

A Way to Build Our Family

by Christine

Conrad and I adopted our twins Rachel and Caroline at birth over 6 years ago. When we were searching for an adoption agency 7 years ago, there were several things about Adoption Choices at Jewish Family Service of Metrowest (JFS/MW) that set them apart from other agencies. First and foremost, Dale and Raquel were approachable, responsive and up front about everything. Our preconceived notions about how we were supposed to act were quickly dispelled when they greeted us with words something like this: “It’s ok to not be thrilled about being here today. Most people don’t dream about creating their family through adoption. But don’t worry, when all is said and done, you will both think that adoption is a great way to build a family.” Those simple statements allowed Conrad and me to admit openly that we had differing feelings about adoption and that it was the last resort for us. But those words also gave us great hope that there would be a process – a process that was beginning that day – that would ultimately allow us to embrace adoption as a way to build OUR family.

Over the next year as we attended pre-adoption classes, we came to understand also that the process did not occur in a finite amount of time. Adoption Choices communicated to us a commitment to our family over the long haul. The pre-adoption classes and wealth of resources helped us develop a firm foundation as educated adoptive parents. During the emotional roller coaster of the placement process the support we received from Raquel and Dale was invaluable. Now that our twins are older and we deal with their expressions about how it feels to be adopted and school-related issues, the importance of JFS’s “Continuing Connections” post-adoption services is patently clear. With workshops on a wide range of adoption related topics, this agency honors its commitment to being an ongoing source of education and guidance to everyone touched by adoption. Of particular relevance to our family was the workshop on blended families. Since we have a biological son, we were particularly concerned about the intricacies of

a family of birth and adopted siblings. That workshop not only allayed my fears, but also helped me to anticipate that Daniel may be the one overshadowed by his adopted siblings – something that had never even occurred to me. Now that I have lived the experience for over 6 years, I often look back on the wisdom I was given during that workshop and marvel at how lucky we are to have chosen Adoption Choices.

The relationship we have with Rachel and Caroline’s birthmother is a direct result of Dale and Raquel’s wisdom and guidance. Initially, the concept of an “open adoption” was terrifying to us. We both came to understand however, that all of us in the adoption triad: birthparents, adoptive parents and adoptees benefit from the honesty and relationships built in an open adoption. We have also learned that through the years everyone’s needs and expectations change and that flexibility and communication is the key. We are fortunate that our girls’ birthmother lives in the area and we have created many shared memories that provide a firm foundation of security and love that will sustain Rachel and Caroline when they deal with the very real losses surrounding adoptions.

Adoption is an open subject in our home; we talk about it, read books about it and feel that our healthy attitude allows us to become adoption advocates. When our friends and children’s friends hear us speak using the correct terminology, they begin to understand that words like “real” and “natural” have no place in the adoption lexicon. When our older son has an assignment at school that we know would be emotionally difficult for Rachel and Caroline, we use that opportunity to educate the teacher. By the time Rachel and Caroline see the same material years later it has become applicable to families created by all means. That is the legacy of education and awareness, and for that we owe much to Raquel and Dale and Adoption Choices.