

SEPTEMBER 2020

# FAMILY ROUTES



A Monthly Newsletter by International Social Service USA

## ISS-USA WELCOMES NEW DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR

Antinia Joiner

Antinia (An-tah-knee-ah) joined ISS-USA's team in September as the Development and Communications Coordinator. She is originally from South Carolina and just recently relocated to Baltimore. Antinia has a Bachelor of Arts in Communication with a minor in Creative Writing.

While in college Antinia volunteered for numerous non-profit organizations. The time she spent volunteering at the Rape Crisis Center of Horry County sparked her passion to serve and work in the non-profit sector. Prior to joining ISS-USA, Antinia worked at the American Cancer Society where she was a Distinguished Events Coordinator.

Antinia plans to pursue an MBA with a concentration in non-profit administration to dive deeper into effective grant writing, fundraising, social responsibility and financial governance.

When Antinia is not working she enjoys trying new restaurants in the city and binge watching '90s sitcoms.



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## MAKING FAMILY REUNIFICATION POSSIBLE IN THE MIDST OF COVID-19:

Utilizing Remote Assessments to Bring a Granddaughter Home

With Covid-19 on the rise, navigating the world virtually is becoming the norm. Don, a grandfather living in the United States is determined to obtain custody of his granddaughter in Australia, after her mother has been unable to care for her. Don's daughter has severe mental health issues which resulted in Ella, her daughter, being under the care of the child welfare authority in Australia. Don has been working with an attorney for over a year in hopes that he would be rewarded custody of his granddaughter

ISS-Australia referred the home study/kinship placement to ISS-USA. Then the pandemic started, and the state where Don was living went into lockdown, and everyone was encouraged to stay home. Don was deeply distressed to think that his granddaughter could be living in foster care with strangers for an even longer period of time. However, ISS-USA quickly pivoted to using remote assessments, and developed guidelines for doing this work. "We didn't want to see family separation prolonged even more, due to covid closures" said Elaine Weisman, Training and Program Manager at ISS, co-developer of the ISS-USA guidelines. The home study took place virtually, using the newly developed guidelines. Although virtual, it was able to capture much of the same information that would have been captured with an in-person visit, and showed a grandfather willing and able to provide a safe and loving home for his granddaughter. ISS-USA transferred the reports to ISS Australia, and the case was recently heard in court. The judge granted custody of Ella to Don. Don and Ella now reside together at last in the U.S.



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ISS-USA is continuing to enhance our remote assessment procedures so we can share them nationally. Would you help us? Please take a few minutes to complete this brief survey about remote assessments if you have had experience using them, [click here to take our survey!](#)



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## STIMULATING SYNERGY AND GROWTH IN ISS

### Welcome Damon Martin as the Chair of the Casework Coordinators Group

Devoted to unifying families, Damon Martin's 23 years in social work has prepared him to lead the Case Coordinators Group in the role as its newly elected Chair. Damon has worked for ISS Australia since February 2008, managing the NSW Government funded services. Damon is eager to demonstrate his expertise in introducing innovative strategies and goals to elevate the mission of International Social Service (ISS). Damon believes increasing collaboration and visibility can better position ISS as a global child protection expert. Damon aims to promote collaboration across the ISS network by establishing working groups, spearheading new projects, research, and services. Building relationships and engaging with members of other offices is fundamental to building a rapport and working collaboratively.

Previously, all the Casework Coordinators met in person annually, and occasionally by Zoom. As the annual meeting will transition to Zoom due to Covid-19, Damon hopes the increased familiarity with virtual platforms will encourage more frequent meetings and communication. Damon envisions ISS members taking advantage of virtual resources by co-presenting at international conferences and seminars to increase ISS's visibility.

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Visibility is necessary to amplify the critical work ISS accomplishes in uniting and protecting families. Damon stresses that ISS's mission is even more imperative now, as the world struggles with the overwhelming consequences of COVID-19. He is excited to invest his time in fundraising and marketing strategies to attract philanthropic and high-profile donors. He also plans to expand representation in the Middle East, Asia and Africa and obtain more reliable and efficient members globally.

Damon is dedicated to projecting ISS's mission and ensuring children globally can find security with their families. He is excited to be part of the global leadership team and in propelling ISS towards future achievements.



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## ISS LEADERSHIP IN LEBANON

### Introducing Rose Habchi as the Vice Chair of the Casework Coordinators Group

Himaya, which means “protection” in Arabic, is the main local child protection non-governmental organization in Beirut, Lebanon. The organization, with offices across Lebanon, evaluates the needs of the community and provides psychological and social support to children, their parents and caregivers, based on their needs. In 2018, Himaya proudly became a member organization of the International Social Service (ISS). As a member of ISS, Himaya works on cross border child abuse cases.

Rose is a clinical psychologist, occupational therapist and psychotherapist who has been working for Himaya for three years. She is a Resilience Program Manager and the head of the Response to Child Maltreatment Program. “I love the mission of Himaya, which is to secure and ensure that all children in Lebanon are protected from abuse,” Rose says about why she chose to work at Himaya.

One of Rose’s main goals in her position is to ensure the consistent quality of interventions for child protection from all of the teams within the organization. In addition, she and her colleagues are exploring strategies to respond to specific areas where child protection is not ensured. Part of this work involves helping communities overcome their misconceptions of child protection, and fear of child protection agencies. She hopes that this will result in an increase of parents reaching out when they are in need of help or ideas. “I hope, as a program manager, to emphasize the importance of partnership with parents and children to ensure adequate response through interventions with families. I also hope to change for good the wrong perception parents have about child protection,” she says.

Rose recently became Vice Chair of the Case Coordinators Group (CC Group) for the ISS network. The group is working to tackle common concerns within the network and among casework coordinators. She is looking forward to the growth of the group and network as a whole.

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Ericka Thompson (above)

### **ERICKA THOMPSON: INTERCOUNTRY CASE MANAGER INTERN**

Ericka is an Advanced year Social Work student at University of Maryland at Baltimore, (UMB) with a Macro/Clinical Behavioral Health specialization. She traveled abroad to Gaborone, Botswana, to pursue her interests in International Social Work, Child Welfare and facilitated staff trainings on self-care tools and counseling skills. Ericka is passionate about Child Welfare and enjoys learning theoretical models for clinical interventions.



Jennifer Nuth (above)

### **JENNIFER NUTH: INTERCOUNTRY CASE MANAGER**

Jennifer, or Jenny, started her position as a Repatriation Case Manager at ISS in July. She received dual undergraduate degrees in Political Science and History from Marymount University in Arlington, Virginia in 2016. After discovering her passion for working on international issues, she went on to receive her MA in Conflict Resolution from the University of Essex in Essex, England in 2018 and focused her individual research on the variance in acceptance rates of refugees in different European Union member states. Prior to joining the ISS team, Jenny worked as an intern and also volunteer at a small non-profit in Washington DC, The Global Language Network, to assist them with development and outreach efforts. She spends her free time discovering new running trails and hanging out with her senior (but still spunky) dog, Romeo.



Sheila Winters (above)

### **SHEILA WINTERS: INTERCOUNTRY CASE MANAGER INTERN**

Sheila is interning as an intercountry case manager at ISS-USA. She is a second-year graduate student at the University of Maryland at Baltimore-School of Social Work where she is also co-leading the International Social Work Organization. Her focus is in Macro/Clinical Behavioral Health, and she is interested in working in international program management!

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