



Post Adoption Press

Serving families formed by adoption in Sonoma,
Lake, Mendocino and Napa Counties

Volume Forty-six

SUMMER 2011

Why I Wrote *Mamalita: An Adoption Memoir*

by Jessica O'Dwyer
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Eight years ago, I was living in Antigua, Guatemala with my then-fifteen-month old daughter, Olivia, whom my husband and I were trying to adopt. We had been enmeshed in the process for more than a year, ever since I first saw a photo of Olivia on an adoption website and had fallen in love.

I wasn't the only American would-be mother living in Guatemala who was trying to sort out a stalled adoption. We were a group of eight, with nothing in common except our overwhelming desire to become mothers and the belief that our bureaucratic nightmares should not be allowed to happen to anyone else. That year, more than 3,000 Americans adopted children from Guatemala. Each one of those families had a story, no two the same.

Soon after I came home with Olivia in January 2004, international adoption became headline news, none of it good. The private adoption system in Guatemala was singled out as particularly corrupt. Front-page stories described payments made to birth mothers, coercion of women to become pregnant, and the trolling of the countryside by "finders" to trick young girls into relinquishing their newborns. Adoptive parents like me were depicted as privileged Americans who swooped in to snatch kidnapped infants. Even UNICEF pronounced that it was better for a child to remain in his country of origin than it was to be adopted by foreign parents. The news got so bad it was impossible not to feel under attack.

But that was only a part of the story. The story I experienced was that of adoptive parents who felt great love for their children, pushing back against a fraudulent, indifferent system that seemed to manipulate emotions at every turn.

When I lived in Antigua, the others mothers used to say, "Somebody needs to write a book about this." My entire life I'd been searching for the one story I had to tell. Even as I was living the experience, I knew Olivia's adoption saga was it. . . .

What's Happening at Parents Place

SUMMER 2011 Calendar

Petaluma Parent Support Group: First Tuesday of each month, 5:45-7:45 pm, at B'nai Israel Jewish Center

Join us for our final meeting of the year on **June 7!** We will take the summer off and resume on September 6

Santa Rosa Parent Support Group: Third Wednesday of each month, 5:45-7:45 pm (Free childcare)

Join us for our final meeting of the year on **June 15.** Bonnie Romanow will be leading a discussion on "Talking About Adoption." Don't miss this informative and enriching opportunity to join other adoptive parents to "talk about" how we talk about adoption, both with our children and with others. We will take the summer off and resume on September 21

First Fridays for Teens: Monthly social activities for teens, 6:00-8:00 pm with pizza and snacks! Adopted teens are invited to join our final group of the season on **June 3!** Teen group will resume October 7

Creating Lifebooks for Your Child: If you have an unfinished lifebook, now is the time to bring it out! Join facilitator Barbara Joy for the final three sessions of our Thursday morning group, **June 9, June 23 and July 14,** 9:30-11:30 am

Please call Liz Jimenez (303-1509) for more information or to sign up for the above groups! RSVP is required
Unless otherwise noted, all events take place at Parents Place, 1360 N. Dutton Ave., Suite C, Santa Rosa

Forget Me Not Farms (a division of Sonoma Humane Society) has invited PAS families to participate in their wonderful summer programs for adopted children between the ages of three and five (Thursdays from 12:30-1:30 pm) and six and ten (Tuesdays from 2:00 to 3:00 pm). Contact Carol Rathmann (542-0882) for more information or to sign up.

Dorothy & Robert DeBolt Scholarship



Adopt a Special Kid

will award \$2000 in recognition of the value their founders place on learning and independence.

Eligible youth:

*California residents

*Who were adopted in CA from foster care

*Have confirmation of acceptance from an accredited US 2 or 4 year college, university or trade school/vocational school

*Are a maximum of age 25

Download 2011 Application from

www.aask.org

or call 888-680-7349

An Opportunity for Adopted Children: Caring for Farm Animals and Plants



Do you have an adopted child or are in the process of adopting a child between the ages of 5 and 10? If so, there is an opportunity for you and your child to participate in a study being conducted by Sarah Ross M.S., a graduate student at Palo Alto University, that will explore the benefits for children of caring for plants and animals.

Participation in the study will include your child attending a 9-week summer program at Forget Me Not Farm, located on the grounds of the Sonoma Humane Society in Santa Rosa, CA and completing interviews, questionnaires, and drawings with the researcher. Children will attend the farm program from June 7th through August 2nd, from 2:00pm-3:00pm on Tuesdays. Participation is free of charge.

For more information, please contact Sarah at seross44@yahoo.com or (443) 415-5066.

What's Happening in the Community



Presents

Camp ALWAYS

(A Life With Adoption Yields Success)

July 11-15, 2011

At Grizzley Creek Ranch, Portola CA

Some of the features of Camp ALWAYS include:

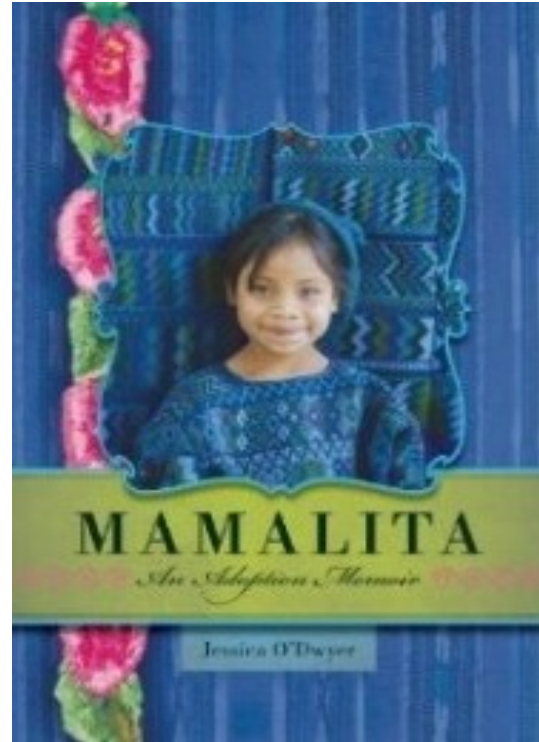
- Respite
- Workshops and trainings for parents, covering topics ranging from Special Education to Child Development to Attachment Issues
- Sports fun and a swimming pool with lifeguard
- Camp activities, including arts and crafts, nature walks, dances, songs and campfires
- Lodging in spacious cabins
- Bonding activities and relaxation time
- All activities led by talented AASK staff, along with host camp staff
- All meals and maintenance tasks taken care of by camp staff
- Most of all, our amazing, diverse adoptive families



*Eligible families are those that have at least one child who was previously in foster care (a dependent of the juvenile court) in California and is now at the adoptive placement stage or beyond.

*Cost to families is \$100 per person/ \$50 per person for ages 0-2

*Download registration form at www.aask.org



“Until that moment, I hadn’t grasped the enormity of adoption: That for one woman to become a mother, another mother had to give up her child. That for every day that I lived with my daughter, another mother lived without her. And regardless of the birth mother’s reasons—she was poor, she was alone, she had other children to care for—and no matter what we call it—surrender, relinquish, making an adoption plan—it still required one mother to give up her child to another.”

*“As an adoptive mother to two teens born in Latin America, I couldn’t put *Mamalita* down. This honest and balanced memoir reveals the challenges and rewards of international adoption like no other book I’ve ever read. I recommend it to anyone involved in adoption—adoptive parent or child, birth mother or foster parent—and for those who wonder what it feels like to be part of that experience. *Mamalita* brings the tumultuous yet uplifting journey alive. A must-read.”*

- Leceta Chisholm Guibault, Board Member of the Adoption Council of Canada (1999-2009)

Jessica O’Dwyer

will be appearing on

Sunday, June 5, 2011 at 1 p.m.

[Copperfield’s Books Montgomery Village](http://Copperfield's Books Montgomery Village)

2316 Montgomery Drive

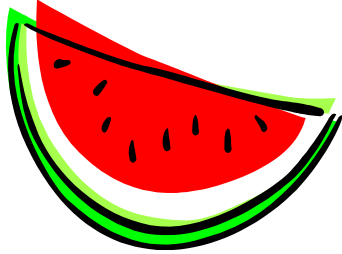
Santa Rosa 95404

707-578-8930

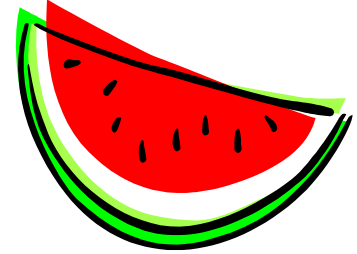
Her book has been generously donated to the PAS Library!

Post Adoption Services Annual Picnic

Please join us on Sunday June 5 from 11:30 am until 2:30 pm
At Sally Tomatoes Restaurant at the Sonoma Mountain Village Event Center
1100 Valley House Drive, Rohnert Park



BBQ Lunch
Face Painting & Jolly Jumping
African Drumming & Dancing



Please RSVP to Anita by May 27 at
571-2048

Post Adoption Services @ Parents Place (PAS) offers a variety of services for families formed by adoption. From one-to-one crisis intervention and counseling to support groups for children and parents, we have something to support you and your children. We also provide parent and professional trainings on a variety of topics throughout the year to help build skills and knowledge regarding adoption related issues. Our goal is to be here as a resource for you and your family. We have a free lending library filled with informative books on a variety of parenting, adoption and attachment issues. Our staff and clinicians are knowledgeable and caring. Parenthood and adoption can be both a joy and a challenge.

PAS Coordinator Liz Jimenez, MSW can be reached at (707)303-1509

Post Adoption Services are funded through a grant from California State Department of Social Services

Post Adoption Services at Parents Place
1360 North Dutton Ave. Suite C
Santa Rosa, CA 95401