

# Winter 2011 The Perennial Path

## What Is A Hero?

By Candace Abel, Founder and Executive Director

*"I have never been especially impressed by the heroics of people convinced that they are about to change the world. I am more awed by...those who...struggle to make one small difference after another."*

- Ellen Goodman, Pulitzer prize winning columnist, author, speaker

What do we think of when we think of a hero? The term "hero" was coined by the Greeks for a mortal who accomplished something so remarkable that they were due worship similar to the gods. Many of the first heroes became legendary, such as Hercules, and provided an exemplary model of hope and valor for ordinary people.

Over the centuries our romantic fascination with heroes evolved into superheroes such as Superman or Wonder Woman who were more than mere human; and historical "larger-than-life" figures such as those in the enthralling tales of the gallant King Arthur and his round table of virtuous knights. Whether they were superheroes with extraordinary powers or extraordinary people with immense talents and colossal courage, they all strove to protect the innocent from the evil advances of the world.

I have always enjoyed a good superhero movie with dazzling special effects, but as an adult I recognize they are merely meant to entertain. Today my idea of a hero can be described in one way, by a quote from Christopher Reeves, the Superman of the 80s (who later became a quadriplegic), when he said "A hero is an ordinary individual who finds the strength to persevere and endure in spite of overwhelming obstacles." In this light, our resilient children who survive years of abandonment, starvation, discrimination and medical crises before finding their way into loving arms, provide a heartrending living example. In spite of their cheerless past, these children retain a heart of joy for the littlest of things in life. Likewise, their adoptive families display heroic efforts as they jump through Olympian-size hurdles of paperwork, costs, governmental regulations and ultimately medical treatments.

In this newsletter, you will meet numerous people... children, volunteers, adoptive parents who persevere, in spite of the overwhelming numbers, to make a difference to the children we seek to serve. For us, they are the real heroes behind the mission of our foundation. They are the people we look up to and want to emulate; the ones who quietly do their part without expectation of recognition or glory. American television

journalist, Tom Brokaw said, "heroes are people who rise to the occasion and slip quietly away." Please read on and meet our heroes.

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# Life with Samuel



“Samuel is doing fantastic! He has a can-do attitude and nothing slows him down! He is faster on his knees than we are on our feet. He’s pretty fast on his prosthetics, too! He is a bundle of energy and joy and is absolutely hilarious.”

Samuel just played his first year of Upward flag football on a field of sand. He did a really great job and all of his teammates were very accepting. He was also a shepherd in his first Christmas play, which the whole family really enjoyed!

Samuel was slightly delayed in Vietnam, which has lead to some troubles with his language skills here but he is making good progress everyday.

## Forever Family Q & A

### The Wolfe Family



#### What is Alek up to?

Alek is in Boy Scouts and just built a telegraph and learned morse code. He has to learn how to send and retrieve messages in order to get a badge. He just recently started playing the trumpet in school. He played in their big Christmas concert last year. Singing is one of Alek’s favorite past times. He has joined and really loves singing in the church choir. He sounds great!

#### What is the biggest challenge Alek has endured thus far?

Learning how to play the trumpet. He will be learning how to read music braille soon. This is totally different than the Braille he has learned already.

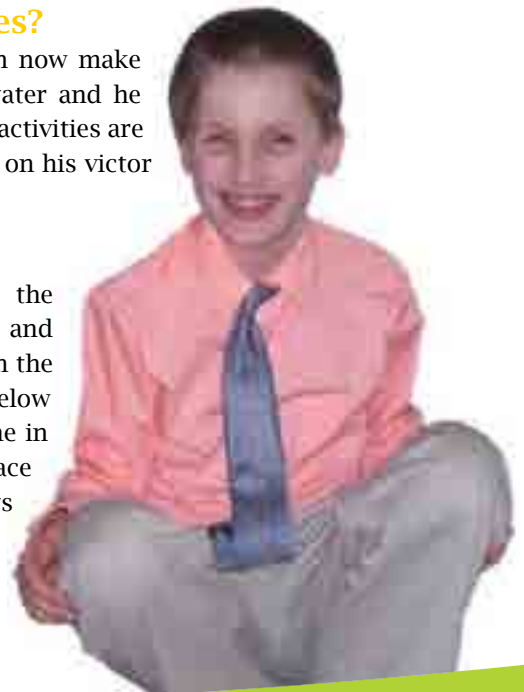
#### What are some of Alek’s favorites?

His favorite food is oatmeal because he can now make it himself with a little machine that heats the water and he pours it out into his bowl of oatmeal. His favorite activities are singing and building. He likes to listen to stories on his victor reader too.

#### Anything new and exciting?

Alek loves Vermont, although he doesn’t like the cold. He has a cool new bedroom! It is black and dark blue with the Nebula “God’s Eye” painted on the slanted wall and Alek the astronaut on the wall below it. The wall also has stars and planets. All done in materials that Alek can feel. He loves outerspace and wants to be an astronaut. He spends his days building legos, listening and singing to music and playing on his computer that talks to him.

But of course, his favorite thing to do is fight with his sister KariAnn.





# Ironman for Orphans



Rebecca's passion for orphans started when she was 12 years old. After babysitting children in her church who were adopted, she was changed forever. "I lay in bed that night and couldn't sleep. I felt God's calling - this is what you're supposed to do." Since that night 24 years ago, she has always had a special place in her heart for orphans and adoption. Rebecca and her husband, Tom, now have three children adopted from Russia in 2003 - Sasha 13, Andre 11, and Rosa 10, who were recipients of a grant from Brittany's Hope.

When they were married, Rebecca and Tom asked their wedding guests to donate to a ministry in lieu of gifts, of which Brittany's Hope was one of them. Brittany's Hope was the proud recipient of \$1,250 from their guests! Her dream was to eventually raise the entire \$10,000 to pay back the grant awarded to her children so they would be able to help another special needs child to be adopted. The question was "how to do it?" Garage sales, bake sales and jewelry shows, while wonderful fundraisers, just weren't going to get it done. Instead, Rebecca started a four year training program for her first Half Ironman Triathlon (1.2 mile swim, 56 mile bike, 13.1 mile run = 70.3 miles).

On July 10, 2010, Rebecca ran and completed her triathlon - an amazing and incredible personal accomplishment; and in doing so, raised \$9,655 for Brittany's Hope, enough to place a grant on a sibling group of five children from the Philippines, who will soon be united with their forever family!

The cycle of giving has been continued! Rebecca raised an entire grant for a sibling group from the Philippines and offered the adoptive family, who lived in the same state, her help in getting situated. Rebecca called race day "one of the happiest days of my life. I enjoyed every minute and finished in 6 hours 39 minutes." Congratulations, Rebecca!

Rebecca says, "Adoption isn't the signing of papers or promises made in court. Adoption is choosing to love a child - a picture of what God does to us. God didn't adopt us because we were cute, healthy, talented or had a lot to offer. He chose to adopt us because He loved us. He knew that through His care and power, we could become what He planned for us to be. I chose to love Sasha, Andre and Rosa when I stood before a Russian judge in May 2003. Tom chose to love Sasha, Andre and Rosa when he stood before a Grand Rapids wedding congregation in March 2007. Has the road been difficult? Yes! Has the journey been full of God's blessings? A hundred times YES!"



Rebecca's hard work helped bring home a group of siblings from the philippines

We, at Brittany's Hope, are so very proud of Rebecca - as a loving wife, an adoptive mother to three wonderful children, an athlete and for her dedication to helping other children be united with their forever families. Rebecca is currently training to run her first Full Ironman on May 21, 2011. Her fundraising goal is to raise another \$10,000 for Brittany's Hope, towards grants for more children waiting to come home.

Rebecca is currently training to run a second, full Ironman on May 21, 2011.

Show your support at:  
[www.BrittanysHope.org/Ironman](http://www.BrittanysHope.org/Ironman)

# Made with Love

**“Y**ou asked us about our motivation and inspiration...what actually motivated us in the beginning was the thought that there was a little girl out there somewhere praying in her bed at night for parents to come for her. Somehow, we knew we would find her and we did.”

The loving touch of a parent's hand and heart for their child is unimaginable, almost unreal, until you realize it is gone. Forrest and Lindee Connolly have brought their daughter, Lenna home from Russia, and now all of their lives will be forever changed.

Lenna wrote to her parents:

“I am so thankful to have such great parents like you. Thank you for bringing me to America. Thank you for feeding me, clothing me and giving me nice presents. Thank you for helping me with my homework, taking care of me when I am sick and for spending time with me. Thank you for teaching me English. Thank you for telling me about God. Love Lenna.”

A lonely child for too long, now their daughter, who they only knew from a far away country, has expressed her love for her parents in so many ways. How can one explain the ultimate feeling of loving a child...you simply cannot, unless you have experienced this wonderful gift first hand.

Lindee, having seen the loneliness and despair in her daughter's eyes, now gone, wanted to do more for the children who were left behind. “After seeing pictures of orphans sleeping on the hard dirty floor, I asked BHF if there was a need for some baby blankets. I looked at these sweet babies and knew they didn't have a mommy to sew a quilt for them. So maybe I could do it.” So, with her incredible creativity and talent, she hand made over 50 wonderful quilts with soft pillows and cuddly animals to hold at night.

Lindee and her family decided, even though they were only one family, there must be something they could do! “What we found out was that we couldn't do everything, but we could do our part and other people could do their part, and together we could get something accomplished. People are always willing to give their time, skills and money for a great cause. They just need to know about the need. If we all continue to work together, all of the small efforts will add up to a grant, and one more child coming home to a family.”

The Connolly family chose to make a difference in the world, not only by bringing their daughter Lenna home, but by helping those children who still need, desire and crave the love of a family. This is why we feel the Connolly family is one of “Our Heroes,” because they have made a difference in children's lives and they will continue making a difference so all children can have a place to call home and a family who loves them unconditionally.

**The Connolly family provided 50 Hand Made Blankets, Pillows and Stuffed Animals for orphans in need around the world.**



## Keeping up with The Bartlinski's

Emilia has come so far from when she was adopted. She wasn't able to walk and now she is almost ready to run and

play like every other child! She just recently went through the final

phase of the leg lengthening process. She is really happy to have her left leg the same length as her right. Even though her legs will not bend, she continues to be grateful to have the chance to run, play and ride her bike. Learning how to be patient during the healing process has proved to be challenging, but she is working through it day by day. She never complains and always has a huge smile on her face.

Currently, because of her surgery, she isn't involved in any activities, though she can't wait to be. She is doing well in school and has

a knack for art. She gets plenty of time to catch up with her favorites, Hannah Montana and Taylor Swift as she heals. Her parents and eight siblings are overjoyed to have her as part of their family.



## One Spoonful at a Time

**"Surprisingly, Bakha's biggest challenges have been tiny. Her major disability at adoption turned out to be malnutrition. With a better diet, vitamins and a couple of years of therapies, she completely caught up to her peers."**

Bakha is a healthy, happy and bright 3rd grader. She's easy-going and loving. She loves riding horses, hanging out with friends and reading anything she can get her hands on. She's in Brownies and 4-H.

Bakha was adopted in 2006 at the age of 5 years. She suffered from an undiagnosed case of rickets. Her posture was hunched and she walked little and poorly, with much pain. She was mistakenly thought to have an untreatable, degenerative condition and was weeks away from being transferred to a "special needs orphanage." Within days of adoption, her mother Mishelle suspected rickets and began giving her a vitamin supplement. She started walking, and then running, within weeks. She grew 8 inches in her first year home.

Bakha has been a big inspiration to her mother and the many people who ended up meeting her. Because of Bakha's challenges with malnutrition, Mishelle co-founded the SPOON Foundation, which was established to help prevent such deficiencies for other children living in institutions overseas. Find out more at: [www.SpoonFoundation.org](http://www.SpoonFoundation.org)



# Our Super Hero Volunteer

Making an impact, day after day

Letting an individual know they are appreciated and welcomed into your family is not difficult at all...or is it? How does one individual convey to another how wonderful and amazing they are by what they do and say so “quietly?” You just have to let them know every day you see them or talk to them, how your life would not be the same without them!

Our “Super Hero” volunteer, Karen Reynolds, is one of those particular individuals. She never passes up an opportunity to help out Brittany’s Hope Foundation, whether it be writing out Birthday Cards, stuffing newsletters, placing thousands of envelopes in the

right zip code order, all the while trying to drive through an icy blizzard, all because she knows, it will help a child somewhere in the world!

Karen is the type of person who will write you a “thank you” card for letting her “help you,” but ultimately she is the one who deserves all the thanks and gratitude! She never asks for a pat on the back or a show of appreciation. She simply comes to the office and completes the work she has been asked to do. Her reward and personal satisfaction comes from knowing that SHE has personally made a difference in a child’s life!

So, “thank you” Karen for being our “Super Hero” and for honoring us with your huge, caring and loving heart that goes beyond borders!

## You’ve touched lives around the world

As our supporters, **YOU** have made our programs and projects possible. You’ve helped provide nutrition, shelter and education to abandoned children who don’t have the simple pleasures in life. You’ve shown love and maintained hope throughout challenging economic times. Please accept

# Our Sincerest Thank You

Ji-uk received a Brittany’s Hope grant in 2009 and came home to his family in early 2010!

Where are they now?



Ji-uk is two now and enjoys playing with his little sister, who is also two. He has been steadily overcoming the effects of being born as a micro preemie. He is very sensitive to change, has sensory issues and struggles a bit to communicate. Ji-uk is now receiving services to help him learn to communicate and to navigate more fully in the world around him.

Ji-uk loves all things with wheels! Trains, cars, trucks, busses, farm equipment, you name it. He wants to see it, drive it or play with it. He is really a happy little boy now, always smiling and exploring. His parents are overjoyed to have him as part of their forever family and think he feels the same!



# We're Home!

Children Who Have Arrived Home Since August 2010



David  
China



Joshua  
Hong Kong



Adalynn  
China



Ian  
China



Eyob  
Ethiopia



Ezekiel  
China



Lorena, Valeria,  
Yesenia, Yuliza  
& Yurledis  
Colombia



Samuel  
Ethiopia



Min  
Korea



Levi  
Korea





# Our Orphan Care Village Opens It's Doors

Visited and Written by: Nathaniel Abel, Director of Development for Brittany's Hope

The planning for this center began three years ago on our first trip to Ethiopia. We heard of the need from the people who live and work in this area of Ethiopia. With no organization providing a safe place for the abandoned children, we worked quickly to respond to the need.

This was the first full scale construction that Brittany's Hope has undertaken. We experienced the usual delays and complications but the work is done. The plans for the Orphan Care Center are based on the family

model with a trained caretaker living with a group of children. We are working with an Australian organization based in Ethiopia, the Grace Centre, to train the caretakers. We have received our license and are preparing for children.

We visited Ethiopia to see the completed center. They had an inauguration of the



center with local officials, churches and the people who made this possible. Everyone was very excited to see the center completed. The government of Injibara and the Awi zone were supportive and helpful during this process.

We have completed the protective fence, guard house, 4 children's houses, kitchen and caretaker's residence. This is only phase one of our long term plans but is now ready to house 20 - 40 children.



Photos courtesy of Nathaniel Abel

Help us furnish the Orphan Care Village so that the Children can have a safe place to call home.

[www.BrittanysHope.org/Furnish](http://www.BrittanysHope.org/Furnish)

2011 Walk of Love  
Elizabethtown, PA  
May 1

[www.BrittanysHope.org/Walk](http://www.BrittanysHope.org/Walk)

Adoption is a wonderful and rewarding journey for families, but can at times be costly and frustrating. With information readily available however, an adoptive parent can significantly reduce the associated financial burden. Our newest partner



is a comprehensive online compilation of financial resources for families hoping to adopt. Over nine years of research has gone into the production of a free downloadable spreadsheet that details more than 45 adoption grant and loan listings. Learn more by visiting their website at:

[www.Resources4Adoption.com](http://www.Resources4Adoption.com)