



Adoption Connection

Fall/Winter 2008

a publication of Infant of Prague Adoption Service

The Judies: A Dynamic Duo

For fifty-five years IPAS has provided support services for women who place their children for adoption as well as advocacy and education for families who adopt. A provider of critical services to our community, IPAS has become the yardstick by which healthy adoption practice is measured.

This legacy would not be possible without the contributions of two women who have dedicated their careers for the past thirty years to this organization. Upon their retirement, we feel it appropriate to share their story.

In 1978 Judith Casson walked into Catholic Charities to a back room designated for the Infant of Prague Adoption Service. Hired to be the agency's new director, she had a huge challenge ahead.

Though the agency had been established, she was charged with bringing the operation into compliance with State regulations, making it a financially self-sufficient entity and implementing modern practices in adoption.

A recent graduate from Fresno State's Masters in Social Work Program, Judy rolled up her sleeves and got to work. She began to lay the foundation that would put IPAS in the vanguard of open adoption. Judy believed in voluntary adoption and that any woman who chose to place her child for adoption deserved respect and admiration for the selfless and loving decision she had made. Ongoing support, after adoptive placement, was to be provided for as long as needed to both birth and adoptive families. Most of all, she held to the belief that the welfare of the adopted child should be the centerpiece of the IPAS Program.

Within a year, Judy hired social worker Judy Luft and the agency began to thrive. Luft had a reputation as a fierce advocate for children in her work for Fresno County, CVRC and in previous work she had done for IPAS. She had an

unrelenting passion for birth mothers too, and like Casson, she believed that education was key to successful adoption.

Luft soon found herself leading our educational group meetings for adoptive parents. Never one to shy away from any task she quickly became the in-house legal guru.

She brought an expertise in the workings of the adoption milieu and shared concern for needed reform in adoption practice.

The two became the dynamic duo. Moving the agency from the dark days of closed secretive adoption, the Judies encouraged openness between adoptive and birth parents, the education of adoptive families, ongoing counseling for birth mother and resources for adopted children. Their progressive approach gained ground and as IPAS expanded, their names grew in respect among all who revolved in the

world of adoption. To this day, our social workers can't go into a hospital without someone asking about the "Judies". Indeed their names are synonymous with Infant of Prague.

Both have announced their retirement. As we look back on their careers, it is almost impossible to describe how they have affected so many lives and how grateful we are for the legacy they built in Infant of Prague.



Share the Joy of Adoption

On the second Tuesday of each month IPAS holds an orientation for prospective adoptive parents. We encourage couples who have adopted through IPAS to share the story about their adoption experience. If you are interested in being a speaker at one of our orientations, please contact our Community Relations Coordinator, Joanna Felger at 447-3333 or return the response portion in "Stay Connected" page of this newsletter.



Reflections & Farewells...

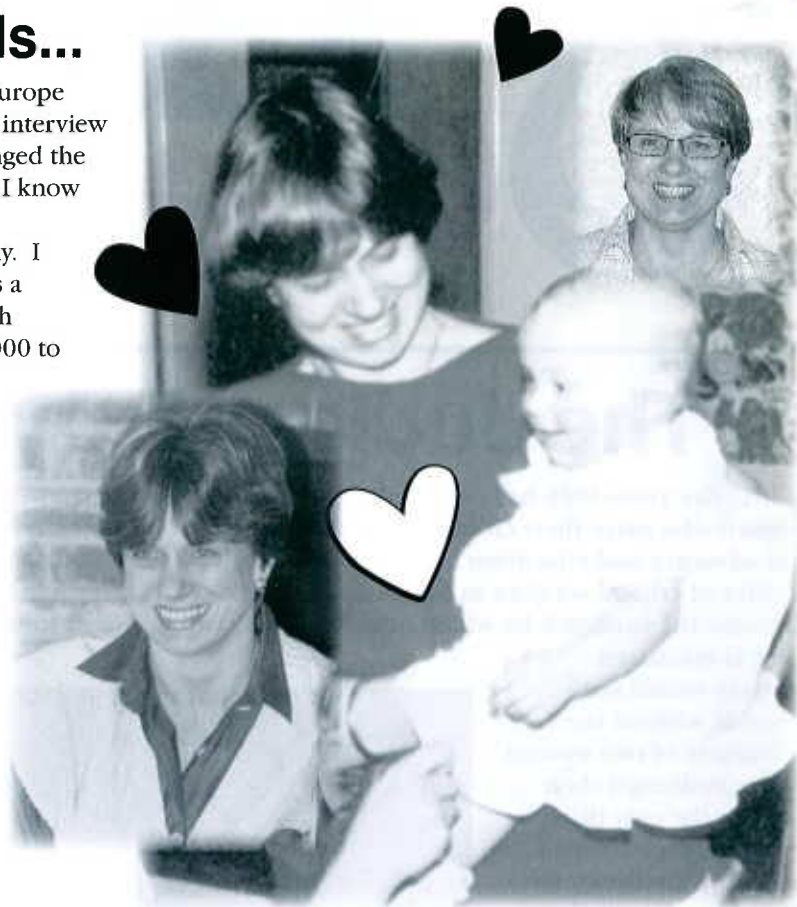
Although my intention was to travel through Europe after graduate school, I found myself in a job interview "for the experience" that very effectively changed the course of my life. That was 30 years ago. Little did I know what was in store for me!

I thrive on challenges and IPAS has presented many. I have witnessed the transition from our operation as a subcomponent of Catholic Charities in an office with partition walls, dingy paint and a debt of over \$30,000 to where we are today as a stand alone agency with a full compliment of MSWs, an Office Manager, Public Relations person and a bookkeeper. The journey has not been without a headache or two but, far more importantly, it has been a source of pride, joy and immense personal satisfaction.

The greatest joys have come in program development. IPAS has become synonymous with open adoption and a high caliber of professional services for all in the adoption triad. If I've done my job right, this pattern will continue and I look forward to seeing it continue to thrive in the years to come.

Will I miss the chaos and the challenges? Yes! Is it time for me to move on? Yes!

For a job I wasn't sure I wanted, this one certainly took hold! I have loved it and the people I've been privileged to know. I will miss all of you and wish all of you the best-
Judy Casson



When I started here-sooo many years ago, I hoped this might be the place where what ever I accomplished could help make a difference for people. That has always been my hope for an epitaph: "Her life, her being here, made a difference". Well, I can safely and with no reservation, say that my years at IPAS have made a huge difference for me! I've experienced the highest of highs and some pretty far down lows, plus everything in between.

I've always believed every child who comes into this world needs to be celebrated and cherished. Seeing this over and over with our adoptive families has been such a joy.

Walking through a birthparent's decision to place her child has been a total privilege as I've watched them choose life and then choose the kind of life they want for their child.

Adoption is rife with love, courage, incredible pain and loss, and above all else hope and genuine joy. Where else could I have found all that?!

For all who have allowed me to be a part of their lives over the past 35 years- thank you! I will definitely miss all that is IPAS (well, maybe not the paperwork...). I will take much with me as I move on.

Till we meet again'
my best-
Judy Luft



2007

Parade of Stars



Delilah Bruno



Sydnee Conde



Delanie Dirkse



Regan Garcia



Rey Jimenez



Luke Hanson



Lucio Moriera



Natalia Perez



Maribel Diaz



Jake O'Neill



Ava Rosales



Olivia Ylarregui



Infant of Prague
Adoption Service

Surprise Boxes

A popular addition to our Wine Tasting event is the Surprise Box Raffle. A table is stacked with wrapped boxes containing gift cards or gift certificate worth at least \$25.00. Many are worth much more and one contains a grand prize. Our guests purchase the boxes, in lieu of a raffle ticket, in hopes of winning the grand prize. Traditionally our staff and Board of Directors spend months collecting donations from businesses to fill our surprise boxes. This year, many of our adoptive families took the lead on collecting those donations and sending in contributions. With their help, surprise box sales totaled more than \$3,000.00. We thank the following adoptive families and the supporters of IPAS for their kind donations.

Eric and Susan Barle
Red Ruby Salon
Loretta and Kevin Creighton
Marion's Beauty Salon
Clint and Kelly Haskell
Lucky Nail Salon
The Silvera Family
The Brian Fisher Family
The Scott Family
The De Mera Family
Steve and Mary Galvin
The Chielpegian Family

Liz and Blair Looney
Judy Luft
Bob and Sandy Mayer
The Stringer
The Ford Family
Verdalee
Michael and Dianne Lima
Not Just Paper
The Garrett Family
The Mann Family
Becky and Bryan Lynn
Brettina Ashworth

Jerome and Riva Guimont
The Reyna Family
Stewart and Brenda Shavinsky
The Suggs Family
Scott and Dori Tolzmann
Debby Jameson
Chris and Amy Hanson
Mr. and Mrs. Manuel Chavez
The Patterson Family
The Ridge Family
The Gatz Family



The Palmer Family
Neil and Lori Carmody
Casey, Kelly, Christopher and Aaron Austin
Douglas and Angela Landon
Mindy and Shane Herbert
The Holland Family
The Bolt Family
Elvin and Betty Goertzen
Patricia Hudson-Johnson
Keith and Rita Patillo

Sponsorship Recognition

Thanks to the support of so many, this year's annual fundraiser, "A Toast to the Children" was a tremendous success. Two-hundred and fifty people attended the wine tasting at Weber BMW on the fifth of September and enjoyed a delightful evening of gourmet foods, wine, music and friends. Our special thanks go to our sponsors. Their support and generosity helped us reach the financial goals necessary to maintain the services we offer to birth parents, adoptive parents and the community at large.

Private Reserve

Richard and Karen Spencer

Vintner's Collection

McCormick Barstow
ACTAGRO, LLC
Stan & Darlene Spano
Michael & Joan Conway
Frank & Virginia Dalena and Family
John & Lisa Bonadelle/
Bonadelle Neighborhoods
Harris Construction

Winemaker's Select

Howard & Dottie DeMera
Rick & Debra Ginder
Cassabon & Associates LLP/
Jim Cassabon
Jeff Cazaly Consulting
DeMera, DeMera & Cameron
R&B Properties
Michael & Mary Martinelli
True North Properties
United Carpet One
Campos Brothers Farms
Mike & Vicki Mathiesen
Don & Judy Peracchi

Cellarmaster's Choice

Warren & Joanna Felger
James & Co. Lighting/Dan Spencer
Carl & Linda Motschieder
Giorgio & Andrea Russo
Wathen Family Builders/ Della Wathen
Kasco Fab, Inc.

Fishman, Larsen, Goldring & Zeidler

Big DE Farms and Cattle
Mike & Laura Chielpegian
Ernestine & Bill Schuh

Conisseur

Jane & Lou Amendola
Frank & Ruth Diel
Bob & Betsy Kimball
Perkins, Mann & Everett
Quinlan, Kershaw & Fanucchi
Martin & Marianne Weil
Michael & Denise Weiner
Sarah Woodward

We are grateful for other donation from:

Lusinda Baldwin
Richard Caglia
Emma Collins
Frances Cutler
Msgr. John Esquibel
Dominic Falasco
Julia Harder
Mary Ann Miller
Peter Erle Robinson
Ted & Joanne Warmerdam
Dr. & Mrs. Syl Bryan
Jim & Emilie Cobb
Michael Collins
Mrs. Theodore Cribari
Mr. & Mrs. J DeMera
Shannon Hanshaw
Mary Ann Mana
James & Delia Netto
Susan Spencer

Dear Friends,

Once again we are delighted to pronounce our 6th Annual "Toast to the Children" a resounding success! There are so many generous people to thank for their donations of time, talent and treasure. We are especially grateful to the **Pajouh family** who welcomed us to their beautiful **BMW Dealership**, to our generous sponsors who made it a financial success, and to an excellent committee who put it all together.

We enjoyed the tastings of wine from Fresno wineries **Agajanian Vineyards, Englemann Cellars, Milla Vineyards** and **Fresno State Winery**. Madera was represented by **Ficklin Vineyards, Mariposa Wine Company, Quady Winery** and **Grizzle Republic**. And from Sonoma County we enjoyed the excellent wine of **Seghesio Family Vineyards**. Featured in our silent auction were many excellent vintages from various Napa wineries donated from the wine cellar of a most generous anonymous donor as well as **Old Doc's**.

The delicious buffet from **Pardini's Catering** was complimented by the micro brews of **Donaghy Sales** and the ice cream sundaes of **Cold Stone Creamery**. The 118 surprise boxes, featuring a wine club membership from **Mariposa Wine Company**, tickets for the **Madera Wine Trail** and a beautiful **Carlisle silk scarf**, sold out in the first half hour. We add a special thanks to the businesses and adoptive families who donated to our surprise box drive. Lively bidding on silent auction items included a two night **Vintner's Holiday at the Ahwahnee Hotel** donated by **DNC Parks and Resorts of Yosemite**.

A special thanks to all the benefactors, Board Members, IPAS staff and volunteers who made this evening such a success. Your support has made it possible for us to reach the financial goals necessary to maintain the services of **Infant of Prague**.

Sincerely yours,

The Board of Directors
Infant of Prague Adoption Service

PS Mark your calendar now! Next year's "Toast to the Children" will be the Friday after Labor Day, September 11, 2009.

Looking Forward

After thirty years of service with Infant of Prague, Judy Casson retired as Executive Director on October 31st. Long time social worker Judy Luft also announced her retirement but, she will continue to serve part-time as Director of Casework until December 31st.

It is almost impossible to imagine IPAS without Judy Luft and Judy Casson. Their dedication and concern for children, birth parents and adoptive families has placed Infant of Prague at the forefront of adoption practice in California.

Fortunately, we are blessed to have an excellent staff, trained by the "Judies", who will carry on the work of building families through adoption. Jennifer Mann,

Melissa Littlewood, Dodie Barton, and our newest social worker, Stephanie Schmidt, will continue to provide the same quality services that we have offered to birthparents and adoptive families throughout the San Joaquin Valley.

Karen Spencer, who has been involved with IPAS for twenty-five years as a Board member, an employee, and a fundraising volunteer, will serve as Interim Director until a permanent Executive Director is hired.

We will miss both Judy Casson and Judy Luft more than words can say. We are so grateful for the foundation they have provided. We move forward, inspired by the knowledge, compassion, and dedication they have shared with us. We wish them all the best in their retirement.

IPAS Social Workers



Jennifer Mann



Melissa Littlewood



Stephanie Schmidt



Dodie Barton

Parent Link



November is National Adoption Awareness Month

National Adoption Awareness Month is a collective effort to recognize and celebrate adoption. It provides a wonderful opportunity to increase knowledge and awareness of healthy adoption practice. Here are a few suggestions for your family to share in the celebration.

- Donate a book about adoption to your child's library. Or ask the librarian at school or local library to display a book about adoption.
- Partner with your place of worship. Ask your congregation leader to hold a special November service in honor of adoption.
- Write a letter to your birthmother
- Share your story. Remember receiving, "the call"? Remember seeing and holding your baby for the first time? Share the tale of their homecoming with friends or give an adoption talk at your child's school.
- Celebrate family: Enjoy a family dinner or an evening without television or distractions and simply enjoy your loving home.
- Macys is carrying the 2008 "Celebrate Adoption" Christmas ornament. The ornament retails for \$48.00 and is available while supplies last at www.macys.com.

Come to the IPAS family picnic

Save the date for the annual Infant of Prague Family Picnic. The event will be held on April 26, 2009 from 11:00PM. TO 2:00PM at Woodward Park in Fresno. **Come join the fun!**



Infant of Prague Adoption Service

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Celebrate
National
Adoption Month

(559) 447-3333

Stay Connected

Calendar

December 3

Adoption Update class series begins

December 9

Orientation for prospective adoptive parents, 6:00pm.

January 13

Orientation for prospective adoptive parents, 6:00pm.



Help with upcoming events...

Name _____

Address _____

Phone Number _____

Email _____

New address, please update your records

Events you would like to volunteer for:

IPAS Family Picnic, April 25, 2009

Guest speaker for Prospective Adoptive Parent Orientation

Guest speaker for Adoptive Parent Training Class

Please fill out and mail to: **Infant of Prague Adoption Service**
6059 N. Palm • Fresno, CA 93704
www.infantofprague.org