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An Adoption Story

An Open Book

At right: Grayson, Sabrina and Stephan

Our daughter, Grayson, just turned two! As we celebrated, surrounded by her birth family, we realized just how lucky we are. Open adoption looks different for all families, but for us it's about connecting Grayson to all the hearts that care for her. We would like to share a bit of our story with you, our positive experiences with open adoption and how it affects our everyday lives in hopes to help

other families better understand and welcome openness wholeheartedly.

It all feels surreal, but we remember the day when Beginnings called with the news that the birth mother had chosen us to be Grayson's parents. It was a huge moment brimming with feelings of joy, love, excitement, and enormous responsibility! We met in person soon after, tears and emotions flowing. Even though we didn't really



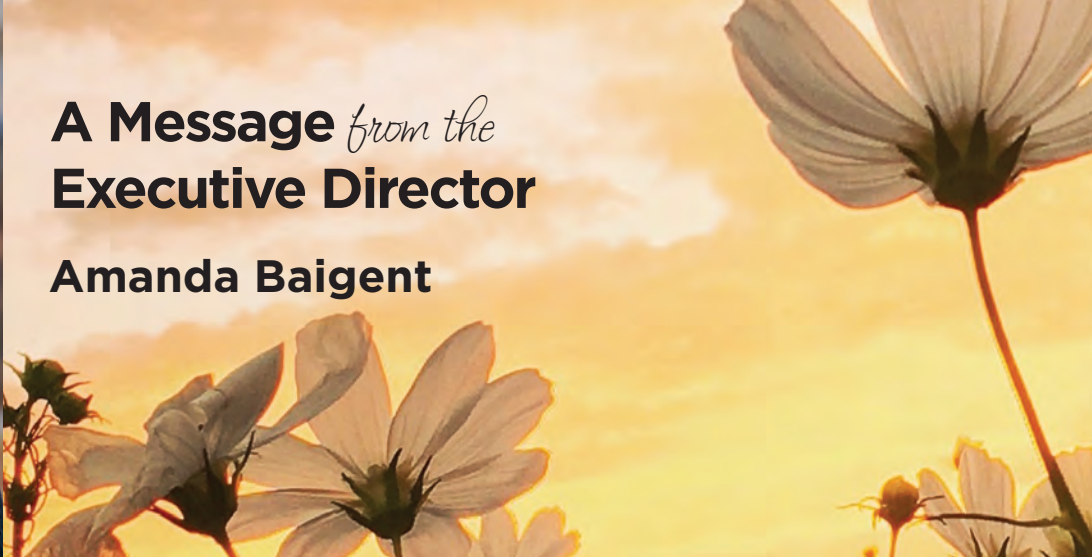
know each other yet, you could feel the love and happiness in the room. We had only a few short weeks to get everything ready before Grayson's arrival, and all of a sudden it was real, our little family of two suddenly grew... in many ways.

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A Message *from the* Executive Director

Amanda Baigent



Dear Beginnings friends and family,

At this time of year, we like to share some statistics around how our services were accessed over the past year as well as offer some updates on what lies ahead. It has been another very busy year for Beginnings as we provided hundreds of hours of counselling and support services to expectant women, their partners, and those hoping to grow their families.

I am always struck by the tremendous courage it takes to make life changing plans as families navigate an emotion-filled and stressful time in their lives. I am also aware of how hard it is to falter, lose one's footing, and yet somehow, find the strength to get back up again. We can all draw on our own experiences of when we have felt vulnerable, or not good enough,

judged, or like the rug has been pulled out from under us.

The answer to what helps in times of struggle will be different for each of us but at the heart, I believe we all need a safe and nonjudgmental space to take refuge, reflect, heal, learn, and grow. The kindness we show others is also the kindness we need to offer ourselves during our most difficult times. My hope for this year is that we continue to nurture this compassion for one another so that when we falter, we may also flourish.

Beginnings strategic initiatives for 2023 includes a focus on ensuring we are creating spaces for individuals and families to flourish. We are launching our new outreach video for clients and community service

providers to reach as many people as possible with options for support. We are also enhancing our support programs including family check ins, individual and group support options, and decision making and reflection tools for expectant parents. We look forward to sharing all that is to come, and we thank you for your ongoing care, support, and prayers.

- *Amanda*



An Open Book ... (cont'd)

As we started our journey into adoption, the idea of “openness” felt very unfamiliar and honestly a bit scary. However, the more we learned about it, the more it became clear that it was important and positive. Openness is an organic and very fluid relationship which can come in many forms. There is no right or wrong way, but communication is key. In the beginning, we didn’t really know how the open adoption would play out, or how much we would really be in each other’s lives. There was a lot of trust and optimism between us and the birth family in the early days of our relationship, and it has flourished over time into love and respect.

Though distance is a factor (as was Covid), we try to see one another for in-person visits a few times a year.

We send photos/videos frequently and casually, but there’s no schedule. Grayson is an energetic and silly girl, so there’s always a video or photo worth sending for a good laugh. It’s fun to witness the birth family’s reactions to Grayson learning and growing, and to see how proud they are of her. With each milestone we share together, funny photos, videos and even Grayson’s artwork the more it feels natural.

Grayson’s baptism this past summer was a big event too. We had Mom’s side of the family, Dad’s side, and Grayson’s side, and we find comfort in knowing that she’ll only ever see it as one big family. We’ve also been meeting more and more members of Grayson’s birth family. She’s not a secret to them and they have been



Grayson

excited and thankful to meet her, and us! This is a lifelong commitment that will grow and shift over time. There’s no doubt that sometimes will be easier than others, but that’s true of any family. It’s about keeping in touch and being present, and it’s all for her.

We recognize that not all relationships are the same, but we are fortunate that this is ours. Grayson is growing up with the privilege of a healthy open adoption and strong family bonds. They chose us to be her parents, but we all made the choice to be family.

– Sabrina, Stephan & Grayson

Welcome To Our New Foster Family



Beginnings Family Services has always been near and dear to our family. Opening our home and our hearts to love and serve these little babies while they are in foster care is a privilege and we thank God that we can be a small part of their lives.

“Let all that you do be done in love.”
I Corinthians 16:14

– The Jans Family

At left, Jasper, Lynn, Pete & Kate

Thank You For Your Support in 2022!

To all our donors, Beginnings continues to be deeply humbled to receive your generous donations. Your willingness to help vulnerable individuals and families in our community as they weather a crisis in their lives makes our work possible.

With your support at our Hamilton office, we were able to provide the following in 2022:

- We received inquiries from 75 expectant or new parents looking for adoption and parenting support
- We provided information, support, and counselling to 69 women who were making decisions regarding their pregnancy and parenting plans
- We placed 26 children for adoption
- We provided foster care for 21 children over a span of 383 days
- We received 351 inquiries from prospective adoptive families
- We received 320 inquiries about our Embryo Donor/Recipient Program
- We welcomed 14 babies through our Embryo Donor/Recipient Program

Leaving a Legacy

Beginnings has been very fortunate over the years to be named as a beneficiary by individuals as they carry out their estate planning. We are always amazed and honored when Beginnings is notified of estate gifts. We feel such gratitude for the thoughtfulness and care that has been taken during the preparation process to ensure that Beginnings is remembered as part of their legacy.

We have heard Beginnings been referred to as an additional “charity child”, and as a result this gift leaves a testimony of what was important to the donor. The generosity and forethought that is required when planning for an estate gift to Beginnings is never taken for granted.

In these times charities are always challenged to maintain their free services, but gifts like this set us on a good path to ensure that pregnant women and their families have



continued access to support and resources as they make difficult life decisions.

If you would like to receive information on how to include Beginnings in your estate planning, please reach out to us at any time at info@beginnings.ca or call the office at 905-528-6665.

You can also receive a free Will planning consultation through Christian Stewardship Services by contacting them at info@csservice.ca or calling their office at 1-800-267-8890.

Beginnings would like to express a heartfelt thank you to our faithful donors for considering paying tribute to Beginnings when creating a Will.



beginnings
FAMILY SERVICES

1 Young Street, Suite 520
Hamilton, ON L8N 1T8

Phone: 905-528-6665
Email: info@beginnings.ca

www.beginnings.ca



Beginnings Family Services Staff:

Executive Director:

Amanda Baigent, MSW, RSW

Director of Administration:

Megan Dunlop-Elms, BA

Director of Finance:

Aideen Hennessy, CPA, CGA

Embryo Donor/Recipient Program

Director:

Mary Howlett-Nero, MSW, RSW

Director of Strategic Communications:

Tonya Noble, MA

Clinical File Coordinator:

Kim Wachta, BA, MLS

Office Administrator:

Madeline Slump, BA

Office Administrator:

Simona Nolan

Embryo Donor/Recipient Program

Coordinator:

Julia Milmine, MScEd, OCT, RSW

Embryo Donor/Recipient Program

Counsellor:

Stephanie Parker, MSW, RSW

Clinical Coordinator:

Bethany Vidican, BSW

Birth Parent Counsellors:

Bonnie Archer, BSc, RN

Connie Barrett, BASoc, SSW

Vanessa Crozier, BSW, RSW

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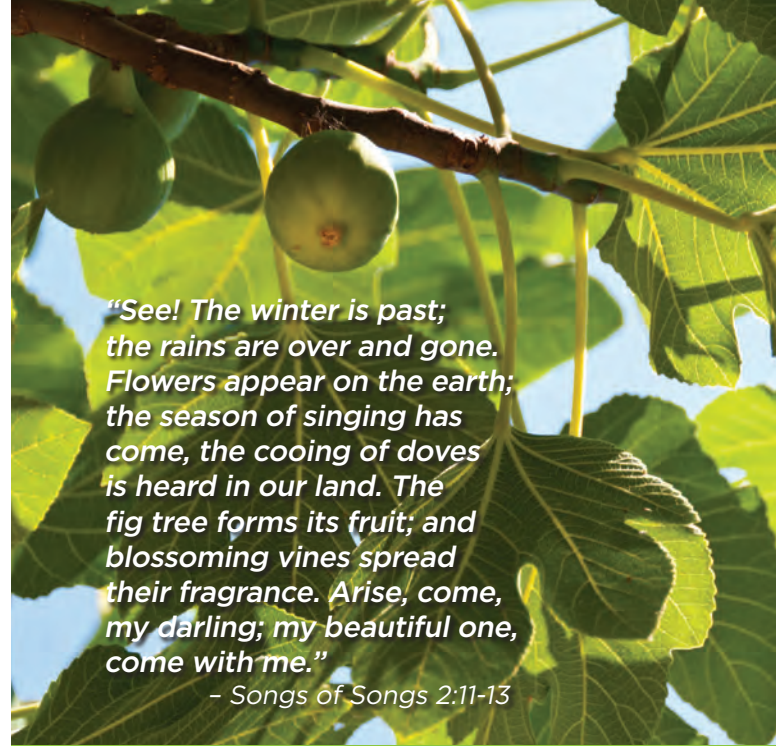
Trenton Johnson

Heather Morrison

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Adrian Stulp

Embracing Connections and Bringing Families Together



*"See! The winter is past;
the rains are over and gone.
Flowers appear on the earth;
the season of singing has
come, the cooing of doves
is heard in our land. The
fig tree forms its fruit; and
blossoming vines spread
their fragrance. Arise, come,
my darling; my beautiful one,
come with me."*

- Songs of Songs 2:11-13

Monthly Donor



Please consider becoming a monthly donor in providing pregnancy support and counselling for under resourced families via our website at www.beginnings.ca or by contacting us at **905-528-6665**.

Let's Keep in Touch!

Make sure to 'Like' **Beginnings Family Services** and **Beginnings Family Services Embryo Donation** on Facebook and to 'Follow' us on Twitter and Instagram!



Interested in receiving this newsletter and communications email?

Please send your email address to info@beginnings.ca so you never miss an update!



Embracing Connections and Bringing Families Together

Your Name & address (if different than on reverse)

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

Phone _____

Postal Code _____

Email _____

Yes, I can donate monthly:

\$100/mo \$50/mo \$25/mo \$ _____/mo

Please supply your credit card or provide a void cheque. A void cheque is preferred to reduce service fees.

I would like to make the following donation:

\$1,000 \$500 \$250 \$100 \$50 \$ _____

Please complete for credit card payment:

VISA Mastercard Expiry _____ 3 Digit CVV Code _____
Card # _____

Interac e-transfer can be sent to bsfpayments@beginnings.ca

Please indicate "Donation" in the message box and include contact information for receipt.

I would like more information on how to include Beginnings in my will.

Head Office: 1 Young Street, Suite 520, Hamilton, ON L8N 1T8
1-877-528-6665 info@beginnings.ca www.beginnings.ca



Thank you!

To donate online, visit www.beginnings.ca and select DONATE TODAY

Please make cheques payable to Beginnings Family Services. Gifts of \$20 or more will be receipted. CCRA Charitable Reg. No. 815689856 RR 0001