

My Dream Comes True

In 2007, I started to research options for single-parent international adoption. I first searched the internet for the different countries and the requirements for each country. As a result, I decided that I liked the idea of adopting a child from Russia. I also knew of three other families who had adopted from Russia with positive results. Next came the difficult part...deciding on an adoption agency to use for my home study, document preparation and international adoption process. After searching the internet for many hours, I narrowed down my list of possible agencies to 4. I then called the Better Business Bureau and found out that Beacon House Adoption Services had an excellent standing in the community while others had complaints lodged with their local Better Business Bureaus. I also spoke with another adoptive parent that had used Beacon House Adoption Services and she was extremely pleased with the services of this agency having used this agency to adopt multiple times from Russia.

In March of 2008, I met with Dawn at Beacon House Adoption Service. She was very knowledgeable about international adoption and patiently answered all of my questions. I completed my application to start the process. I was assigned a wonderful social worker (Stacy) for the completion of my home study. I met with Stacy on multiple occasions (both at the adoption agency and in my home) and she was very professional and easy to work with. Once my home study was completed, I was assigned an international case manager (Linda) who guided me through all of the documents that would go to Russia in my dossier. I also found Linda to be very friendly, professional and easy to work with. She answered all my questions and assisted me in completing my paperwork. I turned in my documents in November of 2008. I received my referral for Gage in the latter part of November (2008) and accepted the referral after speaking with a pediatrician that specializes in international adoptions (upon the recommendation of Beacon House Adoption Services). In December (2008), I received notice from Linda that I had a travel date (12/20/08) for my first trip to Russia to meet my future son. What an exciting day this was for me. I was at work when the call came in and had to go tell everyone at work. All of my coworkers have been so supportive to me during this process...I think they all feel like they are adopting him right along with me. One of my coworkers (who is European) volunteered to go with me on my first trip to Russia. My brother has also been a wonderful support for me during this process and he volunteered to go to Russia with me to meet my future son. I provided Linda with my itinerary and she made all of the arrangements for transportation and translators while in Russia.

On 12/20/08, my brother, coworker and I set off for our first trip to Russia. We were all



so excited we could hardly stand it. We took so many pictures...pictures of us loading the car to go to the airport, pictures of us on the plane and pictures, pictures and more pictures while in Russia. We flew the most direct route possible which was Baton Rouge to Atlanta and then Atlanta to Moscow. We arrived in Moscow on 12/21/08 (they are 8 hours ahead of us in time) and we followed the instructions given to us by Linda for going through

passport control. Once we passed through passport control, we saw a woman standing with a sign that had my name written on it. We went over and introduced ourselves to Tatyanna (see photos) who is one of the Beacon House Adoption Services translators. She was such a warm and friendly person and made us feel very secure. You could not navigate Russia without a translator because of the alphabet system which makes it impossible to read anything. Tatyanna's husband Nick served as our driver while in Moscow. Moscow has many different airports and when you arrive in Moscow from the United States you must go to another airport to make the connecting flight to the region where you are adopting from...in my case that was the Samara region which is approximately 500 miles southeast of Moscow. Moscow airports will not let you check in prior to 2 hours before the scheduled flight and there were no seats in the front part of the airport so Tatyanna and Nick took us to the Mall for coffee and shopping while we waited for our next flight. Tatyanna and Nick were both wonderful to be around....they were just like long lost relatives to us.

We later boarded our flight and headed to Samara. Once we arrived in Samara, we were again met (like clockwork) by the Beacon House Adoption Service translator (Svetlana -see photos) for this region. She was very friendly, professional and easy to work with. She introduced us to our driver (Sergey) and they made us feel very safe and secure. They assisted us with checking into our hotel for our overnight stay (prior to our visit the Center for Adoption the next day.

On 12/22/08 we headed to the Center for Adoption where I was interviewed by a psychologist and given a psychological evaluation. Once the psychological evaluation was completed, I was then interviewed by the Director of the Center for Adoption. Once the interview was complete, the Director granted a referral and an invitation to visit a 10 month old boy in a nearby town. Svetlana assisted us and gave instructions throughout the entire process. We then went by taxi to the nearby town's baby house to

meet my future son. We met with the baby house physician and lawyer who provided us with the medical and social history of the child I was to meet. When the baby house director brought him into the room, it was LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT.

My coworker took pictures of us interacting and I have them chronologically in time



and you could see the progression of how he opened up and we bonded that very first visit. We were able to visit with him for two days and I signed the petition to adopt him. Once our visit was finished, we had to say goodbye (very difficult) and leave Russia to await a court date.

In February (2009), I received the call from Linda that I had been given a court date of

March 4, 2009. She provided me with the instructions and I made the flight and hotel reservations. Once again, I had to run and tell everyone that I had a court date; after all, everyone asked me every day if I had heard anything about a court date....again they feel as if they are adopting him also. On 02/27/09 we (my brother went with me again) headed out to the airport for our second trip to Russia. Everything went like clockwork according the Beacon House Adoption Services plan. This time we were met in Moscow by Val (another Beacon House Adoption Service employee) who explained everything to us and assisted us with some of our paperwork. Val is excellent to work with and makes you feel so comfortable, as if you have known him for a very long time...hugs and all. He also assisted us with our transfer to the other airport for our flight to Samara. Once we arrived in Samara, we were met by Svetlana and were taken immediately to the baby house to visit with my future son again. Svetlana was wonderful...what a blessing she is to adoptive families. Again, this was a wonderful experience.

The next day (March 3, 2009) I had to go for the medical evaluations which were performed by 8 different specialists who had to testify that I was healthy to adopt a child. Once this was completed, all I had to do was wait for the court date the next day (March 4, 2009). I went shopping in the afternoon to help pass the time and sat around talking to the other couple that were there adopting a child (they also went with me on the first trip). I couldn't sleep a wink the night before court and then finally court time arrived. I was called into the court room (just me and Svetlana) and asked questions by

the judge and prosecutor. The baby house social worker and Director of the Center for adoption presented the case supporting the adoption of my child. The entire process took about 50 minutes and while I was nervous, I also felt very prepared by Svetlana (she translated everything for me during court). At the end of the court the judge told me that she found that I had done everything according to Russian law and she supported my adoption. One word of advice...the prosecutor does speak English because after the court she came up and gave me a big hug, looked at the pictures I brought and spoke English to me. I had tears of happiness in my eyes. I walked out of the court room and met my brother eyes and smiled really big and he burst into smiles. He said he was so nervous sitting out in the hallway he could hardly stand it.

Unfortunately, the Samara region requires a 10 business day wait period before the judge's ruling becomes effective which meant that I could not pick up my son until March 22, 2009 and we were not allowed to stay in the Samara region (and couldn't visit with my son) ...so I decided to return to the United States and make a 3rd trip to Russia to pick up my son. We then met with Svetlana to prepare the paperwork that she would need in order to get a passport for my son to leave Russia and come to the United States. We were taken to the airport that evening and headed back to the United States.



On March 20, 2009, I left for my third trip to Russia. This was the exciting trip...no worries about getting the invitation to visit a child, no interviews by Russian officials, no medical evaluations, no COURT...just go and pick up my son. I arrived in Russia on March 21, 2009 and again everything went like clockwork according to the Beacon House Adoption Services plan. Tatyanna, Nick and Val

took wonderful care of us and assisted us every step of the way. I met up with the other couple who made the first 2 trips with me and we flew out to Samara and spent the night in a hotel. On March 22, 2009, we all went with Svetlana and Sergey to pick up our children. The caregiver brought my son to me and had me stand back so he could walk into my arms with a smile so big on both of our faces, I thought our faces would break from smiling so big. He was not walking on my previous trips so you could tell the care givers had been working with him. The care givers at this baby house truly seemed to love the children and take care of them. I bundled my little bundle of joy up in a snow suit and off we headed to the airport. He did not cry at all during the van ride to the airport, the plane ride to Moscow and the car ride to the apartment we rented in Moscow. I used gotorussia.com to rent an apartment...this was wonderful....great prices and everything went according to plans...we had a full

kitchen, master bedroom, shower, washer etc...much better than a hotel room. The next morning (Monday 03/23/09) Tatyanna and Nick picked us up and transported us to the photography place to get my son's picture for his Visa to come into the United States. We then went to the US Consulate to turn in the paperwork to bring him into the United States and get an appointment for our interview. On Tuesday 03/24/09, we shopped for souvenirs in the morning...I bought my son many items (Russian fairy tale books, music and souvenirs) to show him as he grows older. That afternoon we went back to the US Consulate for our interview where we received all of the paperwork to bring my son back into the country. Wednesday 03/25/09 was a free day for us while we waited for my son to be registered with the Foreign Ministry Department (which is a requirement). We scheduled a grand tour of Moscow this day through expedia.com. This was a wonderful tour in a heated van with a very knowledgeable tour guide. He showed us so much of Moscow, the Red Square, the metro system, the Kremlin, etc., etc. We took many pictures of my son in front of some of the famous Moscow places so we could show them to him as he gets older.

On Thursday, 03/26/09, we boarded Delta flight47 (nicknamed the "Stork") and headed to Atlanta. I suggest that parents take lots of toys as this is an 11 ½ hour flight. Once in Atlanta, we went through passport control and turned in all of the paperwork for my son to become a US citizen. We took a picture of him holding a small US flag with his feet planted on US ground....so exciting. Next came the flight into Baton Rouge. When we arrived at the airport, many friends and family members were there waiting for us with balloons, happy wishes and LOTS of smiles, tears and hugs. My son was smiling, laughing and showing off his walking skills. It was a time I will never forget.



In closing, my son is doing wonderful. We are having no trouble at all bonding and we are both very happy. This has been, and continues to be, the best thing I have ever done in my life. I would encourage any parent wishing to adopt to choose Beacon House Adoption services for their international adoption process. I will leave my email address with Beacon House and please feel free

to contact me for more information.

And lastly, I want to thank Anne Hughes and her wonderful staff for making my dream come true. I love you all!!!!