



Spring Newsletter from Boston Korean Adoptees, Inc.

Boston Korean Adoptees, Incorporated <info@bkadoptee.org>
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BJA Newsletter Spring Edition 2013

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Issue 4.0

May/2013

BJA Board Letter

WELCOME!

Dear BKA Members,

Greetings, and welcome to the May edition of the BKA newsletter! It was a long winter, but we've outlasted the storms and we hope you're enjoying the spring.

In this issue, you'll meet Jonathan LaBrecque, one of our most recent (and most active) members; recap our reading with Lee Herrick and the 7th annual Dessert Fundraiser; and read about the planning for the BKA 2014 anniversary celebration conference and some upcoming events.

As always, we'd also like to welcome all of you who have just joined BKA and give a shoutout to all our existing members. We hope that you've been able to make it to an event or two, follow us on social media (see the quick links on the left) and keep up with events on our Yahoo email group.

If you have any information or content that you would like to see in an upcoming issue, we welcome suggestions! Just send an email to info@bkadoptee.org.

Thank you for your support of BKA. We hope to see you at an upcoming event!

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Sincerely,

Boston Korean Adoptees' Board of Directors
Nate Bae Kupel, President
Christopher Albrizio, Treasurer
Sarah O'Neill, Secretary/Clerk
Mark Zastrow, Director
Nikki Rizzo, Director

Meet Jon LaBrecque, BKA member

If you've been to a BKA event recently, chances are you've seen Jonathan LeBrecque. Board member Mark Zastrow sent him a few questions for him to answer so that we can all get to know him a bit better!

So, tell us a little bit about your background.

My background is that I was adopted from Seoul in 1988 at 8 months old. I grew up in Western Massachusetts most of my life, so I am rather local. I have three siblings, all of which are adopted from Korea as well. I went to college in Providence, Rhode Island and have since moved to Boston for graduate school.

I know you're currently pursuing your masters in social work at BU. What led you to pursue that path?

I would say deciding to pursue any graduate degree is a process. This one began for me in Oxford, England. I was studying abroad there my junior year. It was a super academic setting, with me spending most of my time in the library and reading. As the year came to a close, I began to think about what I wanted the next step to be after senior year. I realized this was the time to begin thinking about either employment or graduate studies. I knew I was not ready to go find a real job and definitely wanted to stay in school. However, I felt even though I enjoyed my time at Oxford and in the libraries there, I was definitely more interested in things outside of the classroom. This thought I took back with me to Providence for my senior year. While there I began to think about ways to explore what I really enjoyed doing. I did not write for the newspaper or any literary magazine. What I did do was I volunteered a lot. I volunteered at two soup kitchens, a battered women's shelter, a nonviolence institute, and an LGBT youth resource center. I decided to study at the Feinstein Institute at Providence College my senior year and studied Public and Community Service Studies. I thoroughly enjoyed my time in that program and decided to transition into macro social work from there.

What else do you want BKA to know about your accomplishments?



No accomplishment ever stands on its own. It is the result of a long and dedicated process of sacrifice, diligence, and focus which leads up to any accomplishment. I think I am still on this path towards the accomplishments I want to see done. Most of what I have accomplished would be academic in nature, prizes, degrees, fellowships and the like. I think I want to build more processes for other people to accomplish things. As a community organizer, the ultimate goal is to get community residents to advocate on their own behalf. You build a process which leads to certain accomplishments. The steps necessary to take the residents to that accomplishment are much more important than the accomplishment itself. You build leadership, enhance capacity, and empower people. I want my accomplishments to be shared with others.

What does BKA mean to you?

A lot. This was the first adoptee group I have ever joined. The time I have spent here with everyone has been invaluable. I never got the chance to do anything culturally Korean because none of my other siblings were very interested in exploring Korean culture. I am really happy that I have found BKA and participated in its activities.

I know you went back to Korea for the first time this past winter. What were your feelings like at the start of the trip and what do you think looking back on it?

This was an opportunity that kind of fell into my lap. I simply had to take it even though I would not be home for Christmas. It was very stressful at the beginning because I did not receive my plane ticket until 48 hours before when I had to leave. It was a very odd feeling of limbo being back in Western Massachusetts and wondering whether or not I would be in Korea in a few days. For whatever reason, when I was beginning my journey and even after getting off of the plane, it did not set in that I was actually in Korea for the first time in twenty or so years. Fortunately, I had an amazing experience in Korea. I could not have asked for a better way to return to Korea. I was with friends, and we knew people who could speak Korean and were willing to take us places. I stayed there long enough to not feel so out of place. I definitely had a cultural experience and learned a lot of what it was like being in Korea. After the trip, processing a little more, I am quite happy with how it turned out and am enthusiastically looking forward to returning and spending even more time in Korea.

Recap of Past Events

On March 6, we welcomed poet Lee Herrick, a longtime friend of many in BKA, to Boston for a poetry reading featuring Lee and 11 of his friends and colleagues. Several poets were Korean-American or Korean adoptees, including Sun Yung Shin, Nicky Sa-Eun Schildkraut, and Leah Silvieus. It was a night of some incredibly moving writing that both captured personal experience and gave powerful voice to diverse communities from a wide variety of perspectives.

The emotions of the pieces swung from humorous anecdotes to emotional punch-in-the-guts. But the positive energy in the room never flagged, led by Lee's kind spirit. "This is how Lee celebrates his own book launch--by inviting all of his friends to read!" said one reader.

We estimated close to 70 people attended this amazing event. Thanks to everyone who came out, and congratulations to Lee and all the readers!

* * *

This past month also saw what's become an annual tradition--the 7th annual Dessert Fundraiser, called "A Little Peace." Thank you so much to those of you joined us on April 27 for what was a very successful event filled with fun and food!

Over 120 people purchased tickets to the fundraiser and had the opportunity to taste baked goods from 18 bakers. We also had a wonderful Ocean Spray Craisin Bake-off Challenge this year.

Thank you to our volunteers, and to Brendon Albrizio and Adlife Marketing and Communications Company for donating an iPad mini to the raffle (this was a huge success)! And a big thank you to our very own Nikki Rizzo who, in addition to being a new board member this year, has also been our liaison on the Dessert Fundraiser planning committee. She has done incredible work helping to coordinate the dessert fundraiser! And of course, thank you to all of you who attended the event as well! We had somewhere close to 30 people in attendance at the event who were either BKA members, significant others, friends and family. We couldn't have done it with out you.

Recap of Past Events



Lee Herrick reads to the audience at "Democracy, Poetry, and Prose."

On March 6, we welcomed poet Lee Herrick, a longtime friend of many in BKA, to Boston for "Democracy, Poetry, and Prose"--a reading featuring Lee and 11 of his friends and colleagues. Several poets were Korean-American or Korean adoptees, including Sun Yung Shin, Nicky Sa-Eun Schildkraut, and

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PS: Find out more about Lee at his website: leeherrick.com.

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One of the many delicious desserts at "A Little Peace."

Looking ahead: BKA 2014 celebration

In the summer of 2014, Korean adoptees will come from all over the nation and the world to gather in Boston for a weekend of socializing, community building, and workshops--and we, BKA, will be hosting them in celebration of our 10th anniversary.

Our theme is "What's (Y)our story?" The phrase is meant to suggest that each of us brings our own unique story and experiences--but also that together, we write our own story as a community, and that we have the power to write our next chapter.

Our planning for this 2014 conference is picking up steam. Back in January, we had a fantastic, productive brainstorming session with our members. Many thanks to everyone who attended! Out of that, the Planning Committee has been hard at work incorporating your feedback and has begun to plan programming. The thing that we hear over and over again at the committee meetings is that we're committed to not just repeating what has been done in the past at similar conferences--we want to change the game.

In keeping with our theme, we want to find ways to make the meeting's workshops more participatory and meaningful for everyone involved, so that everyone feels that they have something to contribute. We're currently experimenting with some media projects and very excited to see them take shape!

Upcoming events

Summer BBQ

BKA's annual summer BBQ will be on Sunday, July 7, from 10 am-2:30 pm. The location is Larz Anderson Park in Brookline. We had our BBQ there last year as well and it is an absolutely gorgeous park. We have the sheltered space again so it will go on rain or shine! We'll send out more details as it approaches, but please mark the date on your calendars!



Laura Knuttenen and Sarah O'Neill at the 2012 BBQ

Red Sox Game

We're looking into purchasing group tickets for our annual trek to Fenway Park to take in a Sox game. Keep an eye out for an announcement in a future email!

We hope you enjoyed the fourth BKA Newsletter. If you have questions or comments, please send us an email at info@bkadoptee.org.

Sincerely,

Nate, Chris, Sarah, Nancy, Mark, Nikki
BKA Board of Directors

Mark Zastrow
BKA Events Coordinator

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