

Mothers in Action

The newsletter of
Origins-USA

SPECIAL ANNUAL REPORT ISSUE • AUGUST 2007 – AUGUST 2008

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Origins-USA is the only national non-profit organization representing mothers who lost children to adoption and advocating for the natural right of mothers to nurture their children and for keeping natural families together. Origins-USA is working to change public thinking so that people accept without question that mothers who are able have the resources and support they need to nurture their own children.

Origins-USA has had many exciting accomplishments during the past year. Highlights discussed in this report include: (1) producing a YouTube video on the effects of adoption loss; (2) Action Alerts; (3) Media Appearances; (4) HUGS; (5) Mothers' Stories; and (6) growing our membership.

While I am very pleased about the progress the organization has made,

I am also aware that the family preservation movement has a big challenge ahead of us, as the adoption industry and prospective adopters continue to raise money and government and business support for adoption.

- In May, the National Council for Adoption (NCFCA), which represents adoption agencies, announced that it raised \$37,000 in its latest fundraising drive to "champion the cause of adoption." NCFCA's major activities include media campaigns and training programs to persuade more mothers to surrender their infants to adoption.

- Many organizations have been set up to raise money to help people with limited financial resources adopt. Examples include *The Gift of Adoption Fund*, *Shaohannah's Hope*, *The Asian Bridge*, and

HelpUsAdopt.org.

- As of 2008, the federal Adoption Tax Credit allows full reimbursement for up to \$11,650 of adoption related costs for most adoptions.

As you can see, Origins-USA has a lot of work to do! There are other advocacy organizations working on related goals to connect with, potential members to recruit, members who might want to be more involved. In particular, five areas of opportunity to focus on in the coming year are:

- *Membership*: Reach out to more mothers and people separated by adoption, and recruit more members. The more members Origins-USA has, the stronger our voice!
- *Volunteers*: Continue to get more members involved as volunteers

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and potential future board members.

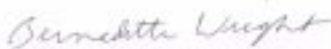
- *Fundraising.* Expand our fundraising efforts, so Origins-USA can not only continue its basic operations, but have the money needed to do more to further its mission.

- *Visibility.* Increase our visibility in the media, making mothers' voices heard and educating the public about the need to strengthen mothers' rights related to surrender and help struggling mothers keep their children.

- *Networking.* Expand our networking with other organizations that support our goals.

I hope you will continue to support Origins-USA's work in the coming year, as we continue to stand up to the adoption industry and spread the truth about adoption separation.

Sincerely,



Bernadette Wright
President, Origins-USA
(2007-2009)

ORIGINS-USA'S MISSION & VISION

Mission

Origins-USA advocates for the natural right of mothers to nurture their children and for keeping families together.

Vision

Every mother receives the support she needs to nurture her children. Mothers and children are separated only after all efforts to keep them together have been exhausted. Children separated from their mothers shall be provided stable living arrangements that honor and maintain their connection to their family.

YOUTUBE VIDEO: MOTHERHOOD, ADOPTION, SURRENDER & LOSS

To spread the truth about the effects of adoption separation on mothers, Origins-USA produced a YouTube video, *Motherhood, Adoption, Surrender, & Loss*, in which four mothers talked about losing their children to adoption and how it affected their lives.

Below are just a few of the many positive comments people made about the video:

"Thank you for the info. You have answered my biggest question about adoption because more than anything I was worried about the effects on my heart and the effects on my child if I was going to decide on adoption. Seeing that video made me realize that not having all the money in the world doesn't matter but what matters is love. So thank you very much."

"Good to see some of the REAL TRUTH about adoption getting out during 'National Adoption Awareness Month.' This is exactly the kind of awareness that is needed to kickstart meaningful reform in the U.S."

"Finally the silence is broken rather than our hearts! Real women should never be silenced for the sake of their children. Great job!"

*"Oh wow. It's beautiful. Thank you for speaking for us."
Nicole, mom of adoption loss, 2001*



PROMOTING ACTION, MAKING OUR VOICES HEARD

This year Origins-USA issued eight Action Alerts, which led to mothers making their voices heard:

- 7/26/08 Two Comment Opportunities
- 7/10/08 H.U.G.S. Support
- 7/01/08 The Mothers' Stories Project
- 3/10/08 Mothers' Responses Solicited from New Jersey Catholic Conference
- 2/21/08 Mother's responses to Juno movie needed
- 2/13/08 JUNO Action Alert: Letter Writing Campaign
- 2/09/08 Express Your Outrage! Lawmaker sorry for 'sluts' remark.
- 12/02/07 Origins-USA Supports the Kinship Caregivers Support Act

In addition, the Origins-USA website provides several ways for mothers to take action:

- "Get Involved" page of the website
- Tips on writing letters to the editor page of website
- Mothers' Stories project, linking mothers to the media

MOTHERS' STORIES

Origins-USA's **Mothers' Stories Project** page: <http://www.originsusa.memberlodge.org/Default.aspx?pageId=155948>) provides a resource for the media seeking stories of mothers who lost children to adoption or had their parental rights terminated.

As of November 23, 2008, 24 mothers have shared their stories. Each story is written by a mother who was separated from a child, in her own words, and expresses briefly what the experience and aftermath have been and what she would like to see changed about the adoption system. The stories span surrenders occurring from 1956 – 2004, nearly five decades. ***No other book or venue of any kind has provided such a resource.***

Many thanks to the following mothers who shared their stories, listed by year of surrender:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Marisa Mims, 2004 | 13. Sheila Leonard, 1970 |
| 2. Pennye Anglin, 1997 | 14. Karen Dawber, 1970 |
| 3. Susie V, 1995 | 15. Denise Roessle, 1970 |
| 4. Stephanie Smith, 1991 | 16. Irene Price-Gendron, 1969 |
| 5. Stephanie, 1990 | 17. Donna Stefanov, 1969 |
| 6. Bernadette Wright, 1990 | 18. Susan Schnirring, 1968 |
| 7. Anonymous, 1983 | 19. Mirah Riben, 1968 |
| 8. Sandra Whitney Soto, 1981 | 20. Dale Boercker, 1967 |
| 9. Rebecca Ricardo, 1980 | 21. Laura Crepeau, 1961 |
| 10. Anne Fredericks-Kotler, 1979 | 22. Barbara Pasternak, 1959 |
| 11. Elise Perkins, 1973 | 23. Jesse Jordan, 1958 |
| 12. Kathy Aderhold, 1972 | 24. Pat Buono, 1956 |

MEDIA APPEARANCES

Articles & letters to the editor mentioning Origins-USA

- Oct/Nov. 2008: “The Stork Market” by Mirah Riben, reviewed by Denise Roessle in *Adoption Today*
- Feb. 2008: “Juno:” Separating Fact from Fiction by Mirah Riben, OpEdNews.com
- Feb. 2008: The Trouble with ‘Juno’ by Nara Schoenberg, *Chicago Tribune*
- Jan. 2008: “Opinion: Discrimination is Not in the Best Interest of Children” by Bernadette Wright, Alternatives to Marriage Project (AtMP) newsletter
- Dec. 2007: “Waiting Through Life, Treading Time” by Claudia Corrigan D’Arcy (p. 24 - 28), *Adoption Today* magazine
- Nov. 2007: The National Council for Adoption: Mothers, Money, Marketing, and Madness by Claudia Corrigan D’Arcy, www.divinecaroline.com
- May 22, 2008: Birth Parents’ Rights Denied by Mirah Riben, APP.com
- Feb. 25, 2008: States’ sealed records discriminate against adoptees, families by Mirah Riben, *USAToday* Opinion
- Feb. 20, 2008 A Mother’s Opinion on the Film Juno, jworld.com
- Nov. 22, 2007: Opening Adoption: Kingston Mother Joins a National Battle for Adoption Reform, *Kingston Times*
- Nov. 15, 2007: Birth info not easily obtained by adoptees: RegDay serves to inform residents about adoption information hurdles, *Sentinel* (North Brunswick/ Brunswick)
- Nov. 11, 2007: Group Keys on Adoption, *Home News Tribune*
- Nov. 9, 2007: Letters to the Editor, “For Gabriel, definition of ‘family’ is key,” *The Oregonian*
- Nov. 8, 2007: Sandy Young to Host RegDay Adoption Event, *Hondo Anvil Herald*

Radio Interviews

- August 2008: Mirah Riben on “Speaking of Adoption”
- Jan. 2008: Mirah Riben on “Speaking of Adoption”
- Jan. 4, 2008: 1240 AM WOON Rhode Island
- Dec. 26, 2007: “Open Questions about Closed Adoptions,” WAMC.org by Claudia Corrigan D’Arcy
- Dec. 2007: “OUSA Study Mothers’ Voices: Surrender Experiences and Long-Term Effects,” Guest: Bernadette Wright, The Adoption Show
- Nov. 27, 2007: Bernadette Wright on “Speaking of Adoption,” 1240 AM WOON Rhode Island

HUGS - HELPING "U" GET SUPPORT

Many thanks to Origins-USA's HUGS volunteers!!

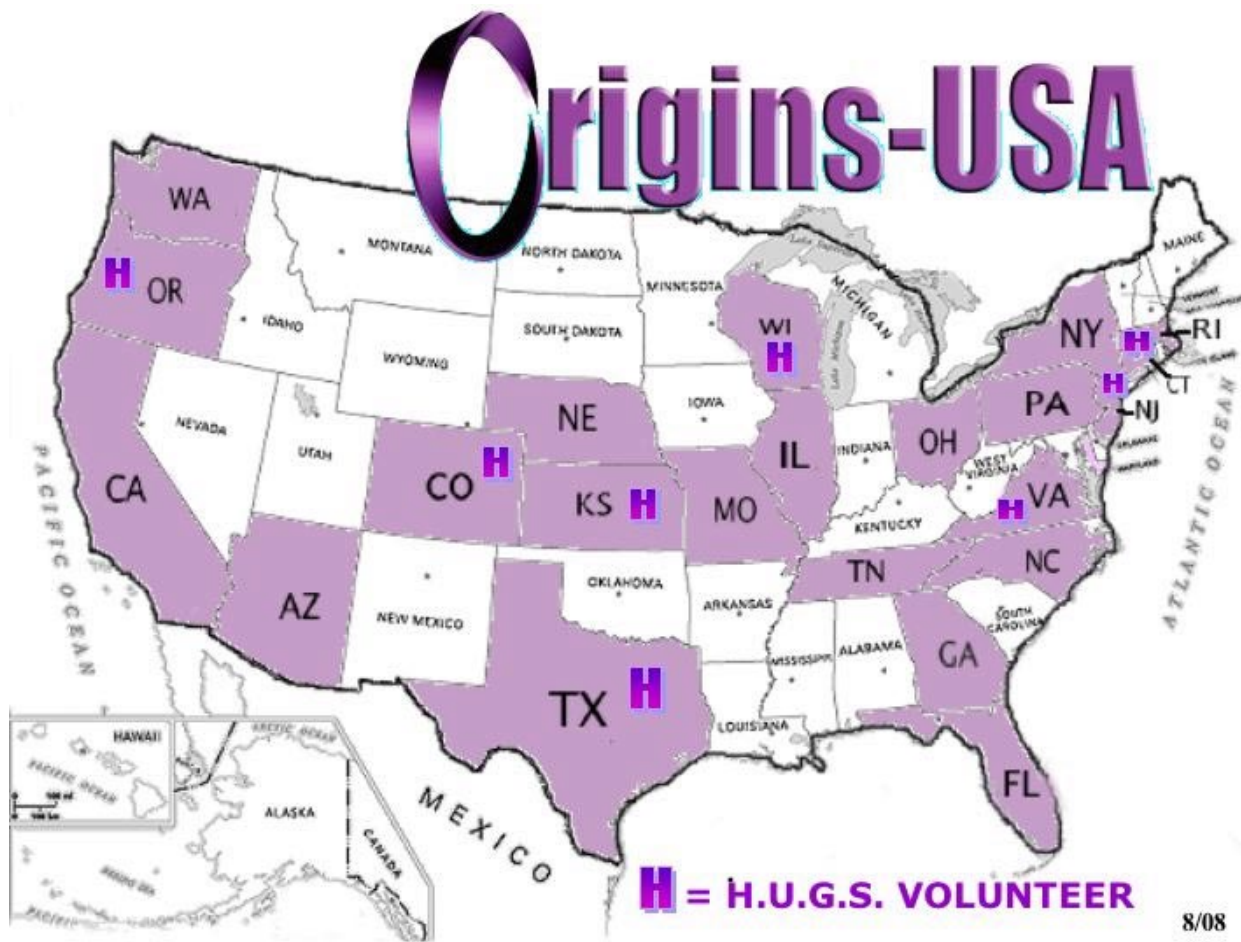
- Colorado - Kathy Aderhold
- Connecticut - Suz Bednarz
- Kansas - Cathi Robinson
- New Jersey - Mirah Riben and Linda Bolton
- Oregon - Jane Edwards
- Texas - Donna Stefanov
- Virginia - Bernadette Wright

Other ways Origins-USA is helping mothers get support:

- Opt-in member directory
- Members forum

BUILDING MEMBERSHIP

A larger membership helps us be a stronger voice for mothers. Over the past year, our membership has grown from approximately 40 members to close to 60 paid members, a mailing list of over 200, and 266 friends on MySpace. Origins-USA now has paid members in 22 states, and HUGS volunteers in 7 states (see map).



Below is a sampling of comments that Origins-USA's members and friends have made over the past year:

"I am so grateful to have found your organization. For the last 18 years there were many times that I felt very alone in my struggle to come to terms with the loss of my son to adoption. Thank you for all that you are doing."

"I love the work Origins is doing! I just joined in December, nice to see Origins represented here on MySpace!" — Liz

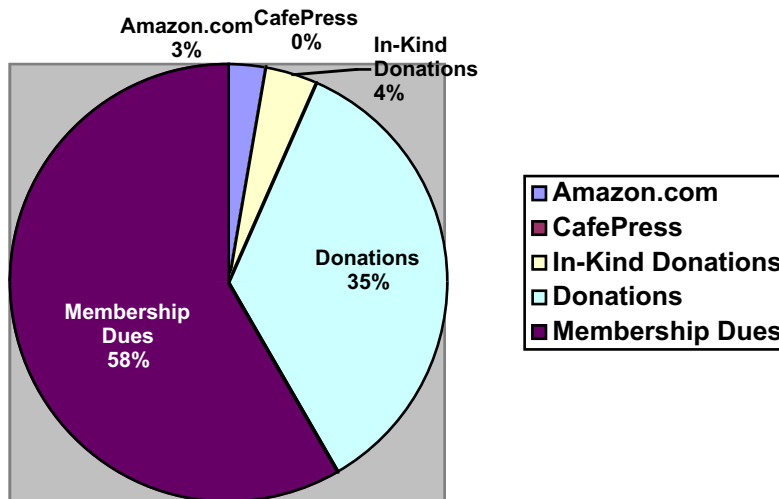
"Being involved with Origins USA has changed my life in so many positive ways. I am sure Origins will one day be the demise of the adoption industry. So proud of you all."

"When I need an answer on something surrounding mothers' rights I KNOW that I can find the ethical answer from Origins and its members. I look to Origins for a strength and voice for the mothers."

FUNDRAISING

Nearly all of Origins-USA's income comes from dues and donations from members like you (see Chart).

Origins-USA Income: Jan 1 - July 16, 2008



Origins-USA Board Members and Committee Chairs 2008-2009

Bernadette Wright, President
Jane Edwards, Vice President
Mirah Riben, Vice President of Communication
Donna Stefanov, Secretary
Kathy Aderhold, Treasurer
Suz Bednarz, Web Master
Denise Roessle, Newsletter Chair

How Origins-USA is putting your donations to work for mothers' rights and keeping natural families together:

- Origins-USA is an all-volunteer organization— Board members and volunteers receive no payment or stipend of any kind, and many have generously given in-kind donations and donated money.
- Each board members has agreed to pay her travel, lodging, and other expenses for the annual in-person working board meeting entirely out of her own pocket, to further save Origins-USA money.

How do your donations help?

Over 90 percent of our budget goes to support:

- The interactive, informative, and helpful Origins-USA.org website, which provides:
 - Information and resources about adoption and keeping natural families together that are not available anywhere else;
 - Members-only area with opt-in members' directory, members-only forum, and other information for members;
 - Convenient online membership and donation forms.
- Twice a month conference calls, for board members and volunteers to review progress and develop action plans for accomplishing Origins-USA's mission and goals.

In the coming year, Origins-USA needs to raise additional funds to:

- Produce a more professional looking brochure and other outreach materials.
- Increase capacity by purchasing education and training materials and enrolling volunteers in courses.
- Buy advertising to recruit more mothers to participate in the Mothers' Stories Project and recruit more members.
- Upgrade membership and donation software to make it easier for members to join and donate online.

Origins-USA has very thoroughly researched and chosen the most economical website and conference call options we could find that meet the organization's needs, and always appreciate cost-saving ideas and suggestions, as well as your financial contributions.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Earn \$\$\$ to support Origins-USA's work just by shopping online!

- * Shop at our igitve store at www.igitve.com/originsusa, and at over 680 brand-name stores a portion of each online purchase is donated to Origins-USA! Origins-USA will also get a \$5 bonus the first time you sign up and make an online purchase.
- * Click on any link to Amazon.com on the "Books, movies, and videos" section of the website, and a portion of your Amazon.com purchase will go to Origins-USA <http://originsusa.memberlodge.org/Default.aspx?pageId=27390>. It doesn't matter if you are buying a book, electronics, clothing, or anything else!
- * Buy t-shirts, pins, and more at the Origins-USA store at CafePress <http://www.cafepress.com/originsusa>, and a portion of the proceeds will go to support our work.
- * When you sell on Ebay, make your transaction support Origins-USA's work through Ebay Giving Works http://donations.ebay.com/charity/charity.jsp?NP_ID=26949

Give the most generous monthly or one-time donation you can. Donations are tax-exempt, and you can conveniently give online using your credit card or PayPal account (you do NOT need to create a PayPal account). Or, you can mail a check to: Kathy Aderhold, Origins-USA Treasurer, 2961 South Kearney St., Denver, CO 80222.

Volunteer! Contact info@origins-usa.org to sign up. If you have the time and energy to be more involved, key volunteer vacancies right now include:

- HUGS Coordinator
- Mothers' Stories Coordinator
- Research
- Fundraising and grant writing
- Membership



#43030

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**WE ARE ON THE WEB!
VISIT US AT
ORIGINS-USA.ORG**

**MOTHERHOOD
IS FOREVER**

Origins-USA is a national 501(c)(3) non-profit organization working to advocate for mothers' rights, to keep natural families together, end corruption and exploitation in adoption, promote healing for people separated by adoption, and seek justice for those injured by illegal and unscrupulous adoption practices.

Our activities include educating the public and policy makers, conducting research, referring people to attorneys, and providing in-person and online support for people harmed by adoption.

We are a non-profit organization supported solely by members and donors.

JOIN TODAY

Friend of Origins-USA (Free) / Email list only

Subsidized/financial need \$5.00 (USD) / Year

Student/Senior \$10.00 (USD) / Year

Regular Dues \$20.00 (USD) / Year

Charter Membership \$500.00 (USD) / Lifetime membership

MEMBERS: Register and log-in to the Members Only area and enter your profile! If you have any questions or problems with logging in, contact info@origins-usa.org

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Submission guidelines can be found at Origins-USA.org homepage.