

# ADOPTION:

ANOTHER WORD FOR LOVE

ELEANOR



THE BARKER ADOPTION FOUNDATION

2017 ANNUAL REPORT



# IMAGINE A WORLD



where every child has  
a safe, permanent,  
loving family.



SEBASTIANO



**THAT IS  
THE WORLD  
WE WORK  
TOWARD  
EVERY DAY**



at The Barker Adoption Foundation

# LETTER FROM THE LEADERSHIP



Dear Friends,

It is a privilege to be entrusted with leading The Barker Adoption Foundation and to have the opportunity to share with you the impact of our work in 2017. This Annual Report is more than a simple listing of data. It features stories and pictures of those touched by our services and the generous donors who support our mission to build and support families.

The year 2017 marks our 72nd year of finding families for children and supporting those children, families and others in the community through robust programming, support services and education. Our goal is to be a leader in ethical child-centered adoption services which includes not only placing children in loving, safe and permanent families, but also providing lifelong services that ensure children, families, birth parents, adoptive parents and adult adoptees are supported throughout their adoption journey.

With your help, we succeeded in achieving this goal in 2017. We celebrated the homecoming of 79 children, from newborns to older youth, both from the United States and from our international programs. We provided responsive, nurturing and non-judgmental counseling to pregnant women, their partners and family members. We reached out to hundreds of prospective adoptive parents who might consider adopting an older child from foster care through our Project Wait No Longer Program. We grew our post-adoption services and responded to requests for post-adoption information, provided individual adoption-related counseling, assisted in search and reunifications and sponsored informative education sessions for the community on adoption related topics. We partnered with five countries to place internationally- born children, including older children and children with medical issues. And finally, we seamlessly transitioned leadership of the agency from our long-serving and beloved Executive Director, Dr. Marilyn Regier, who retired in August. While Marilyn left big shoes to fill, Sue is lucky to have served by her side as the Associate Director for the last five years, and before that in several other capacities at Barker. With the support of the Board and our committed staff, we have continued the important work of Barker.

The Barker Adoption Foundation has helped build and support over 7,500 families since Richard and Ruth Barker founded the organization in 1945. Still, we recognize that much remains to be done in the ever-changing landscape of adoption. We thank you for your continued support as Barker continues to fill a critical role for the children we serve and the entire adoption community.

Thank you for helping us make a difference,

Susan Hollar  
Executive Director & CEO

Howard Menditch  
Chair, Board of Trustees

## 2017 BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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## **WE SERVE:**

Birth Parents,  
Adoptive Parents,  
Adoptive Persons  
and anyone whose  
life is touched by  
adoption.

# LOOK WHO JOINED OUR FAMILY IN 2017!

Adam & Rob welcomed Caleb  
 Alberto & Lauren welcomed Sebastiano  
 Alessandro & Valeria welcomed Luigi  
 Alexander & Diana welcomed Caitlyn  
 Anthony & Dorothy welcomed Samantha  
 Anthony & Karen welcomed Anthony  
 Arden & Gloria welcomed Jacob  
 Arnie & Jeana welcomed Avery and Ryder  
 Arvind & Sukhvir welcomed Amyra  
 Barry & Melanie welcomed Eli  
 Ben & Amanda welcomed Jonathan  
 Bill & Jennifer welcomed Hannah  
 Brad & Maria welcomed Serafina  
 Brek & Kendell welcomed Gwendolyn  
 Brett & Leigh Anne welcomed Sabrina  
 Bright & Costanza welcomed Darian  
 Bruce & Holly welcomed Carly  
 Bryndon & Megan welcomed Brenna  
 Chris & Jacquie welcomed Joseph  
 Christa welcomed Cora  
 Christina welcomed Luna  
 Christopher & Emily welcomed June  
 Cody & Erin welcomed Finn  
 Dan & Bethany welcomed Zelig-Louise  
 Daniel & Melissa welcomed Elyse

Daniel & Nina welcomed Selene  
 Daniela welcomed Ava  
 Danielle welcomed Patience  
 Dave & Becky welcomed Jolette and Jose  
 David & Lynn welcomed Christopher  
 Devin & Janelle welcomed Justin  
 Eliza & Rachel welcomed Lena  
 Eric & Jeannette welcomed Gabrielle  
 George & Jamie welcomed Samantha  
 Jake & Sarah welcomed Finley  
 James & Leah welcomed Hederson  
 James & Nicole welcomed Timothy  
 James & Rosario welcomed Juan  
 Jason & Hilliary welcomed Eros  
 Jermain & Jason welcomed Jalen  
 Jiahau & Pauline welcomed Derek  
 Jodi welcomed Aiden  
 John & Scott welcomed Andrew  
 Josh & Darryl welcomed Frederick  
 Justin & Sarah welcomed June  
 Kevin & Chris welcomed Sophie  
 Kyle & Christine welcomed Benjamin  
 Laurent & Brenda welcomed Bora  
 Lita & Vic welcomed Ellie  
 Loren & Karen welcomed Anna

Matt & Jaylyn welcomed Greyson  
 Matt & Katie welcomed Miriam  
 Michael & Jennifer welcomed Gabriel  
 Michael & Julia welcomed Hope  
 Mike & Jean welcomed Lisa  
 Nathaniel & Aletheia welcomed Rhett  
 Niles & Tani welcomed Raven  
 Noel & Alex welcomed Eleanor  
 Philip & Robin welcomed Luke  
 Pili & Christina welcomed Lily  
 Rajeev & Pallavi welcomed Kairavi  
 Rex & Kirsten welcomed Caileigh  
 Rich & Natalie welcomed Sam  
 Richard & Ming welcomed Marie  
 Richard & Pauline welcomed John  
 Rob & Allie welcomed Robert  
 Scott & Heather welcomed Shane  
 Terence & Mari welcomed Meadow  
 Till & Brenda welcomed Kailah  
 Tim & Brian welcomed Autumn  
 Tom & Ashley welcomed Luciana  
 Tony & Jenn welcomed Mariah  
 Venkata & Naveena welcomed Nirvan  
 Viet & Avery welcomed Avery  
 Willard & Sharon welcomed Janelle





# 7,500+

CHILDREN WE HAVE PLACED IN SAFE, LOVING,  
PERMANENT HOMES SINCE OUR FOUNDING IN 1945

# 79

CHILDREN PLACED  
IN SAFE, LOVING,  
PERMANENT HOMES  
IN 2017!

# 140

PROFESSIONALS AND COMMUNITY  
MEMBERS WHO RECEIVED TRAINING  
FROM BARKER RELATED TO ETHICAL  
ADOPTION PRACTICES

# 57

PROSPECTIVE  
ADOPTIVE PARENTS  
WHO RECEIVED 27  
HOURS OF TRAINING  
FOR OLDER CHILD  
ADOPTION FROM  
FOSTER CARE

# 537

PROSPECTIVE ADOPTIVE  
PARENTS WHO ATTENDED  
AN INFORMATIONAL  
MEETING

# 300

ATTENDEES AT OUR 2017 ADOPTION AND FOSTER  
CARE CONFERENCE, MY FAMILY IS MY FAMILY:  
FROM AMBIVALENCE TO ACCEPTANCE

# 5

COUNTRY PROGRAMS WE  
PARTNERED WITH TO PLACE  
29 CHILDREN WITH LOVING  
FAMILIES IN THE UNITED  
STATES — CHINA, COLUMBIA,  
HAITI, INDIA, AND SOUTH  
KOREA

# 500+

REQUESTS WE RESPONDED TO FOR  
POST-ADOPTION INFORMATION AND  
COUNSELING

# FIRST PERSON



In the pages that follow, members of the Barker family share their stories about adoption and its impact on their lives.

## ANGELA

“THEY  
CAME IN  
& SAVED  
MY LIFE”

*These are the words of Angela, a woman facing an unexpected choice between parenting and placing her child for adoption.*

### UNANTICIPATED BIRTH

Angela recalls the details of the day that changed her life. “I wasn’t feeling well and had what started as a bad stomach ache. The pain was growing worse, so I took an Uber to the hospital to find out why.” The answer came as a shock – Angela was in labor and about to give birth. Unaware she was pregnant, Angela was suddenly delivering a child that she felt unprepared to raise.

For a woman in Angela’s position, identifying and processing all of the available options can be overwhelming. Parent or don’t parent? Involve family members or leave them out? Spend time with her baby or don’t? The choices, and the impact of each, can be difficult to sort through.

### AT A LOSS

Angela says she was certain that adoption was the right choice to make for her daughter, but she didn’t know where to turn for help. “I knew I couldn’t parent her and that placing her for adoption was the best option, but I wanted to make sure I did everything right so she could have the kind of life I wanted for her,” Angela says.

“It wasn’t about me. It was about her. She didn’t ask to come into this world and I needed to figure out how to do right by her,” she adds.

At the hospital, Angela struggled with tough decisions — who should she call to inquire about adoption, who should be caring for her daughter right now, where would she find a family who would love her baby and help her grow up to be strong?

### EVALUATING THE OPTIONS

Wrestling with these thoughts, Angela felt a sense of overwhelming relief when she was visited by two pregnancy counselors from The Barker Adoption Foundation.

## WHAT CAN BIRTH MOTHERS EXPECT FROM BARKER? THEY CAN ALWAYS EXPECT THE FOLLOWING AT NO COST:

- A licensed, experienced pregnancy counselor available to talk whenever they wish
- Confidentiality and respect
- Support at the hospital before and after the birth
- An experienced pregnancy counselor available to support birth fathers as they make their decisions
- The option to select and meet a family who is ready to adopt and parent
- Guidance in tailoring the level of open adoption that is right for them
- Continued support after the adoption takes place

“They came in and saved my life. I was so afraid I was going to make a decision that was going to harm my daughter because I didn’t know enough about placing her. They walked me through all of my options and helped me understand what I could do and what I did not have to do.”

While Angela was steadfast in her desire to place her daughter with an adoptive family, Barker’s pregnancy counselors would also have provided support if she had decided to parent instead. All Barker pregnancy counselors hold Master’s degrees in social work and are skilled at providing informed, competent and compassionate care to birth parents in need. Barker pregnancy counselors use the title “pregnancy counselors” rather than “adoption counselors” because they never assume a parent will place their baby for adoption.

### MATCHING WITH A FAMILY

All birth parents have the option to select an adoptive family for their child. In this case, Angela gave Barker permission to contact potential adoptive parents on her behalf to find a good match. Her parameters were simple, but clear: “I needed to be sure that she would be loved and that she will be able to be herself. I don’t care if the [adoptive parents] are aliens from the moon as long as both things are true.”

During this period, Angela’s baby was under the care of a Barker “Cradle Care” family. Through Barker’s Cradle Care program, babies are placed with trained, licensed foster care families who provide love, nurture and care while birth mothers and their partners take time to evaluate their options and reflect on their decisions.

Fortunately, Barker didn’t have to look as far as the moon to find a couple they thought would be a good match. After reviewing the couple’s file, Angela agreed to meet them, albeit reluctantly. Again, she credits Barker’s pregnancy counselors with helping her work through her options. “At first, I didn’t want to go, but the Barker pregnancy counselor I was working with really encouraged me to and I’m so glad that I did.”

### SETTING EXPECTATIONS

Angela had a heart-to-heart with the prospective adoptive parents when she met with them at Barker’s offices. “What appealed to me most is they promised me they wouldn’t change her. If she doesn’t want to wear pink, she doesn’t have to. If she wants to wear pink, she’ll wear pink. I want her to be able to be herself.”

A little over a year later, Angela says she’s happy to report she sees that promise being kept. She’s also pleased that she has been able to maintain a role in her daughter’s life.

### WATCHING HER GROW

Facilitated by Barker, Angela and the baby’s adoptive parents have crafted a relationship that includes regular updates and yearly visits and Angela was thrilled to be asked to give her daughter her first name. She was also grateful for the thoughtfulness the adoptive parents showed when they christened the baby in a christening gown handed down through the generations from Angela’s great-grandparents.

Following another family tradition, Angela gave the baby her first pair of black-and-white Converse Chuck Taylor sneakers for her first birthday. “Everyone in my family gets a pair on their first

birthday and now she has them too,” Angela says, while showing off the pair currently adorning her own feet.

### GRATEFUL TO BARKER

Asked about Barker’s discussion group for birth mothers, Angela says she hasn’t participated, but is glad to know it’s there if she changes her mind. She also appreciates the referrals she’s received from Barker for therapists that understand adoption and its complexities should she decide she wants to speak with someone. Just as important, she says, is knowing that her child will also have services available to her through Barker if she desires them as she grows.

Angela is still in touch with her social workers and is grateful for the support she received throughout the process. “If you want a place where you’re already family when you walk in the door, go to Barker. When [the Barker social workers] walked in my door, they were ready to take care of my daughter and me.”

**165**  
**PREGNANT**  
**WOMEN, THEIR**  
**PARTNERS AND**  
**FAMILY MEMBERS**  
**RECEIVED**  
**COUNSELING**  
**FROM BARKER**

# MATT, LINDA & ROY



MATT, LINDA, ROY

*Imagine for a moment that you are 12 years old. You've lived with 10 different families in the past four years. You've never spent an entire year in the same school. You don't have a birth certificate, which makes even small things hard.*

*That's the situation Matt was in when a couple named Linda and Roy received a call from The Barker Adoption Foundation inviting them to review his file and consider whether they might be just the right parents to give Matt the stable, lasting, loving family he so deserved.*

## READY FOR AN OLDER CHILD

Enter the home of Linda, Roy and Matt today and the love and connection among the three is unmistakable. They finish each other's sentences and share obvious delight in recounting how they came to be a family, despite challenges along the way.

Older child adoption isn't for everyone. Many potential adoptive parents do not feel equipped to meet the needs of older youth or feel intimidated by the idea of parenting a child who may have experienced emotional trauma. Linda and Roy felt differently: "I always wanted to adopt an older child," Linda says.

The couple was well-versed in the challenges that can come with older child adoption. They had explored both public and private

older child adoption before opting to join Barker's Project Wait No Longer (PWNL) Program, an initiative launched in 2005 to match children in the U.S. foster care system with families that are ready, willing and able to meet their needs. While waiting to be matched, Linda and Roy learned as much as they could from others who had undertaken older child adoptions, completing over 27 hours of training and attending a support group at Barker related to older child adoption.

## MATCHING UP

When Linda and Roy received a call from a Barker staff member excited about a potential match for them, they were willing to keep an open mind. While Matt, then age 12 and living in Oregon, was a little bit older than the child they were envisioning, the couple knew Barker had their best interests at heart and agreed to carefully review Matt's file before deciding whether to go further.

It didn't take long for their interest to be piqued. In the "Wednesday's Child" video included with his file, Matt put together a Lego set. "We started thinking, 'Wow, this child could be a great match for us!'" Linda says.

Open to learning more, the couple talked to Matt's team of social workers and others in

Oregon who were responsible for his care. They also spoke at length with his current foster mother who had been preparing Matt for adoption for a year. They made a photo book that included pictures of their neighborhood, their friends, their church, their home and Ollie, their cat. They added images of Linda playing the violin and Roy drumming and sent it off so Matt could begin considering them too. Matt says he looked through the book once and announced he was "ready to go."

## INTRODUCTIONS

In August 2013, Linda and Roy flew to Oregon to meet Matt. Roy tells the story of their first meeting: "We went to his foster family's house and Matt came out to greet us holding an *Electronics for Dummies* book he had bought with his birthday money, which told us we were going to get along just fine. Our first outing was to the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry where we spent time taking in the exhibits."

When they stopped for lunch at the museum restaurant, and Matt announced that he was going to have three desserts, Linda and Roy had to tell him he was limited to one. "It was our first parenting moment," Linda says with a laugh.

## "THIS IS OUR KID"

Linda and Roy are both musicians and music is a big part of their life. In a moment that sealed their growing bond, while driving back from the museum, Linda started beating a rhythm pattern in the car. Roy joined in a few phrases later with his own pattern, a practice they've engaged in countless times. Suddenly, a third rhythm could be heard from the back seat — Matt has added his

**WHEN IS A  
PERSON TOO  
OLD TO NEED  
A PARENT?  
THE ANSWER  
IS NEVER**

own pattern that seamlessly integrated with those Linda and Roy had started.

“That’s when we knew it for certain: ‘Oh my God, this is our kid,’” Roy says.

After the first visit, Linda and Roy visited three more times while the paperwork was completed for Matt to move to Maryland with them and begin their daily lives as a family. That day finally came just before Thanksgiving in 2013.

## ANOTHER ODYSSEY BEGINS

While Matt, Linda and Roy were finally physically together, a lingering reality from Matt’s past turned finalizing his adoption into a nearly four-year ordeal. Despite being a ward of Oregon since he was nine, Matt had no birth certificate and no proof of his identity. Without it, his adoption could not be completed. It also meant he could not obtain a Social Security number, apply for a passport, or even register for school without going through extra steps.

“There was no birth certificate, no family records, no medical records and no school records from the time before Matt went into foster care. From a family point of view, this didn’t matter. Nothing stopped us from the family formation that started as soon as we met Matt in Oregon. That part happened quickly. It’s the legal part that got hung up,” Roy explains.

## NO CONFIRMATION OF BIRTH

Oregon had made serious efforts to confirm Matt’s birth, even going so far as to send an investigator to California to try to speak with the manager of a trailer park where Matt was rumored to have been born. Neither the manager nor anyone else could attest to Matt’s birth, leaving the state legally unable to issue him a birth certificate.

After Matt left Oregon, every six months Linda, Roy and Matt attended permanency hearings with an Oregon judge by phone. As time dragged on, everyone involved grew frustrated with the lack of progress. “We were getting more and more upset about not being able to get things done and we decided to go another route and get political representatives involved, starting with crafting letters to the governor of Oregon and the state’s attorney general,” Linda recalls.

## LEGAL HELP

During this period, Linda, Roy and Matt were visited monthly by a Barker social

worker who also was aghast at the limbo the family found themselves in. Fully supportive of the shift in tactics, Barker engaged Peter Wiernicki, an experienced adoption lawyer, to help Linda and Roy write the letters they would send to Oregon officials. “His advice was that somewhere, someone was just going to have to decide to do the right thing and we needed to make sure we didn’t let our frustration get the better of us. Our letters needed to be written in a way that encouraged people to help us,” Roy says.

**BY AGE 10, THE LIKELIHOOD OF A CHILD IN FOSTER CARE BEING ADOPTED GOES DOWN BY 50 PERCENT**

After the letters were sent, things started moving. The governor asked for status checks. The state Department of Justice got involved as did the state ombudsman. “The team turned over every stone to find documentation and they finally uncovered something that might work, but it was a document that would have to be approved by a registrar in California’s vital records office, not Oregon’s,” Linda explains.

## FINALIZATION — FINALLY

An Oregon registrar offered to call the registrar in California and explain the situation. Shortly afterwards, Linda, Roy and Matt received a call at home in Maryland and heard what they had been longing to hear for nearly four years — Matt’s birth certificate had been issued. In October 2017, three years and eleven months after joining his forever family, Matt’s adoption was finalized.

Since then, Linda, Roy and Matt have been busy navigating other bureaucratic mazes to obtain other important documents. It took three tries to obtain a Social Security number as the agency wanted certified letters from all of the schools that Matt had attended in Oregon while in foster care. “Oregon schools don’t keep records of students who don’t graduate from them so we had to have someone drive to all of the schools there and get letters saying the records they wanted weren’t available,” Linda says. Next up, a U.S. passport so Matt can see the world, if he desires.

## A BARKER FAMILY FOREVER

In the meantime, Matt is thriving as he heads into his junior year in an International Baccalaureate program that emphasizes independent thinking and self-awareness. An accomplished artist and self-taught programmer, he’s not-so-secretly hoping for a 3D printer for his next birthday.

And remember those Legos that first caught Linda’s eye when she saw Matt’s Wednesday’s Child video? Every August, you can find Linda, Roy and Matt exhibiting their creations at BrickFair Virginia, an expo where Lego enthusiasts gather to appreciate more than two acres of Lego models and displays. “There are so many things we never would have known about or experienced without Matt. He’s brought so much to us,” Linda says as Roy nods in agreement.

Reflecting on their experiences over the past four years, Roy, Linda and Matt all express gratitude for the support they received from Barker throughout. “We can’t say enough good things.”

“We’ll always be a Barker family.”

## PROJECT WAIT NO LONGER

*Project Wait No Longer* partners with public child welfare agencies across the country to find loving, safe, and permanent families for older children in foster care.

# ELYSE & CARLY



ELYSE AND CARLY

*Elyse and Carly are so close that for a long time, they called themselves “sisters.” Their strong attachment is likely to serve them well for their lifetimes as research shows that adopted children who form connections with other adopted children (and see families who mirror theirs) have a healthier view of adoption overall.*

## ROOTED IN CHINA

Now six, Elyse and Carly began their friendship in an orphanage in China where the girls shared a crib while awaiting placement in a permanent, loving family. Six months apart in

age, the two girls have very different personalities, but a steel-like bond.

The bond between their adoptive families is also extraordinarily strong. Elyse’s parents, Melissa and Dan, and Carly’s parents, Holly and Bruce, met through Barker while waiting for their daughters to be ready to join their families.

## PRAISE FOR BARKER

For Melissa and Dan, their journey to Elyse started with a desire to explore adoption as a way to form their family.

“We were never told we couldn’t have biological kids, but things didn’t seem to be going in that direction so we started researching adoption. We were becoming really frustrated with the information available on the Internet and then a co-worker brought his daughter home through Barker and we decided to attend an information session,” Dan says.

Dan calls the information session transformative. “We were so grateful for all of the information that was provided.

It corrected a lot of my misconceptions. We felt so comfortable we stopped looking at other agencies and committed within a month.”

Holly and Bruce had a similar reaction to Barker. “We wanted to have a second child, but that didn’t seem to be happening and we had always been open to adoption. I did a ton of research and called a lot of agencies. What I immediately liked about Barker was they were upfront and forthcoming from the start. They easily answered the questions I had and when I asked for references, they gave them right away,” Holly says.

Both couples completed the application and home study and then settled in to wait to be matched with a child. During this time, each attended training classes and support groups at Barker. “We attended the waiting parent meeting as well as sessions on behavior and on medical issues. We had a little

## BARKER CONTINUES TO SUPPORT EACH FAMILY WHO ADOPTED INTERNATIONALLY AFTER THEY ARRIVE HOME WITH THEIR CHILD.

Immediately upon return and for at least the following 12 months, a Barker social worker spends time with each family, providing support, assistance, and information during this critical transition and bonding period.

advantage with the medical because I'm a doctor, but we found that there is no substitute for going through it with Dr. Dibbs. It really clued us in on what to expect. All waiting parents should go to these sessions," Bruce says.

## FOSTERING CONNECTIONS

After Melissa and Dan were matched with Elyse and Holly and Bruce matched with Carly, Tina Ji, head of Barker's International Program, connected the couples and introduced them at one of the trainings. If they hit it off, she thought, they might be able to travel at the same time and give the girls a start in their families together.

That's exactly what happened. When they received notice the girls were ready to come home, Melissa, Dan and Bruce flew to China and together met their daughters in Beijing, traveled to the girls' home province to finalize their adoptions, and flew back to the U.S., where Holly and Tyler, Carly's new brother, waited excitedly at the airport to welcome everyone home.

## LENDING SUPPORT

Both families say being together in China helped ease the transition for the girls and for themselves. "The girls had known each other since they were 18 months old. They were kids who had been inseparable all that time and having them come home together made the process in China easier for the adults and the kids," Bruce says.

Bruce adds, "Each day, we met in the morning for breakfast and then again in the evening for dinner. In between, I'd spend time individually with Carly and Melissa and Dan would spend one-on-one time with Elyse. We'd each do different things with the girls to bond as a family based on each girl's needs. Doing it this way allowed the adults to support one another and gave the girls something familiar as well."

Melissa fondly recalls the flight to the girls' home province as a special moment in their bonding time. "Elyse was snuggled deep into Dan's chest and we were feeling blissful. Two seconds later, she threw up all over him," she recounts, laughing at the memory. Dan chimes in: "It was the best throw up ever."

## "OUR JOB IS TO KEEP THEM TOGETHER"

Since arriving home, the two couples have continued to see their connection as an essential part of their daughters' lives and they have worked hard to keep their relationship close —no small feat considering they live two hours apart.

"During the first year, we saw each other every other month for birthdays and other gatherings. We stay in each other's houses and try to be there for big events. We all feel like it's our job to keep them together," Melissa says.

Holly says it's been amazing to watch the girls' bond continue to grow and develop over time. "They may be apart for three months and then when they're together it's like they have never been separated."

Dan says they gained more than a daughter through their experience, they gained an extended family. "It's like we won the lottery twice."

## THE 2017 BARKER ADOPTION FOUNDATION STAFF

Alexandra Williams, LGSW	Outreach and Program Support Specialist, PWNL
Ann Morrison, LGSW	Director of Domestic Infant Program
Anna Beers	Executive Assistant
Anne Christman	Director of Development
Betty Betz	International Programs Case Manager
Beverly Clarke LICSW, LCSW-C	Director of PWNL
Charnita Mercer, LGSW	Pregnancy Counselor
Eileen Wharton, LGSW	Child Matching and Family Support Specialist, PWNL
Jenny Beers	Program Assistant, PWNL
Kate Simpson, LGSW	Family Specialist
Kathie Lehner	Senior Program Assistant, Domestic Program
Kathleen Porter	Office Manager/Web Coordinator
Katie Quinn	Program Assistant, International Programs
Lisa Hughes LICSW, LCSW-C	Clinical Specialist, International Programs
Lori Hoffmaster	Director of Development
Margeline Thomas	Digital Marketing and Outreach Manager
Marilyn Regier, Ph.D., LCSW-C	Executive Director & CEO, Retired
Namatie Mansaray	Program Assistant, PWNL
Patricia Sanyer, MPA, LGSW	Pregnancy Counselor
Rebecca York, BSW	Program Assistant, International Programs
Stephany West	Program Assistant, Domestic Program
Susan Baker, CPA	Director of Finance and Administration
Susan Hollar LICSW, LCSW-C	Associate Director, Executive Director
Tina Ji LLM	Director of International Programs
Varda Makovsky, LICSW, LCSW-C	Director of Family & Post Adopt Services

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	Keltie Hawkins, LGSW	Rosalie Daelemans
		Sandy Batton, LICSW, LCSW-C
		Seth Solondz

# DOUG & JULIA

When Doug, a 50-year old adult adoptee, submitted his DNA to a company that promised to determine his ancestry, his expectations were pretty low. As someone who had conducted an extensive, but unsuccessful, search for his birth mother two decades ago, he figured he might receive information about his global origins and not much more.

At first, he was right. The report he was sent mostly described his Irish lineage. It wasn't until he received an email saying he has a half-sibling in California that things became interesting.

## THE BEGINNING

Doug was born in Washington, D.C. in 1967. His birth mother, a young art student who became pregnant during a relationship with a professor at her college, had temporarily moved to the Washington DC-area with her mother to give birth and avoid the scrutiny and judgment from family and friends that were often directed at pregnant, unwed women during that era.

The Barker Adoption Foundation helped place Doug with his adoptive family and he grew up in the Washington suburbs. His father was a prominent lawyer and his mother stayed at home to raise Doug and his older sister.

## UNSUCCESSFUL SEARCH

In the late 1990's as he turned 30, Doug began searching for his birth mother. "Sometimes you hear people talk about having a hole in their heart and for me that was true. I always felt like she was looking for me and I wanted to find her."

The search proved frustrating. "Adoption records in DC were sealed and there wasn't a way to get information from them. I contacted Barker and they sent me a letter with



DOUG'S AUNT MUFFET, DOUG, JULIA

some medical and other information that they had, but there wasn't anything in it that was going to lead me to who I was searching for. I even hired a private investigator, but nothing could be found. Since I didn't get anywhere with it, I kind of put it away and forgot about it," he says.

## SHOCKING NEWS

Receiving the email from the ancestry service brought it all back to the fore. He and his half-sister Nicole, a Californian who was just a year younger, spoke by phone and he learned something so startling it was hard to believe — he and Nicole didn't share a mother, they shared a father and that father was not the professor identified in Doug's records. Instead, it was a man who had played in a band with Doug's birth mother and with whom she had had a brief fling.

Doug was in for more shocks. After he and Nicole pieced together the story, he learned that his birth father had led a colorful life with six or seven marriages behind him, including the one that produced Nicole. Nicole had been

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## SEARCH AND REUNIFICATION ASSISTANCE INQUIRIES

estranged from him for some time, but Doug was able to track him down in Colorado, where he was homeless and living in a storage container. Just three weeks after Doug found him, his birth father died of a heart attack. Doug and Nicole, in their first act as siblings, met in Colorado where they held a memorial service for a man that Doug had not had a chance to know.

## RELAUNCHING THE SEARCH

All of these events made Doug more determined than ever to find his birth mother. He contacted Barker again and began working with staff in the Post-

## OUR SERVICES DO NOT END AT PLACEMENT

We offer lifelong support to all members of the adoption circle whenever it is needed. Our post adoption services are available to any person touched by adoption, even if Barker was not the placing agency.



Adoption Services Program. This time, things were easier. “Barker was able to get DC to unseal my adoption record and then take the search from there.”

Barker staff made contact with Julia, Doug’s birth mother, within just weeks. “Varda Makovsky, head of Barker’s Post-Adoption Services Program, called me and I knew exactly what it was and I was thrilled,” Julia says.

### A WELCOME CONNECTION

Julia recalls her decision to place Doug with an adoptive family. “I was very young and wasn’t prepared to raise him. It was a very difficult decision and Barker was very helpful to me at the time. Over the years, I always wondered and worried and wondered and worried, especially around his birthday, and hoped that he was doing well.”

In 1982, Julia’s mother, who also wondered how Doug was doing, tried to get information, but ran into similar stumbling blocks. “The general message was that if we were going to have any contact, Doug would have to be the one to initiate it,” Julia recalls.

As the years progressed, Julia thought about searching again, but said terror held her back. “I was hoping for it, but was scared of what I might find. I was just sort of paralyzed.”

Against this backdrop, Varda’s call was a welcome one and Julia praises the way Barker connected her with Doug. “They were really sensitive to my feelings and how I might perceive this and were very good at counseling me. I didn’t have any hesitation in moving forward.”

Soon, Julia and Doug were not only talking and texting, but visiting each other on opposite coasts. “I’ve been to see her three times in California where she lives and she has come to DC once. It feels like we’ve been connected all along and we communicate every day.”

One of the first things Doug shared was the news that his birth father wasn’t who Julia thought he was. “That was a shock,” Julia says with understatement. He also introduced her to Nicole, who lives in California too and has since become close with Julia as well. “I love Nicole and her children and her husband

as does my husband. It’s like we’ve gained an entire big family all at once.”

### ACKNOWLEDGING THE RISKS

Doug knows that all reunion experiences are different. “For me, it couldn’t have gone any better, but going in, you have to be careful. My heart would have been broken if Julia had said she couldn’t have a relationship with me. I was fortunate that while she’s now married, she never had any children. It would have been a lot harder if she had five kids after me and then I popped in to her life.”

“I just wish it had been sooner,” he says.

### BLENDING FAMILIES

Doug struggled with when and how to share the news that he had found Julia with his adoptive mother. “My father died at Christmas in 2016 and it was very hard because we were all very close. My mom was just lost without

my dad and when I found Julia just two months later, I didn’t want to tell her because I was worried it would crush her.”

Still, concerned that she might learn about it from someone else, he decided to tell her as gently as he could. This Thanksgiving, Doug and the mother who raised him will travel to California to meet the mother who gave birth to him. “I’m looking very forward to meeting her,” Julia says. “I’m very sensitive to her — she raised him and did the hard work. I am following their lead, but would love to talk to her about Doug’s childhood and learn more about his early years.”

As for Barker, Doug and Julia have nothing but gratitude. “I can never pay the Barker staff back for what they did for me,” Doug says. Julia agrees: “They were wonderful.”

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*We apologize if we have inadvertently omitted a donor name from this list. Please contact us at [achristman@barkerfoundation.org](mailto:achristman@barkerfoundation.org), so that we may correct our records.*

# LARS & MARITA

## Helping Those Who Come Next

When Lars begins to talk about the impact Barker's 2017 Colombia Homeland Tour had on him and his family, his eyes well with tears. He says he had no idea of its likely magnitude when he saw a notice about the tour in a newsletter and asked his daughter if she would like to go as a family as her 30<sup>th</sup> birthday present.

Neither Lars nor Lovisa had been to Colombia since Lars and his first wife, Kerstin, had traveled to Bogota to receive Lovisa in 1987 when she was three months old. Nor had Marita, Lars' second wife and a mother figure to Lovisa from a very young age. None of the three knew what to expect.

### INTENSE AND AFFIRMING

What they found was life-changing. Barker's Colombia Homeland tour includes daily time for adoptees to come together and share their thoughts and emotions around their experiences, both past and present. "It was intense for Lovisa as she hadn't spent much time talking with other adoptees about her adoption before. Being with people who understand your perspective and relate to what you are thinking about it is so important. It was so powerful that Lovisa is now trying to set up a group for adopted adults in the town where she lives so she can help others have a similar experience," Lars said.

It was also intense for Lars and Marita. "Every evening, we would talk together as a family for more than hour and Lovisa would share what she had learned and felt during her meetings with other adoptees. Having those conversations about things we had never talked about or didn't fully understand deepened our relationship," Lars said.

### CONFRONTING FEARS

The couple says the ability to talk with the other parents on the tour about the potential to feel threatened by their child's renewed love for their home country, particularly around adolescence, also was important. Other topics covered by adoptive parents in daily meetings included helping their children incorporate their birth countries and cultures into their identities and the usefulness



of counseling if you hit a rough patch. "It was helpful for people to hear that counseling can be a healthy thing for everyone," Marita notes.

Lars says one of the most poignant moments of the trip came when the group met with a birth mom who had placed her child through an international adoption. "We were sitting in a big circle and she talked about her experience. It was so moving to hear the circumstances of this woman and the sacrifices she was willing to make for the good of her child. It really hit the kids hard to know that the good of the child was the reason for the decision."

Marita believes the birth mother also took away something positive. "She shared that birth mothers fear that their children will hate them forever as they go through life. She learned from the group that that isn't true."

### GIVING BACK

Lars and Marita are at stage in their life when they are thinking about their legacies and what good they can do both now and into the future. After reflecting on their homeland tour experience, they knew that Barker was high on their lists of organizations to support. Lars shares why: "Barker has impacted not just us, but so many families. We believe it's vital to give so other people can benefit

from Barker. It was the generosity of past generations that made it possible for Barker to help build our family and we want to help Barker be there to do the same for others."

### GRATITUDE

There are many different ways to support organizations through wills, retirement distributions, and other planned giving options and we are grateful that Lars and Marita have chosen to honor Barker with their giving. We're also grateful for their enthusiastic affirmation of the work we do on our homeland tours. When asked if they would do the Colombia trip again, they each respond with a resounding "Yes!" This time both have tears in their eyes.

# 100+

PEOPLE WHO ATTEND  
ONE OF OUR FIVE  
MONTHLY SUPPORT  
GROUPS FOR  
INDIVIDUALS WHOSE  
LIVES HAVE BEEN  
TOUCHED BY ADOPTION

# MAKE A GIFT. CHANGE A LIFE.

RACHEL AND BETHANY



## BY MAKING A GIFT IN 2018, YOU CAN HELP US:

- Further strengthen services for families adopting older children
- Increase the availability of post-adoption counseling services for children and adults
- Add support/discussion groups and educational workshops as needs emerge in our community
- Engage hospitals and clinics and other professional caregivers to educate them on the hallmarks of ethical, child-centered adoption and Barker's services

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR GIVING:

- Direct Donations
- Workplace Giving
- In-Kind Gifts
- Matching Gifts
- Stock Donations
- Honor/Memorial Gifts
- Planned Giving
- Volunteer Service
- Donor-Advised Funds
- Minimum distributions from 401(k) and other retirement resources
- AmazonSmiles shopping
- CFC Designation #38308

**ONLY 44% OF OUR OPERATING EXPENSES ARE COVERED BY FEES FOR OUR SERVICES.**

**MEETING THE NEEDS OF OUR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES DEPENDS ON SUPPORT FROM OUR COMMUNITY.**

Please visit our website at [www.barkeradoptionfoundation.org](http://www.barkeradoptionfoundation.org) to make a gift online or to obtain more information. If you have questions, please contact our Director of Development Anne Christman at 301-664-9664 or [achristman@barkerfoundation.org](mailto:achristman@barkerfoundation.org).

# 2017 FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

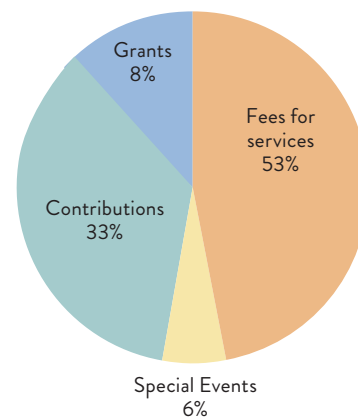
The Barker Adoption Foundation completed 2017 in solid financial condition. Revenue consisted of \$1.2M in program fees for services and \$1.1M in contributions from individuals, family foundations, grantors and special events. Only 44% of Barker's expenses are covered by program fees, making support from donors crucial to our continued success. With a clear dedication to our mission guiding all spending decisions, donors can count on their contributions making a difference in the lives of those we serve, with 86 cents of every dollar going towards our programs.

The continued growth of The Friends of Barker endowment campaign *Legacy II: The Next Generation* has helped to ensure Barker's financial stability. A percentage of the investment income from the endowment funds are distributed semi-annually to the Foundation to help support Barker's operations. In 2017, the amount contributed to Barker was \$394,332. The dedication and generosity of the families and friends of Barker that made this operating support possible will enable Barker to continue to provide its comprehensive, lifelong adoption services for generations to come.

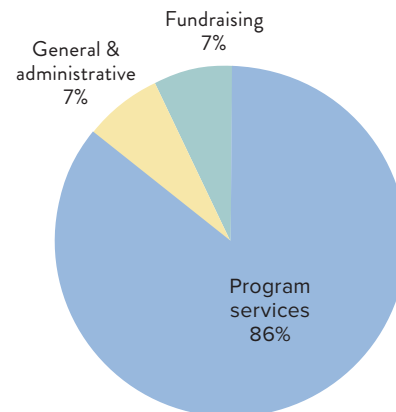
## CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

Year Ended December 31, 2017	The Barker Adoption Foundation	Friends of Barker, Inc.	Total
<b>SUPPORT AND REVENUE</b>			
Fees for services	\$ 1,220,033		\$ 1,220,033
Grants	179,000		179,000
Contributions	761,724	\$ 301,588	1,063,312
Special Events	134,025		134,025
Revenue	2,294,782	301,588	2,596,370
Investment income net of fees	43,833	1,933,153	1,976,986
Friends of Barker Contribution to Barker	394,332	(394,332)	-
Other	21,975	-	21,975
Total Revenue	2,754,922	1,840,409	4,595,331
<b>EXPENSES</b>			
Program services	2,360,141	-	2,360,141
General & administrative	190,262	5,112	195,374
Fundraising	191,424	-	191,424
Total Expenses	2,741,827	5,112	2,746,939
Change in Net Assets	13,095	1,835,297	1,848,392
Net Assets - beginning of year	434,357	10,483,462	10,917,819
Net Assets - end of year	\$ 447,452	\$ 12,318,759	\$ 12,766,211

## THE BARKER ADOPTION FOUNDATION REVENUE



## THE BARKER ADOPTION FOUNDATION EXPENSES



7979 Old Georgetown Road  
First Floor  
Bethesda, MD 20814

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#### ACCREDITATIONS AND AFFILIATIONS

The Barker Adoption Foundation is licensed in the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia. The agency is Hague-accredited through the Council on Accreditation (COA) and a member of the National Council for Adoption, Local Independent Charities, the Maryland Coalition for Adoption, the Maryland Association of Non-Profit Organizations, the North American Council on Adoptable Children, the Virginia Association of Licensed Child Placing Agencies, and featured in the 2017/2018 Catalogue for Philanthropy as "One of the best small charities in the Greater Washington Region."

Photographs courtesy of Barker families and Maureen Minehan. Annual Report written by Maureen Minehan. Design by Havit Advertising. Printing by HBP, Inc.

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