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Newsletter

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News From Americans Adopting Orphans—Seattle Main Office

China Quota Suspended for 2003!

After scrambling to meet the deadline for the 2002 quota, we have received official word from the China Center of Adoption Affairs (CCAA) of changes in policy for 2003. It has been announced that the CCAA has "decided not to continue the quota system in the year 2003." The announcement also included a change in regard to single adopters. The new requirement is that "the single adoptive parent should not be over 50 years of age, should have received a higher education or vocational one with a stable job, and a comparatively good financial income."

Clarification from the CCAA about the new singles policy is that the age restrictions for singles would not take place immediately so as not to negatively impact singles who were already in the process of completing their paperwork for their dossiers. Shortly, however, all applications/dossiers from singles must be logged in at the CCAA *before* the applicant turns 50 years of age. (It hinges on the DTC date, not the referral date of the child.)

It is too soon to tell what impact eliminating the couples quota will have on future assignment and wait times. As more information becomes clear about how this will change adoption from China, we will let you know.

Register Now for Winter Classes

There's still time to sign up for our upcoming classes. In January, don't miss Amy's "Chinese Language Crash Course for Adoptive Parents" and "Mahjong Made Simple". February is filled with practical information for parents to get organized for their preplacement studies and travel with Kathy's "Preparing for your Home Study" and Dave's "Planning your Adoption Trip" classes. No new parent should miss out on Cindy's "Baby Care Basics" or "Baby Proofing and Child Safety" classes. Register today by phone, email, on our web site, or postal mail.

www.orphans.com

Is Your Post Placement Report Due?

The China Center of Adoption Affairs requires two post placement studies be submitted once parents are home with their child. One is due 6 months after your return from China, and another is due 12 months after your return home. To encourage families to complete this obligation, **Americans Adopting Orphans** began having families pre pay for their post placement studies at the time of referral. That way, when your post placement report comes due, you will only have to think about arranging time for an interview and won't have to worry about the fees. If another agency conducts your post placement study, you will get a \$150 refund (provided you pre paid) when we receive the post placement report. As an alternative, you may designate the \$150 as a donation and receive a tax deduction for your contribution.

If your child came home between January and August of 2002, it is time to contact your agency to complete your first post placement study. If your child came home in 2001, it's time to submit your 2nd post placement report to your agency so that it can be forwarded to the CCAA. Remember to send a few photos of your child.

Chinese New Year Banquet News

It's that time again! Come experience the event of the year for **Americans Adopting Orphans** families—our 8th Annual Chinese New Year Banquet!

This year promises to be one of the best ever! Current and past families will find a flyer in this mailing with details about our Year of the Sheep Shindig. If you are a waiting family, please consider coming. It's a great opportunity to meet other families and see lots of happy children. We hope to see you there!

Employee Features

Jennifer White came to **Americans Adopting Orphans** seeking a change in her career after years in the insurance field. With a strong desire to help people in a tangible way, Jennifer has found tremendous satisfaction working with adoptive families.

Accustomed to detail-oriented work, Jennifer's skills were a perfect match for our agency where she performs technical reviews on dossier documents and home study reports. Her easygoing manner and straightforward style of communication are appreciated by our clients.

At home Jennifer enjoys spending time with her husband, two school-aged children, and a menagerie of pets. Having a particular fondness for sports, she can often be found at local events cheering on her team. She is a diehard Mariners fan. Reading and gardening are pastimes for Jennifer.

Amy Guo grew up in China and graduated from Jiangxi Normal University in Nanchang with a Masters Degree in English. After several years working as our facilitator in Guangzhou where she assisted families with their processing at the US Consulate, she came to the US in 1999 to act as an intern in the **Americans Adopting Orphans** Seattle office. She now continues those same duties as a full staff member.

In our home office, Amy handles communication with our China facilitators, works with families to establish their travel plans and itineraries, and translates referral documents and other correspondence from China. In addition, Amy teaches some of our most popular classes including the Chinese Language Crash Course for Adoptive Parents, a Chinese cooking class, and a Mahjong class.

Amy loves children and is proud of her part in bringing families together. She and her husband (a long-time friend of the Ptasniks) are expecting their first child. Congratulations Amy and Jay!



News from Abroad

Processing Times--Ukraine



Our first Ukraine families are getting close to submitting their dossier which means that we hope to have the first **Americans Adopting Orphans** Ukraine kids back before the next newsletter comes out.

Processing times are very short compared to those of other countries, and the dossier is a little less complicated. It is estimated that most families will complete their dossiers for a Ukraine adoption in about 4 to 6 months. After a dossier has been sent to Ukraine, families are normally invited to travel to select a child (or children) in about 2 months. Both parents in a married couple must travel to complete the adoption. The trip is approximately 2 to 3 weeks in duration. Call us for details! 206-524-5437.

Processing Times--China



November was truly a time of thanks for our families whose dossiers arrived in China in October 2001. They received their referrals the day before Thanksgiving, just in time to share their good news with family and friends over the long weekend. Children ranged in age from 6 months to 15 months.

Last November was a busy month for most agencies and the CCAA as it was the deadline to submit dossiers for the 2002 quota. As a result, applications poured into the CCAA. Referrals for November 2001 families have started coming out in several waves. They have released all referrals for dossiers submitted through November 20th at the time of this writing. We anticipate referrals for **Americans Adopting Orphans**' families any time!

The CCAA has reported to us that Review Room 1 has completed processing of all dossiers up to and including March of 2002. Those dossiers are now in Review Room 2 awaiting child matching, however there is no indication of how soon those assignments will be issued.

Processing Times--Vietnam



Our Vietnam program remains on hold. Vietnamese newspapers have printed the new Marriage and Family laws that went into effect on January 2, 2003. According to the US Department of State on December 20, 2002, "The United States and the Government of Vietnam are actively involved in discussions regarding the conditions under which adoptions between our two countries can continue." There is a group of families organizing to lobby for the US to sign an agreement with the government of Vietnam so that adoptions may continue.

Processing Times—Cambodia



The INS has begun processing the "class 4" families (those who submitted their I-600A before the December 2001 shutdown but who had not yet received a referral). Once this group has been processed, the INS has indicated that they will begin working towards reopening the adoption process to new families. We are hopeful that this will occur early in 2003.

News from the Net

Check Out our New and Improved Web Site!

Exciting changes are coming to our web site in the coming months. We are adding an "Adoption Store" to include resources for pre- and post-adoptive families. Use our Adoption Store as a resource to enhance your knowledge of foreign language, culture, and travel, whether you are waiting, about to travel, or are back home with your child. We have videos, for education and entertainment (Looking for Mulan? We have it!), books including a very nice Atlas of China, our terrific phrase book for adopting and travel in China, and the Baby B' Air, a child restraint system for use during air travel. Coming soon—jewelry, handmade quilts, music, travel safety equipment, flowers, toys, child care products, and more!

You can review books of interest and even order books online from Barnes and Noble through the **Americans Adopting Orphans** website at www.orphans.com. Go to our website and click "Adoption Literature" and select from categories such as books for younger children, books for older children, adoptive parenting, and the like. Click on the title to buy the books from Barnes and Noble online, and help support us at the same time! Every time you buy a book through us, a portion of the purchase goes to **Americans Adopting Orphans** at the same low price to you. In addition, even if you just want to shop at Barnes and Noble online, you can still help us by clicking through the Barnes and Noble banner on our website. Please, take the time to do this when you buy from Barnes and Noble. Check back periodically as we are developing and updating this list constantly.

From our E-Group

*I know **Americans Adopting Orphans** works with the Bridge of Love (a charitable organization that works closely with the CCAA), but what if people want to donate specifically to their child's orphanage? Does **Americans Adopting Orphans** have a current project in our child's province families/friends can donate to? How does that work?*

You can absolutely target donations through **Americans Adopting Orphans Giving Program** to any orphanage that you want. We can even help with specific purchases.

This offers several advantages to adoptive families. First, it makes the donation tax deductible. We are a 501(c)3 charity. This means that families can give more, or at least pay fewer taxes thanks to their generosity.

Second, by going through official channels, you know that the donation will really get to the kids. With money or items that are simply given to an orphanage, there is no accountability for that donation. It is possible that an orphanage director could take the money, buy blankets, but charge the purchase to the orphanage books, and pocket the money. Parents go and see new blankets, but this means that some other purchase that could have been made with the official budget money does not get made. While most orphanage directors are honest, putting this kind of temptation in front of them is not a good practice.

By working with the Bridge of Love, we know that all cash donations, and the value of item donations, are made part of the official orphanage budget.

Third, it helps our agency. By setting up the Giving Program, and making it so flexible, we want to help as many families as possible give targeted donations to specific orphanages. The China Center of Adoption Affairs appreciates agencies that help orphanages. When our families want to donate to an orphanage, it helps **Americans Adopting Orphans** to be a part of that process. While many agencies build mandatory donations into their adoption process, our belief in Choice and Freedom for adoption has meant that **Americans Adopting Orphans** has not been able to make as many donations as agencies who charge higher fees. If any of our families want to help the orphanages in China, and if they appreciate the philosophy of our agency, we hope that they will want to support **Americans Adopting Orphans** as a part of supporting the orphanages. Just let us know how we can help.

On a larger scale, we have not been able to organize the families who want to help orphanages. While we have designed our Giving Program to be very flexible, and let families decide how their money works, we simply don't have the staff to go out and really get a community of helpful families together. If any of you families would like to help with this, we would love to hear from you. We have some great ideas, but no real time to implement them. For example, we could put together some general materials for families to have fundraisers. Official letters from **Americans Adopting Orphans** that says how the money will be used, and that the fund raiser is a part of our program. Graphics on disc that families can take to print shops to make signs, banners and flyers, and introduction letters to local merchants to make donations. Ideas for fun events like shopping center stroller Olympics, or fun run/walks, or even bake sales.

While we could hire a fund raising staff person, that would mean that we would have to pay them out of a portion of the money that we raise. We want more of the money to go to the orphanages, and that means volunteer help. Any takers?

Parents' Zone

Scam Alert

Take caution when sight seeing and shopping in Guangzhou. Scam artists frequent hotels, restaurants, and shops around the airport and US Consulate waiting for unsuspecting adoptive families. You aren't hard to spot with all that luggage and a baby strapped to your back! Families have been approached by Chinese people posing as students, businessmen, or someone who "just wants to practice their English." After gaining your trust, they offer to escort you to places of local interest and act as interpreter or "negotiator" with shop keepers for buying souvenirs, meals, taxis, etc. Unbeknownst to you, a "trusted guide" may over-inflate prices of purchases and pocket the surplus. Families have been left stranded on the back streets of Guangzhou far from their hotel without money after their "guide" simply walked away with their last few dollars "to go find a taxi."

Richard and Alexa, our Guangzhou guides, recount a very recent example of how cautious families need to be when in China. "An adoptive father had quite a scary experience on the Shamian Island and we think you'd better tell this to every family who's coming. One morning, he was walking alone on the island when a man came and tried to talk with him. The man asked him if he was adoptive family. Then the man told the adoptive father to give him money. The father wasn't stupid so he tried to ignore the man and kept walking to hotel. The man followed him for sometime and kept asking for money. Then three other men came and stood together with the man. The adoptive father was smart so he stayed calm and yelled at the four men. They were scared and scattered away.

"We feel very relieved that nothing serious happened. The police have been informed but we don't know if they can do anything. The adoptive father seems to us to be a hard target for anyone, but we can't help thinking "what if it had been a single mom?" We also heard from another facilitator that there was a girl asking for money from some families. It seems that some bad people noticed there are so many adoptive families on the island. With a baby and not knowing much about China, they are easy targets. Some families who haven't traveled much may think that everyone can be their friend. We think you'd better tell this to the families and tell them not to talk with strangers. They should be careful."

Protect your family by using common sense and simple precautions:

- If you want to explore, and your adoption agency does not provide a local guide, ask your travel agent or the concierge at your hotel to recommend and arrange for someone to help you. Guides provided by your adoption agency are paid by the agency for their expertise and proven good service to families. Thus they are not as desperately motivated as independent tour guides to seek tips and price gouge as the major source of compensation for their time.
- Always keep the name and address of your hotel with you in both English and Chinese. You can show it to people on the street, taxi drivers, etc. to make your return to your hotel if you get lost.
- Never disclose how much money you have with you. Con artists will push you hard until they think they have all the money they can get out of you, then will suddenly disappear when your money is gone even if you are relying on them to continue helping you.
- Make shopping expeditions in groups when you can. It's more difficult to fool a whole group than a couple of individuals. Always tell someone in your group where you are going and when you expect to return particularly if you venture out alone.
- Take your English-Chinese/Chinese-English dictionary with you so that you can communicate without an interpreter. By pointing at the Chinese characters and words in

English you can make yourself understood.

- Always carry your passport on your person--never let it out of your sight. (One Seattle Times story tells of a traveler who left his passport in a jacket pocket then placed it in an overhead storage bin on his international flight. When he arrived at his destination, his jacket was there but his passport was not.)

Quick Books Pro Needed

In order to improve our ability to work with you, we have recently upgraded our accounting software to QuickBooks. When we opened the box, we found that we could receive a \$120 rebate if we were upgrading an old QuickBooks to the 2003 Edition we just installed. If you, or your accountant, have an old copy of QuickBooks (not Quicken, their consumer product), and you donate it to us, we can qualify for the rebate. All you have to do is send us one of these three things: The original, or even a photocopy, of 1) the QuickBooks CD Rom or 2) first 3.5 inch floppy or 3) the cover of the User's Manual. Please don't do this if you plan to upgrade yourself, as only one upgrade is allowed per copy.

Fear of Flying Dampening your Adoption?

Learn to understand your fear and deal with it so that your adoption trip can be as relaxing and enjoyable as possible. The *Fear of Flying Clinic* is a nonprofit public service organization with branches around the country to help people overcome their fear of air travel. Its volunteer staff consists of commercial airline pilots, Federal Aviation Administration personnel, members of the International Organization of Women Pilots, employees of major airlines, clinic graduates, and licensed behavioral counselors.

In the Seattle area, the *Fear of Flying Clinic* is offered twice each year. It is a two full weekend course with the next session being March 22 and 23 and March 29 and 30. The program includes lectures, supplemental cassettes and reading materials, and an optional orientation flight on a commercial jet. Learn about pilots, safety instructors, air traffic controllers, flight attendants, and maintenance specialist. For more information you can visit the web site of the Fear of Flying Clinic at www.scn.org/fofc. Many airports also offer fear of flying classes.

WANTED: Your Family Recipes

It's been threatened before, but we're serious about it this time. An Americans Adopting Orphans Family Cookbook will exist in time for the summer PigNoc! If you make a mean Mu Shu or have a unique way with Jello, we want your recipes. Chinese, Ukrainian, Vietnamese, Cambodian, or American, it doesn't matter the cuisine. If it's family-friendly, we'll take it.

Yes indeed, an **Americans Adopting Orphans** Family cookbook is in the works. Our goal is to have it ready by July. We need your favorite main dishes, side dishes, vegetarian dishes, desserts, beverages, noodles, rice, and all things in between. We even have recipes for home made playdough and fingerpaint.

Submit one or more recipes to us with ingredients list, preparation instructions, cooking temperature and time, how many people the recipe will serve, and any special comments to **Americans Adopting Orphans**. Don't forget to include your name with the recipe so that we can credit your culinary talents.

By the way, we also need someone, or a team of someones, to coddle this project through to completion. You don't even need to be local to Seattle. Please email or call if you would like to lend a hand.

Staying in Touch.....

Americans Adopting Orphans

Seattle

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St. Louis

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Keeping you Informed

Monthly Information Meetings

On the 3rd Sunday of each month 3 to 5:30 pm, we meet at our classroom (3212 NE 125th, Seattle) to discuss how our programs work and to answer your questions.

Free quarterly newsletter

To be included on our mailing list, please call, write, or email us. You may receive our newsletter by email or postal mail.

Clients only egroup

To join, email your request to cindyp@orphans.com. In your email message, please identify yourself by name as a client of Americans Adopting Orphans. You will either be invited to join or be added to the list automatically.

Monthly General Adoption Support/Waiting Family Meetings

On the 1st Sunday of each month, you are invited to our general adoption/waiting family support group. This meeting is for families currently involved in an adoption, families who are waiting for a referral, or families who are home with their children. You will receive an email or post card reminder of the date and time about a week prior to this regularly scheduled meeting.

After Hours Update Line

Even after our phones have been forwarded to voice mail at the end of our business day, you can still call and hear the latest news about processing times and/or other important notices about international adoption. Simply call our regular office number and select option 3 to be updated on our adoption programs.

Audio and Video Instant Messaging

Face-to-face conference calls through Yahoo Instant Messenger are offered for your support and convenience. Send an instant message to: daveporphans .