



2020 ANNUAL REPORT

THE
BARKER
ADOPTION
FOUNDATION since 1945

75 YEARS OF
RESILIENCE + HEART



Dear Friends,

2020 was one of the most memorable years in The Barker Adoption Foundation's history, and it was truly a great example of 75 years of resiliency and heart. We both celebrated and reflected as we reached this important milestone marking decades of dedicated service to the community. Since its founding in 1945, Barker has evolved from a traditional domestic infant-placing adoption agency into a highly regarded, comprehensive adoption center offering a full range of lifetime support for the children, youth, adults, and families we serve. Ruth and Richard Barker, who founded the agency, would be amazed and proud of the legacy they created.

2020 was also the year of COVID-19, the pandemic generating great uncertainty and unimaginable anxiety around the globe. It was the year that country borders closed, slowing international adoptions to a crawl. Access to local hospitals that support birth parents became far more difficult. Family courts shut down and on reopening were faced with huge backlogs, creating delays in adoption proceedings. In domestic adoptions, referrals to families from agencies outside the area slowed. Youth who had eagerly anticipated leaving foster care forever and joining their Barker adoptive family had their Barker family placements delayed because of travel concerns.

However, the Barker community came through as always, which is also how 2020 will be remembered. For example, our 75th anniversary celebration at the French embassy in May had to be moved online—yet incredibly, those who'd sponsored the live event gave what they'd promised and sometimes more, without the benefit of an Embassy experience. We actually exceeded our 2020 fundraising goals.

Barker staff made extraordinary efforts to keep the work going. We moved many services online with minimal content change, and the number of attendees at some trainings, information sessions, and support groups hit new highs. We expanded our post-adoption counseling services, and almost 200 people attended Project Wait No Longer information sessions to find out about adopting an older child from the U.S. foster care system. As a result, the number of applications for older children hit an all-time high.

Perhaps most important, 51 children joined permanent, loving families through Barker in 2020 because of the tremendous generosity of those who continue to support our mission, especially during seasons of uncertainty.

That Barker survived and even thrived in 2020 gives us confidence that we will truly be here for generations to come. We are grateful to all of those in our community who make our work possible.

Susan Hollar
Executive Director & CEO

Gary Diamond
Chair, Board of Trustees

Cover: River
Left: Haram



Susan Hollar
Executive Director & CEO



Gary Diamond
Chair, Board of Trustees

Officers and Trustees of The Barker Adoption Foundation

MAY 2020-MAY 2021

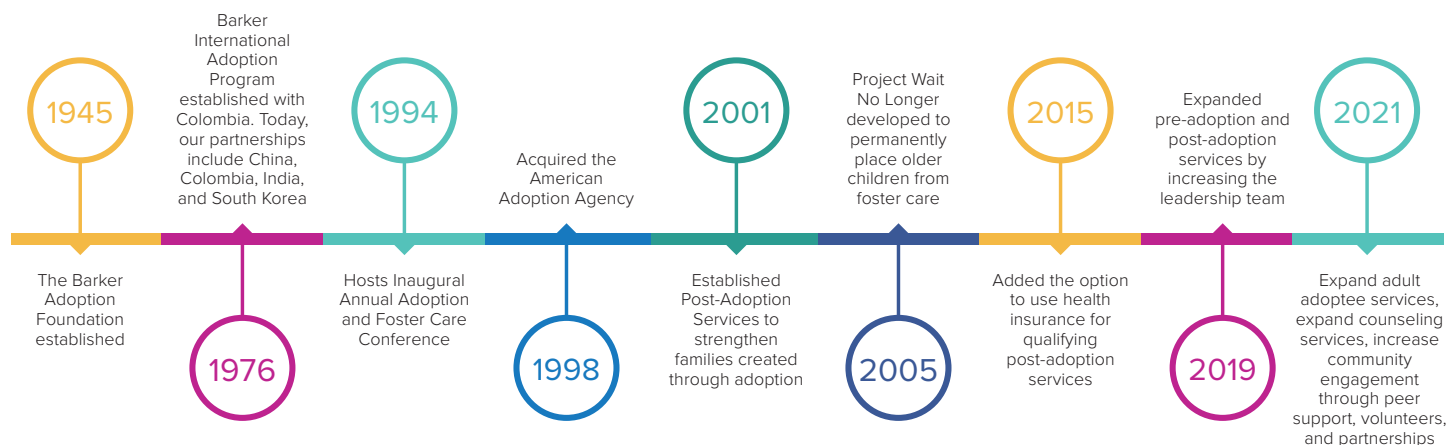
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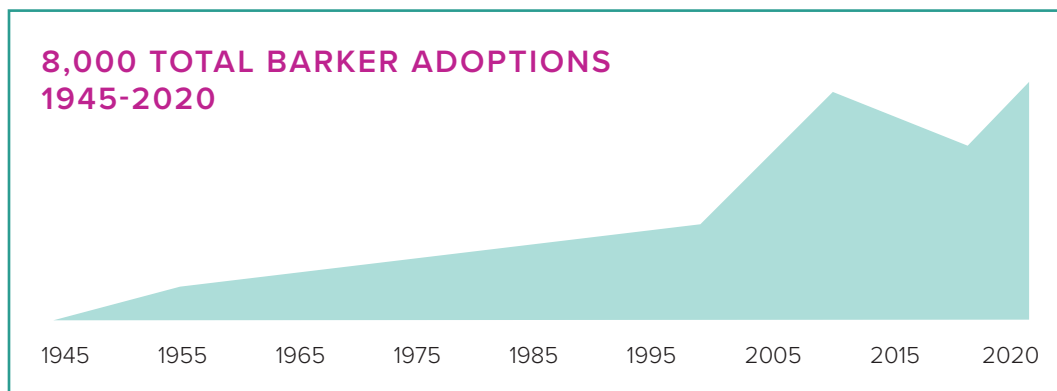
75 Years of Resilience + Heart

The Barker Adoption Foundation is one of the oldest adoption agencies in the country and a leader in nonprofit, ethical adoption. The agency was established in 1945 in the living room of Ruth and Richard Barker, who believed strongly in providing unconditional love and permanency to infants of unmarried military women.

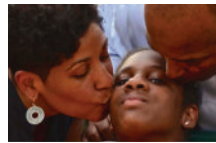
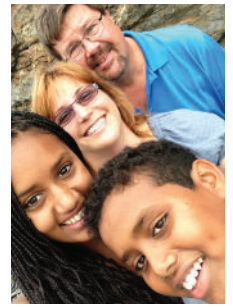
Our services have grown over the years to reflect the needs of birth mothers, children, families, and adult adoptees. Barker started international adoptions beginning in 1976 and post-adoption services in 2001. We expanded significantly over the years, including growing our counseling and adult adoptees services and in 2005 launching Project Wait No Longer to permanently place older children from foster care.



Barker's impact is much larger than our small size would suggest.



Some of the many Barker families with resilience + heart, 1945 to today.



The Barker Adoption Foundation Mission

Barker provides lifelong services for all in the adoption constellation and advocates for ethical, respectful, and child-centered adoption practices.

“Barker has a responsibility to be a lifetime resource for the children we are placing today. Our vision is to be a key part of the adoption community for future generations.”

– Sue Hollar, Executive Director & CEO

Barker Offers:



ADOPTEES

- Project Wait No Longer
- Mental health counseling
- Kids groups
- Pre-teen and teen groups
- Search and reunion
- Heritage/Homeland tours
- Discussion groups
- Workshops/Conference

“What we need is someone who will be there when it matters.”

– Samuel, adoptee



BIRTH PARENTS

- Crisis pregnancy counseling
- Post Adoption Counseling
- Support group
- Cradle Care
- Facilitated visitation with birth child and adoptive family
- Search and reunion
- Workshops/Conference

“Barker will provide you with community and family, with people who are truly listening to you and asking what your needs are...these people do exist and they are at Barker.”

– Aaren, birth mother



ADOPTIVE FAMILIES

- Mental health counseling
- Support groups
- Affinity groups (new parents, transracial parents)
- Heritage/Homeland tours
- Workshops/Conference

“In the same way that adoption is a lifelong, loving commitment to a child, so too is the commitment that Barker makes to every family. Their caring team of post-adopt professionals has been there for us as our family and its needs have grown and changed over time.”

– Steve and Todd,
adoptive parents

What Makes The Barker Adoption Foundation Unique

75 YEARS OF RESILIENCE + HEART

For 75 years, Barker has sought to ensure that every child has the loving and unconditional support of a permanent family.

- Ethical, respectful, caring, personalized support for birth mothers and their families, adopted children and adopted adults, and parents of all adopted children
 - Focus on children's safety, stability, health, and happiness throughout their journey
 - Inclusive and welcoming to all types of families and all types of children: single, married, LGBTQ, straight, all races, all ethnic origins, all abilities, all religions, all welcome
 - Individual and group counseling provided for birth mothers, prospective adoptive families, children, teens, and adult adoptees at every step of the journey, from initial interest and application to home study and waiting to match and post-adoption
 - Insurance accepted for counseling
- Project Wait No Longer, an innovative program to match and place foster care children who are at risk of aging out of the system and suffering the often-harsh circumstances that result from aging out
 - Broad post-adoption services that are open to all whether adopted through Barker or not, to support all in the adoption circle through lifelong education, training, and counseling



Abby, Felix and Matt



Barker families gather for a Barker picnic

What We've Achieved with Resilience + Heart

“That Barker survived and even thrived in 2020 gives us confidence that we will truly be here for generations to come.”

– Sue Hollar, Executive Director & CEO

► Creating Forever Families

51 children placed with permanent, loving families



26 infants through the Domestic Infant Program

4 older children from the U.S. public foster care system through Project Wait No Longer

21 children from Korea, India, and Thailand through the International Program

► Offering Support to All in the Adoption Circle

704 people participated in individual post-adoption counseling sessions

75% of individual post-adoption counseling sessions were covered by insurance

349 people participated in parent workshops, webinars, events, and children's groups

335 people attended a waiting-parent meeting

322 people participated in our virtual Adoption and Foster Care Conference

59 pregnant women received counseling, along with their partners and other family members

41 adopted children and teens attended a kids or teen group to share their experiences

18 children were served through Cradle Care, which provides interim care during the adoption revocation period

► Reaching New Forever Families

179 people attended a Project Wait No Longer information session about adopting an older child from the U.S. foster care system

82 People joined a virtual international adoption information session

27* applications were received from individuals and couples wishing to adopt an older child from U.S. foster care



142 people attended a virtual adoption open house

*a new record

156 people attended an international adoption webinar

Forever Families with Resilience + Heart

In the following pages, some of our families share their adoption stories and offer a glimpse into their personal challenges and journeys. All have overcome difficulties with compassion, love, resilience and heart.

Project Wait No Longer: adopting children from foster care

► Did you know?

- In the United State, 442,000 children are in foster care
- 24,000 young people age out of foster care each year
- These young people experience very poor outcomes at a much higher incidence than the general population, facing higher rates of criminal conviction and jail, substance abuse, homelessness, unemployment, public assistance, and involvement in the child welfare system
- A child's chance of being adopted decreases by 50% after age 10
- More than 1 in 5 will become homeless after age 18
- Only 58% will graduate high school by age 19, compared with 87% of all 19-year olds
- Fewer than 3% will earn a college degree by 25, compared to 28% of all 25-year olds



Ameerah, Kayla, Anne, Herman



Tammy, Jamie, James



Adam, Caleb, Rob

Resilience + Heart

Project Wait No Longer

INSIDE WILLIAM AND RAMOND'S BANTER, A STRONG BOND

Spend any time with William and his adopted son Ramond, age 14, and it doesn't take long to figure out what they share.

They first met via FaceTime back in December 2019. What did Ramond think?

"I said, ok he's not really funny, but he tries hard so I'll give him that," says Ramond.

Were they nervous? "I was a little nervous because I think, you know, I was a little bit intimidating," says William.

"He's not intimidating," says Ramond.

For William the road to finding Ramond took 3½ years. **"Even though it took a long time, I feel like he is the right child for our family," says William.**

William was previously married and always liked kids, but his former wife didn't want children. They had a good marriage though they ended up getting divorced.

William, an optometrist, was getting close to retiring after 20 years in the Navy and, back in the fall of 2017, decided to pursue adoption.

He was interested in an older child because he was older himself and had cousins and extended family who also were older. With respect to his preferred age range, "I told the adoption agency, 'I want a kid who doesn't believe in Santa Claus but isn't yet driving,'" says William, grinning.

A social worker told him about The Barker Adoption Foundation's Project Wait No Longer, which connects older children in public foster care systems with parents interested in adopting. That appealed to William: the other agencies he knew of mostly worked with infant

adoptions. **"Barker was just very open, very willing. Project Wait No Longer just seemed ideal for me."**

He contacted Barker, and Barker staff got him started on the list of to-do's that are part of the application and home study process. William was approved to move forward, and he worked with a Barker social worker to start the search. They spent quite some time over several interviews discussing what he was looking for and the type of child who might be good a fit.

One day Barker's social worker came across a profile that seem like a match. It was Ramond, who was living with a foster family in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

Ramond had made a video, and William was impressed: "I saw him and I was like, you know, he's sharp."

That prompted William to make his own video: he talked about himself and his family, showed the house, showed the room that would be Ramond's if they became family, and more. And those introductory FaceTime meetings went well.

Then COVID-19 hit, and everything slowed down. William and Ramond didn't let the time go to waste: they talked on the phone about once a week getting to know one another.

Next was figuring out a visit—the airlines were mostly shut down. So William drove the 18 hours to Baton Rouge.

He and Ramond got on well. They toured a Navy ship, went to a museum, and did "touristy" things for a few days. "Plus I showed him up in mini-golf and then in bowling," William says.

Next, Ramond's social worker scheduled him to come visit William in southern Maryland in July.

When Ramond's social worker called to ask Ramond if he wanted to go back to Louisiana, he said no. So that visit ended up turning into an official placement. Their

adoption was finalized in early May of 2020, though they've been family for months.

They really chose each other, Ramond says. He'd been presented with other potential parents but picked William.

William learned a few lessons along the way that he thinks other parents looking to adopt might benefit from. Several times, he learned to manage the roller coaster of emotions of seeing a child who might be a good fit, getting excited, and then finding out that they might not be the best match.

Of the 3½-year process, slowed partly because of COVID, William says: "I was feeling a little bit impatient. But at the same time, I kind of just accepted that, you know, it is what it is. Let the process run out. Things will happen when the time is right."

He also took advantage of Barker's support groups for waiting parents and for parents of adopted teens and encourages other adoptive parents to take advantage of those and other groups when they're waiting. "You can sort of cry on each other's shoulders from time to time and hear stories that make your situation not seem so bad sometimes. It's a really good source of support."

He's also taken a lot of online webinars about parenting since he's a new parent, which helps him recognize what's normal teen behavior.

"I think I remember the first day I yelled at him," says William. It was last fall when school first started. "It was over school stuff. He said he was not going to go to school" (which was virtual).

"And I said, 'nobody can do anything about it,'" fills in Ramond. "But I was joking about that!"

"You were not joking," says William.

"I was joking!" protests Ramond. "And guess what—if I didn't want to go, I wouldn't have gone. That's how you could tell it was a joke because I went."

"You can't 'make' this kid do anything," says William, grinning. Really though, 8 months into the school year, Ramond is up and ready for school before William gets

up. "He can be very disciplined," says William. "I think we do have pretty good communication."

And the pandemic has had some benefits. It's let them spend a lot more time together since they haven't been able to get out to see many other people and go a lot of places. "It's almost like being married to somebody," says Ramond, under his breath.

"We are married!" says William. "That's what happens when you join a family!"

William said he sometimes wondered whether Ramond liked being there since he doesn't show much emotion. Ramond agrees: "You never really see me getting all excited or disappointed."

But then he adds: "I like being here. I wouldn't want to be anywhere else. So, yeah, I don't really show it that much, but it's true."



Right: William and Ramond

Resilience + Heart

Project Wait No Longer

A FAMILY IS NOT ABOUT DNA BUT ABOUT LOVE AND CARE

Families take many forms. The one that Donovan and his adopted son Noel have begun has a bond as strong as any.

“When we met it was just like we had known each other for the longest time,” says Donovan. “The great part is that we never really had any awkward moments—it was like it was meant to be.”

Donovan, who lived in Washington D.C.’s Virginia suburbs, had always wanted to adopt. His grandparents had adopted his own mother and uncle. Though he never got the opportunity to meet his grandparents, “I always appreciated that they gave my mom and uncle a life and an opportunity to do something good with themselves, with parents,” he says.

In 2018, he turned 44 and decided it was now or never. He started to look at local agencies and noticed that The Barker Adoption Foundation was having an information meeting in a couple of weeks. After attending he got started in making a new family a reality, working through Barker’s Project Wait No Longer, which connects older children in foster care to forever families.

He liked that Barker’s web portal explained the adoption process in a straightforward way—it has clear checklists and explanations of what to submit and how, he says. Barker staff kept following up to check how he was doing in getting information together for his home study and whether he had questions. **“I felt like they walked me through the process,” he says.**

After approval came a glitch. He wanted to move from his Virginia condo to a house in Crofton, Maryland, to give his family-to-be more space. But changing states also meant he had to re-do his home study.

After the second approval, the next challenge was waiting for a match. “Sometimes you feel like ‘did

I say something wrong or did I do something wrong or did I not describe myself well enough in the documentation?’” he says looking back.

In early 2020, he was starting to read about kids he might be matched with. Initially he was looking at children ages 8 to 12. But when he read the profile of a 13-year-old boy in Alabama, he expanded his age range. “I saw his case, and I felt really connected to him somehow. I could see a little bit of me in his writeup,” says Donovan. Both shared Latino culture and a love for Latin American food, shopping, and sports.

Noel was living in a group home in Alabama with nine other children. “I describe myself as a fun and loving boy ready to experience life and its many possibilities,” he writes now of his experience. “My journey has not always been fun or an easy one.”

He was 10 years old when he and his three younger sisters were placed in foster care. **“It was a difficult road for us, changing schools and homes, and many times I wondered where life would lead us,” he writes.** Noel liked the fact that Donovan’s case file noted that adoption had been part of Donovan’s family culture.

The two started meeting over video once a week, and they hit it off.

In July 2020 Donovan flew to meet Noel in Dothan, Alabama, and rented an Airbnb “to feel what it would be like sharing space in a home, rather than being in a hotel room,” says Donovan.

They were both nervous meeting in person for the first time. They did some hiking and bowling, played card and board games, went to an air and space museum, raced mini-carts, and watched movies. Donovan asked Noel if he’d ever grilled on a barbecue—he hadn’t. So Donovan said, “OK, you’re going to cook dinner today. I’ll walk you through all the steps, from preparing to grilling to serving.” And Noel did.



Donovan and Noel

Three weeks later Noel came to Maryland to visit, which Noel says was even more fun because they went to Six Flags America, the National Harbor in Maryland, the Maryland State Capitol, and some of D.C.'s monuments. Right before he got on the plane, Noel thought he was headed for Washington State, not Washington, D.C. His social worker re-situated his geography, showing him where Maryland is.

Noel felt he had found family. **“I was always looking for the right person to come into my life, spend quality time with me, and create lasting memories,”** he writes of his experience. **“When I met my dad, I quickly learned we had a connection I felt like never before.”**

Only a few weeks after that, Noel came to Maryland for good with all his belongings. Donovan had gotten his room ready—his paint color, the furniture and lighting he wanted, picture frames he could use to put his record covers on the wall. It had been sad for Noel to leave his sisters and friends at the group home in Alabama. But when he walked into his forever home for the first time, “It felt normal. It felt like home,” he says.

Nine months later in May of 2021, he was finishing up 8th grade and had made honor roll all three semesters of his first academic year in Maryland—the first time he'd ever made honor roll. In English, he's got a perfect 100 average, and his teachers moved him up into AP English for the coming year (he's already in AP Spanish). Math used to be a struggle, but with tutoring from Donovan and other friends, Noel is excelling.

“I think having the stability of a supportive parent and not having to worry about everything going on in his

group home or if and when another move is coming, gives him time to concentrate on himself and school,” says Donovan. **“I think that's why he's succeeding.”**

Since both of them had to work from home during the pandemic, they had a lot of time together. “I think it's helped with us getting closer and bonding a lot better and being able to understand each other's limits,” says Donovan.

What helped Donovan through the adoption process? “Patience,” he says. “Let the process work—there's no specific timeframe.” And every adoption is different so you can't compare your experience to that of others, he adds. It was useful to attend Barker's Annual Adoption & Foster Care Conference, he says. “Just hearing the different perspectives, the different things that people experience, helped a lot.”

Ideally, Donovan would have liked to adopt Noel's siblings too—to mirror what his grandparents had done for his mother and uncle. But by the time Donovan found Noel, they'd been adopted.

So the process isn't over: starting in fall 2021, Donovan is planning to start again, looking for a sibling or two for Noel. “We'll see where it goes,” he says.

In the meantime, they're a strong family. “My dream and prayers for finding the right parent(s) has come true,” writes Noel. “To anyone who may be reading this, I say keep positive and fighting for what you believe in. **A family is not about DNA, but about the love and care you feel and build together.”**



Noel

Resilience + Heart

Domestic

ACTS OF LOVE AND THE GIFT OF ADOPTION

Dan and Bethany Meola of Bowie, Maryland, were married in 2011 and hoped to have kids right away. That didn't happen, so a couple of years into their marriage they started thinking about adoption as a way to grow their family.

After talking to adoptive parents and reading as many books and blogs as they could, they started attending information sessions, including one offered by The Barker Adoption Foundation.

They decided that adoption was the path for them. In 2015, they went through a home study—which included relocating since they weren't sure that the basement apartment where they lived at the time would pass muster. After a wait of a little over a year, they were matched with their daughter Zelig-Louise in 2017, 2 months before she was born.

When the big day arrived, Bethany got to be in the operating room and Dan gave Zelig her first bath in the recovery room. Also important was getting to meet both birth parents, an experience that has forever shaped Dan and Bethany. Zelig's parents told them that day that they were grateful to place their daughter in their care, "so you can give her the life that we can't provide for her." Today Dan reflects on that moment: "It was just so humbling—it was an act of love. She wasn't an unwanted child."

Next they wanted to find a sibling for Zelig, so the following year they started on the paperwork toward another adoption.

This experience would be a bit different. After they were approved came a 9-month wait. On September 30, 2019, Bethany got a call from Barker. A girl had been born and was in a nearby hospital in the neonatal intensive care unit. Bethany set up a three-way call with Dan, who was at work. "I think this could be a good fit,"

the Barker social worker told them. "What do you guys think?"

They talked about it and said yes. The same day, the birth mother said yes too.

The next day they went to the hospital. The girl who would become Grace was 9 days old and weighed about 5 pounds. "I just remember seeing her and thinking, 'She's so tiny,' and just being amazed. Like, 'Oh my gosh, we didn't even know about you. And here you are,'" says Bethany.

They spent time sitting with Grace—cuddling, singing, telling her about their family. "At that point there was literally nothing to do but sit and snuggle," says Bethany. "So it was a very special time together." They also got to meet volunteers who had taken care of Grace during the period after she was born. "The love that people poured into her from the very beginning was a really amazing part of the experience," she says.

By October 9 Grace was cleared to come home with them.

It had all happened so fast, Bethany remembers. She and Dan had gone away for the weekend just prior to getting the call, so it was lucky they'd had a chance to relax—not knowing they'd have a newborn the next week. "That's definitely a funny thing about some adoptions," says Bethany. "It's not like with pregnancy where you have some sense of when the baby's going to arrive. And that's what we experienced with Grace."

They have an open adoption with Zelig and a closed adoption with Grace, both the preferences of their birth mothers. Zelig's mom sends her gifts on Christmas and at her birthday, and they talk to her over Skype. "I'm sure we'll be coming back to Barker in a couple of years to say, all right, give us some intel, because both Zelig and Grace are adopted, but they're having some pretty different experiences," says Bethany.



Dan, Bethany, Grace, and Zelie

The pandemic has given the family a lot of time together in 2020 and 2021. “All the family time actually has been a blessing,” says Bethany. Because Dan could work from home, the kids are now a little confused when he goes to work. “Like, where are you going, Daddy?”

Dan and Bethany say their adoption journey has taught them a number of lessons.

One is how they view their experience of infertility. “We’ve felt really helped by Barker in that regard,” says Bethany. “They encouraged us to acknowledge the grief of infertility and that it may not ever fully go away, while also having great excitement and joy about pursuing adoption. Those these two things can coexist. I just thought that was very freeing.”

Adds Dan: “I think our infertility has made us more grateful, made us appreciate more deeply every day the gift of children. Because otherwise we wouldn’t have had the gift of adoption.”

Adoption also was a lesson in releasing control. “Adoption involves a lot of waiting and uncertainty,” says Bethany. “We’re both Catholic, and our faith had a role to play in that for us. Everyone has to figure out ‘What do I do with this time of waiting and uncertainty?’” she says.

Meeting birth parents up close also has given them a lot of compassion for what birth mothers go through. “Remembering that helped us not center on ourselves so much—like we’re not the most important people here,” says Bethany.

And Dan appreciates that Barker has helped guide them on talking about adoption with their kids—treating it as a regular part of their lives so that there’s no stigma involved. Instead, “It’s a proud fact of their existence,” says Dan.

They’ve also learned to push back when they hear adoption discussed as a form of charity or social work. They get lots of questions about open adoption too—especially because they have one open and one closed adoption. “The relationship that Zelie hopefully will be able to have with her birth family is just so valuable,” says Bethany. That’s not to say that it’s effortless—it has its challenging moments. “But it’s such a unique relationship with the adoptive family and the birth family and so worth the effort when it can happen,” she adds.

Bethany says she’s really happy to have two kids who are adopted. “They can be each other’s buddies. It’s been really cool to see them play together more and really be sisters.”

“None of us are related biologically,” she adds. “But we’re a family.”



Grace and Zelie

Resilience + Heart

Domestic

AFTER SIX FALSE STARTS, “THE BEST THING THAT EVER HAPPENED TO ME”

In January 2019, then-47-year-old Lisa of Silver Spring was 2 months from adopting a baby. The child she'd been matched with would be born to a birth mother and father who'd both selected Lisa. With the baby 7 months along, Lisa had a mile-long to-do list for what she'd need to be ready. She told her family the good news.

Then she got a call. The baby had been born 2 months prematurely. That was a shock, but the baby would be ok and the birth mother had signed the paperwork. Lisa went to the hospital and got introduced to the team caring for them.

Just 24 hours later, she got another call—the adoption was off. The birth father had changed his mind and wanted to parent.

“I was numb,” says Lisa. “It was probably the hardest thing I've ever experienced in my life. I don't consider myself an overly outward emotional person, but this process tapped into every emotion you can imagine.”

It was the first of six matches that wouldn't end in adoption. But today, she says, it was all meant to be.

In 2016 she'd been teaching a class at American University as part of her job as an administrator there. During an icebreaker, someone shared that she'd adopted a son from Korea. Chatting with the woman later, Lisa told her she'd always wanted to adopt but thought she'd wait till she was married.

“Why do you have to wait to be married?” the woman asked. “You can adopt as a single person.” Lisa had never considered the possibility, and it got her thinking.

Her acquaintance had adopted through The Barker Adoption Foundation and told her about the agency. Together they attended a Barker Adoption Information



Lisa and Kobe

Meeting. Lisa loved what she heard. “I'll always be thankful for Andrea because she was the one who pushed me in that direction,” she says.

After that first match in 2019 fell through, Lisa had to acknowledge her own hurt and confusion and let others help her. She'd usually been in the supportive role herself, assisting others in getting through hard times. “I actually like to help people with their own stuff,” she says.

No death had been involved in that first match, but the same sadness and feeling of loss accompanied it. Lisa didn't question whether adoption was for her, but she recognized that it would be a process, not a straight line. She wanted to figure out how to protect herself a bit better. As part of that, she determined she wouldn't tell family members the next time she was matched, so as not to raise expectations.

She also needed to figure out how to deal with the feeling of loss in a way that was productive and healthy. She journaled. **She talked to friends. Barker staff introduced her to people who'd also had matches fall through. She attended a Barker support group for prospective adoptive parents who are single.**

Her Barker social worker asked whether she wanted to take a break from the adoption process. Lisa said no. “I told myself, ‘The only way you're going to learn how to ride a horse is if you get back on it, so get back on it,’” she says.

All those decisions would serve her well: over the next 17 months, five more matches followed. Of those,

match number 6 was the hardest. The baby was born, but on day 22 of the 30-day revocation period, the birth mother decided to parent. “You finally start to breathe and you feel like, ‘OK, this is going to happen.’ You know that you’ve still got another week or so, but you’ve made it past 3 weeks. And you say, ‘There’s no way it’s not going to happen.’ And then it didn’t happen,” she says.

She understood the context too. Barker supported both birth mothers and adoptive parents in their decisions. “If the baby can be with the biological family, that’s always the win,” she says. “But if not, there’s also a win for a baby who can be placed with a family who wants to love them.”

Then one day last July, she got a call from her Barker social worker. “Lisa, it’s finally happening,” she heard on the phone. “I’ve been matched again?” Lisa asked, while inside she was thinking, “Here we go again.”

What came next would change her life. “No, actually effective 30 minutes ago, the revocation has expired and you can pick up your baby boy.” This time the baby’s mother had selected Lisa, but Barker had waited till the 30-day revocation period ended to tell her she’d been selected—the staff didn’t want her to be disappointed again.

“I truly appreciate that they did that,” she says. “I will never forget that day. It was like slow motion. Everything went real slow for like an hour.”

She rushed with friends to baby stores, spending 3 hours getting the house ready to bring home the baby, named Kobe. It was in Buy Buy Baby that someone said to her, “The most important thing to this baby right now is that you’re there to love him. He doesn’t care about blankets, he doesn’t care about onesies. He doesn’t care about any of that stuff.” That gave Lisa permission to breathe.

Ten months later, she can reflect on the 5 years since she started. “Kobe is my child. So that means that everything that came before was part of the journey and it would not have fit. He fits. He even looks like my mom, which is kind of scary,” she says.

The road there gave her insights for others. “Don’t let rejection talk you out of your dream,” she says. And

she recommends prospective parents take advantage of Barker’s resources. Her social worker told her frequently that if she needed to process feelings, she’d be happy to talk. “I would say, ‘No, not right now,’” says Lisa. “But I always went back.”

She also appreciates that Barker staff “really took the time to get to know me, the person,” she says. **“The folks there have such a high sensitivity to their clients, and they’re there to offer support.** [My social worker] treated me like a sister, someone who just was rooting for me, who was listening to me, who was really trying to think about what I needed to feel good about this situation. Barker’s Director of Domestic Adoptions and the Pregnancy Counselor & Family Support Specialist also were extremely supportive of me throughout this process.”

Today Kobe is 10 months old, and someone recently asked how she was feeling since he came home. “I said, ‘I don’t want to imagine life before him. All I want to imagine is life with him, because before him there was a piece of me that wasn’t complete,’” Lisa says. **“He truly has been the best thing that ever happened to me.”**



Lisa and Kobe

Resilience + Heart

International

IT WAS LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT

Lots of people have adopted internationally. Very few can say they did so in the teeth of the COVID epidemic. In that small group are Ilinca and Damien of Germantown, Maryland.

Ilinca and Damien had decided to adopt years ago. After settling into life following long, demanding educations and early professional lives, by late 2017 they were ready to make it happen. “We knew we could provide the opportunity for a child to grow up in a happy, loving, and caring environment,” says Damien.

They had heard good things about The Barker Adoption Foundation through friends and in January 2018 went to Barker’s office to get the process started. They wanted to adopt from Korea given some personal connections. They found Barker’s early training sessions valuable, helping temper their expectations about how long the process would take and offering practical tips on what to expect as first-time parents, says Damien.

Next came the home-study hurdles. There was the home visit—would their beloved dog behave? He did, sitting quietly next to the Barker social worker and seeming to know it was an important moment. There was the psychological evaluation—a 4-hour test that felt like one of the longest exams in their lives. There were the background checks, the home fire safety inspection, and the medical exams.

For them perhaps the toughest piece was the form asking about which health conditions they’d be comfortable with in an adoptive child. “That was the hardest to fill out because our hearts were open—if we had all the money in the world, I would love to just adopt any child,” says Ilinca. “But we had to come to peace with ourselves. We had to be realistic, but it’s hard to say no to certain criteria.”

Next came the waiting for a match, which for them turned out to be about 10 months. The wait became

tougher after they got to about 6 months and started hearing of other families getting matched. “You asked yourself: what’s wrong, what’s going on?” says Damien. But what helped was attending Barker seminars and having support groups for prospective parents. “If you can meet just one other couple you can be friends with, that will get you through,” says Damien.

Then came the call from the Barker social worker in May 2019. Ilinca was at work in her office when it came, and a Barker social worker was on the line telling her, “Happy Mother’s Day!” It was the day after Mother’s Day, and she wasn’t yet a mother, “but that’s the best call you could ever get,” Ilinca says.

They’d been matched with a child in Korea and went to the Barker office to take a look at his packet. The staff advised them to read the information about him before they looked at photos. But Ilinca and Damien couldn’t help themselves, and the first one they saw was a 7-month-old boy in a chair in a Gap onesie, smiling.

“That was really it,” says Damien. “It was love at first sight.” They said yes.

Normally the next step would involve two trips to Korea: one to meet their prospective son and go to court and the other to take custody of their child. But it was now early spring 2020, the pandemic had just hit, and the court date was set for April 27, 2020. The choices weren’t easy. What would infection rates be like in Korea by the time they needed to travel? Would they be able to get back to the United States? If they waited, would their prospective son still be available for adoption?

They decided to forge ahead. Korea had a strict 2-week quarantine for any arriving visitors from abroad, which made two separate trips not feasible. So they decided to do a single 6-week trip. Damien could work from Korea; Ilinca would have to take time off. But their work teams were supportive. The court date got pushed off till June 19.



Ilinca, Aiden, Damien

They flew to Seoul and immediately were put on a bus to the quarantine hotel. “You roll your suitcases into that room, the door closes behind you, and you know the next time you’ll get out is 2 weeks from now,” says Ilinca. Their coffee table became a desk. The hallway to the bathroom became a yoga spot. They were served three meals a day from people in full hazmat gear. “We had to keep in mind that the only reason we were there is the child, not our comfort,” says Ilinca.

A few weeks later, they were off to meet their prospective adoptive son Aidan at the offices of Barker’s partner adoption agency in Korea. When they arrived, a family was already in the lobby. It was Aidan’s foster family, and Aidan—there he was. On the way up to the social worker’s office, Aidan grabbed Damien’s legs and held on.

All of the paperwork had been done prior to the trip and was ready. “The agency had everything ready. All we had to do was show up and follow directions,” says Ilinca. “We didn’t have to worry about a single paper.”

After that came the court hearing, which involved more questions and went longer than they’d expected. But Ilinca and Damien had been prepared for tough questions, and they got through it. They waited for final custody for a couple of weeks and visited Aidan two more times.

Then the day came. At the agency office, they hugged the foster care family goodbye. And then they were in the elevator, alone with Aidan.

“We got out of the building and were waiting for the cab and it’s like, ‘OK, we are his parents. We’re responsible

for him now,’” says Ilinca. Damien suddenly realized he’d never changed a diaper. “I was like ‘Oh my God, am I going to be up to par? How am I going to do that? Am I going to know when he’s hungry?’” But their natural instincts kicked in.

Soon they were flying back home to Germantown, and when they got there, they were greeted by a house festooned with balloons and a stack of Uber Eats gift cards, both courtesy of their neighbors.

Aidan cried a little more than usual during those first days, a reaction Ilinca thought was natural for a child who’d just experienced such a big transition. But the isolation forced by the pandemic let them have lots of time to bond. A couple of weeks after they were back, they prepared Korean food and Aidan had a huge appetite. That was the moment that Damien thought they’d settled into a real routine at home.

By July 2021, Aidan was now a “terrible 2 toddler,” says Ilinca. “He’s a master negotiator. We’ll say, ‘You get to bring two toys upstairs’ and he says, ‘Four toys.’” And they’ll settle on three. The same happens with bedtimes.

All of that is part of being a family. “Aidan is a wonderful, smart, and amazingly resilient child,” says Damien.



Aidan

Resilience + Heart

International

AN ADOPTION AND A RETURN HOME

When Dorothy and Peter started the adoption process in 2015, they weren't expecting it would involve Peter reconnecting with the story of his own adoption.

They'd waited to start the adoption journey till Dorothy, a doctor, finished her residency and they'd done some planning and saving. They knew they wanted to adopt from Korea: Peter had been born there in 1982 and adopted by an American couple.

They began scouting out the adoption landscape and discovered that one of the three Korean agencies worked with The Barker Adoption Foundation, half an hour from their home in Savage, Maryland. Dorothy had two patients who'd adopted through Barker and had heard good things.

So they contacted Barker's international program director to get an orientation and start the work. Not far in, they started to find the paperwork and process overwhelming and decided to slow down. "I figured taking more time was a better option than getting a divorce," jokes Dorothy.

But they got through it and were approved in early 2020. Then came a several-month wait. By December they still hadn't been matched and wondered whether it would ever happen. But in January, they got the call from Barker: they'd been matched with a boy named Haram. They quickly said yes and looked forward to the trip to Korea, Peter's first return.

Then came COVID, throwing everything into limbo. Peter and Dorothy could get into Korea but would have to be in quarantine for 2 weeks on arrival. Neither had work-from-home jobs, so both of them being out of the country for several weeks wasn't an option.

Instead, Peter used every shred of leave time to make the trip—7 weeks total since the quarantine meant what normally would have been two trips had to be



Peter, Dorothy, and Haram

combined into one—and Dorothy would join him to when it came time to pick up Haram.

Barker's orientations had reaffirmed their realistic picture of what kids go through in the adoption process. So it was no shock that Peter and Haram's first meeting wasn't a storybook moment. They both had masks on. Peter is a big guy--6' 4". The agency staff tried to take a photo of them together, and Haram was having none of it. "Haram just lost it," says Peter. "He didn't want to be anywhere near me—he was kicking and screaming."

But he completely understood too. **"From my perspective you almost have to lower your grandiose expectations of what adoption is, because it's not going to be all sugar and gumdrops and rainbows and unicorns,"** says Peter. **"It's very raw. In my case it was pure empathy. I may not have remembered it, but it really hit home because I could only imagine that that was me,"** he adds.

It didn't take much imagining. Peter had brought with him a copy of his own adoption file—he'd been adopted through Korea Welfare Services (KWS), the same agency they were working with to adopt Haram (KWS had a different name at the time of Peter's adoption).

Agency staff were enthused to share information with him about his own adoption: where he was born, his mother’s name, and the circumstances of his adoption. “They gave me gifts and said, ‘We’re so happy you came,’” says Peter. “I learned so much because my parents didn’t have any of that information.”

Peter was impressed with how committed the agency is to connecting adoptees to their homeland and stories, including meeting their birth mothers if both parties are open to that. “Even though I have no memory of the place, it just felt like I belonged there. It was a little spiritual connection. It was it was incredible,” he says.

Now it was time to pick up Haram, and by this time Dorothy had joined Peter after she’d spent 2 weeks in quarantine. They’d been told not to expect a lot of smiles and happiness that day. “They warned us—he’s going to be crying, and the foster mother is going to be crying,” says Dorothy. “And I’m so glad they did because that’s realistic. As the future parent, you think it’s going to be amazing and they’re going to come into your arms. No, that’s not real.”

Having prepared for the worst though, things didn’t go so badly. Haram cried when they picked him up, but as soon as he got outside into fresh air he stopped. In the taxi they started pointing out sights, and soon he was interested and smiling. He slept through his first night (and still does).



Haram

Now they’re a family, and Haram loves to make his parents dance with him. When he’s having a meltdown, putting dance music on gets him back on track, says Dorothy. As Peter tells the story of Haram kicking and screaming during the photo-shoot in Korea, Haram breaks into a giggle fit. “You love that story don’t you?” says Peter.

Dorothy still communicates with Haram’s foster mother through a popular Korean app, using Google Translate to send photos and share stories and videos. “She’s a big part of his life, so I’ll always honor them as family because of what she and her husband did for him,” says Dorothy.

Since his experience, Peter also advocates that, if they’re able, parents of kids from Korea take a trip there before their child turns 18 to re-connect them with the homeland. “I can’t wait to take trips back with Haram and go and explore more of the country together,” he says.



Haram

Resilience + Heart

Post-Adoption

► DID YOU KNOW?

50% of Barker's post-adoption program participants had no previous affiliation with the agency

► BARKER OFFERS:

- Group counseling sessions, covered by insurance. Current counseling and discussion groups are:
 - Birth parent
 - Adult adoptees
 - Parents of adopted teens
 - Parents of adopted young adults
- Search and reunion services
- Family and professional trainings, with CEU credits
- Home Study for Barker and non-Barker families
- Heritage/Homeland tours

A LOOK AT BARKER'S POST ADOPTION SERVICES DURING A GLOBAL PANDEMIC

Cynthia Cabbage heads The Barker Adoption Foundation's Family and Post-Adoption Services Department, providing direction and oversight for Barker's clinical and educational services for birth parents, adoptive parents and adoptees of all ages. Kristen Reighard, Barker Counselor, facilitates Barker's monthly Adult Adoptee Discussion Group, Barker's Teen Connections Event, and groups for school-aged children.



Cynthia Cabbage



Kristen Reighard

Q: What Challenges Did the Barker Post-Adoption Community Experience During 2020?

CYNTHIA: Universally, the pandemic brought about life and death concerns for everyone around the globe. No one was immune to these worries, and adoptees and birth parents experienced an added layer of complexity. The pandemic resulted in tremendous loss of life and many adoptees and birth parents worried they might miss the opportunity to reunite with a birth family member due to the possibility of illness or death from the virus. As a result, we saw a significant increase in the number of adoptees and birth parents seeking counseling and search and reunion services.

KRISTEN: The Barker community is inclusive and welcoming. All those touched by adoption, regardless of any past affiliation with Barker, are welcome. While we have always prided ourselves with providing in-person services, the pandemic-related restrictions did not allow for that to happen safely. Initially, we were challenged with needing to purchase online platforms and to arrange for technical support to ensure things went smoothly. But these challenges quickly diminished and we found new and interesting ways to be available and to ensure continuity of services.

“I’ve never seen such an increase in the need for our search and reunion and counseling services.”

– Cynthia Cubbage, Director

Q: How did Barker shift its work to meet the needs of the adoption community?

KRISTEN: Fortunately, we moved Barker’s in-person monthly support groups to a virtual platform, which allowed attendees who had moved away from the area to reconnect with our group online. In our adult adoptee group, people joined from many parts of

world. There is a lot of appreciation for the fact that no other organization offers this kind of donor-funded adult adoptee group that meets on a regular basis. In fact, many discussion and support group members have suggested that we keep our groups virtual even after the pandemic safety restrictions are lifted.

In addition, historically, Barker has offered in-person groups for elementary age children and their families. We developed a new on-line program for second and third graders this year. The group, affectionately known as BARKER S.T.A.R.S., helps to equip children and parents with the skills, language, and confidence to respond to uncomfortable and invasive questions and comments about adoption. Children may not have loved online school last year, but their love of this adoption group was unquestionable.

CYNTHIA: Barker added two new master’s level adoption counselors to its staff to better meet the increasing community need for affordable counseling. The counseling was offered online during times that worked best for children and their families.

Q: What Does the Future of Post Adoption Services Look Like?

CYNTHIA: Those touched by adoption can count on Barker for generations to come. We continue to expand our post-adoption services, both in size and scope, and are committed to ensuring that they remain accessible and affordable. There were many challenges associated with this last year, but also many valuable lessons learned. Barker will continue to adapt to the worldwide challenges and the individual needs of those who seek our services.

THANK YOU to Our Donors for Their Resilience + Heart

We offer heartfelt thanks to those who gave to The Barker Adoption Foundation and to the Legacy II Campaign through Friends of Barker or to both in 2020. Our donors' generous support is what makes it possible to provide no-cost pregnancy counseling, to find and support safe, loving, permanent families for children who need them, and to offer critical post-adoption support and education. We are grateful for the individual donations, foundation and corporate gifts and grants, and contributors to our special events.

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Scott & Marty Synnott
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Richard & Elise Zaragoza
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Marilyn Zett
Michael Zielinski & Fran Teplitz
John Zweck & Susan Minkoff
Carl & Peggy Zwisler

**WE GRATEFULLY
ACKNOWLEDGE THE
FOUNDATIONS THAT
SUPPORTED BARKER
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Altman Kazickas Foundation
Amazon Community
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Amazon Smile Foundation
Ben's Chili Bowl Foundation
David Graham Foundation
The Duber Family
Foundation, Inc.
George Preston Marshall
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Community Foundation
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William S. Abell
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ACKNOWLEDGE THE
CORPORATIONS THAT
SUPPORTED BARKER
IN 2020:**

Berkadia Commercial
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Neighborhood Development
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Rock Creek Springs
SONA/Primis Bank
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Washington Fine Properties
Wiley
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**THANK YOU TO OUR
SPONSORS WHO
SUPPORTED BARKER'S
75TH ANNIVERSARY
CELEBRATION:**

Nonie & Larry Akman
Dwight Allen & Joan Centrella
The Maxine B. Baker Family
David & Laura Berol
Kathryn Bucher &
Stephen Jessey
Jerome & Tara Casagrande
Eugenia Collis & Byron Pappas
Martha & David Dantzic
Jack Davies & Kay Kendall
Robert & Barbara DeLucia
Vincent & Megan Dennis
The Diamond/Blum Family
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Christine Kranz Smith
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Adrian Washington & Donna
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The Wiggins Family
Wiley
Christopher &
Constance Young

**THANK YOU TO OUR
DONORS WHO CHOSE
TO HONOR THE SPECIAL
INDIVIDUALS BELOW BY
GIVING TO BARKER:**

All of the 75th Anniversary
Honorees
Maxine Baker
Susan Baker
Cindy's Birthday Fundraiser
Gretchen Conway, Rhys
Conway & Their Awesome
Birthmother
Grace, Christopher, Courtney
& Shelley DeLucia
Gary Diamond & Family
Sasha & Lexi Friedenheim
David Gibb & Elizabeth Gibb
Maureen Golden
Devin Handy
Dr. Stephen & Jean Hersh
Sue Hollar, Barker's CEO
Shelley Holt
August Hutchins & Family

Ana Inskeep
Christy Isaacson
Miles Jungbin Ivatts
Katherine & Aaren
William C Kelly
Benjamin Krulwich
Brooke Anne Luginbill
Varda Makovsky
Malcolm
Amile-Nyon Malone
Marilyn, Maureen, & Maxine
Augustus Marrkand
Mars
Mary's Birthday
Shirley Maynie
Kaden McCall
Our Children – Katherine &
Daniel
Susan Pfeffer
Nathan Robinson
Ellen Russell
Zoe Schaeffer
Tara Shirodkar
Andrew Shortill & Sarah Shortill
Campbell
Emilyann June Sower
Adrian Washington
Mikayla Wolf

**IN 2020, WE WERE
HONORED TO RECEIVE
GIFTS IN MEMORY OF:**

Thelma Adams, Barker
Grandmother
Liyenna Bhattacharya
Pauline Calomiris
Sally Donelon
Susan Ertzinger
Zdenek Formanek
Morgan Fowler
Morgan Fowler & Mike Horn
Mario & Carmela Giangola
Jeffrey Goldstein
Linda Holden
Drew O'Brien
Audrey M & William J Perry
Carole Rabinowitz
Angela Ramirez de Marino
Leslie Scherr
Kathleen Volt

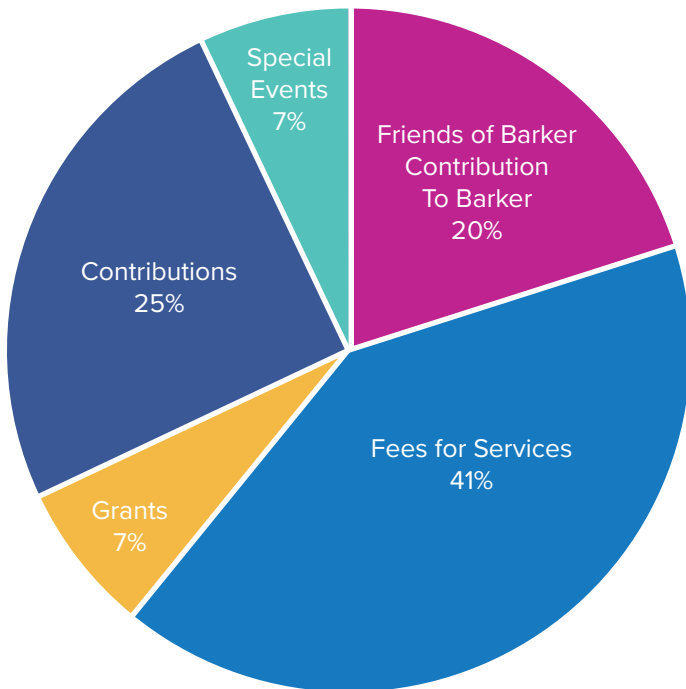


2020 Barker Adoption Foundation Financial Overview

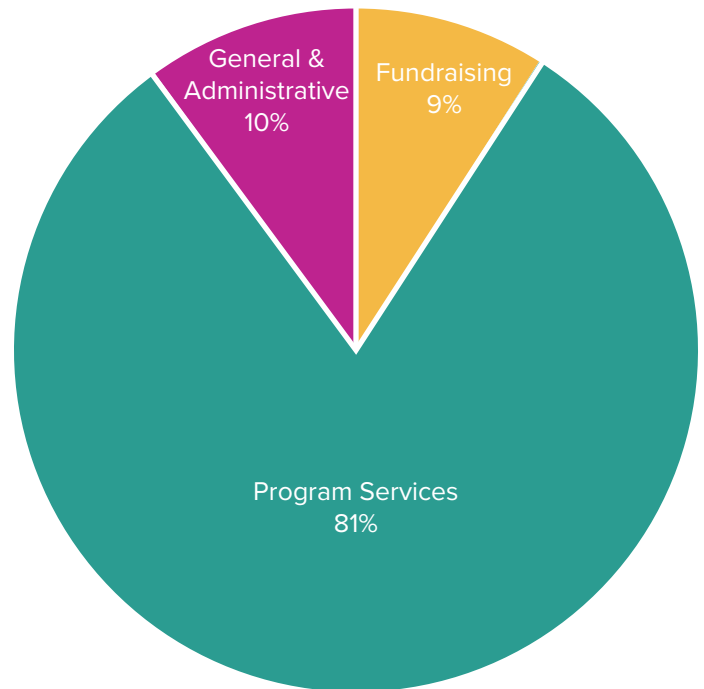
Despite the pandemic and a shift to remote work for the staff, The Barker Adoption Foundation ended 2020 in a strong financial position, with revenues exceeding expenses by \$334,622. Spending continues to be mission-driven, with 81% of total expenditure going directly to programs serving all in the adoption community.

The Friends of Barker (FOB) 2020 contribution of \$631,931, an increase of \$61,306 over 2019, makes a significant impact on Barker's stability for years to come. FOB distributions of \$3,016,342 since 2012 have significantly supported Barker's operations. The financial security that this endowment provides will allow Barker, in this ever-changing world of adoption, to be even stronger for the next generation.

BARKER ADOPTION FOUNDATION REVENUE



BARKER ADOPTION FOUNDATION EXPENSES



CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2020	THE BARKER ADOPTION FOUNDATION	FRIENDS OF BARKER, INC.	TOTAL
Support and Revenue			
Fees for services	\$1,289,070		\$1,289,070
Grants	\$227,500		\$227,500
Contributions	\$795,623	\$34,186	\$829,809
Special Events	\$201,230		\$201,230
Revenue	\$2,513,423	\$34,186	\$2,547,609
Investment income net of fees	\$10,788	\$2,518,337	\$2,529,125
Friends of Barker Contribution To Barker	\$631,931	(\$631,931)	
Other	\$17,228		\$17,228
Total Revenue	\$3,173,370	\$1,920,592	\$5,093,962
EXPENSES			
Program services	\$2,311,412		\$2,311,412
General & administrative	\$278,124	\$6,209	\$284,333
Fundraising	\$249,212		\$249,212
Total Expenses	\$2,838,748	\$6,209	\$2,844,957
Change in Net Assets	\$334,622	\$1,914,383	\$2,249,005
Net Assets - beginning of year	\$800,840	\$14,238,895	\$15,039,735
Net Assets - end of year	\$1,135,462	\$16,153,278	\$17,288,740

► How you can help

- Monthly Donations
- Annual Gift
- Matching Gift
- Planned Giving
- Workplace Giving
- Friends of Barker
- Event Sponsorship

Please visit www.barkeradoptionfoundation.org/2021-annual-fund or use the envelope included to provide your support today.



Right: Lisa and Kobe





www.barkeradoptionfoundation.org • 301.664.9664



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 North American Council on Adoptable Children, the Virginia Association of Licensed Child Placing Agencies. The Barker Adoption Foundation is featured in the Class of 2021-22 Catalogue for Philanthropy: Greater Washington.

Photographs courtesy of Barker families.
Annual Report written by Steve Yoder and Libby Powell.
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