

*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!*

*2 Corinthians 5:17 NIV*

## Adoption

By Kimber Graves,  
Marketing Coordinator

### Education Series Equips Families for the Adoption Process and Beyond

The journey toward adoptive parenthood is often filled with eager preparation: researching agencies, choosing a country, decorating a nursery, and fantasizing about the first tender embraces. Months, or even years, of anticipation finally culminate in the long-awaited moment of bringing a new child home. However, this joyful homecoming is not the end of the journey, but really just the beginning!

At Bethany, we believe adoption is a lifelong process, not simply a one-time event. Innovative programs like our ongoing Adoption Education Series support this belief. In our continued efforts to establish and serve families, we place a special emphasis on informing birthparents, adoptive, and foster parents, as well as the general public, about the varied aspects of adoption from pre-placement to the experiences of active parenting and beyond. "I'm so pleased we have been able to offer these vital sessions on the unique aspects of the lifelong issues of adoption," says

Bethany Director, Linda Wrestler. "It's another concrete way for Bethany as an agency to fulfill its mission."

Melitta Payne, Bethany's Coordinator of International and Independent Services, feels the education series helps participants to better understand the enduring impact of adoption. "Awareness and education about the issues of

attachment, grief and loss, and race help prepare parents for the unique opportunities they will encounter during their journey as a family," states Melitta.

Last October, the featured series topic was "How Kids Process Adoption as They Grow," presented by award-winning author and adoption educator, Pat Johnston, who is the publisher of Perspectives Press, Inc. ([www.perspectivespress.com](http://www.perspectivespress.com)). Drawing from experiences as both an adoption professional and an adoptive mother to three grown children, Pat helps equip individuals for the lifetime journey of adoptive parenthood, with all the richness and complexity that it entails. Though she read a multitude of adoptive parenting books and resources as a young mother, Pat concedes that "immersion is what drove the real learning."

Acknowledging the layers of loss inherent for everyone involved in an adoption is crucial, Pat explained, to cultivating a sense of openness with children. "Adoption is about the child, not the parents," Pat emphasized. "By keeping our eyes, ears, and minds alert and dealing with issues as they present themselves, we can help our children learn to feel comfortable in their own skin."

Practical tips Pat offers for navigating the early, middle, and late childhood years as an adoptive family include the following:



*Pat addresses the effects of grief and loss on adopted children.*

- **Stay connected.** Remain in contact with your agency, other adoptive families, and pertinent organizations within the adoption community.
- **Stay tuned in.** Be aware of new resources, adoption workshops, or culture camps available to both children and parents.
- **Stay literate.** Read newly published adoption books and adoption parenting magazines (many have broad appeal, while some are geared toward more defined adoption audiences).

After the conclusion of the presentation, several parents lingered and continued the discussion that Pat had initiated. One participant expressed the "ah-ha" moment that occurred to her during Pat's talk. "I suddenly realized that the post-adoption transition is not all about me. It is about the unique needs my child has because she spent the better part of a year without the love and security of a mother."

Tara VanderWoude, who is both an adult adoptee and an adoptive mother herself, agreed with Pat's explanation that adoption

needs to be explained over and over again. "It isn't a one-time event, but an ongoing process, since a child's perspective and understanding change throughout the years," she observed.

Bethany's Therapeutic Foster Care and Home Run supervisor, Patty Jewell, believes that each child experiences adoption differently. "What is true for one is not (true) for another. As they grow, develop, and have experiences with the world, their understanding of their own adoption changes. Parents benefit from adoption education that enables them to better support each child through his individual adoption journey. A parent's experience as a member of the adoption triad changes over time, as well. Education can help the parent personally as they navigate the waters of adoption," said Jewell.

Bringing a new child home is one of the highlights of life. It is the beginning of a lifelong and wonderful journey called parenthood. Equipped with support and ongoing learning, adoptive parents are sure to triumph and enjoy the families they worked so hard to create.

We invite you to attend one or more of the upcoming workshops scheduled for the 2008 Adoption Education Series. Each course provides instruction, interactive exercises, and extensive resource lists for further exploration and support. For a detailed listing of all offerings, please visit the Bethany website at [www.bethany.org/indiana](http://www.bethany.org/indiana).

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*Pat Johnston, publisher of Perspectives Press*

