

The Children's Bridge – Annual General Meeting 2008

Presidents Report

The past year for the Children's Bridge (CB) can best be described as being the proverbial "roller coaster ride", complete with ups and downs.

The 'Ups':

Following difficult search process to recruit a new Executive Director, we were very fortunate and pleased to have been able to successfully bring on board Sandra Forbes. She has proven to be a very capable and a welcome addition to the CB family. In difficult times, she has done a wonderful job in integrating herself into the organization and building relationships with key stakeholders and partners such as the Ministry and our local in-country partners. She was also instrumental in our ability to take the necessary steps to establish a program in Nepal.

In addition, CB staff have continued to demonstrate their unwavering commitment to serving our membership. The quality of service and commitment to providing a high level of service is evidenced by the numerous emails and messages that I and other members of the Board have received complementing various staff members for their efforts. Job well done team!

The 'Downs':

Faced with the realities of changing in-country rules and policies within our current adoption programs, extended timelines for international adoption, increasing costs, and a progressive decline in the general economic climate, CB has been challenged in the following ways:

- Reduced new client and file volume resulting in reduced revenue.
- Increased staff and infrastructure costs to manage, track and maintain clients files over several years.
- Increased frustration and anxiety amongst our families in process and in waiting culminating in an increased incidence rate of events that can be characterized as abusive to CB staff.
- Increased staff turnover.

For those who continue to stay abreast of the current state of international adoption, the fact that this past year has been filled with such 'highs and lows' should come as no surprise. The world of international adoption is rapidly changing. As countries shift their policies to promote and incent domestic adoption vs. international adoption, and steadily reduce the number of babies/children who are to be adopted internationally, and as wait times extend, this creates an environment that is filled with stress and emotion. Not an easy environment for everyone involved - these are challenging times.

Faced with this dynamic and rapidly evolving environment, agencies such as CB must continue to not only explore other programs, but also critically examine its service delivery models and operations to enable a sustainable organization. The Board is currently proactively working with management to understand and explore how best to move forward and enable CB to have the agility respond to the changing environment, but also continue to serve our membership.

In closing, I would also like to take this opportunity to invite members who wish to take a more active volunteer role in CB to reach out directly to anyone of the Board of Directors. We fully recognize that we have many talented individuals within our membership and believe that together we can successfully navigate these challenging times.

I look forward to hopefully meeting and hearing from many of you at our 2008 AGM.

Young Lee