



*Post Adoption Center
For Education
and Research*

Est. 1978

AAC Conference Special Edition

Spring 1997

President's Message

by Jane Calbreath, M.A.

creating a new vision for PACER in the 21st century . . .

Since its beginnings in 1978, PACER has played a significant role in the building of post-adoption services in the San Francisco Bay Area. It was established, "to provide programs of information, education, research and services to individuals and families involved in adoption or those considering relinquishment or adoption." Today it continues to be staffed by trained volunteers who are themselves adoptees, adoptive parents and birth parents.

After nearly twenty years, the media and general public are finally beginning to listen to our stories and to show interest in understanding our issues. They hear our desire for change in the direction of truth and openness, and away from myth, lies and secrets.

As we approach our twentieth anniversary, PACER is beginning a new period of growth. We currently have over three hundred members and 12 support groups that cover the entire San Francisco Bay Area. An earnest effort is being made to develop our board of directors to lead the organization into a new era.

One of our exciting plans is for a men's group which will bring together male adoptees, birthfathers, adoptive fathers, as well as, spouses and other men who are in supporting relationships to women triad members. We also want to provide groups for adoptee teens, for newly relinquishing birth parents and to offer therapy groups in addition to support group (see Susan Love's article on next page). We are looking for volunteers to be trained in support group facilitation and triad psychotherapists for upcoming therapy groups and referrals.

The board is beginning work on a larger *vision* for PACER that will increase services overall. We see a truly dynamic organization offering training and counseling services, along with the search and support services for reunions. In the interest of education we will be offering professional training, seminars, consultation and community awareness programs for therapists, social workers, educators, pediatricians, lawyers and judges. PACER has established relationships in order to remain well informed on political issues and the status of state legislation related to adoption.

This year we will produce our newsletter quarterly for the first time in five years, provide computer training for adoption activism on the internet, and offer an expanded Search Workshop in June, in addition to several community events beginning with a Mother's Day Picnic on May 10th (see "Announcements" on page 3.)

Recognizing the increased interest and awareness of all adoption-related issues, PACER is seeking to connect in a collegial manner with other organizations and agencies to share information, ideas and resources. We hope to maximize all of our efforts by working in cooperation with other organizations from around the country, rather than duplicating efforts.

As board president, I invite your feedback and ideas. Whether you are a new member, or have been around for the unfolding history of PACER, now is the time to participate in creating the newest version of PACER. We will soon begin a formal visioning process to take PACER into the next century. Please lend us your hands, hearts and resources and work with us. ♦

Jane Calbreath, M.A. is an Organizational Consultant who specializes in organization transformation and change. She is a support group facilitator and the newsletter editor for PACER and has presented at the AAC and other conferences over the past seven years. She can be reached at (415) 21 Mendocino Lane, Novato CA 94947, 898-8938 or email: jbreath@aol.com

**Post Adoption
Center
for Education
and Research**

P.O. Box 309,
Orinda, CA 94563
(510) 935-6622 voice mail

PACER, the Post Adoption Center for Education and Research, is a non-profit, volunteer-run organization established in 1978. It serves the adoption community in the greater San Francisco Bay Area by offering monthly support groups, peer counseling, workshops and seminars, a newsletter and referrals to related services.

PACER's purpose is to foster a better understanding of adoption as a lifelong process and to serve all members of the adoption triad by providing them with information, education and ongoing emotional support.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Jane Calbreath, *President and Newsletter Editor*
Sandie Gutcher, *Secretary*
Doug Ross, *Treasurer*
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Merrill Hunn
Laura Ingram
Susan Love
Gail Smith
Lee Ziegler

**Newsletter
Publications**

Approx. Release
of Newsletter

Summer 1997	June 15, 1997
Fall 1997	Sept. 15, 1997
Winter 1997	Dec. 15, 1997
Spring 1998	March 15, 1998

**Submissions and
advertising to:**

jbreath@aol.com or
21 Mendocino Lane,
Novato, CA 94947

Support or Therapy Group?

Similarities & Differences

by Susan Love, MFCCI

PACER has a history of offering support groups that are popular and well-attended by triad members in the Bay Area. These monthly meetings are invaluable as a safe place to share experience and get information from people who have been there. Being able to talk about these issues with others who *know* is in itself healing. Just hearing others' stories can reduce the feeling of isolation and of being an outsider. Support groups offer a great educational opportunity and a space for people to feel comfortable talking about things that they don't elsewhere.

In these peer-led groups participants have a time to talk about what is on their mind. Sometimes comments are invited, but "advice" is discouraged as is "cross talk". People usually come to a support group when they are struggling with a specific problem, want to hear about the experience of others and want the group's support. These groups are most often open-ended with no required attendance. Although, there may be dues for membership in the sponsoring organization or a "donation" custom, there is no fee per session. Under Jane Calbreath's direction, facilitation training and standardization of group structure has strengthened the PACER support group network.

With the expanded vision of how PACER will be serving triad members and their families in the Bay Area, it seems appropriate to look at the merit of therapy groups led by professionals, as well. This article is intended to offer some thoughts on the purpose of each type of group and some ideas of why one might choose to join one or the other or both.

We seek counseling for a wide variety of reasons: to deal with delayed grief issues, to help our children understand their adoption, to cope with the aftermath of reunion, and other issues related to adoption. Many times we enter counseling for reasons seemingly unrelated to adoption: relationship difficulties, addiction, death of a loved one or career changes. Changes often cause an adoptee to start searching for his/her birthfamily and origins. This might be triggered by the birth of a child, the death of the adoptive parents, or a medical crisis creating the need for accurate medical history.

These and other issues can be worked through in a therapeutic way leading to insight, increased self-esteem and to affect desired change. Individual therapy is one option or a therapy group can have equal value. The group may even be the preferred choice. Being with a group of other people who can empathize deeply with your experience can be very productive. The magic happens with the interpersonal interface or feedback. The goal is to help each person to express him/herself and to be who they are without the defensive layers we have all developed to survive. (We don't need all those layers anymore. We survived!) The power is in the witnessing of the group, it's ability to give feedback, and in that person's chance to practice being who she/he truly is.

Key to the success of a group is a feeling of safety and confidence in the group leader, because letting go of our defensive layers of behavior takes courage and can render us feeling exposed. A safe and supportive group environment can help us to do our work, and until we do, we're not really living our own lives. We're living the role we have created.

Therapy groups tend to be more structured than support groups and usually meet for a specific number of sessions. Members make a commitment to attendance and although typically less costly than individual therapy, there is a fee for each session. Groups are led by one or two therapists who facilitate interaction and process between members. Care is given to ensure a group of people that can work together.

In response to PACER members asking for therapy referrals, we are developing a referral service for the adoption community. If you have questions or comments or are interested in groups or referrals, I welcome your call. ♦

Susan Love, MA, MFCCI is an adoption counselor and has a therapy practice for children, individuals, couples, families and groups. She is a certified teacher K-12, adoptee and adoptive parent with deep interest in adoptive families. She can be reached at Bay Area Psychotherapy Services, Berkeley, (510) 287-8981 or email: soozlove@aol.com

SUBMISSION AND PUBLICATION GUIDELINES * YOUR PARTICIPATION IS WELCOMED!

All submissions must be double-spaced and typed on full-sized paper (8 1/2 x 11), preferably on disk formatted for Macintosh (3 1/2" only) in Microsoft Word, Claris Works, or Pagemaker-compatible. No handwritten or telephone copy accepted.

Readership is approximately 600; this includes members of the Adoption Triad, their families, agencies providing adoption-related services and counseling professionals.

ADOPTION-RELATED ARTICLES

Feature-length articles, book/film/video reviews, news items, and search/reunion stories are limited to 750 words or less (75 typed lines, about 10 words/line). They must have clinical/professional relevance, yet can also express the opinions, ideas, expertise and/or personal history of the author; include a brief bio at the end.

Short features, letters to the editor (250 words or less) and humorous material of interest to the Triad community are also encouraged.

Submissions must be received by the 15th of the month preceding publication. (*See page 2.)

ADVERTISING AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Paid submissions are accepted in the following categories:

*Ads & Announcements

*Display Ad

*Personal Flier

(1) ADS & ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Maximum 55 lower-case characters/line of type

(count punctuation and spaces and allow for the extra space needed to capitalize the first few words of your ad). Please indicate member or non-member with your ad.

PACER MEMBERS: \$4.00/line, NON-MEMBERS: \$10.00/LINE

Mail check payable to PACER. We CANNOT bill for unpaid/underpaid ads; refund for overpaid ads; or issue receipts (your cancelled check is your receipt). Mail or fax by the 10th of the month prior to publication.

(2) DISPLAY ADS:

Mail in with check. Must be camera ready, which means a black and white copy on paper that is clean enough to be photographed.

Mail by the 10th of the month preceding publication.

(3) FLIERS

Each quarter we can include in the newsletter up to three 8 1/2 by 11" fliers on lightweight paper. Fliers must be relevant to post-adoption and congruent with the mission and values of PACER. If questionable, the flier will be reviewed by the PACER board of directors.

Mail or fax one copy of the flier to reserve space and request approval. Upon receiving approval, check for \$100.00 and 600 copies of your flier must be received by the 1st of the month of that particular newsletter's publication. (You will be advised of delivery location with your approval.)

All submissions must have content, tone, and appearance relevant to and in the best interests of PACER, its mission and values, and the post-adoption community we serve. The PACER organization does not place infants or children for adoption, hence, advertisements from persons wishing to adopt, or professionals/agencies facilitating new adoptions will not be accepted.

PLEASE NOTE: The publication of any submission does not imply: representation of a PACER position or policy, endorsement of the submitter or their services or products; or responsibility for any claims made by any submitter. Pacer also reserves the right to partially or unilaterally EDIT, MODIFY, CANCEL, or OMIT all submissions without further consultation.; all submissions are reviewed by the PACER Board of Directors prior to publication in the newsletter.

ALL SUBMISSIONS, ADS, & ANNOUNCEMENTS SHOULD BE SENT TO: David E. Duffy, 8362 Mill Station Road, Sebastopol, CA 95472-2539. Phone (707) 823-6208 / Fax: (707) 823-3267.

Announcements

Quarterly PACER FACILITATOR'S MEETING

KTVU Studios at Jack London Square
Saturday, April 26th
9:30 a.m. until 12:30 p.m.
Jane Calbreath (415) 898-8938 for information.

UNITED WAY

Please consider designating PACER as your charity of choice. When you make your annual donation to the United Way, include the following information on your pledge card:
Post Adoption Center for Education and Research
P.O. Box 309 Orinda, CA 94563

FAIR presents: *Addressing Adoption*

7:30 - 9:00 pm

Trinity Methodist Church, Mt. View

April 2nd: Discussion follows presentation:
Deciding to search, What does it mean?
May 7th: Group discussion on resources
for adopted teens
for further information (415) 856-3515

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Adoptees Therapy / Support Group offered at ARC, Adoption Resource and Counseling Services. ARC provides education, consultation and psychotherapy for triad members of all ages - children, teens, adults. Call Janece Fields, ATR, MFCC, at ARC (707) 829-9346 in Sebastopol.

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Pact Offers Support Group for **Trans-racial Adoptees**

An informal setting where trans-racially adopted adults can meet others with similar issues.

Date: 1st Tuesday of each month
Time: 7:00 until 9:30
Location: Oakland
Facilitator: Lisa Steinberg

Information & directions call Lisa at (415) 221-6957 days

PACER Celebrates Mother's Day

Please join PACER members, their families and friends for a picnic in Marin County :

Saturday, May 10th, 11:00 am- 4:00 pm
Corte Madera location
For more information call Jane Calbreath at (415) 898-8938 or your support group leader

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Search Workshop

Saturday, June 7th
from 1:30 - 4:30 pm
First Congregational Church, Berkeley
Channing Way at Dana

\$35 fee, must register in advance
Call Laura at: (510) 653-4637 for more information
Flyers available at all support group meeting

THE TRAIL TO OPEN RECORDS
American Adoption Congress
19th Annual
International Conference
April 3 - 5, 1997
Irving, Texas
Questions: (714) 434-7635

The California Geneological Society's 12th Annual **Family History Fair**

Friday, April 25th 12 noon - 8 pm
Saturday, April 26th 9 am - 5 pm
Herbst Pavilion (Pier 2) Ft. Mason Center, S.F.
Call: (415) 777-9936 (Wed., Thurs. & Sat.)

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Internet Training: Adoption Activism presented by Bastard Nation and PACER

Date: Sunday, April 13, 1997
Time: 11:00 - 2:00
Place: Bay Area Computer Training Center
4340 Redwood Hwy, Suite A36, San Rafael
\$25 fee - Pre-registration required
Laura Ingram (510) 653-4637 or lcingram@aol

Open Records: Why It's An Issue

Copyright 1996, Bastard Nation

Adult adoptees in countries around the world have easy and unrestricted access to the records which help them to define their genetic, ethnic and cultural heritage. These records include their original birth certificates and the hospital records from their births. The film "Secrets and Lies", which takes place in England, includes a scene where the adoptee accesses her original birth records without any problem. This almost never happens in the U.S. today.

Adult adoptees in all but two states in the U.S. (Alaska and Kansas) are forbidden from accessing their original birth certificates thanks to archaic depression-era laws which mandated that adoptee birth certificates be falsified and sealed, allegedly to protect the adoptee from the shame of their "illegitimate" heritage.

In Scotland, adoptee records have been open since 1930. In England they have been open since 1975. Australia, New Zealand, Norway, Finland, Israel, Mexico and many other nations have open records for adult adoptees. Why are they still sealed in most of the U.S.?

Well-funded lobbies representing certain adoption agencies and lawyers think they have a vested interest in keeping adoptee records closed. They are going from state to state trying to pass a "Uniform Adoption Act" which would seal adoptee records for 99 years and in some cases felonize searching for adoptees and birth parents.

Searching has nothing to do with the gratitude or lack of it. Adoptees search for a variety of reasons, from wanting medical history to wanting to know their biological and ethnic heritage because they themselves are starting a family. Many adoptees begin to search in earnest when they start a family. On the other hand, some adoptees choose not to search for a variety of reasons, from simple lack of curiosity to a fear that they will somehow "disrupt" their birth parents' lives. Fact is, most birth parents welcome reunion and even when they don't there is usually some birth relative who does. Searching is also not a threat to adoptive parents and many adoptive parents assist their children with searching. The parents who raised you will always be your parents.

It is time to get humane open records laws passed in each state and province of the U. S. and Canada. To find out more about adult adoptee rights and how to help get constitutional open records laws passed, contact Bastard Nation at 415-435-7960, or visit their website at <http://www.bastards.org/> ♦ *(reprinted with permission)*



PACER NEEDS *Your* SUPPORT!

Benefits of membership include:

- subscription to the newsletter (4 issues/year)
- support group meetings for one year
- discount on PACER events

Name: _____ Address: _____

Phone: _____ City / Zip: _____

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|---|--|--|--------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> New member | <input type="checkbox"/> Renewal | <input type="checkbox"/> Donation \$ | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Adoptee | <input type="checkbox"/> Birthparent | <input type="checkbox"/> Adoptive Parent | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Newsletter only \$20 | <input type="checkbox"/> Regular Member \$40 | <input type="checkbox"/> Sponsor \$125 | |