

Spotlight: Haiti Adoptions Grow in Number as the Need for Families Expands

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Haiti Spotlight

Haiti becomes popular
hotspot for adoptions

Sisterhood

China adoptees create
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Touching a Life

One woman overcomes the
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throughout the world

Gift of Adoption Fund

By Peter Moran

Every adoption journey is unique as children and parents are united through love and hope. The cherished adoption story of the Schade family, spanning continents and cultures, is no exception. Like any good narrative, it unfolds in universally inspiring ways.

Ann and Rick Schade first considered adoption more than 20 years ago, but the expenses involved were too much of an obstacle. “The cost was, frankly, startling for a young couple facing a mortgage, college loans and other debt,” Ann recalled. The situation for the Schades was not uncommon — then or now.

According to a recent study by the Dave Thomas Foundation, 40 percent of Americans have considered adoption, but less than 2 percent actually move forward due to high costs.

Despite the financial challenges, Ann and Rick’s desire to adopt didn’t fade. At one point, they were approached by a friend whose extended family included a developmentally delayed 1-year-old girl in need of a permanent home. When that adoption fell through, the Schades were naturally heartbroken, and Rick said he never wanted to experience that kind of disappointment again.

In their late forties still wanting children, but not wanting to adopt an infant, the Schades became increasingly focused on “waiting children” — those left to grow up in foster care or an orphanage and much more at risk to face a lifetime of poverty, drug addiction and crime. Ann and Rick, like many others, recognized that a safe, loving and permanent home is the only solution for the millions of children worldwide without families.

Fate stepped in during March 2007, when, at the invitation of a friend, Ann joined a mission team to Ethiopia to set up a library at an orphanage. While there, her heart was opened to the possibility of reaching out to these orphans on a permanent basis. When she returned home, Ann and Rick conferred and began the international adoption process.

The Schades’ life-stage had changed dramatically since they first considered adoption decades ago; the reality of adoption expenses hadn’t. Adoption costs today can easily exceed \$25,000, including agency, placement, attorney and homestudy fees, as well as travel and medical expenses. Having been through the adoption process before, the Schades were well aware of the costs. What they didn’t know at



CELEBRATING HALLOWEEN are Ann and Rick Schade with their daughters, Hewan and Berhan.

first — like many others who consider adoption — was that financial assistance was available.

Ann began searching for organizations that offer financial support for adoptive parents. She found some groups offering modest grants, and others with low or no interest loans available. Many organizations had grants only for people with a particular religious affiliation, who would adopt from a specific orphanage, or lived in a certain region of the country. Each organization had different questions and required a different presentation of Ann and Rick’s finances. Completing the various applications and preparing different financial statements proved to be arduous to say the least.

A Gift of Adoption grant was one

of many the Schades applied for. With a downloadable application written in simple language, the Gift of Adoption grant application was surprisingly easy for Ann and Rick to complete; the foundation’s staff was also friendly and supportive. Following a suspenseful wait while their application was reviewed, the Schades were overcome by relief and gratitude upon learning they were approved for a Gift of Adoption grant.

In a storybook ending, Ann and Rick adopted and welcomed home their daughters, Hewan and Berhan, from Ethiopia in July 2008. Half-sisters by birth and living at Adoption Advocates International Orphanage in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia for two-and-a-half years, the Schade girls are now ages 12 and 9 respectively.



BECOMING A FAMILY through the help of the Gift of Adoption Fund is Ann and Rick Schade with their daughters, Hewan and Berhan.

The Schades are just one of hundreds of families who have benefited from the life-changing generosity from Gift of Adoption since the organization awarded its first grant a dozen years ago. Being able to adopt their daughters was such a blessing for Ann and Rick, but knowing the number of children still in need of families, they felt compelled to do even more. The Schades decided to become regular donors to the Gift of Adoption Fund, and in doing so became a part of helping other children get adopted.

Gift of Adoption, founded as a private family foundation in 1996 by adoptive parents Gene and Lucy Wyka, then converted to a public charity in 2001, has kept its singular focus: to inspire more Americans to adopt by providing adoption grants to qualified parents, and giving children permanent homes and a chance to thrive. That overarching goal is the same, but the growth of Gift

of Adoption enables the foundation to promote adoption in two complementary ways. First is to directly help families overcome the financial obstacles to adopting. Second is to shape a new framework of philanthropy by making adoption a charitable endeavor, and something that caring people everywhere can support in the same way they support other essential causes. The Schades had a strong calling to adopt, but not everyone has to adopt in order to make sure a child is blessed with a permanent, loving family.

To date, Gift of Adoption has awarded 561 grants totaling more than \$1.9 million. This year its domestic and international adoption grants will be split about 50/50. Domestic grant priorities are to keep biological siblings together and pre-empt foster care. International adoption priorities also serve to keep biological siblings like Hewan and Berhan

together within families, prevent system “age outs” and to facilitate adoptions of children with life-threatening conditions so they are adopted more quickly and begin receiving the care they need.

Any U.S. citizen with an approved homestudy from a licensed and accredited agency or social worker, is eligible to apply for a Gift of Adoption grant. Financial need must be demonstrated, but the number of biological or adopted children in a household does not affect eligibility. In addition, Gift of Adoption does not consider marital status, gender, race, creed, national origin, religion or sexual orientation when reviewing applicants.

Gift of Adoption receives many more applications than funds are available. This year the organization expects to receive approximately 600 applications. Of this number, about 100 families will receive grants that range from

\$1,000 to \$7,500 to assist in the adoption of nearly 120 children. Funds must be used for expenses directly related to the adoption process, ranging from agency to travel costs. Grants are paid directly to the service provider and are provided as the last funds needed to complete the adoption. Grant applications can be downloaded at www.giftofadoption.org.

Ann and Rick Schade’s adoption experience has moved them to remain passionately involved with adoption issues, and connected with others through Gift of Adoption and other organizations. Ann is on the board of Hearts of Hope Adoption Ministry, and the Schade family is helping to launch an adoption ministry at their church. With their continuing gifts of time, dedication and financial contributions, the Schades are “paying it forward” so other children can complete their own adoption journeys and experience the life-long joy of family.

Peter Moran was born in Seoul, Korea and adopted at 7 months, one of five children — four of whom were adopted. As a child, Moran was encouraged to celebrate adoption as well as his Korean heritage. Today, Moran stays involved with adoption by volunteering at Korean-adoptee culture camp and other adoption organizations. Moran works at his family’s business in Queens, N. Y., and is studying for a master’s degree in public relations and corporate communications at New York University. He lives in Flushing with his wife and dogs, and enjoys writing, non-profit work and the outdoors. He looks forward to starting a family and perhaps becoming an adoptive parent himself.