



Nothing has slowed down at LAPA...

... even with Latin American adoptions at an all time low. This past year, LAPA's membership increased from the year before as we focused on reaching out to new families. We have several new faces that have brought a renewed energy to our Latin Culture Day and our Annual Picnic, and we look forward to our time together at the Rocking Horse Dude Ranch.

This past year, through the generous contributions made to *the Judy Fund* (in memory of LAPA mom Judith Tartaglia), we were able to provide every LAPA family who desired it, a wonderful set of adoption education books to donate to their school or library. The Judy Fund will once again be able to support adoption education a little closer to home by providing each LAPA

family with an active membership, a complimentary copy of Sherri Eldridge's acclaimed book *Twenty Things Adopted Kids Wish Their Adoptive Parents Knew*.

The book covers a range of topics important to the adoptee and their adoptive family from hidden losses, to the impact of unknown medical history, to fear of abandonment, to conducting a birth family search— issues that span the lifetime. I wonder what it would mean to our kids to see this book out on the coffee table, to have them pick it up and look through it, and have a hopefully meaningful dialogue about some of Ms. Eldridge's insights?

November is National Adoption Awareness Month, and we at LAPA thank you for your continued support through your membership, participation, donations to the Judy Fund and your ongoing love for this organization even after your children are grown and having families of their own. ■

by LAPA President Andrea Quatralo

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On the web: <http://www.lapa.com>

Officers for 2013-2014

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LATIN AMERICA PARENTS ASSOCIATION (LAPA) is a not-for-profit organization registered in the state of New York. LAPA is not an adoption agency. It is an all-volunteer organization of families who have adopted or who are in the process of adopting children from Latin America. Our mission is to provide accurate and timely information as well as support before, during, and after the adoption process. To accomplish our mission, we make accessible to our members: current information about sources and conditions within Latin America; networking with families involved in all phases of the adoption process; invitations to social, cultural, and educational events; and participation in international relief programs throughout Latin America. Membership in LAPA is open to all those interested in Latin American adoptions. Yearly dues from June 1 to May 31 are \$50 for both full and associate members. Full members are those who have adopted; associate members are those who hope to adopt a Latin American child.

¿Qué Tal? is the official newsletter of the Latin America Parents Association.

Submissions and Articles

Please make sure to include the names of the child, parent(s) and sibling(s), birth country, date of birth, and adoption date.

Photos should be clear, mostly of the child's face. Be sure to include the child's name, birth country, and any other information you wish to include in the caption.

Send submissions to:
María Giuliani
bqdesign@earthlink.net

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We would appreciate a copy of the publication in which our material is reprinted.

The LAPA Board of Directors would like to extend their heartfelt condolences to María Giuliani and her family. María's father, Julio, died in October.

What Exactly Happens at the LAPA Board Meetings?

by Andrea Quatralo

LAPA Board meetings are everything but BORING! Ten years ago, LAPA members, Jack and Mary Liljahult, volunteered to host our meetings. This offer came as much from their generosity as it did to accommodate their daughter who cried whenever Mary would try to leave the house to attend the meeting.

Now, 10 years in, the action in the basement trumps the business going on in the living room! While the parents tend to the business of running LAPA, the kids have grown accustomed to having their own meeting. Gathering all together, our kids who range in age from 22 to 12, and have now known one another since they were young kids, hang out, and even volunteer input to keep LAPA fresh and relevant.

It's been a pretty amazing experience for our children to have this organic way of spending time with other kids where they share a commonality of having been adopted from Latin America. Where else does this really happen?

There is always room for more . . . for more parent volunteers on the Board as well as room for your kids. If you are interested in joining the Board and giving your child this enriching experience, then please contact me, Andrea Quatralo, at info@lapa.com for more details.

President

Mid-Winter Getaway

Doral Arrowwood Hotel
975 Anderson Hill Rd, Rye Brook, NY 10573
(914) 939-5500

Join the LAPA families for an overnight stay at the beautiful Doral Arrowwood Hotel in Rye Brook, New York on Saturday February 15, 2014 (the weekend before President's Day). Enjoy swimming in their large, heated indoor/outdoor pool. Rooms cost about \$170 a night and includes breakfast. Its easy to reach from New York city even if you don't have a car -- you can take the MetroNorth to White Plains and a 5-minute cab ride.

Here is what LAPA mom Ruth McArdle said our weekend could look like: Saturday afternoon offers lunch together in the Pub followed by swimming for the kids, and lounging with or without a Kindle by the fireplace, for the adults. At 3 PM, there is a children's movie. In the evening, there is a family dinner in the scenic dining room or a private room, with a family night of games. On Sunday we could go for a walk in the woods

There is no need to contact LAPA. Just book your own room and meet other LAPA families. For questions, contact us at Info@LAPA.com.

Bolivia

April 26, 2013

Notice: Procedural Barriers to Hague Adoptions

The Office of Children's Issues and the U.S. Embassy in La Paz have received numerous inquiries from prospective adoptive parents interested in adopting children from Bolivia.

Bolivia is a Party to the Hague Adoption Convention. Therefore, in order to adopt a Bolivian child, prospective adoptive parents are required to work with a Hague-accredited U.S. adoption service provider (ASP) who is also authorized by the Ministry of Justice, which is the Bolivian Central Authority, to facilitate adoptions of Bolivian children. However, Bolivia has not authorized any U.S. Hague-accredited ASPs to process adoptions of Bolivian children. As a result, the intercountry adoption of children from Bolivia to the United States is not possible at this time. Although the U.S. Embassy will continue to engage with the Bolivian government on this issue, we cannot estimate when the Bolivian government will authorize a U.S. ASP to facilitate Bolivian adoptions.

The foregoing does not affect the ability of an adoptive parent who is habitually resident outside of the United States to file a Form I-130, Petition for Alien Relative, for an adopted child from Bolivia with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). To be considered habitually resident outside of the United States, the adoptive parent must complete two years of legal custody and shared residency in Bolivia with the child.

USCIS determines whether a child meets the definition of an "adopted child", and qualifies for immigration on a case-by-case basis. For more information about Form I-130, please visit the USCIS Form I-130 processing page. If you have further questions, please contact us by phone at 1-888-407-4747 or e-mail us at adoptionUSCA@state.gov.

Colombia

July 1, 2013

Alert: Colombia Moratorium Update

The Colombian Institute for Family Welfare (ICBF) formally announced several important changes in Colombia's management of intercountry adoptions.

Beginning July 15, 2013, ICBF will no longer accept new intercountry adoption applications from non-Colombian citizens living abroad interested in adopting a child under 6 years and 11 months old, unless ICBF considers the child to have special characteristics or needs. Families who are considering adopting a healthy child in this age range should ensure that they have filed their initial application with ICBF no later than the July 15, 2013 deadline. Visit ICBF website to learn what documents ICBF requires

as part of the initial application. ICBF has indicated this moratorium will last at least two years.

The Department of State expects that adoption processing will continue to operate normally in all other respects. Families who have already been accepted by ICBF as prospective adoptive parents for a healthy child less than 6 years and 11 months old will maintain their place on the existing waiting list and ICBF will continue to match and finalize adoptions for these children. Families interested in adopting older children or any child identified by ICBF as being more difficult to place because of special characteristics or needs should not experience any changes as a result of this decision. Furthermore, ICBF has indicated that any family currently on the waiting list which is open to adopting a different category of child should work with their adoption service provider to let ICBF know. Visit icbf.gov.co to learn more about the 8,000 children with special characteristics or needs who are currently awaiting adoption.

In addition to this moratorium, ICBF has also implemented a number of changes affecting adoption service providers and private adoption houses. Effective immediately, adoption service providers may no longer charge prospective adoptive families for "humanitarian assistance" programs as part of an adoption contract. In addition, ICBF has formally reminded prospective adoptive parents, adoption service providers, and private adoption houses of its ban on donations by any family or entity involved in an ongoing adoption prior to the completion of that adoption. ICBF is concerned that these payments and donations jeopardize the credibility of Colombia's intercountry adoption process. The Department of State expects that ICBF may take adverse action against any individuals or entities that do not honor these requirements.

For updates you may email the Bogota U.S. Embassy at: IVBogota@state.gov, Attn Adoptions or refer to adoption.state.gov for updates.

Guatemala

May 28, 2013

Update on Intercountry Adoptions in Guatemala Joint USCIS-State Delegation to Guatemala

During the week of May 13, 2013, Special Advisor for Children's Issues Ambassador Susan Jacobs traveled with USCIS Director Alejandro Mayorkas to Guatemala for meetings with Guatemalan government officials of agencies directly involved in adoptions, including the Procuraduría General de la Nación (PGN) and the Guatemalan National Council on Adoption (CNA). They also met with members of the Supreme Court, the Ministerio Publico (MP), the Ministry of Social Welfare, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA).

Their visit provided an important opportunity to meet recently-appointed Guatemalan officials and emphasize that the timely and transparent resolution of all the remaining pending transition adoption cases in the best interests of the children remains a top priority for the United States. The meetings were also an opportunity to review the progress on completion of these remaining cases following recent administrative and personnel changes in the Government of Guatemala. In the last several months, the Guatemalan government has accelerated its completion of cases, and fewer than 100 pending transition adoption cases are awaiting resolution as of the date of this notice. Twenty-nine cases have moved to CNA's Acuerdo process, and nine cases have concluded with the immigration of the adopted children to the United States with their U.S. citizen parent(s). Guatemala also completed an additional four cases under the notarial process and these children have joined their families in the United States. Some cases have concluded with the child's reunification with a biological family member in Guatemala.

Officials at the PGN, which has the authority to complete the investigations in the pending cases, report having 52 cases in various stages of investigation. The PGN has received renewed funding for its investigators, allowing them to continue their work with a goal of completing these investigations within two months. Once it has completed an investigation, PGN will request a hearing with a Guatemalan court judge for a determination of the child's adoptability, or reunification with biological or extended family. It is also possible, though not likely, that the judge will order the case to conclude via the notarial process. According to the Guatemalan Supreme Court, there currently are no backlogs at the courts in Guatemala City, so that legal process should proceed without delays. The cases with court decrees of adoptability will go to the CNA for evaluation of their eligibility for completion of the adoptions through the Acuerdo process.

The USCIS and Consular staff of the U.S. Embassy in Guatemala City are in constant communication with the Guatemalan officials responsible for adoption procedures. U.S. Embassy staff monitor and promote Guatemalan progress in resolving the remaining cases by attending the semi-weekly meetings of the technical group where these authorities work through the cases. Prospective adoptive parents may contact USCIS directly at Guatemala.adoptions@dhs.gov, and the Immigrant Visa Unit of the Consular Section directly at AdoptGuatemala@state.gov, in order to inquire about the status of individual adoption cases.

Mexico

September 17, 2013

Updated information on U.S.-based Hague Accredited Adoption Service Providers authorized by Mexican Central Authority.

The Mexican Central Authority recently provided the U.S. Central Authority with official notification that, in August 2013, it granted authorization to provide adoption services in Mexico to five additional U.S.-based Convention accredited adoption service providers. This action brings the total number of U.S. adoption service providers authorized in Mexico to eleven:

1. Carolina Adoption Services, Inc
2. International Child Foundation
3. Across the World Adoptions
4. All God's Children International
5. Adoption Related Services, Inc.
6. MLJ Adoptions, Inc.
7. International Adoption Net (August 2013)
8. The Open Door Adoption Agency (August 2013)
9. The Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Chicago (August 2013)
10. Hands Across the Water (August 2013)
11. Children's House International Adoptions (August 2013)

It is essential that U.S. citizens wishing to adopt in Mexico work with an adoption service provider that has current U.S. Hague accreditation or approval and is currently authorized by the Mexican Central Authority. Because Mexico periodically updates its list of authorized providers, we encourage prospective adoptive parents to verify their adoption service provider's authorization status with the Mexican Central Authority before initiating an adoption. The Mexican Central Authority publishes a list of adoption service providers authorized to provide adoption services in Mexico. In addition, our Mexico adoption information flyer includes contact information for the Mexican Central Authority along with information on the Mexican inter-country adoption process.

We publish updated information related to intercountry adoptions from Mexico as we receive it. If you have any further questions please write to us at adoptionUSCA@state.gov or call us at 1-888-407-4747.

— <http://adoption.state.gov/>

Latin CULTURE NIGHT

by Lorraine Lepler

The threat of flash floods and arrival of thunder and lightning didn't put any dampers on the fun or spirit of LAPA's first Latin Culture Day (not night) on May 11, 2013, held at the Westbury Friends School in Westbury, New York.

Long-time LAPA friends joined with new families one day before Mother's Day. We gathered to celebrate our children's heritages and the formation of our families through adoption. We dined on Colombian rotisserie chicken, arroz con pollo and other typical fixings while enjoying each other's company. As the dark storm clouds gathered, Ruth McArdle led the kids in field games and tug of war. Getting soaked by the thunderstorm was a foregone conclusion, so just before the rain fell, several kids soaked one another from head to toe with water balloons.

The event featured Inka Kusi Sonqo, a troupe who performed lively music of the Andes and led the guests in circle dances. The gathering closed with raffles of Mayaworks handicrafts and LAPA's Annual Business Meeting.

Here are the officers elected for 2013–2014:

President: Andrea Quatrale
Vice President: Christian Smeets
Treasurer: Joan Giurdanella
Secretary: Lorraine Lepler
Trustee: Sharon Carty
Trustee: Jack Lieblein
Trustee: Dorothy Marks
Trustee: Brian Mulligan
Trustee: Steven Ressel

A good time was had by all, and the LAPA moms particularly enjoyed hearing the letter written by Andrea Quatrale in honor of Mother's Day. (See facing page.)



mother's day message

To the LAPA Moms at Latin Culture Day from Andrea Quatralé

To my fellow Board Members:

I am so sorry that I won't be with you all tomorrow for this event. . . .

I am sending wishes for a beautiful day for LAPA's annual Latin America Culture Day! Thanks in advance to all of you that will be pitching in to make it a wonderful day for our children and the parents and family members who love them.

If I may, with it being the day before Mother's Day, request that one of you (who ever feels comfortable doing so) gather everyone together (perhaps prior to the music beginning) and welcome everyone and take a moment to honor all of the mothers who are present and those mothers not present; the ones who have given life and the ones who continue to nurture that life and how without one another none of us would be families. That it is a day to honor the heritage and roots of our children and the rich and beautiful cultures in which they descend.

And on a personal note to Lorraine, Mary, Joan, Dorothy and both Sharons: Thank you so much for all of your support over all of these years that we've know each other. We share a special bond as adoptive moms and I so appreciate being able to share the trials and tribulations with you all and grateful that you've been so open about your own experiences. I am a better mother because of you all. And to the men: We couldn't be the moms that we are without your love and support.

I am looking forward to working (if it can be called that- I really see it as an act of service and giving back just a drop of what has been given to me . . .) with all of you on the board in 2013-2014. We may not have gotten to every item we hoped to but we did some good work this past year and touched the lives of many children and families and that is good work.



then&now

BY MICHAEL SPIRIDON



Michael, second grade
Michael and his fiancée Veronica, 2013

MY NAME IS MICHAEL SPIRIDON and I was born in São Paulo, Brazil. My mom, Barbara Spiridon, adopted me when I was five years old. I'm sure that when I was young, it bothered me that I didn't look like her. But now, I can't imagine my mom not being my mom. When I think about her, so many emotions come into play. If you take everything out of the equation and just look at all that she has done for me over the years, I can truly say that she is the most kind, thoughtful, understanding person on the planet—even after all that I have put her through.

I grew up in Larchmont, New York, in Westchester County. The community was predominantly white, and at first I felt really out of place. But after a while . . . and I mean years . . . I started to fit in. I don't remember meeting anyone who was adopted at school until the third grade. That's why all the LAPA meetings in the church basement in Hollis Hills hold a special place in my heart, and the Christmas parties. They were always a blast.

When I was a teenager, I made sure that people weren't looking at me as a Latino kid but as an out-of-control kid. In my mind, it was easier to deal with people just thinking that I was uncontrollable than to think that I did not fit in because I was Latino. There were probably a lot of racial incidents at school, but I have blocked out those memories. Growing up in the predominantly white community, I used to date only blue-eyed blondes. But I'm not dating anymore, since I'm getting married to my beautiful fiancée Veronica some time soon.

I recently moved to Florida and work in international logistics, trying to live my life as normally as anyone could. I will always be a kid at heart. I still like my video games and all kinds of loud music. Right now, I am into trance and dub step.

Here's the advice I would give to the kids who are in LAPA right now: Make the best of the time that you have. Don't let the other kids in school get to you. At the end of the day, the only people who matter are your family, your true friends, and yourself. Take your time. Life is not a race. Don't forget your past. However, don't let your past control the present.

A Board Meeting Treat

At a board meeting in the spring, LAPA teen Alex Green graciously prepared this scrumptious treat for board members:

Nutella Cheesecake

Nutella Cheesecake

Ingredients:

For the crust:

- 1¼ cups of ground graham crackers
- 6 tablespoons of unsalted butter, at room temperature
- 2 tablespoons of Nutella
- ¼ cup of sugar
- ¼ cup of chopped hazelnuts, finely ground in a food processor

For the filling:

- 2 8-ounce blocks of cream cheese, softened at room temperature
- 1 cup of confectioners' sugar
- 1½ cups of Nutella
- ½ teaspoon of vanilla extract
- ¼ cup of heavy cream

For the chocolate ganache:

- ½ cup of heavy cream
- 4 ounces of semisweet chocolate chips
- 1 tablespoon of butter, softened at room temperature

Steps:

Day 1

1. Add all ingredients for the crust in a food processor and mix until everything is combined and holds well when you pinch it.
2. Press the mixture into a 9-inch springform pan, with about an inch of crust up the side. Place in the refrigerator.
3. In a large bowl using a spatula (or if you have a standing mixer use a paddle attachment) add the cream cheese and Nutella. **MAKE SURE YOUR CREAM CHEESE IS SOFT.** Then add the remaining ingredients and keep mixing until you have a smooth batter.
4. Pour the batter into the prepared crust and even out. Cover the top with aluminum foil and set it in the fridge overnight.

Day 2

5. In a small saucepan, add the cream and bring it to a simmer. Pour the cream into a bowl with the chocolate chips and let stand for about 3 minutes. Whisk together until the chocolate chips have melted and mix in the butter as well.
6. Pour the mixture over the top and place it in the fridge for another hour. Top the cheesecake however you like and serve.

Food, Fun, and Frolic

by Lorraine Lepler

LAPA FAMILIES GATHERED FOR AN AFTERNOON OF FOOD, fun, and frolic on Saturday, September 21, at LAPA's annual family picnic, held at the Westbury Friends School grounds in Westbury, Long Island. Several families new to LAPA attended the picnic and were warmly welcomed. As is typical at LAPA events, new kids were quickly "at home" with those who've been attending LAPA for several years—playing catch, soccer, football, and using the playground equipment. Some left with beautiful Mayaworks handicrafts, either purchased or won during the raffle.

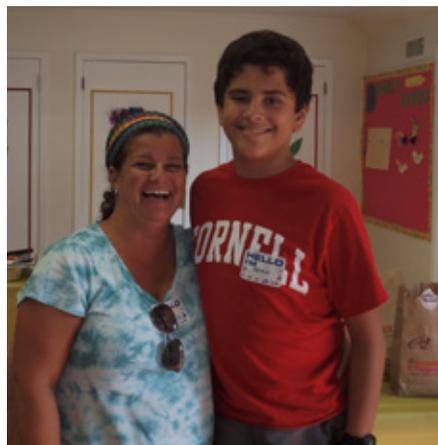
Mi Tierrita of Hempstead catered a lavish Colombian chicken lunch buffet, complete with salad, rice, beans, and traditional trimmings, served in a room decorated with festive Latin America decorations. Many enjoyed their food outdoors, as the rain that threatened the event had thankfully passed through the area before the festivities began, giving way to a very temperate and pleasant day that was perfect for outdoor activities. In keeping with several years of LAPA picnic tradition, Bubbles the Clown transformed our beautiful children into various creatures as she painted their faces to a backdrop of bubbles and lively music. She presided over three-legged and sack races, with kids and adults participating. Armed with a new rope (the old one having broken during last year's LAPA tug-of-war contest), Bubbles refereed a 3-round tug-of-war between the LAPA girls and boys. It was fun, but probably no one remembers which side ultimately won. Everyone's strong resistance was rewarded at the end with home-spun cotton candy. As Bubbles was leaving the picnic, she remarked that LAPA is truly one of her favorite groups, and that she truly adores and enjoys seeing our kids get bigger and more mature each year.

We hope the new families enjoyed being at the picnic as much as the "old" families enjoyed meeting them, and that this picnic is just the first of many LAPA events they attend in the future.

Be sure to watch the LAPA website and plan to attend LAPA's spring parenting event and Latin Culture Day. ■



**at the
LAPA
Family
Picnic**
by Lorraine Lepler



These Celebrities Were Adopted?

Michael Bay Director of Transformers

Surya Bonaly Figure Skater

Richard Burton Actor

Peter and Kitty

Carruthers Figure Skaters

George Washington Carver Inventor

Rachel Crow Celebrity

Daunte Culpeper Football Player

Kristin Chenoweth Actress

Faith Daniels TV News Personality

Ted Danson Actor

Melissa Gilbert Actress

Scott Hamilton Figure Skater

Deborah Harry Singer

Faith Hill Singer

Steve Jobs Cofounder of Apple

Ray Liotta Actor

Grey Louganis Diver

Nelson Mandela Anti-Apartheid Leader

Frances McDormand Actor

Sarah McLachlan Singer

Dan O'Brien Decathlete

Michael Oher Football Player

Liz Phair Alt-Rocker

Edgar Allan Poe author

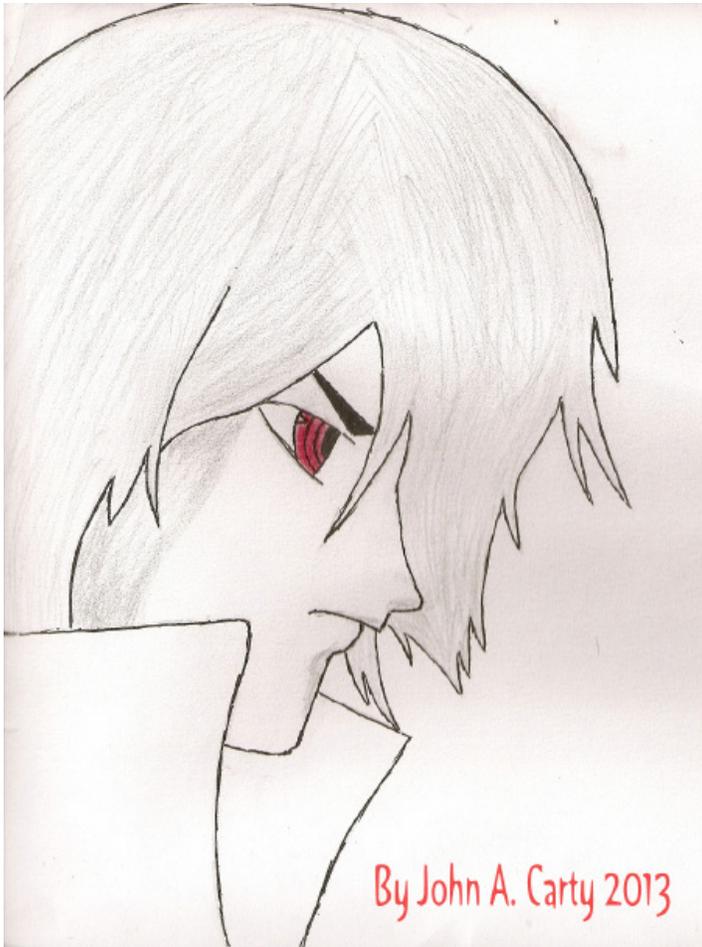
Nicole "Snooki" Polizzi TV Personality

Michael Reagan Radio Talk Show Host

Babe Ruth Baseball Player

Buffy Saint-Marie Singer

Dave Thomas Founder of Wendy's



Bubbles at the Picnic by David M.

LAPA artist

LAPA kids!

Are you an artist, a writer, a cook? Let us know. Share your drawings, writings, and recipes with us, and we will publish them on an upcoming edition of ¿Qué Tal?