



**HERITAGE CAMPS**  
FOR ADOPTIVE FAMILIES

Impact Report  
2023



# From the Executive Director

In 1986, I experienced one of the greatest joys in my life, the day our 4-month-old baby Lacey, born in South Korea, came home to us. Three years later, our 3-month-old son Sam arrived from India! My husband Dan and I were over the moon! We had two wonderful, beautiful children whom we loved more than anything in the whole world, and that's all it takes, right? Wrong.

It took experiencing Korean Heritage Camp for the very first time in 1992 to even begin to understand what we needed to learn and understand about being an adoptive family. Love is powerful, but love is not enough.



We had to learn and understand more about who our children were and where they came from. The cultural part of camp was a true joy, eating the food, watching my kids dance, bringing home treasured arts and crafts, and learning from people who looked like my kids! Also learning about how our kids might be feeling about being adopted, finding their identity, and much more.

In 1995 I became the Executive Director of Heritage Camps for Adoptive Families! Little did I know that my children would catapult me into a career I never dreamed of. Little did I know how much I would gain from delving into not only my own children's cultures, and the culture of adoption but that of hundreds of other adopted children at 9 heritage camps!

In fact, we are the only organization in the world that runs 9 separate camps, serving over 3,000 people, including adoptive families, counselors, and community presenters. I am proud of that achievement and can wholeheartedly say, I didn't do it alone.

We now have four paid staff at HCAF, which was a very long time in coming and much appreciated, but it is also all the volunteers who make each camp happen. Countless hours are spent by parents, counselors, and cultural community members. It never ceases to amaze me what we do every summer, at every camp. We are having an impact not only on adoptees, from preschoolers through adults, but on their families and on the community as well. We continually strive to build connections that last throughout the year.

Our roots are strong and will hold us steady as we move into the future where international adoption is changing, and adult adoptees are asking for more time at camp past high school, know it has made a world of difference for me and for my family. What a joy it has been!

Pam Sweetser  
*Executive Director*

## Our Mission

Heritage Camps for Adoptive Families is a post-adoption resource dedicated to promoting healthy adoption, racial, and ethnic identities in transracial, transnational, and domestic adoptees by creating an intrinsic sense of belonging through our programming and community.

## Our Vision

To continue to be a leading post-adoption resource and advocate, accessible to all adoptees and adoptive families, growing and adapting as adoption changes worldwide.



# Our HCAF Village

Without the support of our volunteers, our camps would not be the authentic, meaningful, and unforgettable experiences that they are.

*"Volunteers don't necessarily have the time; they just have the heart."*

– Unknown

**2,462** Total camp volunteers equating to over 41,000 hours

**325** **Camp Counselors** – Spending days with each group of kids throughout camp. They are the racial mirrors, the adoption mirrors, the role models, and the mentors to our campers.

**467** **Camp Presenters & Performers** – Working with all ages to teach about culture, demonstrate cultural arts, cook ethnic food, present on topics around race and adoption, and provide campers with support and information that lasts long after camp.

**1,291** **Camp Parents** – Every parent volunteers a half day of camp, preparing meals, with craft projects or games, driving middle schoolers to outdoor education sites, taking shifts in the camp market or evening activities, or other jobs.

**379** **Camp Leaders** – These people, who have so much heart for camp, give all year round as camp directors and coordinators, leading the way to plan, create, manage, and execute every aspect of camp.

**2** **Volunteer Boards.** – The governing Board of Directors, consisting of camp parents, adoptees, and community members, and the Advisory Board, consisting of community members and adoptees who advise us about programming or other community needs.

Last, but not least, we have four staff members at HCAF, who manage the big picture of our organization, and help ensure our volunteers and camp families have the best camp experience!



# Camp Program Highlights

## For Elementary through High School Campers

**Community/Cultural Engagement** – Campers learn about who they are and where they came from—whether across the world or in the U.S.—through music, dance, visual arts and crafts, cooking, games, customs and traditions.

**Adoption Education and Identity Building** – Each age group experiences developmentally appropriate workshops centered around adoption and identity. Led by therapists and community mentors, these workshops provide a safe space for campers of all ages to share common experiences and thoughts with their peers.

**Racial Awareness** – Our pilot program on race for elementary campers started at African/Caribbean Heritage Camp, led by educators and community leaders. Our goal is to include this program for all camps. Race is an included topic in workshops for both middle and high school campers as well.



## For Adults:

**Adult Workshops and Activities** – Each camp includes a wealth of workshops designed to provide support and knowledge to adoptive parents about issues relevant to their kids and families, and to foster connections with each other.

**Adult Adoptee Programming and Events** – Camp never ends! HCAF welcomes individuals and families to participate in workshops and activities related to their interests as adult adoptees and to continue the peer connection.

## For Families:

**Family time** – These are family camps, so we provide time for families to regroup, have fun, and spend time with each other and friends.

**Special Needs Support** – Every child is welcome and accepted at our camps. Working with parents individually, we strive to provide the safest and best environment for children/teens with special needs.

**LGBTQI+ Support** – Every child or parent is welcome and accepted at our camps. Most camps are implementing opportunities for the camp LGBTQI+ community to connect.

**Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion** – This has been a tenet of our organization since the beginning, and we are deepening our commitment with a special community task force, the creation of our Anti-Racism Tool Kit, and relevant camp programming.



## Year-Round

**Adoptee Meetups** – We offer quarterly meetup opportunities for adult adoptees with various activities and locations.

**Webinars** – Throughout the year our online webinars offer a wide variety of topics relevant to adoptive parenting, with some programming for teens and children as well.

**Resources and Referrals** – We try to help families year-round with therapy referrals, notices about community events and activities, birth country travel information, etc. We only refer or publicize events that are known to us and have been well vetted. Our website includes resources for all ages and our anti-racism toolkit.



Visit our website  
for more detailed  
descriptions of our  
programming



# HCAF history at a glance

HCAF webinars are developed and 1,231 people participate.

All nine camps held virtually for 2020 and 2021 with an average of 418 families participating each year.

HCAF's staff is now comprised of four members, but the bulk of the organization's extensive operations is still handled by volunteers.

HCAF initiates all-camp theme, **"Creating Connections."** Almost 3000 people expected to participate this summer.

Shifting adoption demographics lead to reorganization: **Cambodian Heritage Camp** closes. **Southeast Asian/Pacific Islander Heritage Camp** and **Russian/Eastern European/Central Asian Heritage Camp** are formed.

**Domestic Adoption Camp** takes place in Colorado Springs with over 60 families attending.

HCAF programs **"Who I Am"** and **"Courageous Conversations"** are developed to speak to Middle School and High School campers about adoption and race.

**Domestic Adoption Camp** for families with children adopted in the U.S — HCAF's most diverse camp yet—starts with 17 dedicated families,

Colorado Heritage Camps changes name to **Heritage Camps for Adoptive Families**. One part-time employee joins executive director Pam Sweetser.

2000–2004. Four additional camps join the organization: **Cambodian**, **Chinese II** (due to high demand for Chinese Heritage Camp), **Filipino**, and **Russian Heritage Camps**, adding approximately 300 people to our camp family.

1997–1999 **African-American, Chinese, Latin American, and Vietnamese Heritage Camps** join the organization.

HCAF's **HeART Talks** program, an adoption-centered workshop for adoptees in pre/k-5th grade with age-appropriate activities run by licensed art therapists, is developed.

Community support grows, as members of the various cultural communities and adoption professionals volunteer to present at camp.



About 300 people participate in the first Korean "Culture" Camp, at the YMCA of the Rockies/Snow Mountain Ranch.

2010

2021

2022

2023

2020

2017

2011

2010

2005

2004

1999

2000

1997

1995

1992

# HCAF 2022 Snapshot



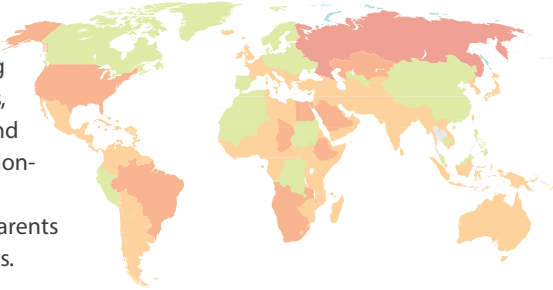
**HERITAGE CAMPS**  
FOR ADOPTIVE FAMILIES

## Who we serve

We focus on supporting international and domestic adoptive families, including adopted children, parents, non-adopted siblings, and extended family. Additionally, our camps are a resource for foster parents and waiting parents.

45 states + D.C. and 6 foreign countries

represented over 3 years



Whether families have adopted internationally or domestically, HCAF helps them become part of a larger community "just like themselves," with shared experiences, challenges, and opportunities. At our heritage camps, we connect adoptive families with authentic cultural experiences, providing positive representations that affirm the inherent worth of a child's birth culture.

**17**  
Childcare

**55**  
PreK/K

**254** Elementary

**288** Middle School

**397** High School

**1,048** Parents

## How did we spend our money?

**\$155,847**  
**Programming**  
(workshops/activities, facilities, food)

**\$141,918**  
**Counselors & Presenters**

**\$70,846**  
**Families**  
(scholarships & volunteers)

**Operation % = 38%**  
**Guide Star**  
**Recommendation = 40%**

**\$1,216,202**  
**Volunteer Powered**  
**Donations**

**Family**  
**Powered**  
**Donations**  
**\$152,148**

**Program fees**  
**would be \$579**  
**per person without**  
**volunteers and**  
**donations**

**Avg. per camper cost**  
**= \$208**

**Avg. registration fees**  
**= \$162**

Our camp fees are considerably lower than many other adoption camps. We believe it's important to be inclusive, and want to ensure that camp is affordable for the majority of families. We provide scholarships for camp fees and accommodation for those who qualify for financial support.

## Where do our donations come from?

**34%** **Camp events and fundraisers**

**26%** **Colorado Gives**

**18%** **Individual Donors**

**15%** **HCAF Gala**

Community member contributions & Giving First

**10%** **Family Foundations**

Matching gifts, Kroger card payments, AmazonSmile, United Way contributions, and others.

**7%** **Indirect Donations**

**5%** **Corporate contributions**

# OUR HCAF COMMUNITY

## Fran Campbell

### Filipina community member & “Courageous Conversations” program founder

I started with HCAF in 2000 as a cultural community presenter at the Filipino Heritage Camp. I have always been active in the Filipino American community, so there was a cultural connection to HCAF. More importantly, my two youngest brothers were adopted from the Philippines, so there was also a personal connection to HCAF. I joined the HCAF Cultural Advisory Board in 2009, and soon after that I developed the “This Is Me” program for high school adoptees and parents. Now known as “Courageous Conversations”, the program has been presented at every Heritage Camp since 2010.

Adoption was a pivotal moment in my family history. My brothers were adopted at ages 8 and 13. Adoption in our family was all about assimilation from third world poverty into American culture. My brother’s understanding of the culture they came from and the culture they were dropped into was so contradictory. They had lived in poverty but had never before endured discrimination and bigotry. They didn’t know how to react when bullies hated their skin color or insulted their accent. They were miserable – and we missed it.

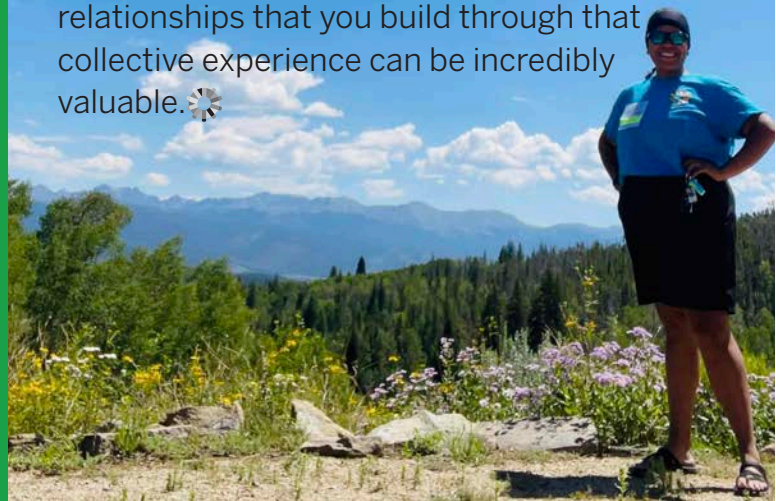
Culture, to me, is why HCAF is such an important piece of the transracial adoption experience. HCAF strives to define culture as more than just food, language and art. HCAF breaks down assumptions so that adoptive families can see the realistic challenges and beauty of the journey. At HCAF, I am able to share my culture, to learn about other cultures and to honor my families’ adoption experience.” 🌻



## Yoselin Corrales

### Honduran adoptee & staff member

I think it's been so valuable to have had the opportunity to be connected with my culture and with adoption in a positive way, in a way of leadership and mentorship, and now as staff. Seeing the development of my identity through the lens of adoption has been really exciting. I think I gained a lot more comfort around talking about adoption. I think it also allowed me to gain a community of people that have similar experiences to myself, and that are still some of my lifelong friends. I think the relationships that you build through that collective experience can be incredibly valuable. 🌻



## Sam Severns

### Korean adoptee & board member



One of the truly amazing aspects of camp is the nurturing of the Counselor-Kid connection. This mentorship is not something specifically planned but something that organically occurs over the course of camp. It's those relationships that ultimately drive the kids to come back and want to be counselors themselves, and that cycle continues. I'm definitely a product of that. I especially enjoyed growing up with the same counselors and

ultimately being able to be a counselor with them. That's where I've made the best connections. 🌻



# OUR HCAF COMMUNITY

## Rupa Ryan Kryzer Indian adoptee

I had a friend that I met on Facebook, who was also adopted from India, and she said “you gotta come out to Colorado. In 2008 I decided to come check it out. I was a counselor that year and the whole experience blew my mind. I loved staying in the cabin with the other counselors. I just felt surrounded by my culture in a way that I hadn’t before. Heritage Camps do a really good job of growing and evolving with the needs of the kids with changes that are happening with adoption, internationally and domestically. And so it’s a camp that a person can grow up with and it’s a camp that’s going to grow with them. 🌻



## Shawn Candelaria ACHC parent & board member

We were able to attend our first camp in June of 2022, and frankly, we just had an amazing experience. It was life changing for our family, and especially for our daughter who basically said it was the best week of our entire life. So, yes, for us it was an experience that we’ll never forget.

I think my daughter’s experience of having an opportunity to be around a bunch of kids and get to be friends with kids that look like her and have similar stories, truly helped her with some of her self-identity. Understanding that while her adoption story is unique to her, there are other families and children out there that share similar stories as ours 🌻



## Laura Blaney CHCII parent & board member

Heritage Camp is like home to me. Every year, on the first morning of camp, I take a deep breath of gratitude for this gathering place, where every family looks like my family, where the families were formed like my family was formed, and where all of us -- adults and children alike -- share a bond of understanding of the highs and lows of adoption. We’ve been coming to Heritage Camp since

my daughter was five, and she’s 15 now. I’ve served in just about every volunteer capacity at our camp. I joined the Board of Directors to serve in a broader way, to do what I could to ensure that Heritage Camps for Adoptive Families survives and thrives long into the future. Heritage Camp is a gift to my family. Being on the Board is my way of saying thanks for this extraordinary gift. 🌻





# 2023 Schedule

**African / Caribbean Heritage Camp**  
June 8-11, 2023

**Chinese Heritage Camp**  
Sept 1-4, 2023

**Chinese Heritage Camp II**  
July 27-30, 2023

**Domestic Adoption Camp**  
July 13-16, 2023

**Indian/Nepalese Heritage Camp**  
July 6-9, 2023

**Korean Heritage Camp**  
June 15-18, 2023

**Latin American Heritage Camp**  
June 22-25, 2023

**Russian / Eastern European /  
Central Asian Heritage Camp**  
July 20-23, 2023

**Southeast Asian Heritage Camp /  
Pacific Islander Heritage Camp**  
Aug 3-6, 2023



## Non-Discrimination Statement

Heritage Camps for Adoptive Families, Inc. welcomes participation at the camps of all persons and does not discriminate on the basis of age, race, color, religion, political affiliation, gender, sexual orientation and gender expression, physical or mental disability, marital status, or national and ethnic origin. This policy also applies to all employees, volunteers, and relationships with outside contractors, vendors, and consultants.

## Volunteer

## Donate

## Contact Us

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