



insider

A Legacy of Love Celebrating 25 Years in Indiana! 1983-2008

By Kimber Graves

It is a place that many Indiana families know well by now—a professional office complex situated on the east side of Indianapolis. Take a quick peek at the brick building on Caito Drive and you may dismiss it as just another business.

Examine this place called Bethany Christian Services more closely, though, and you will discover an excellence that is evident in everything you encounter: the professional, yet comfortable, furnishings in the offices and education room; the bulletin boards lined with photos of happy children who have been united with their forever families; the welcoming smiles on the faces of staff members who greet you. Parents have waited here. Prayed here. Cried here. Laughed here. Staff members have given presentations here. Counseled hurting women here. Slept here.

On September 16, 1983, Bethany's ministry in Indiana began when its office supervisor, Teri Swim, officially opened the doors and began offering international adoption services. Teri recently reflected on the first office, comprised of a meager, three-room area and two-member staff. "I accepted the position in the spring, got married in July, and began looking for office space, furniture, and a secretary. God is good and everything seemed to come together with our little location on Whitley Drive."

Steve Payne and his wife Melitta, who currently works as Bethany's Coordinator of International Services, were the first family to begin the Bethany adoption process in Indiana. They received a referral for their son, Jonathan, on January 23, 1984. Then, in 1986, Melitta joined Bethany as a part-time adoption specialist. Her professional tenure at Bethany has spanned 22 years, with her position expanding to include supervision of the international adoption programs. Acknowledging the integral role Bethany has played in her life both personally and



*The Paynes receiving Jonathan's referral.
January 23, 1984*

professionally, Melitta shares, "I love children, value families, believe in adoption, and count it a privilege to serve in a faith-filled setting."

Another key figure in the evolution of Bethany in Indiana is branch director Linda Wrestler. When Linda was hired in 1986, the national office wanted her to focus on developing a domestic adoption program. Linda's commitment to cultivating Bethany's services in the state resulted in six domestic adoptions the following year. Gradually, the program increased to include 16 placements in 1990, plus the addition of a full-time birthparent counselor. The most significant growth occurred in 1996, when Marion County awarded to Bethany an intensive family preservation contract that opened the door to more expansive services with the state.



*Teri Swim presenting Jonathan Payne's referral
(at the Whitley Drive office)*

Even with considerable growth, Linda feels the heart of Bethany's mission has remained the same. "It is still a place where we care about providing excellent service and where we come alongside families to share in both their joy and their sorrow," says Linda. "It is rewarding to see our graduate issue each year. It's easy to believe in adoption when you see the kids graduating from high school and college, going on to impact the world."

When asked to share their most meaningful memories, Melitta and Linda both remember events that revolve around the care and nurture of children in need. Linda traveled to foreign countries on multiple occasions to escort babies from their homelands into the arms of eager parents. "It was a wonderful experience," says Linda with a smile, "to be able to hand a child to her new family."

Recognizing that adoption would not be possible without the sacrificial choices made by birthmothers, Melitta reflects upon a touching moment: "I was sitting at my desk in an office without partitions, trying to be silent and invisible, while a birthmother sang 'Morning Has Broken' to her newborn, just before saying good-bye. What a vivid reminder of how God's plan has unfolded and why we do this work."

Darrin Boyd, president of Bethany's Indiana Board of Directors, is passionate about raising funds that will enable Bethany to maintain and further expand its ministry to serve all those who come to Bethany's attention. "Through the financial support of generous donors, we are empowered to go out and make a Christian difference in the lives of families." Darrin is also swift to emphasize that many of the services Bethany provides are free of charge to those being assisted. "Contributions to Bethany's work enable us to continue helping those in crisis who might not otherwise be able to seek help."

What began as a small, international adoption agency has flourished into a full-service adoption and child welfare agency that champions the cause of the born and unborn through an array of programs, including domestic and international adoption, expectant parent counseling, therapeutic foster care, intensive family preservation and reunification, family profile

THEN AND NOW		
	1983	2008
Staff Members	2	43
Annual Budget	\$45,000	\$2,761,220
Families Served Annually	0	455
Size of Office	800 sq. ft.	4500 sq.ft



Bethany staff. May 2008

and bonding studies, and post-adoptive counseling for families parenting emotionally wounded children. The Bethany team which first consisted of only two staff members now boasts more than 40 dedicated professionals who serve the needs of children, young people, and families throughout the entire Hoosier state. We have united more than 1,300 children – from around the world and in our local communities – with loving, committed families since our inception 25 years ago. Our beginnings were humble, but today we touch more than 1,000 lives each year!



*Linda Wrestler escorting babies
home. November 1986*

Indianapolis

Linda Wrestler, Director

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