

# Adoption: A Lifelong Journey

Third Annual Collaborative Conference for Birthparents, Adoptive Parents, Adoptees, Siblings, Extended Family and Advocates

Saturday, March 9, 8:30 AM – 5:00 PM in Oakland, CA



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## Keynote Descriptions

### **How Many Families Does It Take To Make An Adoption?- Joyce Maguire Pavao**

The family constellation that is an adoptive family is wide reaching. A look at the extended family of adoption and how we can honor it, and in doing so build the self esteem and connectedness of adopted children. In the past, professionals did little to help families to ‘integrate’. As a result children kept their various families compartmentalized in their minds. It caused inhibition about talking about birth family questions with adoptive family, and in some open adoptions, it sometimes caused inhibition of talking about the adoptive family while with the birth family.

One of the most important jobs of a parent is to prepare the child to be a kind, productive, and healthy adult. One way to do that is to be sure that the child/adolescent/young adult adopted person is able to organically integrate his/her past with his/her present, in order to have this future that all parents dream of for their children. This keynote will aim to expand your wings to include all of the families in your life and life of your child(ren).

### **Building Respectful Relationships in Open Adoption- Brenda Romanchik**

There is a saying that the greatest gift parents can give their children is to love one another. Research on open adoption shows that when birth parents and adoptive parents get along, the outcome is always better for the child – in cases where there is no ongoing contact we know it is best for children to have parents who respect and value both their birth and adoptive heritage and connections. Building respectful relationships depends on the ability of all parties to not only understand the roles they have, but to also understand the path that others have to walk. This is not always easy. Many participants deal with feelings of loss and grief, abandonment and, sometimes, disappointment. For some, the experience may be traumatic. Understanding is essential if a child is to grow up being able to healthfully integrate their adoption experience.

This keynote will suggest models for identifying and managing the roles that all have in open adoption. It will also give those in open adoptions ideas in developing traditions and rituals that build feelings of good will as well as basic communication skills that can pave a smoother path.