

Staff

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Jessica Brumbaugh
Angela Buchanan
Kristin Clarke
Kathy Cores
Kathy Crissey
Nicole Cummins
Michele Fried
Sara Greenberg
Roberta Hawkes
Paula Henderson
Teri Henick
Janice Holley
Kathy Hussey
Wendy Poxon
Kathy Regis
Kelly Reinhold
Amy Shuman
Ilana Silberberg
Jody Hansen Walker

A Day in the Life of a Mom

by Michele Fried

As my children are getting older (and so am I), motherhood seems to be defined in so many different ways. One thing remains constant, however, and that is how it feels to be afraid for your child. Before I became a mom, so many people told me how hard being a parent was. In my early months of parenting I never could understand what they meant because every day mothering was more wonderful. Until one day while feeding my first, hives popped out all over his body. Then on another day a child on the bus would not sit next to my child. Then it was ear tube surgery and another time eye surgery. Somehow I managed to get through these times (so did the kids.) I was being a mom.

When the doctor called to tell me that our 14-year-old's scoliosis x-ray was normal, I didn't expect him to say, "We have some concerning information though. The x-ray shows that your son's heart appears enlarged." I was at work when I received the call so I naturally wrote down what he said, much like a case note I would have written for a client. I was professional. I was calm. What do I do? He told me. I did it. Cardiology appointment made. Everything organized. I was being a mom.

Hard part now... I need to tell someone. Husband, yes, call him. And so I told him. He had way too many questions and I had no answers. I would not search the Internet knowing I would only find doom. Since the appointment was almost three weeks away, we decided not to tell our son about the cardiology appointment until closer to the date. Did even one day pass with me forgetting that something may be wrong with my son's heart? Not one day. When my mother told me she was so worried about it, I snapped at her telling her that I could not talk about it. Professional. Calm. I was being a mom.

The day before the appointment I finally told my son that he would need to miss some school the next morning because he had a doctor's appointment. Besides being a bit stressed over missing a class or two at the very start of his freshman year in high school, he handled it well. But then he didn't ask why he had a doctor's appointment. From experience, I have learned only to give a child the information he wants to know when he is ready to know. Later that night he asked and I told him. He asked if it was identified that his heart was truly enlarged what would it mean? I told him I wasn't sure but that medication, diet and an exercise program may be prescribed. Okay, I cheated and looked on the Internet. I was being a mom.

The appointment came and we sat in the pediatric cardiology waiting room with young mothers and their infants. We sat amongst the toys that my son doesn't play with anymore because he is a teenager. After filling out the new patient forms, a kind doctor came to the waiting room to greet us. In less than 20 minutes I watched my son being weighed; have his oxygen level taken; an EKG and an ultrasound done of his heart. The doctor engaged my son in conversation and educated me (and the medical student beside us) about hearts. He then said, "Nothing to worry about mom. His heart is fine." Very simple words, yet I cry now as I type them and I cried when I first heard them. I thanked G-d of course, and the doctor.

And so it is an emotional day because my son is okay. I'm just being a mom.

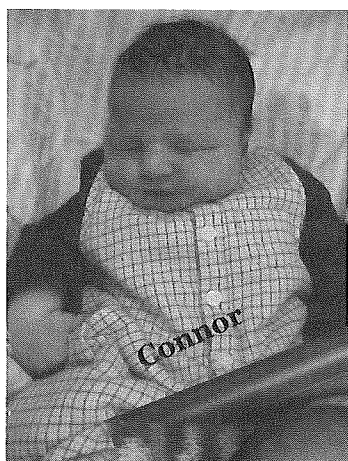
Birth Mother's Holiday Celebration 2004

Due to the kindness of Major Michael Muller and his dedicated comrades, 110 toys were delivered to Adoption STAR to allow for every child in need to receive more than one gift under the Christmas tree during this year's Birth Mother Holiday Party. Also due to a few monetary donations from adoptive parents, we were able to supplement this annual holiday party with additional gifts and goodies that would not have been possible.

One of the recurring statements heard throughout the evening from birth mothers was, "I feel so spoiled!" What beautiful words to hear from clients who often financially and emotionally have not previously experienced the holidays like many of us experience.

This event always touches the agency staff deeply as we witness our birth mothers who know and don't know each other come together and instantaneously bond because they share the fact that they are "birth mothers." This year, we heard so many amazing comments, such as: "My adoptive family is wonderful to me. They love me and my son. They treat my daughter like a princess. They were the best family I could have ever imagined for her." "I love the family I picked. They cherish her and treat me and my kids like gold." "I had a hard time accepting things but I really know now this was the best for my son. They are wonderful to him." "They spoil me so much...They are wonderful parents to my son and their daughter. I am glad they are in my life. Knowing them helps me get over the pain of placing him." "His parents love him so very much and don't treat me different. Plus, my son has a great big brother whose birth mother is now my friend."

In addition to this special event, the Adoption STAR staff took it upon themselves to help several more families in the community by purchasing, wrapping and delivering gifts. Next year, if you would like to "adopt a family in need" please let Adoption STAR know and we can give you the first names and ages of children in need.



Adoption STAR Baby Name Book



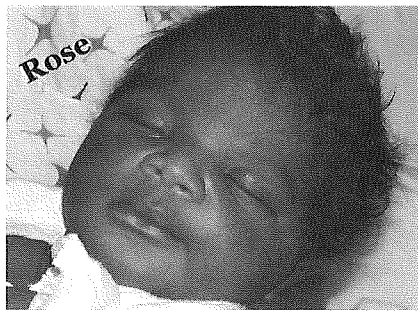
Adoption STAR has compiled all the names of the STAR babies from the beginning of the agency until the end of 2004 and they are included alphabetically in booklet form.

Also included is the "origin" and "meaning" of each name, if known; and a number is listed beside some names denoting how many STAR babies were given that name as a first (or middle) name. Adoption STAR babies have the most beautiful names so if you are waiting to become parents this baby name book may be just what you need! If you wish to receive a copy of the baby name booklet (very nicely arranged with graphics too!) we will be happy to send it to you. If possible, a nominal donation (to cover copying and mailing) of \$5 would be greatly appreciated.



Adoption STAR Client Directory

We are pleased to report that over 50% of our clients responded and are included in the Adoption STAR Adoptive Parent Client Directory! This directory will be made available upon request and will be available only to Adoption STAR adoptive parent clients who have at least completed the home study classes. The goal of the client directly is to encourage adoptive parents of the agency to become friendly with other adoptive families, develop friendships for their children and to stay connected with their fellow home study class participants! Peer support is as important as professional agency support! If you are not a client of the agency and wish to connect with other adoptive parents, the agency also maintains a mentor list and we can connect you with other adoptive parents.



Ethan

Home Study Group Statistics

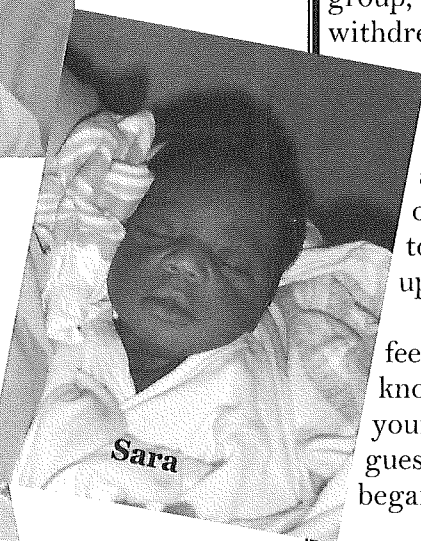
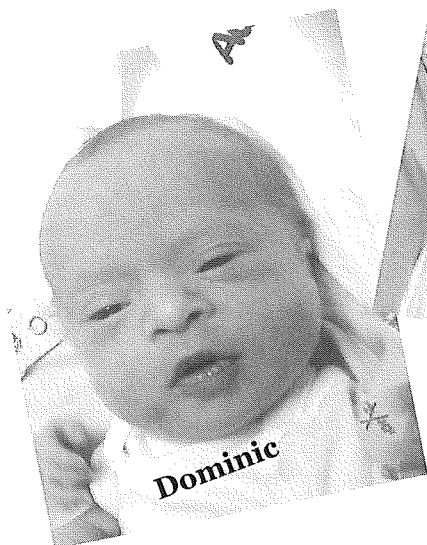
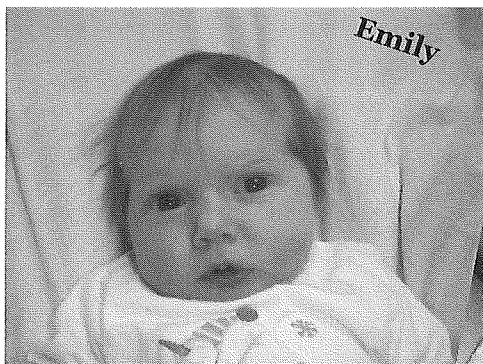
“How many people in our home study class adopted?”

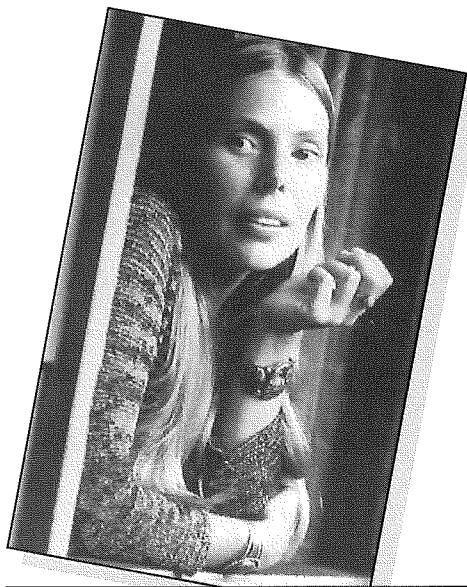
“How is *so and so* from our home study group? Did they adopt?”

Due to confidentiality we can't share information about “*so and so*” (but if you have their contact information you can ask them yourselves – see our Adoption STAR Client Directory mentioned in this newsletter.) What we can tell our clients however is of the home study participants in their group, how many adopted so far, how many withdrew for whatever reason, perhaps got pregnant, and how many chose domestic or international adoption, and how many are still waiting, if any. To make it easier on the agency and on our clients, we now “name” our home study groups so it's easier for clients to remember, and helpful for the agency to pull up the statistics!

If you are a home study client of the agency feel free to contact the agency if you want to know the statistics of your home study group. If your group was not named you may have to best guess the month and year when your classes began.

E-mail Michele at michele@adoptionstar.com or call her to if you wish to know how your home study group has done regarding reaching their goal of adoptive parenthood.





Joni Mitchell is a songwriter, singer, musician, poet and painter. Her output of 21 albums over 30-plus years is widely regarded as one of the most significant and consistent collections of work by any artist of her generation. Joni is a birth mother.

She placed a daughter for adoption in the 1960's, her song, *Little Green*, speaks to her feelings at that time.

Book Review

We would venture to guess that most of you have read one or more books on adoption or parenting. We would love your review of some of the books you read as they no doubt will be helpful to our readers. Here is a book review by Amy Jo Lauber:

Children are from Heaven, by John Gray

This book is truly inspirational and gives the reader specific positive parenting techniques to use. Its main focus is to steer clear of the old fear-based parenting style in favor of a positive approach. The main messages are:

- (1) It is okay to be different
- (2) It is okay to make mistakes
- (3) It is okay to express negative emotions
- (4) It is okay to want more
- (5) It is okay to say "No", but Mom & Dad are the bosses

The five main techniques are:

- (1) Requesting what you want (using "Will you please....?" not "Can you...?")
- (2) Active listening to your child
- (3) Rewards / positive reinforcement
- (4) Unemotional commands (not demands) that are brief and clear
- (5) Time outs that are age appropriate

I found this book to be so helpful not only to understand how to raise my child to be cooperative, confident, and caring, but also how different approaches used by my parents have affected my life. I HIGHLY recommend that every parent pick up a copy!

Little Green by Joni Mitchell

Born with the moon in Cancer
Choose her a name she will answer to
Call her green and the winters cannot fade her
Call her green for the children who've made her
Little Green, be a gypsy dancer

He went to California
Hearing that everything's warmer there
So you write him a letter and say "Her eyes are blue"

He sends you a poem and she's lost to you
Little green he's a non-conformer

Just a little green
Like the color when the spring is born
There'll be crocuses to bring to school tomorrow
Just a little green
Like the nights when the Northern lights perform
There'll be icicles and birthday clothes
And sometimes there'll be sorrow

Child with a child pretending
Weary of lies you are sending home
So you sign all the papers in the family name
You're sad and you're sorry but you're not ashamed
Little green have a happy ending

Just a little green
Like the color when the spring is born
There'll be crocuses to bring to school tomorrow
Just a little green
Like the nights when the Northern lights perform
There'll be icicles and birthday clothes
And sometimes there'll be sorrow

"Sorrow is so easy to express and yet so hard to tell."
-Joni Mitchell

2004 Adoptions

Congratulations on the arrival of...

Norah, daughter of Deidre and Nigel
Faith, daughter of Lorrie and Steve
David, son of Amie
London, daughter of Jill and Aaron
Joshua, son of Karen and Dennis
Morgan, daughter of Lynn & Rob
Lilly, daughter of Theresa & David
Emma, daughter of Julie & John
Chase, son of Cristy & Christopher
Cassandra, daughter of Tracy & John
Abigail, daughter of Trish & Pete
Sara, daughter of Tricia & Yaser
Emma, daughter of Maria & Danny
Charles, son of Arlene
Emma, daughter of Diana & Craig
Matthew, son of Karen and Michael
Hannah, daughter of Nancy & Joe
Alanna, daughter of Lorry & Kirk
Natalie, daughter of Michele & Paul
Kendra, daughter of Karen
Jacob, son of Maria & Ron
Jasmine, daughter of Stephanie & Amy
Tyler, son of Ginny & Bruce
Joshua, son of Michelle & Robert
Evan, son of Michelle & Steve
Heather, daughter of Lisa & Carl
Tyler, son of Jodie and Brent
Charlotte, daughter of Judy & Steve
Elijah, son of Debbie and Jeff
Hannah, daughter of Mary & Henry
Camden, son of Elizabeth & Dan
Alexander, son of Kim & Ron
Benjamin, son of Susan & Mitchell
Ethan, son of Rene & Zachary
Dominic, son of Mary & Mike
David, son of Karen & George
Emily, daughter of Kathy & Todd
Gabriella, daughter of Jill & Greg
Sean, son of Karen & Marc
Connor, son of Wendy & David
Hannah, daughter of Judy & Dan
Jenna, daughter of Lynn & Mary
Katrina, daughter of Kathy & Jerad
Matthew, son of Anna & Scott

Upcoming Orientations:

Learn about the Adoption STAR agency and the programs and services as well as the agency's policies and procedures.

Thursday, March 24th 6:30 - 8:30 pm

Agency Assisted Private Track

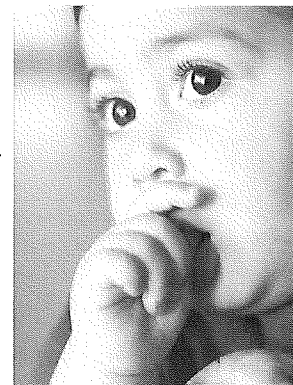
Jewish Community Center
2640 North Forest Road, Getzville,
NY.

Tuesday, April 12th 6:30 - 8:30 pm

Jewish Community Center
2640 North Forest Road, Getzville,
NY.

Sunday May 15th 2:00-3:30pm

Jewish Community Center
2640 North Forest Road, Getzville,
NY.



*Call Adoption STAR at
716-691-3300
to sign up for these classes*

Adoption Books

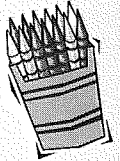
Many of you have borrowed adoption books from the agency resource library; some of you have purchased your own adoption books. Tapestry Books is a wonderful online site for you to browse through: <http://www.tapestrybooks.com/>.

If you do choose to purchase any books on adoption and/or parenting issues, we would love to hear about them... perhaps you would be willing to write a mini book review for inclusion in this newsletter. Also one of the very best donations to the agency is the gift of books. Once you are finished if you are interested, you can also donate your book(s) to the Adoption STAR resource library... even if we have a duplicate, your gift will be greatly appreciated. Our lending library has been a wonderful asset for adoptive parents and birth parents.

The Adoption STAR **Social Action Committee** would like to thank you again for your crayon donations, School 82 students wrote beautiful thank you letters. They truly appreciated your thoughtfulness.

“Hope you continue doing what
you are doing to help others.”

- The students of Room 201



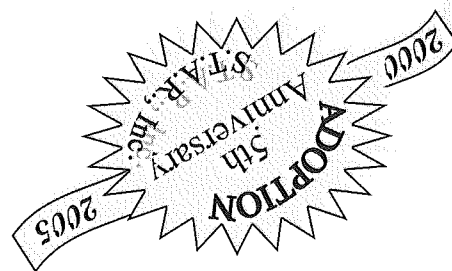
The Social Action Committee has another project and is inviting you to participate.

One of our adoptive fathers, a Major, will be leaving for Iraq in a few months. He has mentioned to us that the soldiers in Iraq enjoy “comfort food” that can have a long shelf life and have made a special request for sunflower seeds and beef jerky. It is also recommended that short notes be included with supported word to our troops.

Adoption STAR will be collecting sunflower seeds and beef jerky (and notes) at three locations:

- * at the agency office, 2001 Niagara Falls Boulevard, Suite 5, Amherst, 716-691-3300;
- * at the home of Tony and Cheryl Misercola 716-674-4911; and
- * at the home of Sue and Shawn Reardon, 109 Vinton Road, Rochester, 585-338-1079.

**Please drop off no later than
Monday April 4th**



2001 Niagara Falls Blvd.
Suite 5
Amherst, NY 14228

