcome so that really helped. We continued to visit every day until the following week when we took our daughter home. We also picked her name together with the birth parents.

Q. What was it like when you brought your daughter home?

A roller coaster of emotions, in our case - it was only a week from the time we found out until we took her home. I didn't really process all the emotions until later. From the moment we got her - the first couple of weeks were overwhelmingly taken up with practical things like learning about feeding, sleeping and nappies...caring for a baby and bonding. When we got home the first night we sat on the sofa and just looked at her, it seemed like a miracle to have her there. It also helped that my parents had just moved down from the North Island and had moved into our sleep-out while they looked for a house.

Bonding seemed pretty natural for us; we just started caring for her and then everything else followed from that. My friends really helped because they shared what it was like bonding with their biological children, saying that even though they had carried them for nine months they still had to get to know them and form a relationship with them after they born.

Q. Have you been able to develop relationships with your daughter's birth family?

We have developed a very good relationship with the birth family. In our case we have a very open relationship, this was helped by the many 'one degree of separation' relationships that we found that we had in common with the birth mother's family. We see them as extended family - and see them once every one to two weeks. For us it is developing into a fluid relationship - like you have with any extended family - some times we will see them more and other times less depending on what everyone's up to. With the birth fathers family it is less relaxed but we had a great visit with him and his family and would like to continue seeing them. We see them all as part of our daughter's family - one of our quotes from our profile was - "we believe that a child cannot have too many people to love them". Looking forward, and thinking what will be important for our daughter as she gets older, I think knowing her birth family will be one of those things that will be very important for her.

Q. What advice would you give to people thinking about adopting?

I would advise them to talk to people they know with experience of adoption. What was also helpful for us was thinking about how it might be different to having our own biological children and getting closure on the process we had gone through to try and have our own children. Once we had done this it was a lot easier to embrace adoption.

Be open to the idea of an 'open adoption'. Like us, people's first reaction is usually to say - 'no I wouldn't want that'. But also like us many people come out of the training being pro open adoption. In fact the social workers said in many cases it is the adoptive parents who want their child to stay in contact with the birth family, because they understand how important it is for their child.

And lastly, while information and other people's stories are helpful, it is also good to remember that if you adopt each situation is unique. I think having an open attitude to what the process might bring rather than deciding it is going to be a certain way ended up being most helpful for us.

We are always keen to hear about good sources of funding. If you have any ideas about Trusts we could apply to or fundraising opportunities please contact us via our website.



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We're on the Web!
www.adoptionoption.org.nz

Educating about adoption in New Zealand today

Do you know someone who maybe interested in receiving this newsletter? We would be delighted if you would consider forwarding the newsletter link to a few friends.

If they want to receive future copies they can email the secretary secretary@adoptionoption.org.nz to get on the emailing address list.

If you do not wish to receive this newsletter please email the secretary and she will remove you from the mailing list.

AGM Update

The Adoption Option Trust held its AGM in November 2009. At that meeting two important decisions were made. Tracy Matehe was invited to become a Trustee and we are delighted to report she accepted the position. The aims of the Trust were also modified to reflect the fact the Trust is now engaged in supporting people going through the adoption process. The aims are now to:

- *raise awareness of adoption as an option for people facing a crisis pregnancy.*
- *educate the public in New Zealand about current practices in domestic adoption, especially open adoption.*
- *work cooperatively whenever possible, with others in the adoption field and in pregnancy counselling.*
- *help support those involved in open adoption in New Zealand today.*

Treasurer's Report

Annual Supporters Members only costs \$25.00 per annum. See 'How to Support Us' section on our website for details. Please help us to educate about adoption by becoming a member. Thank you to the following paid up **Annual Supporters Members** for year end 31.12.10: [Claire Arthurs](#), [Graeme and Sue Duncan](#), [Yvonne Le Fort](#), [Kate MacAlister-Nixon](#), [Susan and Tavale Maiava \(Mission Support Trust\)](#), [Cindy Paul](#), [Roger and Gwenda Smithies](#), [Robin and Lauren Swafford](#).

Thank you to the following **past Annual Supporters Members** for year-end 31.12.09: [Claire Arthurs](#), [John and Gloria Casey](#), [Di Conway](#), [Donna Ellis](#), [Helen Ferguson](#), [Jenny Haliburton](#), [Susan and Tavale Maiava \(Mission Support Trust\)](#), [Rosemary Moore](#) and [Tony and Beatrice Sullivan](#).

Thank you to the following people who have **donated money** for year-end 31.12.10: [Christine Hegan](#), [Sue and Simon Kingham](#), [Roger and Gwenda Smithies](#), [Robin and Lauren Swafford](#) and [Voice for Life - Napier](#)

Thank you to the following people who have **donated money** for year-end 31.12.09: [Richard Bell](#), [Graham and Joan Braddock](#), [Graeme and Diana Burgess](#), [Catholic Diocese Of Christchurch \(Tindall Foundation Grant 2009\)](#), [Kim Fluhler](#), [Sue and Simon Kingham](#), [Ken McAllister](#), [Brendan and Kathyne McNeill](#), [Jacqueline Maskell](#), [Tracy and Renata Matehe](#), [Rosemary Moore](#), [Richmond Mission Support Trust](#), [Strategic Financial](#), [The Warehouse stores at Barrington, Belfast, Eastgate, Hornby and Northlands](#) and [Graeme and Sylvia Vickers](#)

We really appreciate everyone who has supported us with a financial gift. We would like to say a special thank you to [Susan and Tavale Maiava \(Mission Support Trust\)](#) and [Claire Arthurs](#) who donate on a monthly basis. Also we would like to say a special thank you to the [Catholic Diocese of Christchurch \(Tindall Foundation Grant\)](#) and [Brendan and Kathyne McNeill](#) for their financial gift in 2009. Thanks also to [Neil France](#) for preparing our Tax Returns and Annual Financial Reports.

Tracy Matehe (Treasurer)