

Tree of Life Adoption Center

News from Executive Director, Daniel Stinea

January / February 2008

We are very pleased to announce the addition of a program from the country of Taiwan! As a basic overview, Taiwan is located in Eastern Asia just off the southeastern coast of China. Ethnic groups include but are not limited to: Taiwanese (including Hakka) 84%, mainland Chinese 14%, Aborigine 2%. Taipei, the capital city, is located on the northern point of the country. Taiwan has a dynamic capitalist economy.

This program is a very personal program; we will submit families for pre-approval before placing dossiers. Following the placement of the completed documents in the country, families can anticipate a referral within several months. At times, the wait may be a little longer if a birth mother is directly involved in choosing the family for her child and also depending on the parameters of the child you wish to add to your family.

Infants will usually be one to four months at the time of referral. However, the infant will likely be five to ten months old at the time the family travels to complete the adoption and bring their child home. This time line projection includes the five to six months it usually takes to complete the adoption following the referral from the country.

Our Taiwan program will be best suited to families that meet the following criteria:

- 1) At least one parent is under the age of 48
- 2) At least one parent has a college degree
- 3) Family income is over \$30,000
- 4) There are no more than three birth and/or adopted children already in the home
- 5) Parents have been married for no less than five years

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Please contact us for specific details if this program may fit your family.

News from International Program Coordinator, Kay Montes

Bulgarian Update: As of January 1, 2007, we are pleased to confirm that we have ten new families committed to a child from Bulgaria. Due to changes within the country, all "old" dossiers that were left in the country over the delays related to the implementation of the Hague and new leadership being established are being reviewed separately from all newly submitted dossiers. We are very pleased with the progress that our newly placed dossiers are showing and are awaiting our first referrals. The MOJ has committed to meeting when any dossiers are waiting for referrals. We commend them on this exemplary example of prioritizing the needs of the children who wait for families. Further, in conjunction with the MOJ, TOL is specifically looking for families that are interested in adding a child of age five or six to their family; the goal is to have all children matched to a family before country laws requires the children to be moved to the older children's orphanage.



Helena with her Mom & Dad

News from Client Care Coordinator: Kay J.

As discussed in December 2007 publication, future editions of the Tree of Life Newsletter will be distributed via e-mail or through our website. **This will be the last printed version of our newsletter.** To test the system, we also sent this newsletter to our e-mail addresses currently on file. If you did not receive this e-mail, and wish to keep receiving the Tree of Life Newsletter, please send a message to Kay J. at clientcarecoordinator@toladopt.org. Your e-mail address will be added to our distribution list. Also, to ensure that the newsletter does not end up in your junk mail folder, please add clientcarecoordinator@toladopt.org to your address book. If you do not have e-mail and cannot access our newsletter on the web, please let your adoption coordinator know, and a hardcopy will still be mailed to you.

Welcome Home!

Chris and Eileen with their daughter Helena from Guatemala

Todd & Angela with their son Christian from Guatemala

John & Laura with their daughter Sophie from Bulgaria

Mona with her daughter from Kazakhstan

Thomas and Marie Kohalmi with their daughter from Kazakhstan

Mark and Carin Korros with their daughter from Kazakhstan



Christian with his Mom & Dad

Humanitarian Projects

The Tree of Life Family is committed to assisting orphaned children. With the help of our amazing adoptive families, we have been able to improve the living conditions of many children residing in orphanages as they await their forever family. Following are brief updates on our current projects. If you would like more information, please visit our website at www.toladopt.org / Humanitarian Needs.

2007-2008 Primary Project: Help for Andrey

Last month we shared with you Andrey. This young boy will turn 14 on January 31st, 2008. He currently lives in an orphanage in Eastern Europe and was relinquished at birth due to his facial deformities. He has had a difficult childhood and has often been made fun of and excluded from "the group". Several of our staff and some adoptive families have all visited this child during their time in the country and it has been noticed that his confidence is growing and his shyness is diminishing. He asked a visiting family several months ago "have you found a doctor to help me"? We are pleased to share that indeed, at this time, a team of very generous facial reconstruction physicians have donated their services and Andrey will be coming to the USA very shortly. All surgery costs are being covered by the hospital and physicians; it is estimated that he will need to remain in the US for six months and undergo a series of invasive surgeries with the goal of rebuilding his face, mouth and nose. A generous host family has stepped forward and Andrey will be staying in their home.

UPDATE! Andrey is here in the USA!

Our deepest gratitude goes to all of those who responded quickly to allow this young boy to come to the US with almost no "get ready" time! Our team in the country of Andrey's birth made all of the wheels move quickly to allow both Andrey and his escort to have the needed documents to travel; no easy accomplishment. He was able to travel to the US with the family with whom he will be staying in Michigan and we are grateful for their initiative to make this possible for Andrey. The tickets required to allow for travel were quite expensive due to the short notice and it being the holidays: our gratitude to all those who have donated. As of December 31, 2007, we are happy to share that the cost of the tickets has been covered 100%! Many thanks to the very generous donations in support of this young boy! We may at a later date ask for further help as we have been notified by the in country officials that they will require a visit by someone from his country of birth to come to the US to check on his status. As it is anticipated that he will need to remain in the US for up to a year, this is certainly understandable on their part. We will keep you posted as further plans develop.

We will keep an update of Andrey's progress as he completes the medical steps required to allow his face to be reconstructed along with how he is doing adjusting to life in the US. Again, confidentiality will be very high to support his privacy during this transitional time and we are grateful for your understanding. It is a priority for our agency to start to find "his family" so that eventually he can be adopted and come to the US as someone's cherished son. Please let us know if this might be your family: you may email: kay@toladopt.org if you would like further details about adopting this young boy.

New Project: Assist Cambodia

During the trip to establish the new program in Taiwan, our Executive Director, Daniel Stinea took a deliberate side trip to the country of Cambodia. Although this country is not currently open to international adoption, there are many children who are orphans and in need of assistance. Tree of Life has made a commitment to send \$500.00 per month which will be provided to this orphanage outside of Phnom Penh: it is currently home to many waiting children. This amount will allow for groceries for this group of children on a monthly basis. This is a significant commitment for our agency and we are hopeful that if there are families who feel specifically drawn to helping this group of children you will send your donations to TOL, 9570 SW Barbur Blvd. Suite 304 Portland Oregon 97219. Please mark your tax deductible donation: attention: Cambodia support. We hope to continue our relationship with this Director and the officials that were visited during this trip and offer further assistance as needed. At the current time, only school age children can be accepted into care at this facility as the expense of infant care with the need for diapers, formula and baby caregivers is more than they can financially handle.



Ongoing Project : Turgovishte Orphanage Boiler/Doors/Playground Project



The Turgovishte project came to completion in August of 2007; our Program Coordinator, Kay Montes, her husband and two sons traveled to Bulgaria to deliver the funding to replace the boiler which was accomplished during their visit. The orphanage had been without a reliable heating system for well over a year. As a result of the new boiler not only will there be heat but the children will be able to have hot water for bathing again. Along with that, there was enough money to replace the windows and doors, floors and ceiling in an unused wing of the orphanage.

The playground remains our next goal for improvement; we were able to do some basic safety and paint repair but there remains much to do to allow the children to really use their outside play area. We will continue to accept funding for this portion of the project. If you have any desire to assist, please send your tax deductible check to our Portland office at 9570 SW Barbur Blvd. Suite 304, Portland, Oregon 97219 and clearly mark it "Turgovishte Playground Project". Thank you in advance for your generous donations.

Over the past few months, we have been sharing with you entries from Kay Montes Journal documenting her to Bulgaria. She took that trip with her husband and two of her sons, one adopted from Bulgaria several years ago. The mission of the trip was two-fold, first to let her son re-visit his country of birth. The second was to bring donations for the Turgovishte Orphanage and help with some humanitarian needs there. In this issue, we are sharing Journal Entries 3, 4 & 5.

Too Tired to Type...

Dear all, tonight you are basically getting pictures; I am exhausted.....we spent all day standing in the sun painting at the orphanage in Turgovishte.....

Today we traveled to the orphanage and watched as Josiah explored where he lived for the first years of his life.....no pictures of children allowed but we were allowed a "grand tour" of the facilities and have included pictures of the areas to be repaired by the funding we delivered.....the boiler was paid for and is ordered and will arrive soon; the windows and doors along with repairing a portion of the roof is next.....



We worked on the playground all day....not much evidence of our efforts; no tools, paint that is 80% black tar(my diagnosis!) and toxic.....

Back tomorrow for another day of painting, scraping and cleaning.....it will take another trip to REALLY make a difference.....

We are sun burnt, tired and sleeping early.....

Much love to all.....



Dragging our tails behind us.....

Dear friends and family.....

I left you when we were in Turgovishte painting on the playground so I will back up and bring you across the country and the ocean with us.....

Thursday we returned to the orphanage to do what we could to finish some of our painting efforts from Wednesday.....we started with seven quarts of oil based paint and four brushes; by the end of Wednesday one of the paint brushes was down to a handle and about a ½ inch of "brush" that hadn't fallen out.....even so, the "helper" man soaked it in gasoline and gave it back to us on Thursday.....brushes are precious and next time, we will go armed with a better supply. We finished painting the slide and the "play house"; we spoke with our team about buying the materials to repair the play house room, purchase some sand for the end of the slide, pull the old train back up on the patio and have it painted.....the "sitting areas" need new boards.....all of these things seem "important" to us but in reality the greater needs are much more evident; diapers, food, windows and doors.....

The laundry being hung out and taken in three hour shifts starts to let you see how many hours are spent in changing the children, changing the beds.....there are no diapers at times so this "rotation" of clothing is constant and on going.....gave me some perspective on the amount of laundry I see pass through our house with only ten of us living here....



The photo of the lady in white standing with Josiah is the woman who was his direct caretaker during his first two years; I can't describe the expressions that clearly flew across her face and heart when she realized who was standing in front of her.....the tears streamed down her faceJosiah remembered the pictures of her and climbed in to her arms and held on tight.....and I thought that hearts might break when he said "thank you for taking care of my while I waited for my mommy". She returned to our sides frequently through out our second day of work on the playground.....once to tell me to use one of the climbing toys to reach the top of the peak on the play house I was painting.....once to hand each of us a precious pear that grew on the far end of the playground.....and once just to touch Josiah's head and give him a few more hugs.....

We often felt the eyes of the caretakers watching us as we worked.....

When we left it was with a mix of feelings.....we assured them we would return soon.....

We wandered to the local market.....the boys have learned quickly that fresh bread just baked (not sliced and usually still warm), a chunk of Bulgarian white cheese, four apples, ice tea and a chocolate make a feast.....

We shopped for the girls; interesting that our team in BG always has us bring them American shoes and we always bring back shoes for our little ones from BG.....guess it is universal that you want what others have.....

"home" to the hotel for a cozy quiet evening of watching the "Discovery Channel" and snuggles while we prepare to leave Turgovishte early in the morning.....Josiah got it.....when I asked if he was ready to go home he said "I have two homes, I am ready to leave Bulgaria but I am gonna come back".....

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Dear All, Sorry

to have disappeared on you; we had a car breakdown and a part that had to be ordered.....we spent a second night sleeping at the orphanage where the girls were raised for two years.....our visit there was emotional to say the least.....the staff and the Director were amazed at the pictures of the girls.....they passed the pictures back and forth many many times.....they took us to the nursery and showed us the beds where the girls slept....

The range of emotions for us was extreme.....the Director was surprised that Mattea was still alive.....she shared details with us that we had no idea about.....it is wonderful to know more of our daughters history.....

Petko left us to swim at the Black Sea.....the boys played hard and loved every moment.....we filled them with ice cream and did some "before school" shopping for them; the shoes are very well made here and both boys loved going shopping. They both are sporting new shoes and were in a rush to show them to Petko.....I think that he is amazed that something so "basic" as shoes brings such smiles....

Another night in the orphanage.....

As we left this morning a darling little three year old ran to me and grabbed my hand while pounding her chest and saying "me? me? me?".....the children know what it means when an American couple comes.....some one has a mommy and daddy.....I was reminded why I work as hard as I do.....

Back to have coffee and breakfast in the city this morning; more ice-cream (all fresh ingredients; we watched them deliver this morning to the vendors.....bucket after bucket of fresh fruit and ice-cream.....

Then a two hour drive to Turgovishte; a short visit with the Director and then to the hotel (we had rented an apartment but as we were delayed in arriving they rented it out); the hotel is the same one in which I stayed four years ago on my first visit to Bulgaria.....we are going out now to find dinner.....working the next three days at the orphanage painting and repairing the play equipment.....

Much love to you all.....

Will talk as we can.....



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