Is "Quirky" A Diagnosis?
by Pat Hoopes, MSW, LICSW
Director of Clinical Services

In preparation for this edition of Beyond the Horizon, our Post Adopt Support and Education (PASE) team reflected on our own families and the children dear to us. We all had at least one "quirky kid" among them. Parents worry when they observe or have a "gut" feeling that their child is different. Some quirky behaviors may be fleeting or a functional part of "who the child is," while others may be indicative of a neurologically based disorder with the potential to interfere with your child's ability to learn and form satisfying relationships.

It is confusing for parents and their pediatrician to know immediately if the concerning behaviors are "something to worry about." Adoptive parents have the added burden of wondering if the behavior might be an inherited personality trait or the result of some emotional distress associated with his adoption. It is a confusing picture.

In recent years, there has been significant work done in recognizing that children formerly known as "odd," "nerdy," "weird," and "losers" are in fact kids who, through no fault of their own (or their parents!!) have neurologically based conditions that lead to their unusual behavior and inability to fit in.

We hope this edition of Beyond the Horizon will provide some useful information to help you better understand your "quirky kid."

In The News
Most of you are aware of the recent news media surrounding a Tennessee adoptive mom who sent her 7 year old adopted son back to Russia. News like this sad story rocks all who support international adoption and gives fodder to those who oppose it. It is complicated and painful. In this edition of Beyond the Horizon, we are focusing on the often overlooked, but most vulnerable recipient of such news, the adopted child. A number of adoptive parents have expressed concern for their children who are hearing this news and feeling upset and bewildered. Read more about how children may be affected by such news and what you can do to help below in our Q & A.

How to respond to your child's inquiries regarding recent adoption case in the news

Q: I have two children (11 and 9) who were both adopted from Eastern Europe. The recent news regarding the 7-year-old boy from Russia who was sent back to his birth country by his adoptive mother has been very stressful for me. My husband and I have discussed it since the story was released on television. I am wondering if I should discuss it with my children. They have not asked anything about it, but it certainly seems to be a topic of conversation everywhere we go.

A: Your question is one that has been on the minds of many parents - not only adoptive parents. At a recent adoption conference, WHFC staff received several similar inquiries. The vent involving the child from Russia has brought a lot of conversation regarding the concept of adoption and bringing children in to their "forever families."

Your realization that the children may be hearing this story from the news or other friends is right on target. Whether it is in the newspaper, on television/radio or the internet, they are clearly exposed to the news media as well as discussions at school or amongst friends. Since you have a reaction to it yourself, you will want to find a time to talk openly with your children about it. The recommendation would be to discuss it as a family, sharing your feelings as a mother and more specifically, as an adoptive mother with two internationally adopted children. You will want to emphasize with your children that they are both an important part of your family and that they will be with you forever. Be sure to tell them that case triggered a great deal of response from people whose lives have been touched by adoption and that it is okay for them to have some thoughts/or feelings about it. Let them know that you are always available to talk further about it.
Although there are adoptions that disrupt, the vast majority of adoptions do not.

Questions regarding adoption come up at different times for various members of a family. Please feel free to contact one of the post adoption counselors at Wide Horizons For Children to discuss your personal family needs. Call your local WHFC office or email us at postadopt@whfc.org.

BOOK REVIEW: *Quirky Kids: Understanding and Helping Your Child Fit In - When to Worry and When Not to Worry*

Written by Dr. Perri Klass and Dr. Eileen Costello
Review written by Pat Hoopes, MSW, LICSW

While some children's symptoms do result in a diagnosis such as Asperger's Syndrome, Attention Deficit Disorder, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, or Sensory-Integration Dysfunction, others do not. In their book *Quirky Kids: Understanding and Helping Your Child Who Doesn't Fit In - When to Worry and When Not to Worry*, Drs. Perri Klass and Eileen Costello offer suggestions to parents on how to decide whether your child's "quirkiness" warrants a call to the doctor.

First and foremost, they ask parents to consider how persistent their worry about their child's behavior is. Some "quirky" behaviors can be associated with developmental stages that the child outgrows or may rise as the result of stress or a significant transition. These may include a move to a new neighborhood or school, parental separation or the death of a loved one. If, on the other hand, your child's quirky behavior continues over a period of time without a precipitating even or the behavior feels all consuming to the child and parents, it is probably time for a consultation.

Here are some of Dr. Klass and Dr. Costello's thoughts on "when to worry:"

- Child doesn't seem to "fit in," seems significantly different from his peers in behavior, language or social skills and doesn't meet your expectations of what is "normal" for his age.
- Child has lost pace with the milestones he previously achieved (i.e., decrease in verbal skills)
- Child is extremely irritable, chronically frustrated, desperately needy or frequently tantrums.
- Child demonstrates unusual behaviors such as repetitive movements like spinning, hand-flapping, or rocking.
- Child shows unusual sensitivity to external stimuli or is unable to tolerate things that are unusual for other children (i.e. noises, swing motion).
- Child uses unusual speech patterns such as repeating what is said, asking same questions over and over, speaking in a monotone.
- Child is uninterested in an array of toys and fixates on one kind of toy in a repetitive pattern (e.g., lining up cars).
- Child is "clumsy" resulting in frequent falls, bumps and bruises.
- Child is a "social outlier" who cannot or will not fit in.

Some of the associated diagnoses may overlap or are part of a larger spectrum such as autism. Your child's functioning within the diagnosis may be mild to severe. These behaviors can result in your child's experience of his world as a frustrating and rejecting place. These children are often misunderstood by parents, siblings, peers, child care providers, other parents and school personnel. The children are often the objects of teasing, bullying, ridicule, and rejection. Worse yet, the child doesn't understand him or herself. These behaviors undiagnosed and untreated, can significantly damage a child's self image.

If your child exhibits one or more of these behaviors, or any behavior that is persistent, results in negative consequences for the child, or is disruptive to the routine and needs of the family as a whole, it is probably time for an evaluation.

This book is recommended for all parents who worry about their "quirky kids"

Understanding the cause of the behavior will help parents cope as they realize that the behaviors are not willful, but something the child cannot control. Today there are a number of therapeutic interventions that can stop, decrease or effectively manage these behaviors. Start by speaking with your pediatrician. Learning to understand and control these difficult behaviors will significantly improve your and your child's life.
When Boys are Bullies and Girls Are Mean

From Adoptive Families

Cheryl's 10-year-old son came home from school in tears, saying, "Why did you have to adopt me anyway?" After some gentle questioning, she learned that some boys had pushed him in the school yard, saying that adopted kids weren't allowed to play kickball.

Bullying, teasing, and exclusion are among the worst experiences of childhood, and may be especially painful for adopted children. Some kids may be acutely aware of the "different" way their family was formed and feel that they themselves are somehow different. When targeted directly, as Cheryl's son was, the hurt can run deep.

Why do kids tease and bully, and form cliques or gangs? Simply put, when kids don't feel a strong sense of family unity and/or when their self-esteem is shaky, they look for places where they can belong. In a clique or gang, they can feel accepted, and even loved, by their peers. And they exclude others to make themselves feel superior.

A child who feels different and yearns for acceptance may find himself on either side of the situation. He may be the subject of a group’s scorn, or he may strive for inclusion to be like his peers. Either side is troublesome.

So what can be done? I believe the solution lies with not only the child, but also his parents and the community—in this case, the school.

What Children Should Do

A child who is the victim of such behavior should be empowered to handle his own problems. You can contribute to the development of your child’s conflict-resolution skills by asking him: “How did you handle that?” or “What do you think you might be able to do about that?” and discuss his answers to these questions. Your goal is to help your child handle the problem himself rather than by simply taking adult advice. A child will have more confidence in himself and be stronger in the future if he is empowered to stand up to others.
What Parents Should Do

When children are taught tolerance, they are less likely to tease others. Parents who show acceptance of differences have children who are less likely to tease. It’s important to build your child’s self-esteem by treating him with respect and accepting his strengths and his weaknesses. When you hold family meetings, create rituals and traditions, and make family time a top priority, you diminish the likelihood of teasing.

It’s also imperative not to overprotect your child by doing things for him that he could do for himself (including solving problems). This is asking a lot of parents who struggled to build a family or those who worry that their child will grow up feeling different. Remember, though, that overprotection is not in your child’s interest. His confidence diminishes each time you do something for him that he could do for himself.

What the school Should Do

If a child is teasing or being teased, parents should seek the support of the community in which this happens. This will most likely be your child’s school. Schools can handle the problem by educating the children—for example, instituting a conflict-resolution and community building program—and by enacting and enforcing a series of tiered consequences.

If a child teases or bullies others, the first consequence might be that the child is asked to write a note of apology. The second tier of consequences may involve his being called in for a conference with an authority figure, such as a principal, to discuss what happened. The third tier may be that his parents are called in, and so on.

Of course, we need not expect that children will be bullied or will tease others simply because they were adopted. Children everywhere have this unfortunate experience at some point in their lifetimes. Perhaps, though, we can use these instances as opportunities for learning—about our children, our community, and ourselves.

Julie Ross is the Executive Director of Parenting Horizons (www.parentinghorizons.com), a parent and teacher education group in New York City.

Self-Esteem Boosters

To help your child stand up to peer abuse or quit being the abuser, build his confidence by acting in respectful ways towards him, even if you’re angry.

- Use “I” statements rather than “you” statements. Say “I’m uncomfortable with this mess, please clean it up,” rather than “You made a big mess again. Can’t you pick up?”
- Avoid labels. Do not say “You’re such a slob.” Say instead what action you’d like the child to take: “I’d like you to log off the Internet and clean up now, please.”
- Watch your vocal tone. A tone that conveys disgust, annoyance, and other negative feelings can send the message that he isn’t a worthwhile human being.
Does my child have Sensory Integration Dysfunction or is it something else?

As an adoptive parent, I always find myself walking that fine line of questioning whether my child's behavior is "typical of a bio child" or "adoption related."

Although my husband and I believe that some of our son Frankie's challenging behavior is probably a result of not getting the attention he needed during the first 14 months of his life, we'll never know for sure. But the one thing we do know, and would like to share with you in this article, is our journey to date in trying to decode his behavior.

Ever since bringing Frankie home from Russia in 2002, he seemed very afraid of large groups of people and did not easily engage with groups of kids his own age. This was the first sign that something was bothering him. And while I can say that the sound of his sister's screams goes right through me too, Frankie's reaction to them had been unusually aggressive including hitting her or throwing toys at her.

Academically, Frankie is a bright student, but early on his preschool teachers noted that he seemed anxious when crowded by other classmates or when groups of kids walked by him. These behaviors appeared minor and did not seem to interfere with his learning, but they were starting to interfere with him socially. At home, we noticed that Frankie was also anxious about taking the bus to school. He eventually agreed to take the bus home two afternoons a week, but was obviously stressed out by it.

As first grade approached, these fears and anxieties became more pronounced with Frankie refusing to take the bus to and from school at all that year. In addition, although very athletic, he did not want to be a part of any group sport or activity. Golf, tennis and racquetball were his preferred sports, but only when playing them with my husband or with Frankie's best friend.

On the home front, he was becoming aggressive in his verbal outbursts and began hitting me. Friends who were working in the child development field suggested that Frankie might have some sensory integration issues. It is important to note that not all Occupational Therapists are trained in helping children with sensory integration dysfunction. You need to specifically ask if they are trained in that particular area. If they have experience with adopted children, even better.
Frankie was evaluated utilizing a questionnaire that my husband and I completed, as well as a 2-hour physical activity and task assessment in the OT Center's playground-like environment. Frankie had a blast!

A few weeks later, we learned the results of the evaluation indicated that Frankie had moderate sensory integration dysfunction which basically meant that he had a very narrow "comfort zone." A program was outlined for him to stretch that comfort zone so he could go about living his life without the anxiety and difficulty that seemed to fill his every waking hour. It included learning the "Alert Program" which teaches a child to identify if his/her "engine" is running high, just right or too low and what to do to get to that "just right" engine level. Also included in Frankie's treatment program was therapeutic listening therapy with headphones and working on various types of OT apparatus (swings, zip lines, climbing walls, trampolines, to name a few). Finally, we had an answer, or thought we did.

Initially we noticed some improvement, but it was slow in coming and not all behaviors were improving. The weekly report from the OT was that Frankie was doing great and did everything asked of him. Prior to each OT session, I would meet with Frankie's therapist to explain the issues we were seeing at home, and yet none of them were presenting themselves during the OT sessions. The therapist would just give me a quizzical look. After a few months of this disconnect, my daughter and I were invited to come into the treatment room with Frankie. Voila! It was like a light switch being thrown on. All the behaviors that I had been describing to the OT were suddenly quite evident. Now they had something to work with!

Frankie's sessions started including his sister and, as time went by, did seem to help with their interactions. But still something was missing. Frankie was still very disrespectful at home, not listening to either my husband or me, being rough with his sister, not wanting to engage in any group activities after school or during the summer months and still hitting. What was interesting is that these challenging behaviors were only happening at home. At school, Frankie was a very respectful and quiet student.

At this point, it was suggested by his OT that Frankie may have some attachment issues. After much searching, we were fortunate enough to locate a child psychologist who specializes in childhood trauma and attachment issues and this is where we are to date. My husband and I believe that this might be the missing piece in understanding Frankie's challenging behaviors.

One component of Frankie's new therapy is known as PCIT (Parent Child Integrated Therapy). It is play-centered therapy under the coaching of a child psychologist. My husband and I will be taught strategies to employ at home, specific to Frankie's needs. Since it appears that Frankie also may be experiencing some post traumatic stress, we will be working with him on those issues as well.

We are hopeful that these approaches will ultimately eliminate the challenging behaviors that we have lived with for almost 7 years and help Frankie to live life to the fullest. It has been a long, drawn out and stressful journey for us as a family, but finally we believe we have found a psychologist who has the experience, training and resources to help.

For many of us adoptive parents, the early part of our children's lives are a mystery since we weren't present for them. My husband and I find ourselves playing detective a lot, trying to understand what motivates, or better yet, de-motivates Frankie from actively participating in more social environments. Each day we use our intuition and our love for him to help Frankie become the child he was meant to be.

If you find yourself on a similar journey as ours, know that there are very competent and caring professionals out there who can help. The key is to locate them by talking with other parents, other professionals or the post adoption specialists at WHFC as quickly as possible if you suspect your child may need some assistance.

My husband and I wish you the best of luck in your journey.

Books and resources we found helpful in our journey

- Raising a Sensory Smart Child: The Definitive Handbook for Helping Your Child with Sensory Processing Issues, by Lindsey Biel and Nancy Peske
- Attachment Focused Parenting: Effective Strategies to Care for Children, by Daniel A. Hughes
- Beyond Consequences, Logic and Control: A Love Based Approach to Helping Attachment-Challenged Children with Severe Behaviors, by Heather T. Forbes
- The Trauma Center, Brookline, MA
- OTA Wakefield
- Kioko Center, North Andover
- The Early Intervention Program
MOVIE REVIEW: Martian Child

Review written by Nicole Stenke

The movie Martian Child stars John Cusack as a widower who decides to pursue the dream he and his late wife had of adopting a child. Initially hesitant and uncertain if he can raise a child as a single parent, Cusack decides to adopt from the foster care system. He is matched with a six-year-old boy, Dennis, who seems to be in his own little world. Dennis thinks he is from Mars and spends most of his time in a cardboard box. The social worker explains that Dennis is a "hard-to-place" child due to his odd behavior and trauma history. Cusack visits the little boy and gradually builds a relationship with him, and eventually Dennis begins living with him.

The rest of the movie shows the challenges as well as the rewards of parenting a child who is different. Dennis truly believes he is from Mars and has to "learn human beings." Cusack can see the function of the boy's fantasy given his history. He relates to Dennis particularly as he was a quirky child himself and now is a science fiction writer. However, others, including the child welfare agency, do not see the situation in the same way. They want Dennis to become "like everyone else" and believe Cusack is failing as a parent by allowing him to live in his fantasy world and engage in his unusual behavior, such as wearing a "holding down" belt so that he does not disappear. Cusack struggles with allowing the child to be himself while helping be a part of society.

This movie presents older child adoption in a fairly positive manner, while not always showing the real-life nuances of adoption (a home study is not mentioned, a social worker is found peering in their window unannounced). Its poignant portrayal of the love that an adoptive father has for his extraordinary son makes up for any shortcomings. Martian Child shows that parenting an older quirky child is difficult, but that part of their quirkiness is what makes them unique and endearing. I would recommend this movie to anyone who has adopted an older child or just a "quirky" child!

ASK THE SOCIAL WORKER

Do you have questions for us? Write to us at postadopt@whfc.org and "ask the social worker!" We will address one or two questions in each newsletter. So, we invite you to write to us!

CULTURAL EVENTS AT WHFC

The 9th Annual WHFC China Culture Camp drew families from all over New England and New York to Marlborough High School on Saturday, March 27, 2010. The full-day culture camp had 102 children and 111 adults registered and the Preview to culture camp attracted 31 kids and 51 adults bringing the grand total to 295 people!

Vendors were set up in the lobby of the high school that we called the Cultural Marketplace to sell cultural items, DVDs, and provide information for heritage travel, student exchange programs and journaling. Our families were able to enjoy the Cultural Marketplace during registration, lunch and at the end of the day.

Boisterous Chinese drumming and a myriad of Chinese dances were performance by young people in colorful costumes by the Cambridge Center for Chinese Culture in the morning. After the performances, the children and teens split into small groups with their camp counselors of Asian heritage for sessions that featured activities based on the Year of the Tiger. The children were also treated to learning some basic dance moves by the young women who had performed earlier. The parents attended a panel discussion titled "Adoptee Perspectives" which was very moving.

Lunch was catered by China Taste and the cafeteria was filled with the laughter of children making new friends and eating delicious food. The afternoon options for the parents included "Homeland Travel", "Keeping Cultural Connections Alive", "Talking With Your Child About Adoption", "Talking With Your Older Child About Adoption", and "Attachment Through the Years". Following the afternoon sessions, we had our "Final Connections" time which
allowed families to try craft or game activities together in the cafeteria, connect with former China travel friends, or visit the vendors again.

### Upcoming WHFC Events — Register Today

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5/22/2010</td>
<td>Come Fly With Us - Kite Flying / Picnic</td>
<td>Waterford, CT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/22/2010</td>
<td>Teen Connections: Your World, Your Family, Myself - presented by ACONE-RI</td>
<td>Providence, RI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/23/2010</td>
<td>Davis Farmland Outing</td>
<td>Sterling, MA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/13/2010</td>
<td>RI Family Picnic</td>
<td>Bristol, RI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7/9/2010</td>
<td>4th East Coast Ethiopian Culture Camp</td>
<td>Rindge, NH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8/14/2010</td>
<td>Western MA &amp; Greater Albany Area Summer Picnic</td>
<td>Grafton, NY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8/22/2010</td>
<td>Beach Day - hosted by RI PAC Group</td>
<td>Narragansett, RI</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additional events are added frequently. View the complete schedule and register online.

### 2010 POST ADOPTION SURVEY

Earlier this year, the Post Adoption Support and Education team conducted a survey that was completed by 1,272 families who adopted children through Wide Horizons For Children. The focus of the survey was to find out what issues adoptive parents may be facing and what resources have been or might be helpful. The majority of the respondents (70%) have adopted one child through WHFC, with an additional 26% adopting two children. As shown in the chart below, most of the adoptions have occurred within the past 3 years.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How old are your adopted children now?</th>
<th>0-3 years old</th>
<th>4-7 years old</th>
<th>7-12 years old</th>
<th>13-18 years old</th>
<th>Over 18 years old</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When did your adoption take place?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-3 years ago</td>
<td>457</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>833</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-7 years ago</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>357</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>508</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 7 years ago</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>324</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Dear Ann Landers – Where Parents Look for Advice

Respondents were asked where they have received helpful advice about parenting. The results indicate use of many different sources. Among the most commonly used are other parents (adoptive as well as biological), family members, home study social worker, and local therapist or other specialist. Many respondents reported receiving helpful tidbits such as “Relax and go with the flow” and “Don’t sweat the small stuff.”
Counsel Me Please!

The recent news related to adoption has highlighted the need for adoptive families to seek out assistance for dealing with challenging situations. While families openly acknowledge facing issues related to attachment and bonding with their child(ren), only 14% of survey respondents indicated the need for family counseling services, while 18% have children who received individual counseling. Reasons for counseling included:

- Sibling jealousy
- Behavioral issues
- Marital difficulties
- Sleep disturbances
- Dealing with developmental needs

Of the families surveyed, 23% report that their child has an education plan in place. Most commonly, these plans address issues related to:

- Speech and language difficulties
- Social/ emotional issues
- Learning disability
- Behavior
- ADHD
- Autism spectrum disorder
- Motor skill delay

If I Had a Hammer (What’s in Your Toolbox?)

It is important for any parent to feel prepared and have tools at their disposal when faced with any of a number of situations that may arise. When adoptive parents were asked to rate the helpfulness of a variety of tools and materials, 84% of respondents rated reading materials as Good or Excellent, followed by Cultural Events rated Good/Excellent by 58%. Other tools rated favorably include:

- Online forums (30%)
- Face-to-face counseling (30%)
- In-person support groups (28%)
- Web videos (27%)
- Online support groups (26%)

Respondents are also using other online tools such as email, Facebook (did you know that WHFC has a page? Find us now!), and Yahoo/Google Groups to connect with friends and other adoptive parents.

What Interests You?

As we work to address different topics in our e-newsletters and on our website, we asked survey respondents to indicate topics that were of most interest to them. The chart below reflects the topics rated highest by respondents.
Room for Improvement

Seventy-six percent of the survey respondents reported having received WHFC’s Post Adoption e-newsletter. While the overall rating of the e-newsletter was favorable (72% giving it a score of Good or Excellent), we recognize that there are definitely ways we can work to better provide the information adoptive families are seeking. Among the recommendations we heard are:

- Make it more focused
- Provide more emphasis on older child adoptions and the associated challenges
- Address the difficult issues of adoption
- Provide information about adoptees as adults
- Emphasis on educating the children once they are home
- Provide information on common disorders and signs to look for
- Publish stories that reflect unexpected health and/or development issues

Service Please!

We recognize that we at WHFC have not done a good job in the past with informing families about the services at their disposal. In addition, our offices are located in the Northeastern United States, while our families are spread throughout the country. Nevertheless, families are utilizing the services we currently have in place, as shown in the chart below.
Families did offer some constructive ideas for additional services they would like to see offered. The most frequent suggestion was for increased personalized outreach from WHFC. Many respondents felt they received little or no individual follow up after their child came home. Additional suggestions include:

- Ways to connect with other families – both in-person as well as online
- Local events outside of the eastern Massachusetts area, as well as listings of events across the country
- More programs and information for families adopting Domestically as well as from Ethiopia
- More events for younger children
- More programs and information for teen adoptees

**So Now What?**

Gathering all of this information is one thing, now we need to determine what we’re going to do with it! Be patient with us, this will take some time. We do have some ideas that we hope to be able to implement fairly easily. Among these are:

- Educating WHFC staff and partners as well as families about the services offered by the Post Adopt Support and Education team.
- Increase the access that post adoptive families have to information and advice
- Provide additional resource information in every edition of our e-newsletter
- Create topic-specific reading lists for families
- Find a way to share time information about webinars and conferences across the U.S., including those offered by other organizations
- Increase post adoptive families’ access to each other for advice and support
- Create a list of topics for call-in sessions that can be offered to post adoptive families

Many thanks to everyone who took the time to complete our survey. We are always open to feedback and suggestions, so if you didn’t get a chance to take the survey, or have thought of additional ideas you feel would be helpful to us, please contact us at postadopt@whfc.org.

**WHFC POST ADOPT SERVICES: Who Are We and What Do We Do?**

**Mission Statement:**

WHFC recognizes that adoption is a lifelong process for all members of the adoption triad — birth families, adoptive families and adopted persons. We acknowledge that this journey is unique for each individual and family. WHFC's Post Adopt Support and Education (PASE) team assists this journey by providing opportunities for birth family/adoptive family connections, celebrations of birth culture, referral to community resources and consultation on adoption and parenting concerns.
From our recent post adoption survey, we learned that many of you are unfamiliar with Wide Horizons’ Post Adoption Services.

First, our post adoption services are provided by our PASE (Post Adoption Support and Education) team. To meet our team, visit www.whfc.org. This team, in collaboration with other WHFC staff, provide the following post adoption services:

**Beyond The Horizon**

WHFC’s post adoption newsletter is created and published by our PASE team. It is available to all WHFC applicants and post adopt families who have a current email address on file with us. If you know of a WHFC post adopt family who does not currently, but would like to receive this newsletter, you can do the following:

- Forward the newsletter to them using either the "Forward to a friend" link at the bottom or your email’s Forward button
- Refer the family to our enews signup page where they can subscribe to this and other enewsletters of interest
- Request that the family send an email to webmaster@whfc.org with their name and current email address so that we can update our records

The purpose of the newsletter is to provide our families with information and resources to support their parenting through adoption. Each edition aims to raise awareness about post adoption issues, provide useful information and resources. Each newsletter has a theme and the articles and resources are built around that theme. Most editions include articles by professionals, adoptive families and include a review of a book and/or movie relevant to post adoption. The theme of our last edition was "attachment." This edition's theme is "Quirky Kids." Previous editions of *Beyond The Horizon*, can be found on our website. If you have comments on this or past editions, or have suggestions for future editions, please email Pat Hoopes at phoopes@whfc.org.

**Consultation**

Our PASE staff are available by phone or via email for your post adopt questions and concerns. Many of these contacts come from parents who want advice about their child's adoption questions, behavior or school issues.

The role of the post adoption counselor in receiving your questions, concerns or requests for information is to assist you in defining the problem if there is one, offering simple advice if warranted or suggesting resources for the parents to follow up on.

**Domestic and International Search for Information and Connections**

We are hearing from increasing numbers of parents and adult adoptees who are interested in obtaining information about birth family or want to discuss the possibility of contact with birth parents. On occasion, we hear from birth parents requesting information or contact as well. Our PASE counselors will understand your request, discuss your readiness, review your file and assist you further when possible. More information on International and Domestic Search services is available in the Post Adoption section of our website.

**Workshops for adoptive families**

Our PASE counselors along with other WHFC clinical staff speak at workshops and conferences geared toward post adoptive families and adoption professionals. The PASE counselors develop and lead many of the workshops offered at WHFC’s annual China and Korean Culture Camps. They also collaborate with local agencies in offering topic driven post adoption speaker series. This coming year, we will be experimenting with post adoption webinars and teleconferencing for post adopt families.

**Post Adoption website**

Our PASE team collaborates with the agency's Web Project Manager to create and maintain the WHFC Post Adoption website. This website includes information on our post adopt services, articles by families and professionals, recommended reading, as well as links to a wide variety of local and national resources. You can find this site at www.whfc.org/postadopt. In the near future, this site will have a new look... stay tuned!

**Going Forward**

We are grateful to all the families who took time to respond to our survey and share thoughts and ideas on post adoption services. We are currently in the planning stages for the next fiscal year. As is often the case, it is a challenge to provide the services we want in context of budgetary constraints, but we are working on it!!!
Meet the Team
Our Post Adoption team of counselors is dedicated to providing clinical and program support to families. Learn more and contact one of our counselors with your questions.

Pat ~ Barb ~ Betsey ~ Deb ~ Nicole