

# The Constellation

## Winter 2008 Newsletter

“Like adoption, a mosaic is a picture created of bits and pieces. The spaces between remind us that each piece has a history of its own.”



Honoring our Histories

Celebrating our Lives

### Seasons Greetings from Adoption Mosaic

By **Debbie Kaufman**

Dear Friends,

This is the season when we often take time to reflect, and for me, it is especially true this year. I am thinking about the changes that are in the works for my family and for Adoption Mosaic, and they remind me of the importance of the foundations we build upon when these changes take place. These foundations are represented by our relationships and traditions, things that are especially important at this time of year when we are celebrating winter holidays.



My parents have decided to sell the 35-acre property outside of Eugene where they have been living for the past 15 years and move into town. While I am used to my parents moving, as we often did when I was growing up, this is the only “Grandma and Grandpa’s Place” that the six grandkids have ever known. My daughter has been in love with the place (and her grandparents!) since the first day I took her there when she was five, only weeks after we became a family over 11 years ago. For a person who experienced an unstable early life, this piece of property, and the traditions and relationships it represents have meant stability. We will savor the rituals we have built as a family around this piece of property, and anticipate the ones we will build at the new place. What does not change is the foundation of our family.

The end of the year also marks the end of my tenure as the Board President of Adoption Mosaic. We have spent the last year focusing on building the Board and in March we will welcome several new Board members. We are so pleased to have this diverse group of individuals who will help us to continue to grow our organization and our service to the adoption constellation.

Thanks to the incredible dedication of a core group of volunteers with a vision, and the wonderful support of the community, we have built a strong foundation for Adoption Mosaic. We are poised to continue our work of building relationships and our tradition of honoring the diverse perspectives in the adoption constellation. While the foundation is solid, we are counting on you to help us continue our mission. In the coming year, we will be asking you for everything from your opinion, to your time, and yes, your money. I encourage you to contribute in any way you can. You can find more information about all of these opportunities on our website:

- Participate in focus groups and surveys to help us develop new programs for dads, birth families, and gay and lesbian families.
- Volunteer on one of our committees, especially marketing, finance and development.
- Donate items on our “Wish List” and/or financially support our general operations, or specific programs.
- Attend a workshop or event.

Thanks for all of your hard work and support. It has been an honor to be involved with this organization for the past five years, and I look forward to supporting it in the future. Best wishes to you as you celebrate your family’s winter holiday traditions, and Happy New Year!

### What’s Inside

**Interview with Nancy Verrier: pg 2**

**Schedule At a Glance: pg 2**

**LGBT Community: pg 3**

**Adoptee Gathering: pg 3**

**Ask Astrid: pg 4**

**Movie Review: pg 5**

**Book Review: pg 5**

**Food For Thought:**

**Having two Families: pg 6**

**An Open Adoption Letter:  
pg 6**

**Be Heard: pg 7**

**Contributors: pg 7**



## LGBT Community: Creating Families Through Adoption

By Michael McGroarty



Adoption is inclusive of diversity and the Adoption Constellation consists of people from all ethnicities, cultures, races, professions, and differing family dynamics. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) individuals and families are playing an increasingly important role as adoptive and foster parents, and creating families through adoption has become more commonplace throughout the LGBT community. At Adoption Mosaic we recognize the vast resources the LGBT community has to offer children, and in an effort to continue our efforts in support of LGBT families and diversify our current trainings, we are developing a workshop for LGBT prospective and current adoptive parents. This upcoming workshop will offer thoughtful

and practical resources to help guide parents through the emotional, social and political steps they embark on in order to become parents and support their families.

The upcoming LGBT parent workshop will address changes in family dynamics, working with community professionals, navigating government and educational systems, the legality of creating LGBT families, as well as address the particular needs of children of LGBT parents in how they conduct their day-to-day lives. In preparation for this workshop, we are in the process of forming an Advisory Group of LGBT parents and professionals that will help us in our efforts to develop this workshop. We want to hear about your experiences, your recommendations, and the important and particular issues that you, as LGBT parents have faced and continue to face, as well as the values and support you offer your families. If you are interested in participating in the development of this workshop in some manner or if you simply wish to share your adoption experience, please contact Adoption Mosaic Board member Michael McGroarty ([michael\\_am@earthlink.net](mailto:michael_am@earthlink.net)). Michael is facilitating this workshop effort and is eager to hear from you, the parents we serve, in developing this important workshop.

## Adoptee Gathering in Hawaii

By Liz Rogers

As a community, Korean adoptees have formed hundreds of Korean Adoptee groups and organizations around the world. Once or twice a year, one or more of these groups or organizations host an adoptee “gathering.” Well I guess to be more specific, it’s a “Mini-Gathering,” as “The Gathering” title seems to be reserved for when events happen in Korea. These mini-gatherings are predominantly social events. They provide the space and time to connect with other adoptees; whether it’s to share thoughts and perspectives on adoption, network with other professionals, or to just share the same space and feel a sense of community with other Korean Adoptees.

Earlier in October, far from the Land of the Morning Calm, the Korean Adoptees of Hawaii (KAHI), hosted the Asian Adult Adoptee Gathering and Film Festival in Honolulu, Hawaii. What better excuse was there for me to make my first trip to the warm and sunny island of Oahu?

The Hawaii “Mini” included recreational excursions, discussion sessions, a film festival and plenty of opportunities to meet new friends, and reconnect with old acquaintances. The day long film festival screened several short films by Asian adoptees, and attendees also previewed and viewed documentaries exploring the complex dynamics of international and transracial adoption. Roughly 90 adoptees attended from around the world, most from the mainland U.S., but also from Sweden, Australia, Canada, the Netherlands, and Denmark. This gathering was one of many that continue to happen as we grow, share and learn from our experiences as Korean Adoptees.

I don’t know how many more gatherings I will make it to, but having gone to my second one, I can say that it’s a good time and a good opportunity to connect with other adoptees.





## Adoption Mosaic Movie Review The Italian (2007) Review by Livia Montana



Vanya, a six year old boy in a Russian orphanage, is set to be adopted by an Italian couple. Unexpectedly, the birthmother of another young boy returns to take her birthson home. Seeing her devastation upon learning that her birthson has already been adopted, Vanya begins to wonder about his own birthmother. Since the adults in Vanya's life stand to lose a lot of money if the adoption does not go through and some of the children in the orphanage are worried that Vanya will ruin the other children's chances of being adopted, both the adults and the children use different tactics to make sure that Vanya's adoption will go through. Despite all odds, Vanya begins an incredible quest to find his birthmother.

**Points to Consider:** "Although we're supposed to be cheering Vanya on, it's hard not to side with the other orphans, who don't understand why he's willing to pass up the chance for a better life to find the woman who gave him up."

*"through the viewing of mainstream movies the adoption experience is shared and normalized"*

Adoption Mosaic Movie Reviews are written with the intent of fostering conversation amongst movie viewers. Viewers are encouraged to use our "Points to Consider" to discuss the movie - **OR**- come join us for a movie and facilitated discussion at Adoption Mosaic's Movie night. Visit [www.adoptionmosaic.org](http://www.adoptionmosaic.org) for more information!

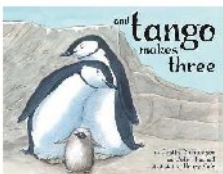
(Review on [www.premiere.com](http://www.premiere.com))

1. What do you think of this quote? Do you think adoptees, birthparents, and adoptive parents might view Vanya's quest in different ways? To what extent do you think that viewers without any relation to the adoptive experience can understand and empathize with Vanya's longing? To what extent do you think the opinion in this quote illustrates the need for the general public to be educated about the complex feelings that factor into being adopted?
2. How do you feel about Vanya's decisions? What do you think goes into determining what a "better life" is? How do adults influence what children feel a "better life" is?
3. How do you feel about the ending of this movie? Do you think it is realistic? What support and information might have been given to Vanya when he expressed questions about his birth mother and doubts about being adopted?



## Adoption Mosaic Book Review And Tango Makes Three (2005)

By Justin Richardson and Peter Parnell Review by Amy Drew



Since 1998, Roy and Silo, two chinstrap penguins at the Central Park Zoo in New York City, have been a couple. Penguin couples can generally only care for one egg at a time, so in 2000, when another penguin couple laid two eggs, Roy Gramzay, their keeper, gave that egg--and Roy and Silo--a chance to be a family.

In this wonderful true story about the love it takes to be a family, Roy and Silo watch the other penguins build a nest and hatch an egg, then do the same with the egg Mr. Gramzay brought to them. They take turns caring for the egg and one day it hatches. Mr. Gramzay named the baby Tango, "because it takes two to make a Tango." Tango is the first penguin at the zoo to have two daddies.

Roy and Silo taught Tango how to sing when she was hungry, how to swim, and how to snuggle at bedtime, just like all the other penguin families. Roy, Silo, and Tango still live together at the zoo today.

*And Tango Makes Three* is aimed at pre-schoolers to grade 3, but readers young and old will enjoy this heart-warming story about family bonds, and the dedication and determination Roy and Silo exhibit during their quest to raise a family. This story will help introduce children to the different ways families are created.



# Food for Thought

*Thoughts from the Adoption Constellation*

## Having Two Families

By Tristan Guibault at age 11

Hi...my name is Tristan and I am 11 ½ years old. I was adopted from Medellin, Colombia when I was 4 months old. I live in Canada with my mother, father and sister. My sister is 15 years old and was born in Guatemala. Her name is Kahleah.

It is a very cool experience to be adopted. To be adopted means to have two families. One family that gave life to you and one family that takes care of you for the rest of your life. To me both of my families are caring and loving and the best in the world.

Ever since I was very little we have had contact by mail and email with my birth family in Colombia. In 2004 I finally got to visit my birth family. We spent 5 days with them. It was so much fun to bring my two families together.

I am the happiest when I see both of my families laughing together and connecting. I am the saddest when I miss my birthmother, and sometimes I cry because it is hard to have one mother who does not live near me.

It is important to me to know who my birth family is because if I did not know them I know I would feel bad. I would feel bad because I would not know if they were alive or dead. I would not know if they were good or bad people. I would not know who I look like. To know who I look like is almost like having a twin. I look like my birthmother and everyone else in my birth family especially my brother. My brother and I are both in good shape. One time when we got out of the swimming pool after swimming we were cold and we shivered the same way. He was also sporty and strong like me. He has the same eyes and hair. He is very handsome. I also learned that my brother has dyslexia just like me.

It felt great to play and hold hands with my brother and sisters. My sister by adoption connected perfectly with my sisters and brother by birth. Kahleah is a really nice sister because she just is. She is my rest of my life sister.

Sometimes kids at school call me names like the “n word” and tease me because I am adopted. This makes me mad. It’s not fair because no one has the right to make fun of anyone because they are brown or adopted. It hurts me very much in my heart. It makes me want to fight. One boy on the bus told me that my “real” family couldn’t stand me and threw me away and that my parents hated me and they wanted to get rid of me. I know this not true but I did want to break his teeth. I know it is not true because I know that my birth family and my family by adoption loves me so much they would probably die for me. Words still hurt though.

I love my mommy because she takes such good care of me. She is always there for me and I will always be there for her too. I feel the same way about my daddy. I tell my parents that I love them more than air and they always say, “I love you more than that”.

I am so happy that my birthmother and family are all right. I think about them every morning, every day, every night and every tomorrow. This is exactly what my birthmother said about me. I am so excited to see my birth family again and meet my new baby brother. We plan to visit again next Christmas. It is cool to have two families...it just is.

## An Open Adoption Letter

By Zoe Francesca Pedersen

My daughter,

It's been seven years since we first intuited each other at the light rail train station in Sacramento, California. You've heard about the Chinese New Year parade that same night, when Daddy had the flu, and the take-out sushi the night you were born a month later, with *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* on the hospital TV, and the Cherry Blossom Festival reunion later that spring, but how much have I told you about our true first meeting?

Your biological grandmother and mother walked towards your adoptive father and I, approaching each other from two ends of a long stretch of sidewalk, in the early spring sun. Your grandma and mom held hands. Your father and I held hands. Then all of us embraced in a group hug that included you. You were still inside your mother's womb, and I wasn't your mother yet, but already there was a blossoming hope between the four adults that daddy and I would become your parents as soon as you were born. You heard my voice and felt my hug. It was the beginning of having two moms and of being two moms.

The short journey from one mother to another happened in a hospital room where the three of us spent two nights together after your birth. Your first mom is as much a part of me as she is of you by now. I look to her to understand you and to know what to anticipate. We count the days until her next visit and wait patiently for the time when she will be settled and we can visit her. How could we live without her? Being twenty years younger than me, she will be there for you someday when I can't be. It's a relay race, one taking up the torch of motherhood when the other can't, back and forth, over a lifetime.

**Further Reading:** *Making Room in Our Hearts: Keeping Family Ties Through Open Adoption* By Micky Duxbury

## Be Heard on the Adoption Mosaic Website

We would like to invite you to participate in a couple of new and continuing projects we are working on for Adoption Mosaic's website. The first is our dialogue series. The second is "Our Voices."

**Adoption Dialogues:** These are conversations between different members of the adoption constellation on a variety of different subjects (some examples are: adoption in the media, adoption reform, personal stories). They are done via instant messenger thus open to those beyond the Portland area. We welcome participation by anyone who is interested in or has a relationship to adoption, not only triad members. Read our newest dialogue at <http://www.adoptionmosaic.org/>

**Our Voices:** Many people have a story to tell, but don't have the time or inclination to sit down and write it out. This is a way to still have your voices heard. Participants will have the opportunity to tell their adoption related story, either in person or over the phone, (stories may also be written) and it will be transcribed into a written format for people to view at [adoptionmosaic.org](http://adoptionmosaic.org).

Contact [tara@adoptionmosaic.org](mailto:tara@adoptionmosaic.org) to be included in one or both of these projects

Adoption Mosaic gratefully accepts submissions to our newsletter or website. Submissions can include: personal essays, original artwork, poems, informational articles, book reviews, opinion pieces or original photos. Please send inquiry's or submissions to [tara@adoptionmosaic.org](mailto:tara@adoptionmosaic.org). Thank you!!

## Contributors

**All articles in this newsletter are copyright protected. Articles, poems, and reviews may be reprinted or copied only with written permission from the author**

**Astrid Dabbeni** - Astrid has worked in adoption for over 18 years. She travels the country to lead youth groups, present workshops on transracial parenting, talking with children about adoption and various other workshops focusing on adoption. Her life-long interest in adoption is rooted in her own adoption at the age of four with her older sister from Colombia. Astrid is the Executive Director and co-founder of Adoption Mosaic.

**Amy K Drew** - Amy is a member of the program committee for Adoption Mosaic and a transracial adoptive parent. She has a background in public relations, communications, and marketing, and is currently working on a young adult novel and a few children's stories. Amy also writes a blog focusing on the everyday wonders of adoption and being a transracial adoptive parent.

**Tristan Andres Guibault** - Tristan is a 14 year old adoptee from Colombia. Tristan has enjoyed his open international adoption from the time he was a toddler. He reunited with his Colombian birth family at age 10 in 1994. Tristan has shared his thoughts on adoption with numerous adoption publications including PACT, Adoption Today and Adoptive Families Magazine. Tristan lives with his family in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

**Debbie Kaufman** - Debbie is a co-founder of Adoption Mosaic and currently serves as board president. She has worked as an advocate on a variety of youth and health-related issues, as well as adoption. Debbie adopted her daughter through the Oregon state system as a single parent.

**Tara Kim- Editor** - Tara has been active in the adoption community for over seven years. She has founded and lead adoptee community groups, lead adoptee youth groups, and served on the board of Adoption Mosaic for three and a half years. Tara was adopted from Korea at the age of two.

**Michael McGroarty** - Michael works as an adoption profession at the Oregon Post Adoption Resource Center (ORPARC) in his role as Training Coordinator and Outreach Liaison to Spanish-speaking adoptive families. He also works in recruitment of Spanish-speaking families in the state of Washington for [AdoptUsKids.org](http://AdoptUsKids.org).

**Livia Montana** - Livia is a writer currently working on a novel and collection of poetry. Her study of literature and philosophy intensified her interest in how the adoptive experience affects triad members. She was adopted from Portugal when she was four and a half years old.

**Zoe Francesca Pedersen** - Zoe is the author of "My Family, My Journey," a baby book for adoptive families with illustrations by Susie Ghahremani. Zoe is a writer and parent living in Portland, OR. Her blog [Adoption Muse](http://adoptionmuse.typepad.com/) can be found at <http://adoptionmuse.typepad.com/>.

**Liz Rogers** - Liz is an Korean American-Adoptee working in the social services field. She is an active community organizer and an advocate for the local Immigrant and Refugee communities. She is a member of the APA Compass collective who produces APA Compass; currently the only Asian Pacific American public affairs radio program in the Northwest.