

National Adoption Month Message from Assistant Secretary Carl C. Risch

Adoption is about family. By extension, November and National Adoption Month, are about family. Through personal experience and my professional career, I have witnessed how adoption creates incredible opportunities to build families. In those homes, children can flourish and adults can experience the joys, and challenges, of parenthood. Adoption is a life-changing event for everyone involved.

With the help of devoted professionals and adoption advocates, families in the United States open their homes and hearts to vulnerable children from around the country and around the world. During National Adoption Month, we come together to celebrate and thank the adoptive families who take in these children. We also recognize the invaluable contribution of the professionals who dedicate their careers – and, in some cases, their lives – to help build forever families for children in need.

In his proclamation setting forth the third National Adoption Week in 1986, President Ronald Reagan recognized the importance of intercountry adoption. The Department of State is deeply committed to safeguarding intercountry adoption as a viable option for children in need of permanency. We believe that once domestic solutions have been fully considered, national boundaries should not be a barrier to adoption.

Intercountry adoption builds families in a real and positive way. I am proud that half of the children adopted internationally find homes in the United States – a trend that has remained steady throughout the years. It says a great deal about who we are as a people and as a nation.

We recognize that the stakes are high. All of us care about the safety of children. All of us recognize their vulnerability. Harm to even one adopted child is unacceptable. One case of deception of an agency, birth parent, or adoptive parent is indefensible. These regrettable situations undermine confidence in our system worldwide and jeopardize the long-term well-being of individual children and the future of intercountry adoption.

In the Bureau of Consular Affairs, we celebrate each successful adoption story and each family. We also continue to work tirelessly to ensure the adoption process is ethical, transparent, and protects children and their parents. As we carry out that mission, we appreciate the efforts, perspectives, and voices of everyone involved in intercountry adoption.

In September 2019, we hosted an Adoption Symposium where we brought these voices together at the Department of State. We were humbled by the honesty, courage, and dedication of all who participated – adoption professionals, advocacy organizations, adoptive parents, birth parents, and adult adoptees – and I personally appreciated hearing such a diverse range of viewpoints on the challenges and opportunities we face on this critical issue. Our outreach to these communities will continue. We look forward to hearing your voices and working together to strengthen intercountry adoption for the future to benefit children and their families.

In closing, I encourage you to join me in accepting the invitation of President Reagan on the occasion of the third National Adoption Week. “Let us call to mind the children, both here in the United States and in other countries, who need families, and let us honor our adoptive families and the brave people whose sacrifice and selflessness make such families possible.”

Happy Adoption Month.

Carl C. Risch
Assistant Secretary for Consular Affairs