

THE SACRED PORTION CHILDREN'S OUTREACH *A Child Caring Ministry*

Spring 2002

*"And you . . . shall rejoice in all the good which the Lord your God has given you and your household. And you . . . shall say before the Lord your God, I have removed the sacred portion from my house, and have given it to . . . the orphan according to all thy commandments which thou hast commanded me . . . I have listened to the voice of the Lord my God."
Deuteronomy 26: 11, 12 & 14*

Our Mission



The Sacred Portion Children's Outreach is a non-profit organization dedicated to providing for the needy children of the world who are without homes or families.

Formerly known in our community as Southwood Child and Family Education Center, the organization was directly involved for 22 years in the development and operation of an early childhood program. In 1997 the organization passed the care and continuation of that program into another's hands and the founders, Craig and Jan Druckenmiller, turned their hearts towards serving a more needy population of the world's children.

The organization, as part of its new mission seeks to assist facilities that care for orphaned and abandoned children in providing healthy, secure environments in which these children can grow and develop as normally as possible.

KIDSAVE SUMMER MIRACLES 2002

If you haven't heard from us in awhile, it's because we've been very focused on the home front with preparations for Bozeman, Montana to become a Summer Miracles city this summer. The Sacred Portion Children's Outreach is coordinating with Kidsave International to bring a group of 12 to 15 orphaned children from Kazakhstan to the Bozeman area for a six week summer camp experience.

Kidsave International is a non-profit organization that exists for one purpose - to end the harmful institutionalization of abandoned children. Kidsave works to reduce the number of children living in orphanages and increase the number of children growing up in permanent, loving families.

During their stay, the children will participate in day-to-day family life with their host families, attend local summer day camps and enrichment activities, and receive medical and dental care. Our goal is to find a sponsor for every child before the children return to their orphanages. A sponsor may provide for the child's education, provide funds to a Kazakh family who is willing to open their home to the child for weekend stays, or serve as a mentor. A sponsor can make a major difference in a child's

life and future. Better yet, we believe that miracles will happen and that the children who come to our community will be adopted by families they meet during their summer camp experience. Of the 343 children who came to host cities across the U.S. for Kidsave Summer Miracles 2001, 323 have found permanent, loving families.

God has truly blessed this project and we would like to share that story with you. A group of people interested in bringing Kidsave to Bozeman began meeting together last fall. At the time, our goal was to bring 7 children to our community, which is the minimum number of children required in order to be a Summer Miracles city. It costs \$4,500 to bring each child to the U.S., which includes air fare, escorts, insurance, and other related expenses. Kidsave International funds \$1,500 of that amount and it was up to our local group to raise the remaining \$3,000 per child. Raising a total of \$21,000 felt like a daunting task. As we proceeded in faith that it could be done, a corporate sponsor came alongside of us, promising to match dollar for dollar the first \$15,000 that we raised. We felt so encouraged and our goal no longer seemed unreachable.

Continued on page 2

Kidsave Summer Miracles

Continued from page 1

We began to contact churches in our area, putting information in church bulletins and giving presentations about the Kidsave Summer Miracles project. In hearing about this life saving program, people began to give from their hearts. Businesses and service organizations responded as well.

As six host families came on board, we discovered that most of them wanted to host siblings and the number of children grew to 12. That meant raising more money. In addition to the \$3,000 per child, we set our sights higher to also raise the \$1,500 sponsorship fee per host family. The sponsorship fee, as described previously, is Kidsave's provision for those children who return to their home country without the promise of a family. If the child is going to be adopted, then the sponsorship fee goes to provide for another child who was not able to come over through Kidsave. In light of the above, our fund raising goal had suddenly increased from \$21,000 to \$48,000.

In discussing how we were going to raise the additional funds, the idea of having a Miracle Makers Evening with a live and silent auction was conceived. A date was set, giving us only six weeks to collect donations of items for the auction and to put it all together. Yet, miraculously, it happened. People divided themselves into tasks including soliciting auction items, publicity, making desserts and organizing food, arranging for music, etc. It was like a well oiled machine put into motion and, by the evening of the event, we were ready. Over 100 auction items had been donated, an array of extraordinary desserts and hor d'oeuvres graced the tables, and a line-up of musicians were ready to provide an additional element of enjoyment to the evening.

God exceeded all of our expectations that evening. Many more people attended than what we had anticipated and the auction generated \$19,000, putting us over our fund raising goal. To date we have raised a total of \$62,000! We now have enough funds to bring several more children beyond the 12, provide sponsorships, and help pay for support services for the children while they are here.

We are now waiting to have the children identified who will be coming to our community and to match them with their host families. We anticipate that the children will arrive around the 1st of July. It should be an exciting and interesting summer!

If all goes well, we are hoping to make Kidsave Summer Miracles an annual project in our community. What a joy to be involved in helping to make miracles happen in children's lives! If you have not had an opportunity to contribute to the Kidsave project and would like to do so, we are still gladly accepting donations. Additional funds will go to help defray adoption expenses for families who commit to adopting a child (see page 4 for the cost of an international adoption) and to provide seed money for next year's Summer Miracles program.

People love to adopt babies, but are often afraid of the unknowns and challenges they will face if they adopt an older child. Many are scared away by the images of institutionalized children they have seen in news reports. Consequently, it is the older children who remain behind in the orphanages, relegated to a life without hope. The Kidsave Summer Miracles program can take the fear and risk out of adopting an older child by giving prospective families an

opportunity to see and evaluate firsthand the challenges and rewards of adopting an older child. Hosting a child is an opportunity for a family to meet and interact with a child in the home environment in order to make sure it is the right fit for their family before making a lifetime commitment. For the children who come over through Kidsave, this may be their last chance at finding a family.

The Waiting Child

by Debbie Bodie
(copyright 1997)

I saw you meet your child today
You kissed your baby joyfully
And as you walked away with her
I played pretend you'd chosen me.

I'm happy for the baby, yet
Inside I'm aching miserably
I want to plead as you go by,
"Does no one want a child of three?"

I saw you meet your child today
In love with her before you met
And as I watched you take her out
I knew it wasn't my turn yet.

I recognize you from last year!
I know I'd seen your face before!
But you came for a second babe.
Does no want a child of four?

I saw you meet your child today
But this time there was something new
A nurse came in and took MY hand
And then she gave my hand to you.

Can this be true? I'm almost six!
And there are infants here you see?
But then you kissed me and I knew
The child you chose this time was me.

On behalf of our Summer Miracles 2002 children, we wish to extend a heartfelt thanks to all who have given so generously to this project. Thank you for being a part of making miracles happen in children's lives!

KIDSAVE FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTORS

Sam & Cindy Nelson	Bonnie Sachatello-Sawyer
Mike & Bonnie Burgard	Paul & Arlene Wylie
Jessica Burgard (in honor of her parents)	The Gem Gallery Limited
Norm & Vicki Millikin	Stan & Dana McHann
Andrew & Joleen Peterson	Robert & Hiroko Irazarry
Jeff & Wendy Brown	Ron & Karla Edwards
Stan & Lois Burgard	Megan Ault
Charles & Carol Kankelborg	Kenneth & January Lambeth
Craig & Jan Druckenmiller	Peter & Nancy Astrup
Fred & Jan Schweitzer	XPEDX
David & Tamys Hoffman	US Bank
Craig & Val Deeney	Pam Cooper (in memory of James R. Biram)
Greg & Bobbi Lovgren	Bridger Biomed, Inc.
River Valley Christian Fellowship	Richard & Lola Jeffers
Joe & Alyssa Nardinger	Darrell Conklin
Peter & Laura Quimby	Gent Cofer
Ken & Lorene Schmit	Laura Underkofler
Byron & Elsa Geist	Larry & Nancy Johnson
Derik & I-Ho Pomeroy	Robert & Megan Spring
Garth & Carolyn Sime	Clarence & Marian Van Dyke
Ted & Betty Lang	Ryan & Stacy Ruble
Mark & Kathy Tyers	David & Mary Sewart
Randy & Sharon Dugger	Bob & Anita Ward
Ron & Melissa Banta	Veltkamp, Stannebein & Bateson- a division of Junkermier, Clark, Campanella, Stevens, P.C.
Stephanie & Christopher Gray	Dependable Paint & Drywall, Inc.
Betty Ann Hill	David & Karen Williams
James & Nikki Robbins	Robert & Sandra Western
Knights of Columbus	Thomas & Isabel Parker
John & Jane Phillips	Bethel Afternoon Fellowship Circle
Lion's Club	Bill & Kathy Webster
Diane Johnson	Capt. USN/Ret Harry R. Miller & Doris Miller
American Bank	
Steven & Christine Carpenter	

We received over 100 donated items for our Miracle Makers auction. We were astounded at the generosity in our community! Although it is too many names to mention here, our most sincere thanks goes to those individuals and businesses whose contributions made our auction a smashing success.

A very grateful thanks also goes to all of the volunteers who worked so hard to put together our Miracle Makers Evening by soliciting auction items, selling tickets, making hors d'oeuvres and desserts, serving, setting and cleaning up, providing the children's activities, and cashiering. A BIG thank you also goes to the following groups for blessing the evening with their music:

Nikai, Forgiven, Grace Praise Band, Forreal, and Servant Song.

A special thanks to Color World Printers and Kwik Kopy of Bozeman for donating a portion of our printing needs; to the Bozeman Daily Chronicle for donating advertising space for our Miracle Makers Evening; to Family Christian Stores for being our ticket outlet; and to KGVW and KOB FM for granting us air time and live interviews for promoting Kidsave Summer Miracles 2002.

The Costs of an International Adoption

Pre-Adoption U.S. Agency Fee

Registration with agency	\$100 to \$500
Home study fee	\$700 to \$2,500
Agency fee for services (Some agencies do not list this fee separately, but combine it with the program fee.)	\$3,000 to \$6,000

Other Adoption Related Expenses Incurred in the U.S.

INS filing fee for Orphan Applications & fingerprinting	\$455
Certified copies of birth, marriage & divorce certificates	\$10 to \$60
Notarization and verification fees (varies according to state and number of documents. Most states charge \$10 per document.)	\$200 (average)
Translation of documents (Averages \$300-\$500 when done in the U.S. If done overseas, costs vary and are often included in the program fee.)	\$400 (average)
Authentication of documents by the foreign consulate (Ranges from free to \$600)	\$375 (average)
Program or International fee (If agency fee for services is separate.)	\$4,000 to \$20,000

Travel-Related Costs

One round-trip ticket per person traveling (Varies tremendously depending on country traveling to, time of year, and type of ticket purchased.)	\$600 to \$2,000
Visa for adoptive parents traveling (Varies with country.)	\$30 to \$200
One-way ticket for child to U.S. (Tickets range from \$100 to \$200 for infants and children up to age two. Tickets for children age three and older generally cost about sixty percent of the adult fare.)	\$100 - \$900
Food and lodging (Varies depending on whether stay is in a major city, an average hotel, or with a family.)	\$60 to \$200 (per day)
Orphan's photos for passport & visa	\$25 to \$35
Orphan's passport	\$25 to \$125
U.S. consular service Orphan Visa fee	\$325
Child's exit medical exam	\$25 to \$125

Post Placement Expenses

Post placement supervision (Varies according to agency and whether international agency or network local agency conducts supervision. Also varies according to the number of supervision contacts required.)	\$200 to \$1,500
Legal fees for re-adoption	Fees vary
U.S. citizenship filing fee	\$125

The above format was taken from *How to Adopt Internationally* by Jean Nelson-Erichsen and Heino R. Erichsen published in 1997. We have updated some of the figures to more accurately reflect current costs.

Assisting Host Families

As you can see from the information on this page, international adoption can be expensive. Costs vary greatly depending upon the agency used, the range of services provided, the country adopting from, the cost of travel, present exchange rates for the U.S. dollar, and a host of other factors. The total cost of an adoption, including travel, can range from \$10,000 to \$30,000 or more. Thankfully, new legislation was enacted this year (The Hope for Children Act) which allows a \$10,000 tax credit for adoption expenses. The tax credit is a direct reduction of tax liability and will be a great help to our host families who commit to adopting their Summer Miracles child. Nevertheless, the families will have to pay their adoption fees up front and will not realize the benefit of the tax credit until 2003 or later, depending upon when the adoption is finalized. If you would like to help us defray adoption expenses for our Summer Miracles host families, you can make a contribution to our Adoption Assistance Fund.

Bozeman host families would appreciate donations of any of the following items (new or used):

- Twin beds (including bunk beds)
- Bedding for twin size beds
- Mattress covers (particularly waterproof ones)
- Pillows
- Sleeping bags
- Step stools with one step
- Bath towels
- Beach towels
- Pull-Ups/Good Nites (large toddler through 80#)
- Car booster seats
- Bicycles & helmets

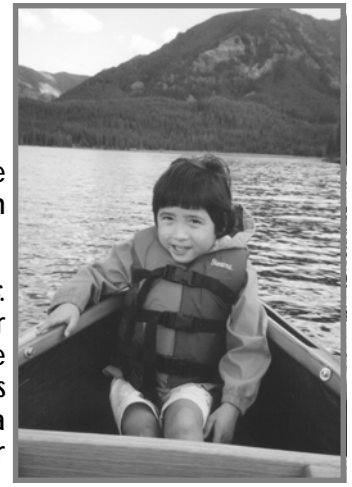
In addition, we will be having a used clothing and toy drive. Clothing sizes will be 4T through girls/boys size 14. Shoe sizes will be children's size 10 through size 4. Call Jan at 586-5773 if you have items you would like to donate. There will be a drop-off box at the Evangelical Free Church, 1701 S. 19th, during the month of June.

A SUMMER OF MIRACLES, PART TWO

By Jan Druckenmiller

Aynagul Masilova had lived in an orphanage in Kazakhstan since birth. Then, in the summer of 2001, a miracle happened and Aynagul is now living with her forever family in Bozeman, Montana.

In our last newsletter, we shared Aynagul's story with you, entitled *A Summer of Miracles*. At the end of her stay with us last summer as her host family through Kidsave Summer Miracles, Aynagul returned to her orphanage in Uralsk, Kazakshtan. We began the paperwork to adopt her. In the meantime we stayed in touch with her by sending cards and calling her every two weeks on the phone. Although we couldn't have much of a conversation due to the language barrier, we knew it was important for Aynagul to hear our voices and to know that we hadn't forgotten her.



Is this our child?

Then, on January 16th, we finally boarded a plane for Kazakhstan. We arrived first in Moscow where we spent a few days sightseeing. We had a beautiful view of Red Square from our hotel window. The architecture of the buildings was phenomenal and St Basil's cathedral looked like a fairy castle when lit up at night. Our facilitator in Moscow provided us with a guide who gave us a tour of the domed churches inside the Kremlin wall. We were in awe of the frescos that covered every inch of walls and ceilings. We also had time to walk through the open market where Matryuska dolls were prolific along with other Russian handicrafts.



We arrived in Uralsk on Aynagul's birthday and threw a party for her group of 12 children. The week that followed was spent visiting Aynagul each day at the orphanage, which is a requirement prior to going to court to complete the adoption.

We were allowed to take her to our apartment where we were staying for a part of each day. Aynagul's reaction to us when we first arrived at her orphanage was not what we expected. We assumed that she would be elated to see us. Instead, there was hurt and confusion in her face



and we sensed her reluctance to open up and trust us again. Five and a half months had been a long time. She made it clear that we were on her turf this time and it was obvious that she had strong ties to her life at Zhas Dauren Children's Center. Each day was a little better, however, and we began to see signs of her reclaiming us. She became possessive of Craig's lap when the other children were occupying it and began to open up when we were alone with her in our apartment. By the end of our week's visitation, the Aynagul whom we had come to know and love last summer was back with all of her impish ways.



Although we were quite nervous, the court hearing went off without a hitch and Aynagul officially became our daughter on January 28th. Aynagul had been in a very nurturing orphanage for which we were thankful, but it made for a very emotional parting our last day in Uralsk. Her caregivers truly loved her and sobbed and kissed her a hundred times when we said our good-byes. Aynagul shed tears of her own, but was emotionally ready to leave with us.

From Uralsk we flew to Almaty where we had to wait for Aynagul's passport to be processed. Jan flew back to the U.S. at that point and Craig continued on to Moscow with Aynagul to get her visa. They arrived home on February 7th. Our other children welcomed Aynagul back into the fold and her adjustment has gone smoothly. We have been amazed at her quick acquisition of English and she participates well in our homeschool kindergarten activities.

After Aynagul had been home for about six weeks, we began hearing grumpy statements such as, "I no like Kazakhstan" and "No coming Kazakhstan." Since six weeks was the time frame that she had been with us last summer, it seemed that she was sensing that her time was up. It took some repeated assurance, but Aynagul now understands that she is home to stay - that she is our forever child and we are her forever family.

IMAGES FROM THE ZHAS DAUREN CHILDREN'S CENTER Uralsk, Kazakhstan



Aynagul's group of children in their room



The children napping in their bedroom



We brought toys and art materials and spent a few hours each morning in Aynagul's room interacting with the children.



Playing with puzzles donated by SPCO



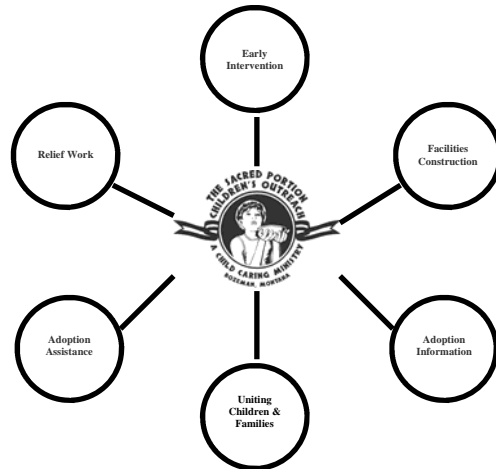
Match box cars were a hit.



We took Aynagul's group to a circus that was in town. They were mesmerized during the performance and got to see the monkey up close afterwards.



THE SACRED PORTION CHILDREN'S OUTREACH PROJECT UPDATES



Early Intervention

We last visited the Children's Shelter of Cebu in August, 2001. Three years of curriculum are now in place and the Children of Hope Preschool is going well. We hope to use the Children of Hope Preschool as a model as we develop a similar preschool program for the Rehoboth Children's Homes in Sampaloc, Philippines.

We are extending our early intervention focus into Madagascar by providing curriculum materials for the establishment of a preschool at Akany Avoko. Akany Avoko is a vibrant Malagasy community that offers refuge to the destitute and promotes environmentally sound ways of improving life in Madagascar. Children, abandoned women and young people, including teenage mothers, find shelter and care at Akany Avoko. They are also provided an opportunity to learn new skills and knowledge to promote a safe and successful return to society. Through this project, the abandoned mothers and teenage mothers will learn how to run a preschool and the children will benefit from the early learning environment.



Facilities Construction

We led a work team to Sampaloc in August, 2001 to help with the continuing construction of the Rehoboth Children's Homes. A Filipino work crew, under the supervision of a contractor, has continued the work and the homes are nearing completion. The orphanage is required to be registered by the Department of Social Welfare and Development. The application paperwork for that has been completed. We are putting together another work team for late August/September, 2002. If you are interested in being a part of this work mission, you can contact Craig Druckenmiller at (406) 586-5773 for more information.

JOIN A WORK MISSION TO SAMPALOC, PHILIPPINES
to help finish the construction of the
Rehoboth Children's Homes
September, 2002

Relief Work

Crisis in Madagascar

by Annie De Meij

A recent election in Madagascar has created a political stand-off between the government and opposition supporters. The president of the past 20 years, Ratsiraka, declared victory although charged with a corrupt election. The new and rightfully elected president, Ravolamanana, has the support of half a million people. Ratsiraka has moved his corrupt government to the port town where the refineries are. He has blown up all the bridges to the capitol and has basically shut down all the industry and jobs there, as goods cannot be received or exported. He is starving the peaceful resisters who are asking for a leader who believes in truth.

In following the news updates on the situation in Madagascar, I have been deeply moved by the sheer numbers of people coming together to peacefully protest the corrupt government and support the new president. All the churches have joined together to make a unified stand for justice and truth. When Ratsiraka brought in the troops and tanks, the nuns and church groups were in front singing. The military could not shoot their own people. When, at 5:00 a.m. a military maneuver was starting, all the church bells rang and people poured out of their homes to stop the takeover.

This is the fourth month of two presidents, two capitols, and a

starved city where the two orphanages are located that AOM supports. Maholy, AOM's facilitator, has been able to stave off hunger in Tangaina orphanage



and Miantso Center even though the prices of food are high and there is little available. Fuel prices are now \$200 per gallon. Everyone must walk long hours to get anywhere. Maholy walks one and a half hours each way to send us our weekly e-mail, let alone procure food. Food is delivered to the orphanages by hand cart. Yet, the children are being fed and there is a fervent hope that the new president will have the support and backing needed to overcome the current situation as well as the tremendous problems that lie ahead.

We are very thankful for the donations we have received for AOM, making it possible to continue supplying food to our two orphanages. We are asking for supplemental donations that would be used to buy rice for children in other orphanages who are on the verge of starvation. The UN foundation estimated the child mortality rate of 7,500 deaths per month of children

under five could very soon double due to lack of food, unemployed parents, and a shortage of medical supplies and transportation. The highest concentrations of these deaths would be in the capitol where food and jobs are extremely scarce. All non-profit organizations working in Madagascar are being encouraged to help as much as possible. We have made a very positive and life saving difference in over 75 children's lives on a monthly basis through our feeding program. Now, we look to make an emergency difference in the lives of other destitute children until the political stalemate is resolved. We share what we can.

In the midst of crisis, there is a bright spot of joy. I will be traveling to Madagascar in June to complete the adoption of our three month old daughter, Mirana. She has been in good hands, being fostered by Maholy and his wife, Tiana. Nevertheless, the situation in Madagascar has caused us great concern on this personal level and we are very anxious to bring Mirana home.



Blanket the World Project

We have lots of decorated blankets that have been completed by Sunday School groups and Scout troops and are preparing a shipment for the Ukraine using an organization called Meests-Karpaty, Inc. We still have a storeroom full of blanket material and would like to continue enlisting groups of youth to decorate these. Call Elsa Geist at 582-1080 if you would like to become involved in this project.

Our Contributors

Gifts Received from 10/16/01 - 5/15/02

General Contributions

<i>Mike & Kathy McKenna</i>	<i>Jerry & Stephanie Lockie</i>
<i>Interior Dimensions/ Mike & Joni Westfall</i>	<i>Steve & Christie Schlumbohm</i>
<i>Gent Cofer</i>	<i>Anne Campbell Turner</i>
<i>Cal & Kathy Braaksma</i>	<i>Greg & Bobbi Lovgren</i>
<i>Robert Gill</i>	<i>Tom & Sandi Tursich</i>
<i>Rodger & Joy Baird</i>	<i>Joel & Claudia Shouse</i>
<i>Henry Charles & Jane Graves Otten Foundation</i>	<i>Len & Cindy Ramsey</i>
<i>Mike & Kathleen Pollard</i>	<i>Coleman Charitable Trust/ Mike & Carol Coleman</i>
<i>Duke & JoAnn Brekhus</i>	<i>Tim & Wendy Hiebert</i>
<i>Tim Adams & Marybeth Jones-Adams</i>	<i>Anderson Family Foundation</i>
<i>John & Harriet Tamminga</i>	<i>Jim & Mary Ellen Litle</i>
<i>Jeff & Sarah Cade</i>	<i>Nikki & James Robbins</i>
<i>OSJ Inc./Eric & Julie Rolshoven</i>	<i>Pat & Tammy McLeod</i>
<i>Naomi Hahn</i>	<i>Dave & Molly Thompson</i>
<i>Anita & James Scott</i>	<i>Richard & Lola Jeffers</i>
<i>Elizabeth & Robert Thompson</i>	<i>Traeger Family Limited Partnership/ Fred & Virginia Traeger</i>
<i>Jeff Van Dyken</i>	<i>William & Teresa Massey</i>

Aid to Orphans in Madagascar

George & Eleanor Peckham
K.T. Jarney & R. Chandrasekar
Darrell Conklin
International Adoptive Families
Robin Morris
Shelley Watters
Cold Mountain Builders
Western Land Office
Jim & Marie Mitchell
George & Flo Kimmerling

A father to the fatherless...is God in
His holy dwelling.
Psalms 68:5

Rehoboth Children's Homes

Springhill Presbyterian Church
International Adoptive Families
Circle Cross Mountain Ministries

We are so very grateful to the individuals, businesses, and foundations whose contributions are making it possible for us reach out to the needy children of the world . Your support has been a great blessing and encouragement to us. Thank you for giving your "sacred portion" .

Sam and Gabe, Our Gifts from God

By Ramona Linabary

Editor's Note: God prepares the hearts of those whom He knows will respond to His call to give His precious children a home. That preparation may begin before adoption is even a conscious thought and results in a yearning and desire that can not be rationalized away. Once that heart commitment is made, God orchestrates events and circumstances that link children and families together in a unique way. Here is one such story.

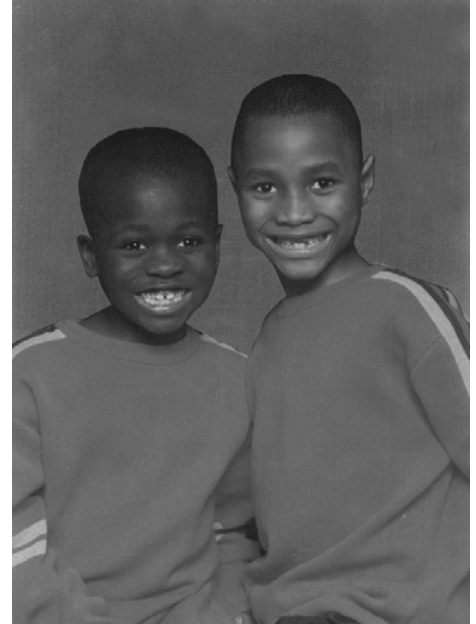
In May, 1999, our oldest child, Alicia, graduated from home schooling and was making plans to move from Fort Benton, MT to Great Falls. The "empty nest" syndrome was beginning to hit me. Her brother, Adam, would only be a few years behind her to spread his wings. It was on January 1, 2000, that I shared with my husband the prayer I had just prayed. "Lord, if I am not to raise any more children, then please take this burning desire from me and help me to redirect my focus onto what it is that you have for me instead." Buying a motor home and becoming snowbirds was not a goal that Don and I embraced. I was just a few months from turning 40 and all of those unfinished projects and plans I had considered for the day when my children were gone seemed so secondary to the joy children brought to my life. I didn't realize when I made that request on New Year's Day that God had already started answering my prayer.

Earlier in the fall of 1999, a Youth for Christ African singing group came to our little church in Fort Benton. After the concert, the singers were dispersed to homes of church members for the night. One of the young African singers stayed with friends of ours, Kristofer and Rebecca Burton. After finishing the U.S. singing tour, this young man went back to Sierra Leone, West Africa, to work in an orphanage. It was the first part of May, 2000 when the orphanage corresponded with the Burtons and made them aware that there was a major need for adoptive parents for the children of Sierra Leone. The civil war there had left many children orphaned or the parents had suffered debilitating injuries that made it impossible for them to care for their children. Rebecca shared this plea with our church congregation. Hearing this, our daughter, Alicia, was very motivated to get us more information. She had, for several years, been begging us to adopt. Financially, we didn't see how we

possibly could. Yet, the four of us in our family could not put what we had heard in church out of our minds. We agreed together that if God wanted us to adopt some African children that He would provide.

Just a few days later on the morning of May 25th, Don, myself and our son, Adam, were sitting at the breakfast table. As we were "day dreaming" and talking about the "what ifs", we decided we would want two children because there would not be others of their race to relate to in our small Montana community. Next, I said that I would like them to be preschool age as I wanted to have plenty of time to teach them to read. We then agreed that it would be best if they were the same gender so they would always have a "buddy". We agreed on boys and Adam added, "Besides, I would like to teach them to play basketball." Adam had been an avid basketball player himself since he was thirteen years old.

We finished our breakfast and, like other days, prayed for direction for that day. It was within an hour from our breakfast table discussion when the phone rang. It was our friend, Rebecca. She had just been called by an adoption agency in New York. The agency that contacted her had two little boys approximately 3 or 4 years old (there was discrepancy on their ages) who were going to be placed back in the agency's custody. They needed to find a family immediately who would be willing to adopt them and who had only older children. These children had arrived in the U.S. on March 28th, having been adopted by a family in Illinois. After their arrival, the family had taken the boys to their pediatrician for medical examinations. After much blood work, it was discovered that they both had chronic, active Hepatitis B. This was supposed to have been detected



in all of the testing the adoptive family had paid for before the boys entered the U.S. This came as quite a shock and disappointment to this family as it was far more than they had anticipated. They had seven other children that they could not separate themselves from to seek medical treatment for these boys an hour away from their home town every other day.

Upon Rebecca's direction, I called the NY agency and spoke with the social worker, Althea, who was handling the case. My first concern was what it would take for us to get these little boys. I was told that we needed an agency in Montana and that it would just cost us the fees of the Montana adoption home study. All of the other costs had already been taken care of. She recommended that we give the family the boys were living with a call and ask more questions. In that conversation we were amazed how we were hearing back confirmation of what we had earlier discussed at the breakfast table. The father, Mr. Eastman, conveyed the family's desire that the boys, Samuel and Gabriel, not be separated. Although they weren't biological brothers, they had become real buddies. Yes, I do believe we had discussed having two boys that morning! The Eastman family also hoped that they would be placed with a family who had

Continued on page 11

Sam and Gabe

continued from page 10

an interest in athletics, as Gabe appeared to be very athletically gifted. Remember what Adam said? We could not believe it! Everything we had talked about in our "day dream" was being presented to us.

It sounded as though the NY agency would have to place the boys in a foster home in Illinois or New York until our home study was done. None of us could bear the thought of this. Don was in the thick of his painting season, but I offered to go myself to Illinois to stay with them. Since the boys were already in the U.S., this would be considered a domestic adoption. We began working with Catholic Social Services and were told that it would take, in a rush, at least two weeks to get a foster home study done in order to legally bring the boys into Montana. We started going through piles and piles of paperwork. A detail God knew about in advance was a social worker, Kyla, who lived only two doors down from us who was able to come to our house and interview us on a Saturday. This sped up the process considerably. The attorney for the NY agency called Sunday night and said they would fly me to Chicago on Monday where I would meet the Eastmans with the boys. I hadn't yet seen a picture of these boys, but my heart had already attached to them.

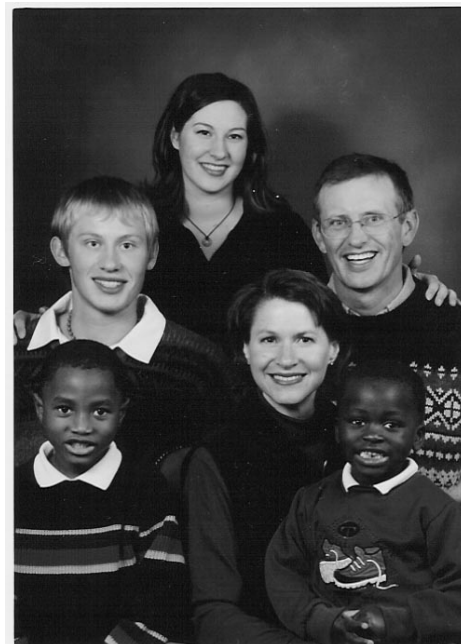
I boarded a plane on June 5th in Great Falls bound for Chicago, just ten days from the initial phone call from Rebecca. I felt a flood of mixed emotions as the plane got nearer to Chicago. What joy it would be for me to behold these two little boys that I knew without a doubt were sent to us as gifts from God. Yet, the other family would be grieving, as they had formed strong attachments with the boys they were having to give up. As I entered the lobby at O'Hare airport, the party was waiting for me - Chip and Annie Eastman, Althea from the NY agency, and the two most adorable little African boys I had ever laid eyes on. The time had come for the Eastmans to leave Sam and Gabe behind with me. They took them across the lobby and sat them down on the floor. They explained to these little boys, who had limited understanding of English, that they would be going with me, and that they would call me Mommy now. It was

all I could do to contain my emotions as I watched. With tears, the Eastmans and I embraced. I promised we would never let Sam and Gabe forget them.

Althea, Sam, Gabe and I boarded a shuttle bus that took us to a hotel where I would be staying with the boys until the papers had been filed that would allow me to legally bring them into Montana. Once we got to our room these little guys came alive. I mean really alive!! There were two queen sized beds that they bounced on and leaped back and forth, squealing and giggling. Althea recommended we give them baths. I was a bit dazed. These little guys were my responsibility now and I hadn't had much time to mentally prepare for it.

The next afternoon Althea headed back to New York as she had other business to attend to. The hotel employees soon realized that we were more than just overnight guests. They took a real interest in the boys and went out of their way to meet our needs. I was in daily contact with Kyla, our CSS social worker. After three days had gone by, it looked like we might be able to leave on that Friday. Our stay was extended, however, through the weekend. A process that had been moving very smoothly got hung up by paperwork sitting on a government employee's desk all week! My heart sank at that point and the weekend went by rather slowly. Here I was with these little bundles of energy who were still bouncing from bed to bed. They were happy most of the time, but I could also detect a certain sadness in them. Although the information was sketchy, I knew they had experienced great losses in their lives with their parents having been killed by rebel soldiers. In the months to follow, we would learn more details from Gabriel that made my heart break for him. I grieved with him when he shared with me the tragedies he had experienced. I thought about all that I had protected my older children from such as violent movies and harmful influences. Now I couldn't even protect this little son of mine from what he had already experienced from living in a war zone.

On Monday morning, June 12th, I got up with plans to leave for Montana. I hadn't realized that the airline ticket provided for me to fly to Chicago had only been one way until Althea informed me that I would be responsible for getting myself and the boys home. I decided to take Amtrak as it would be far less expensive. I packed the bags and arrangements were made for a taxi to take us to the train station. The taxi had been waiting outside the hotel for an hour when the phone call finally came giving me authorization to go. As we were leaving, there was a fanfare of hotel employees with gifts who took pictures of the boys and gave lots of hugs. Once I was on that train I heaved a great sigh of relief and thanked God for all that He had done during the past days. On June 13th, after a 25 hour train ride to Havre, MT, we were greeted at the train station by Don, their new daddy and big brother, Adam.



In November, 2001, Don and I with our three sons relocated to Belgrade, MT. I am so very grateful to say that Sam and Gabe have adjusted very well. They have been warmly received in our community and church. They appreciate where they are at and understand what they have been rescued from. We know it was God's grace that they passed through immigration with their health conditions, for it was God's plan for them to be here where they could have hope for their futures. Every day we marvel at the miracles God has brought to us through them.

Robert's Story

by Cindy Bruckner

Editor's Note: God needs homes for those children whom no one else wants. It takes special people who will step out in faith and take the risk to embrace a special child, particularly when there are so many unknowns. Sometimes, what a family is asked to do seems beyond what they are able and even impossible. Yet, God is faithful in providing the energy and resources to meet the needs of a child such as Robert and help him reach his fullest potential. Such a mission comes with multiple rewards and blessings.



All three of our precious children have adoption stories full of wondrous "God coincidences" and even miracles to tell. But God has been the most obvious in our lives with our newest child - mainly because of all of the resistance He had to work through - in me!

Shortly after the adoption finalization of our second child in 1999, Phil and I were asked by the State of Montana to consider foster/adopting a very high needs infant. We were rather shocked and overwhelmed to hear of his many needs and problems. We thought we were "done" at two children, and there was no certainty this child would even survive his first year! As we gradually researched and learned more about each of his problems and needs, we came to realize that we DID have the ability, time and room to parent one more child. However, the child whom we had been approached about fostering ended up being adopted by another family.

A conviction remained that we were meant to parent one more child and that it would be a child who was "special" and unwanted by other families. I started actively searching the Internet waiting child photolistings. Several children caught my attention, but door after door quickly closed on all of them. Our needed paperwork to pursue an out-of-state adoption was held up for the bulk of a year. Time passed and I realized that I needed to be more open to the child whom God intended us to

parent, not the easier children I kept picking out!

In late 2000, our paperwork came through and only two of the children who had caught my eye that year were still waiting for a forever family. One was a blond-haired boy named Robert from the West Coast. He had such life and laughter in his eyes that made us smile when we looked at his photograph. Through a series of God coincidences, paper mix-ups, and crossed channels, door after door kept opening to Robert. God let me learn of Robert's many, many needs one at a time (so as not to overwhelm me, I suppose!). Every time I was ready to just say "no" to this child, a person/resource/encouragement would pop up within 24 hours! Every single time!! The deeper we got into Robert's needs, the more scared I became and the more certain that this child was not meant to be ours. And yet....we prayed so hard that doors would quickly shut if this was not meant to be. They did not.

In the midst of my fears, we were asked to foster a medically fragile newborn with a heart-breaking fatal illness. That precious child changed our lives forever in the 3 weeks with us. Those who were blessed to have met that child will understand. It was almost as if a wee angel had come to reside in our home for a short time to teach us. We quickly learned that we possessed much more courage, love, advocacy, and research abilities than we ever knew. We

realized that maybe we DID have what was needed to parent complicated little Robert. We took the biggest leap of faith of our lives and told his social worker that we would be willing to adopt Robert if chosen by his adoption committee in a month's time.

During this stressful time, Phil was offered an excellent job in northern Texas. After they interviewed him twice, I flew down as well to check the place out. I made plans to interview the local special needs organization there just in case BOTH the move and Robert's placement with us happened. A fifteen minute interview turned into one and a half hours. Near the end of the interview, the wonderful lady there, Shirley, looked me straight in the eye and said, "God is sending you Robert for your mission." I blinked and said no, that the committee would have to meet first and choose from among three families. She repeated her statement. Shirley also offered to be a resource for me whether or not we moved to Texas.

Continued on page 13

Robert's Story

Continued from page 12

We decided not to move to Texas on the morning of April 12, 2001 and, that very afternoon, we were matched with Robert. Our family of four flew out to meet him at the end of the month. It was a very hard visit. In the five days I spent with Robert, he never made eye contact with me. I flew home sad and certain I was going to say "no" to this child. Absolutely everyone I had interviewed or visited in his state was quite pessimistic about Robert's future. But I knew that



before I could say no we needed to pray - a lot. I felt an urgency to talk to Shirley in Texas before deciding. I could not reach her for four days. In that time, God provided a few more "puzzle pieces" about Robert that we hadn't known previously. When I reached Shirley, I told her all the new information I had and asked what it all meant. She said, "This will sound strange, but Robert sounds just like our severely visually impaired children, especially those with random eye movement." Well, guess what? While visiting Robert, Phil and I realized within 24 hours that he could hardly see! And nobody was even aware of, or working on that. So, God provided me with the final encouragement and even, via Shirley, our Texas connection, directions on what to get started

on as soon as Robert arrived. Robert has been with us now for almost one year. He was essentially blind and deaf, but is slowly learning to see with his new glasses and, in the process, is rapidly discovering a whole new world. He now seems to be understanding speech after a very simple ear surgery four months ago. He had been severely autistic in behavior before and is rapidly becoming less so every day. He had acted severely ADHD before, but is now off all medicines, although he's still quite a busy boy. He had been labeled extremely low functioning, mentally, by one of his regular therapists before, but is learning, exploring, and problem solving at an explosive rate these days. He had been labeled as non-imitative before, but can now sign 50 words fluently and understand many more. He never looked me in the eye once on our first visit, but now craves and even demands eye contact and interaction. He has met and surpassed many milestones that professionals in his former state doubted he could meet in his lifetime! We still have a long way to go but, with God's guidance, who knows just how far this incredible little boy can go! We are so very thankful that God is letting us be a part of this amazing process in Robert's life.

Robert's adoption was finalized on April 18, 2002.

Did you know that there are over 130,000 foster children in the U.S. waiting for a home!

THE ADOPTION CONCIERGE

The Sacred Portion Children's Outreach is made up of people having a heart for adoption and a burden for those children in need of families. We are adoption advocates. Most of us are adoptive parents ourselves, thus having the experience and wisdom to guide others. We know adoption inside out from personal experience and stand in a position to act as **Adoption Concierges** for other families going through the process. We will do this as a free gift of simple service. We have information packets available outlining the first steps that need to be taken, pertinent phone numbers and addresses, articles on adoption and a list of helpful resources, including possible sources of financial assistance. We also have a lending library of books on various aspects of adoption. **Please note that The Sacred Portion Children's Outreach is not a child placing agency.** Our information packet contains a listing of adoption agencies and guidelines for how to choose an agency.

Taking that first step in deciding to create or add to your family through adoption is the beginning of a wonderful journey. Yet, that journey is not always easy. The paperwork may feel cumbersome and the waiting for a child interminable. We are available to offer personal coaching through the layers of paperwork as well as support and words of encouragement.

To access our
ADOPTION CONCIERGE SERVICE,
call
(406) 586-5773 or
e-mail us at
sacredportion@imt.net

Name _____ Address _____ Phone _____

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

I would like to support this ministry in the amount of \$ _____

monthly

quarterly

annually

general

special projects

adoption assistance fund

OTHER NEEDS

I am interested in serving on the Board of Directors of SPCO. *

I would like to help make teaching materials or with other hands-on tasks.

I am interested in joining a work team on an overseas mission.

I will commit to praying for this ministry.

The **Sacred Portion Children's Outreach** is seeking to expand its Board of Directors. This commitment involves attending a two hour meeting approximately every two to three months and some possible time on special projects. If you have a heart for orphans, an interest in adoption issues, or an area of expertise such as grant writing or fund raising, please consider this opportunity to serve. For more information call **586-5773**.

Please return to:
The Sacred Portion Children's Outreach
7104 Bristol Lane
Bozeman, MT 59715
e-mail: sacredportion@imt.net



The Sacred Portion Children's Outreach
7104 Bristol Lane
Bozeman, MT 59715
(406) 586-5773

NONPROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
BOZEMAN MT
PERMIT NO. 160

SPCO
Board of
Directors

Craig Druckenmiller, Jan Druckenmiller, Linda Heydon, Rebecca Ruefer,
Elsa Geist, Sandi Van Middendorp, Lorene Schmit