



Welcome to Kids To Adopt Monthly Newsletter!

Kids To Adopt (KTA) is a not-for-profit international adoption agency located in Vancouver, WA that specializes in placing older and special needs children.

We hope to keep you up-to-date on new programs, family stories, tips, and other useful info for prospective adoptive families and those who have adopted already!

Thank you for your interest, and please don't hesitate to contact us if you would like to submit something to the newsletter or have any other questions or concerns!

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"Journey to Adopt Joshua Gabriel"

*Featured Family Story, written by Tracy and Larry adopted parents of Joshua Gabriel.
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A perfect child. A normal child. What is perfect? And what is normal? Who of us is perfect or completely normal? Who is the judge of that? My name is Tracy Adams. My husband and I are the parents of nine children. We have three biological daughters and six beautiful boys through adoption.

This is our story of how we came to adopt from Guatemala. My husband and I had thought that after our last adoption God was through blessing us with children. But, then a year and a half ago he began to prick our heart once more. My husband and I felt very strongly that this time our child would have special needs. Does "special needs" mean the child isn't perfect? I don't believe so.

This is the story of how our son, Joshua Gabriel came into our lives. His adoption was completed on June 12th 2007 and he arrived home to the USA on July 1st, 2007. He was diagnosed with dwarfism, but as of yet we don't know what type it is, as there exists over 200 varying types



of dwarfism. He is two years old and he is perfectly beautiful, perfectly amazing, a perfect delight, a perfect blessing and perfectly ours. A perfect fit to our family.

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Evaluating Your Referral: Part Four

The last in a series of adoption tips from one of our parents, Dana

Here are the remaining tips from Dana!

6. Ask, Ask, Ask

Be methodical. During your research, note your confusions and needed clarifications. *Write them down.* Then formulate specific questions. If you want a specific answer, you need to formulate a specific question. That way, when it's time to quiz your agency reps, you'll make best use of your time or theirs if you know exactly what information you want.

In Russia – as in a court of law – you only get an answer to the question you ask. Here is a sample exchange that illustrates what I mean:

Q: Is the bathroom upstairs?
A: No.

You thought the answer was going to be, "No, the bathroom is downstairs," didn't you? But that isn't the question you asked! To get the information you need, you have to ask another question – "Well, where *is* the bathroom?" Don't fall into that trap. In No-Second-Chance Russia, you can't always ask a follow-up.

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Journey ...

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Our journey to adopt Gabriel began as I was online at an adoption group that I had recently joined. A family that was in the process of adopting Gabriel changed their minds and sent out a plea online for a new family to adopt him. Apparently, if Gabriel didn't have a family soon, the attorney would be forced to return him to the orphanage. I immediately contacted Sandy Roberts at Kids To Adopt and told her that we were the family for Gabriel!

For months we received many beautiful pictures of Gabriel. During this time, I thought and thought about how I could help him face this big world with his short stature with pride and self confidence. In April I decided to travel to Guatemala and visit my little boy. They placed Gabriel in my arms and I thought my heart would break in two.

It seemed that Gabriel had other issues other than his physical delays. He was 20 month old and could not roll over, crawl, or even raise his head up, much less get up on his hands and knees. He could barely sit up for more than a few minutes before falling over. He did not know how to eat off of a spoon and had a mouth full of teeth that he didn't know how to use. Most of the time he looked off into space as if there was nobody in the room. It was very difficult to get him to grin and he only smiled when he heard a very loud noise, something that would frighten most young children. We had not been given any indication that Gabriel had any other problems and I became a little frightened on what this meant for his future and ours.

Did this worry change our minds about adopting him? No. He had already found a place in our hearts and was there to stay.



support his body weight on his legs if he is holding onto our hands. He has learned to sign "more" when he wants more food. He has learned so many new sounds. He has definitely found his voice!

I cannot tell you how rewarding it is to see him accomplish so much and to see how excited he gets. I

feel so honored to be his mother.

Although the first day visiting Gabriel was very difficult, the next few days improved drastically. I worked with him on how to eat with a spoon, and noticed how he began to focus more and not gaze off into the distance as much. We watched children's television, and slowly his eyes followed the characters on the screen. I saw reactions to colors, and he began to bounce in tune to music. Slowly it became clear to me that the mental delays I thought were so serious were due to an environmental lack of stimulation and what Gabriel needed to thrive was a loving family and home.

Soon it was time to leave, which was very difficult. I had a hard time leaving the country and not taking my little boy home with me! But, God is good! We were able to return to Guatemala at the end of June and bring him home July 1st.

Gabriel has been home with us for two months now. It is amazing to see his improvement from when I saw him in April. He now rolls across the floor to get where he wants to be. He also can lie on his stomach and push up on his hands with his head in the air. He can

It has been a wonderful experience to work along side Kids to Adopt. And we are so thankful for the foundation who granted scholarship grants for the boys that allowed us to bring them into our family.

Lastly, I implore anyone out there whose heart has been touched for these very special children, but are afraid to take that leap of faith. Don't be! God will not give you more than you can handle if He has put this on your heart. I cannot imagine missing out on the blessing that is Gabriel. And I cannot bear to think of what would have happened to him if he had been sent back to the orphanage.

We still have one more son, Eli, in Guatemala, that we are in the process of adopting. He has a bilateral cleft lip and plate. He is an amazing boy as well and we cannot wait to bring him home. But, that is a story for another time. Any prayers you can send up for our adoption of Eli would be wonderful!

May God bless all the families who may read our story! ~ Tracy and Larry



Hague Accreditation Update!

Finally, after much delay, Kids To Adopt had our Hague Visit on Monday, February 18th (President's Day)!! We were originally scheduled to have our visit in September, however, with the passing of Sandy's mother less than a week before the visit, we were forced to postpone. COA then scheduled us for February 4th, however, had difficulty when the head reviewer had to cancel (which was actually good, because otherwise we would have missed a darn-good Superbowl Sunday!!). Finally, the date was set for February 18th ... and it happened!! We are now awaiting the Hague reviewers to review all our information, but are optimistic!

Thank you COA for sending us such knowledgeable and helpful reviewers, and thank you parents for waiting patiently as we prepared. For those of you who don't know, preparation for Hague has become the main stress of adoption agencies throughout the US these past couple of years! However, with good organization, hard-work, and a lot of late nights, it's possible! ~

Tips ...

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Let's try that again:

*Q: Where is the bathroom?
A: It's downstairs.*

Or, in Russia, the exchange might go more like this:

*Q: Where is the bathroom?
A: There isn't one!*

The lesson learned is: in adoption, don't ever ask a yes/no question.

Example: we were blessedly lucky to have been able to speak with the orphanage director (through a translator) *and* an English-speaking Russian doctor who had examined our "referral" for another family (who ended up declining the referral). If we had asked the doctor, "Is she developmentally on target?" his answer would have been, "Yes." Hmm, not quite enough information there.

Instead, we asked the doctor, "What behaviors or characteristics of hers made you think she was developmentally on target?" He couldn't merely answer yes or no; he had to describe what he had observed.

And he did.

And we accepted her. ~

NOTE: Dana, her husband, Joe, and son, Sam, age 5, are the ecstatic and exhausted adoptive family of 3-year-old Darya (Russian nickname: Dasha), home since 12/30/06



Dana and Dasha

Announcements!

The 35th Annual New England Adoption Conference

When: April 5th, 2008
Where: Mill Pond School
More Info: <http://adoptioncommunityofne.org>

Adoption Hall of Fame 28th Anniversary Awards Celebration

When: April 16th, 2008
Where: Alexandria, VA at The Birchmere
More Info: www.adoptioncouncil.org/2008_event_s.html

2008 Little People of America Annual Conference

When: June 20th through June 27th, 2008
Where: Detroit, MI at the Detroit Renaissance Marriott Hotel
More Info: Download the registration packet and learn more at www.lpaonline.org.

2008 National OI (Osteogenesis Imperfecta) Conference

When: August 1st through August 3rd, 2008.
Where: Crystal City, VA at the Crystal Gateway Marriott
More Info: Go to www.oif.org and look at their Events Calendar.

Until All Have Home Projects

If you are interested in donating to UAHH's current African aid project, please go to www.untilallhavehomes.org/project.html. Your support is greatly appreciated!!

Humanitarian Aid Donations

If you are interested in donating money to Kids To Adopt's humanitarian aid fund, please visit www.kidstoadopt.org/donations/helpthechildren.htm



PROGRAM UPDATES!!



Russia

Our Russian program is still moving along quickly - we have several parents that have returned home with their children already, and a bunch more who are patiently waiting to go back for their second trip. And quite a few more working on paperwork!

We do still have a considerable amount of Waiting Children who are looking for families! To get photos and more information on our Waiting Children, make sure to email Kate at kate@kidstoadopt.org to get on the email list.

Kyrgyzstan

We have one more family that is waiting to complete their adoption of a little boy from Kyrgyzstan - they are heading out on their second trip this month.

We are still getting quite a few inquiries from families interested in adopting young, healthy girls from Kyrgyzstan. It is still very difficult and families should expect a very long waiting time if they are certain they wish to adopt from Kyrgyzstan. It's really not a program we recommend to wait for, as we have seen numerous changes in the Kyrgyzstan adoption process over the last year, so it's not what we call the most "stable" program.

Another update - all families adopting through Kyrgyzstan now have to have their documents go through a

lengthy authentication process that adds another \$2,000 on the adoption process. These are requirements from Kyrgyzstan, not our coordinator's or our agency. They make up the rules.

We still do have three young girls from Kyrgyzstan with special needs who desperately need homes. Please spread the word!

Kazakhstan

Some disheartening news from Americans hoping to adopt from Kazakhstan - the Kazakhstan Consulate has refused to process any more dossiers from prospective adoptive parents.

This does not mean that the country is closed ... it just means that for US families, it is on hold for the time being. The Ministry and officials in Kazakhstan are still working with US families, and those that have their dossier through the Consulate should be ok. From what we have heard, this is strictly a Consulate block on US families.

We have seen this in the past with Kazakhstan, and are guessing that the Consulate will start accepting dossiers again sometime in the next 5 months or so ... with a whole new set of dossier requirements. We are hoping that is the case again (and the requirements aren't too difficult), and that things will be up and running again soon.

Ukraine

Our last few families that have hosted through A Child's Embrace hosting program have brought home their children! We are so happy for them and that they have been reunited with their children - this time for good!

Our coordinator has spots in line to accept dossiers throughout the year, but families should move quickly to complete paperwork before all the slots fill up at the SDA. The SDA has put a limit on the number of families that can adopt from the Ukraine this year and spots are filling up quickly. However, for those families who are wishing to adopt a child with special needs, there is no limit - so you are ok!

Bulgaria

Bulgaria is still moving along, with much support from their prime minister! The MOJ is going through dossiers 10 per week, and are hoping to step up the pace once they have the process down.

Right now most of our families are working on paperwork, and we haven't had a family travel yet. So, we still don't have a good estimate on timeframe, but we do know that Bulgaria is moving. Just a bit slow :)

For current updates on all programs, please don't hesitate to contact Kids To Adopt today!