

## Celebrate! National Adoption Month

**N**ovember is National Adoption Month and a cause for celebration—an occasion to remember, appreciate, and announce the joy adoption can bring to families.

Here is an excerpt taken from *The National Adoption Awareness Month Guide*, published by the North American Council for Adoption (NACAC). You can read this great source of information in its entirety at <https://www.nacac.org/adoptalk/adoptionmonth.html>.

Although adoptees hear adoption messages—both good and bad—from the media, their school, and their friends, the most important source of adoption information is what they hear at home. Even the most diligent, open, and aware adoptive parents can neglect adoption as a topic of conversation amid the busy routine of day-to-day family life. Adoption Month is a great time to plan special ways and occasions to talk about adoption,

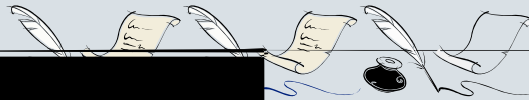
culture, and family connections—and perhaps start habits that last year-long.

Meaningful celebrations are built on things that already have value to the family; they involve finding new ways to make the daily activities of family life important. Sometimes celebrations are spur of the moment occurrences that get everyone involved and are remembered fondly for years. Other celebrations are planned and happen over and over again, becoming family rituals.

When planning new rituals to celebrate with your family, ask yourself and your family members: What are the things that make our family unique? What values are important? What things do we already do to make each person feel connected? How do we have fun together as a family? How do we support one another in times of need? How do we show love, express feelings, and demonstrate respect for one another?

### Ideas for Celebrating Adoption This Month and All Year Long!

- **Set aside a day for each child to celebrate that child becoming part of the family.**
- **Learn more about your child's heritage and make plans to celebrate an upcoming holiday or attend a cultural festival.**
- **Increase your network of friends who have adopted.**
- **Invite an adoptive family, that you do not know well, over for dinner.**
- **Rent a video or read a book that spurs discussion about family.**
- **Refer a family to become foster or adoptive parents.**



The Family Outreach Program through Boulder County presents

## Educational Series for Adoptive and Kinship Parenting

- **Enhance** everyday parenting skills
- **Learn** hands on tools and practical tips
- **Strengthen** family relationships

**Where:** First Evangelical Lutheran Church, 803 3rd Av, Longmont

**Cost:** FREE for Adoptive and Kinship Parents

**Times/Dates:** Third Thursday in November, January, and February from 6:00-8:00 p.m. (Attend one, or attend all)

**November 20**—What Were They Thinking?! Parenting the Teenage Brain

**January 15**—Self Harm and Body Image

**February 19**—Working With Schools in the IEP (Individualized Education Plan)

**RSVP:** Andrea Ostroy 303-441-1476 or [aostroy@bouldercounty.org](mailto:aostroy@bouldercounty.org)  
CHILDCARE AVAILABLE WITH RSVP

Boulder Psychological Services  
Community Partners

## Pathways to Parenting Success

**Where:** Meadows Branch Library,  
4800 Baseline Rd, Boulder

**Cost:** FREE public lectures

**Time/Dates:** Mondays from  
7:00 to 8:30 pm

**11/17/08** - Understanding Stress and How to Manage It Effectively

**12/01/08** - Substance Abuse: What You Need to Know

**12/08/08** - Understanding & Dealing with Depression/Bipolar Disorder

**12/15/08** - Communicating Effectively with Your Teen

## What's in a Word?

*By Maggie Brooks, Adoptive Mom*

A generation ago, when people chose to adopt, they were encouraged to keep information regarding the adoption very private. In fact, some families did not even choose to tell their children that they were adopted. It has since been determined that information regarding adoption should be shared with children. Otherwise, a stigma is placed on their personal history and secrecy tends to breed shame. How unfortunate that is, considering that adoption is only one part of any person's identity and history. It doesn't define us, rather it describes how some of us come to be in our family.

Needless to say, our culture is still adjusting to this openness. Most, or all of us who have adopted our children, have faced many questions regarding their history. We are a part of our culture and we are learning along with them what adoption is and what it isn't. We can help educate people and protect the feelings of our children by being careful about how we describe the nature of our relationship with our children.

If you remember the judge's words when you adopted your child, you may remember that he or she said that adoption gave your child all the rights and privileges that a child born to you would have. When you introduce your child, it is not necessary to say, "This is my adopted child". It is simply your child. If someone presses to understand how they came to be part of your family, then say that the child became part of your family through adoption. See the difference? It is the same reason people don't say, "my autistic child", instead they say, "My child has autism". Adoption was the vehicle to bring them to your family, it is not who they are. How rich it is to say, "This is my child." You have the authority to give that title.

For a while, adoptive parents were encouraged to

use an adoptive language that included descriptions such as: "biological child", and "natural child". These are not necessarily harmful words, but not completely accurate, either. After all, the children that are adopted are also biological children. Therefore, it seems simpler to just say your child through adoption when it is necessary to clarify their personal narrative.

You may at times also be asked where, or who, their "real parents" are. When I was early on my journey with the process of adoption, I was quick to defensively retort, "I am their real mom!" But I have since learned to shift gears and clarify their question with, "Do you mean their birth parent?" Sometimes, you may feel this is too personal a question. Many times I have told people that my children's stories were their own, and I let them choose who and when they would tell it.

Some of us adopted our children after they started out with us in a fostering situation. When people ask how long we've had them, I like to say, "They came home in 2003." This is great if my kids overhear me because then they know that they have belonged with us since then. "Foster child" can also be a very isolating word. It sometimes provokes feelings in the child that they didn't or don't belong.

The unfortunate situation that occurred for our children to not be raised by their family of origin resulted in the joyous occasion of their coming to us. We can help them process this bittersweet part of their life story by being careful about how we describe it to them and to others. When in doubt about what to say, think about what it is you want to communicate to others about the special bond you have with your child. Let your words be part of sealing that bond.



## Holidays Can Bring Up Lots of Emotions

By Lois Melina

**H**olidays are times when families gather to celebrate in traditional ways. Each of these elements of holidays—family, tradition, and recurrence—contributes to the joy. But each can also contribute to stress. In adoptive families, the associations that different family members bring to these elements may create different expectations or more intense feelings.

### How to Minimize Holiday Stress

**Acknowledge that holidays can bring up a variety of feelings. Take the opportunity to talk with your children about them.** Use stories, like Rudolph the Red-nosed Reindeer, to discuss how people sometimes feel they don't belong because they don't look like those around them.

**Let go of any expectations that your family needs to experience holidays in a certain unvarying way to be a real family.** You may find it works better for your family to rendezvous with a few relatives at a ski resort and save the big family gatherings for less emotionally charged holidays, such as the Fourth of July.

**Admit that holidays don't have to be "perfect."** All the food that grandma used to make might not get made—but you can still have a meaningful celebration. Talk openly with your children about expectations you have for the holidays and how you may change them or let some go. Tell them you feel sad about some of them not being realized. Be sure to take ownership of those feelings so that your kids don't feel they have to make up for what you're missing. The point is to model the reality that holidays sometimes don't live up to our expectations and that we own the expectation.

**Sustain a relationship with your child's birth-family in an open adoption all year long so that**

**the relationship doesn't depend entirely on the holidays.** With open communication all year long, and opportunities for contact throughout the year, there may be more flexibility during the holidays.

**Examine the patterns of your holidays.** Rather than repeating those patterns each year and hoping for a different outcome, change the patterns. Develop rituals and traditions to fit your family, even if they may be different from the rituals and traditions you had growing up or those you imagined your family would have.

**Recognize that the human experience brings sadness as well as joy.** Children could not experience the benefits of adoptive families without the loss of the birthfamily. Often, adoptive parents would not experience the joy of family without the pain of infertility. Holidays are not failures if they bring both sadness and joy. The abundance and joy of the first Thanksgiving would not have happened had there not been near starvation the previous year. The deliverance of Hanukkah would not have happened without there first being death. A Redeemer's birth would not be celebrated had there not been human failings.

To read the full article, go to <http://www.adoptivefamilies.com/articlePrintFriendly.php?aid=26>.

Lois Melina is the author of the highly regarded books *Raising Adopted Children* and *Making Sense of Adoption*.

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**T**he Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute is a national not-for-profit organization devoted to improving adoption policy and practice. Their mission is to provide leadership that improves adoption laws, policies and practices - through sound research, education and advocacy - in order to better the lives of everyone touched by adoption.

In order to achieve its goals, the Institute conducts and synthesizes research; offers education to inform public opinion; promotes ethical practices and legal reforms; and works to translate policy into action.

Visit their website at **[www.adoptioninstitute.org](http://www.adoptioninstitute.org)** and learn more about this vital organization:

- Policy and practice initiatives
- Educating the media and educators
- Research, adoption facts and resources
- Publications and E-newsletter

## Boulder County Parent Discussion Groups

### Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Discussion Groups

#### Longmont Location

**When:** The first Monday of each month from 6:00-7:30 pm

**December 1st**

**January 5th**

**February 2nd**

**Where:** Longmont Senior Center, 910 Longs Peak Avenue

**RSVP or Questions:** Andrea Ostroy 303-441-1476

*Childcare and snacks are provided.*

#### Louisville Location

**When:** The 4th Thursday of each month from 6:00-7:30 pm

**November—no group due to Thanksgiving**

**December 4th—due to the holidays**

**January 22nd**

**February 26th**

**Where:** Christ the Servant Lutheran Church,

506 W. Via Appia, Louisville

**RSVP or Questions:** Andrea Ostroy 303-441-1476

*Childcare and snacks are provided.*

### Adoptive Parents Discussion Groups

#### Evening Group

**When:** The second Wednesday of each month from 6:00-7:30 pm

**December 10th—General discussion**

**January 14th**

**February 11th**

**Where:** Boulder Valley Christian Church, 7100 S. Boulder Rd, Boulder

**RSVP or Questions:** Contact Suzanne Daniels 303-441-1533

*Refreshments. Childcare available ONLY with RSVP.*

#### Daytime Group

**When:** The third Monday of each month from 9:15-10:45 am

**November 17th—General discussion**

**December 15th—General discussion**

**January 19th**

**February 16th**

**Where:** The Journey Church, 1285 S. Fordham St., Longmont

**RSVP or Questions:** Contact Suzanne Daniels 303-441-1533

*Refreshments. Childcare available ONLY with RSVP.*

## Boulder County Names, Numbers and Emails

### Post-Adoption Services

#### Cathy Bolton

Program Coordinator,  
Family Outreach Program

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#### Suzanne Daniels

Adoption Specialist

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#### Brenda Krook

Program Assistant

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#### Andrea Ostroy

Kinship Family Specialist

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### Resource Family Team: Adoption Subsidy Program

#### Charlene Wilson

Resource Family Team Supervisor

303-441-1025

cawilson@bouldercounty.org

#### Sharon Sawyer

Adoption Subsidy Worker

(If your last name begins with A-K)

303-441-1204

ssawyer@bouldercounty.org

#### Paula Holt

Adoption Subsidy Worker

(If your last name begins with L-Z)

303-441-1031

pholt@bouldercounty.org

### Longmont Adoption Support Group

A peer lead evening support group facilitated by two adoptive moms. Come spend time with other families who are experiencing the joys and trials of raising adopted children. Open to all adoptive families.

*Potluck—please bring food to share.*

*Free childcare available with RSVP*

**When:** Second Friday of every month, 6:30-8:30 pm

**Where:** First Lutheran Church, 803 3rd Av, Longmont

**RSVP** by the first Friday of the month if you need childcare to LAdoptSG@yahoo.com or Christy at 303-772-8267

### EMAIL

If you're interested in being added to the Boulder County Post-Adoption email group, please email Suzanne Daniels at [sdaniels@bouldercounty.org](mailto:sdaniels@bouldercounty.org)

