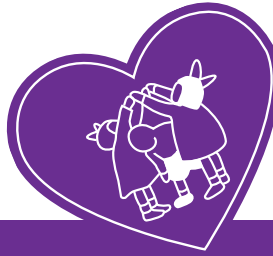


Adoption News



A Quarterly Newsletter from

Adoptions From The Heart

Fall 2011

National Adoption Month Honoring & Remembering First Mothers

November has become a month when families take time to celebrate the blessings adoption has brought into their lives. Statistics show that 6 in every 10 Americans are touched by adoption in some way which easily explains why this special observance in November, which began in 1990 as “National Adoption Awareness Week,” has grown into a month-long celebration.

In the same spirit as Thanksgiving, when you reflect on how adoption has touched your own life this November, also remember those that share a common thread with you. Whether a family was formed through international adoption, foster care, domestic adoption, private adoption or an identified scenario, there is one thing in common with ALL adoptions every adoption begins with a “first mother.”

Each adoption journey is unique but a common thread connects each story to many others. Remember your child’s first mother because your family would not be what it is without her. The specific reasons behind making an adoption plan are as diverse as the pregnant women making them, however the bottom line is that she feels she is unable to parent. Many women choosing adoption are facing extreme financial hardships and lack of support. These hardships do not just go away once she chooses adoption, they continue throughout the pregnancy and for months and even years afterwards. And with little support from family and friends, women may feel alone and hopeless which is why, with your help, AFTH has created several special **projects to PAY IT FORWARD** to show first mothers how important they are in lives of so many touched by adoption. *They* are the common thread we are celebrating.

*First mothers...
the common
thread in ALL
adoptions*



GET INVOLVED in the spirit of National Adoption Month! Join us in spreading the love for adoption by supporting first mothers in need.

Getting involved starts with turning the page to learn about AFTH’s special projects.

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Honoring & Remembering First Mothers Cont'd



Paper Heart Project

Local small businesses will be showing their support for National Adoption Month and Adoptions From The Heart by joining in our Paper Heart Project this November.

How Can You Help?

For \$1 donation per heart, paper hearts will be displayed to spread adoption awareness. You can join the project by visiting these local businesses, any of our office locations, or by purchasing a heart online in the AFTH store at www.afth.org. All proceeds raised by the Paper Heart Project will go to AFTH to support its beneficiaries, including women choosing to place their child for adoption, in their education, counseling, medical care and guidance, living essentials, or other special needs.

Visit the businesses to the left (or an AFTH branch office) to participate in the Paper Heart Project and show your support for adoption!

Allentown Area:

The Ice Cream Lab

350 S. Best Ave., Suite E,
Walnutport, PA 18088

Central PA:

Maniaci's Italian Bistro

360 E. Wyomissing Ave.
Mohnton, PA 19540

Cherry Hill Area:

**Mathnasium of
Washington Township**

Cross Keys Place
141 Tuckahoe Rd., Suite 320
Sewell, NJ 08080

Wynnewood Area:

Happy Tymes Family Fun

2071 County Line Rd.
Warrington, PA 18976

Pittsburgh Area:

The Coffee Buzz

4969 Tusca Plaza
Beaver, PA 15009

Studio J.C.

4036 Monroeville Boulevard
Monroeville, PA 15146-2508

**Timeless Expressions
Photo Studio**

918 St. Clair Way
Greensburg, PA, 15601

LexaLu-Essential Accessories

<http://www.lexalu.com>

Gift Card Drive

DEADLINE: November 25th

Just before the holiday season, AFTH identifies several birth mothers, parenting other children at home, as being in need of extra financial assistance. AFTH donates gift cards for groceries, clothing and toys for the children during the holidays. For many, this is the only way they can do something special for their children.



Last year we were able to help 35 families. This year, with the help of adoption supporters, we hope to help even more families!

How Can You Help?

AFTH will graciously be accepting Target, Acme, Walmart, and Visa gift cards ranging from \$25-\$200. Without these gift card donations, many of the birth mothers would not be able to provide a special meal, warm clothes, and a few presents for their children during the holiday season. If you or your company would like to make a monetary or gift card donation, you can send gift cards or checks for the "Gift Card Drive" to Adoptions From The Heart at 30-31 Hampstead Circle, Wynnewood, PA 19096. All donations are tax deductible.

2012 Building Beautiful Families Calendar

The 2012 calendars featuring children adopted through AFTH are now available for sale. All proceeds benefit the AFTH Birthmother Fund. See the last page of the newsletter insert for details. Already 400 sold - get yours today. They make great gifts AND support adoption!

For questions about any of the National Adoption Month Projects, contact Ali at AlexandraP@afth.org.

A Warm Birthday Wish to Help Others

No matter how you become a parent, there are certain fundamentals that every parent wishes to teach their children. When Greg and Michal adopted their baby girl Katherine, “Katie”, through our agency last year, they knew that they wanted her to grow up with a spirit of gratitude and generosity. It had been a family tradition, started by Michal’s sister, to ask for donations for charities on birthdays rather than receiving gifts. When the time came for Greg and Michal to start thinking about Katie’s first birthday party, they recalled seeing information about the AFTH gift card drive held each fall. (see page 2 for details).

Each year, just before the holiday season, Adoptions From The Heart holds a gift card drive for birthmothers in need of extra financial assistance. For many, this is the only way they can do something special for their children. AFTH accepts Target, Acme, Wal-Mart and Visa gift cards ranging from \$25-\$200 to be used for groceries, clothing, and toys. The gift cards are given to birthmothers with children at home in need during this upcoming holiday season.

Greg and Michal knew that this would be the perfect cause to donate to in honor of Katie’s very first birthday. Invitations were sent asking that instead of gifts, loved ones would bring something small for the gift card drive. This was a particularly great fundraiser for them, as Greg and Michal had family and friends all over the country... generic gift cards to Wal-Mart, Target, etc. were easy for everyone to send. Not only was a this a great chance to give back, but Greg and

Michal realized they really didn’t need more stuff in the house, especially when younger kids would rather play with the first toy they open...and the box it came in! Everyone in the family seemed to understand and appreciate why they were donating.



When Katie’s birthday came, she still had a wonderful birthday party. “Especially after all the waiting - for the placement, for the finalization - people wanted a chance to celebrate with us,” Greg commented. “We had family and some close friends to the house. Everyone wanted to help, so we provided the cake and let people bring food. It was just a simple, fun day with all of Katie’s favorite people.”

Greg and Michal say that they will continue to encourage Katherine to make charitable donations and give back to the community as she gets older. As she grows up, she will be able to choose the organizations she wants to donate to as well as help-out in a more hands on way. “As she grows up, we want her to remember that happiness isn’t about how much stuff she has. We’ve found that what makes us happiest is helping others and spending time with the people we love, and we want to pass that on to her.” We thank Greg, Michal, and Katie for the kindheartedness and support of Adoptions From The Heart!

Please Make Your Checks Payable To: **Adoptions From The Heart**
 mail with form to: **30-31 Hampstead Circle, Wynnewood, PA 19096**

Also Accepting
 Online Donations:
www.afth.org



How would you like your donation to be used?

Use my gift to help birth mothers in the U.S. Use my gift where it’s needed most.

\$50 \$100 \$250 \$500 Other \$ _____

Name(s) _____

Address _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

My employer has a matching gift program. Enclosed is the form.

AFTH is a registered, charitable organization. In accordance with PA law, we are required to advise you that a copy of our official registration and financial information may be obtained from either the PA Department of State by calling, toll-free within PA, (800) 732-0999, or the State of NJ by calling (201) 504-6215. Registration with the NY Attorney General does not imply endorsement. A financial statement is available upon written request from the VA State of Office of Consumer Affairs, (800) 552-9963 and from the CT Department of Consumer Protections by calling (860) 713-6170.

WE ASKED OUR AFTH FACEBOOK FANS

What Advice Would Your Give Prospective Adoptive Parents Waiting for “the Call”?

We posed this question on the AFTH Facebook page. Here are some great tips from adoptive parents that might help during your wait:

Marla: Breathe. Enjoy the anticipation. While it is not most people’s path to parenthood, it is yours. Don’t try to pretend you are not waiting. Use that time to read everything you can about adoption...and do home repairs, cleaning, etc. There is little time to do that once they come home.

Amy: You never know when that call will come. Ours came on a Monday and we had a 3 day old baby in our home Wednesday. She’s 15 years old now and it seems like yesterday we brought her home. You will become a parent, have faith.

Janet: After finishing the paperwork you walk around with your phone every where you go - the second week you leave it in your purse - the third week - you never carry it - and then the phone rings and you were placed with the perfect baby! Hang in there it will happen. We were placed with our daughter after 6 months being in the book and we were placed with a perfect match!

Mitzki: Sleep now. Do all those things you don’t think you’ll be able to do with a child, at least right away. Know that your child will come to you in time. Shop! Buy newborn sizes, even if you think they’ll never be that tiny.

Michelle: Depending upon how you plan on paying the fees and where your money is housed, contact your bank in advance and find out how to access your money in a hurry. I wrote out the instructions and was able to pull them out in a hurry when we got the call to make things easier...even the people at the bank thanked me for the help.

Laura: Never give up....We got the best Valentines present ever...actually got the call Feb. 15th and our sweet girl was born March 16th. There were several disappoints prior to that, but we know that Landri was absolutely the baby we were supposed to have!



Bobby: 1. Don’t give up. As cliched as it sounds, it really IS worth all of the waiting in the end. We waited 4 1/2 years. No, we had not planned on waiting that long. However, the path to get you to your child(ren) is what it is. Our son and his birth family are a perfect match for us! 2. Work to educate your support system about adoption and its negative stereotypes and be sure to include other waiting families AND those that have already adopted into your support system. 3. ENJOY the wait (as hard as that seems). Do the things that other families waiting for their child to be born do. The only difference between your wait and theirs, is a due date. Stay positive! It helps!

Danielle: Just take each day as it comes! We had an Emergency Placement situation and only 7 days after we finished our paperwork and got into the books in the agency. So we did not have a ton of time to think, it was a whirl wind. We had nothing, not a crib, a car seat, diapers. We were called on a Sunday and told, “you are a mommy and a daddy come meet your son.” I still cry when I tell the story and it’s 7 years later. I believe strongly, “what is meant to be will be!”

Our Chosen Child, Adoption Profile Design: you should enjoy the “waiting to become parents” things like shopping and decorating, but do these things because you enjoy them, not because you have a deadline in mind. Remember that adoption isn’t always a straight line - there are often bumps in the road. If you know this beginning the process you are better able to keep your chin up during the difficult times. It WILL happen.

Amy: Enjoy the anticipation of the phone call. When you get the call, things get crazy. Never give up, you will be chosen (and, NO there is nothing wrong with you or your profile.) When you hold your baby for the first time, you’ll realize all the waiting was worth it.

Continued on Next Page...

Kevin: 1. It WILL happen. 2. Loved ones will ask question after question. They are trying to show they are engaged. 3. Do all your home repair stuff before the baby comes. 4. When you go to the store to buy the car seat and stroller (cuz you need them!), tell them with pride that you are adopting and that you're not matched yet. You will be amazed at how strangers will wish you well as you start your family. Give people the opportunity to amaze you. 5. Start educating everyone you know about birth families using positive language. You're laying the groundwork for when you have a child--people should only speak positively around them about their birth families. 6. Please take a moment from time to time to congratulate yourself on doing all the work of creating a family, and know that you will be a better parent for it.

Cynthia: Waiting is so hard, but I agree the perfect match is out there. Read as much as you can about adoption and being a parent. I would also encourage waiting parents to talk to other adoptive parents and waiting parents for support. We even had to stop telling family when we would get "potential" calls, because they would get just as upset as us. Soon your life will be very busy so just relax and remember your angel will soon be with you.

Thank you to everyone who responded to our post on Facebook. Don't miss out on the great discussions. Find AFTH on Facebook and Twitter today and find support with others who have adopted, made an adoption plan, or are considering adoption.

Find Us On...



Facebook

www.facebook.com/AdoptionsFromTheHeart



Twitter

http://twitter.com/@afth_org



WordPress

<http://afth.wordpress.com>

AFTH Support Groups

Support groups are led by AFTH staff and will cover a variety of topics designed for waiting families. Visit our events calendar at www.afth.org for upcoming support group details.

Central PA

Support group meeting for recently placed and waiting families in the area. **Call (717) 399-7766**

Virginia

Adoptive parent support groups bring AFTH waiting families together. **Call (757) 361-0008**

Wayne, NJ

Waiting family support groups are held for waiting families to come together in support. Topic: "Adoption Uncertainty" - Addressing the questions, concerns and fears that may arise while you wait to be chosen. How to be best prepared for a pre-placement meeting and for a possible emergency placement.

Tuesday, Nov. 15 from 7-9pm

Call (856) 665-5655 by Nov. 7th to RSVP.

Birthmother support groups help connect women who have or are making an adoption plan for their child.

Call 856-665-5655 or Email MelodyF@afth.org

Delaware & Wynnewood

Adoptive parent support groups bring AFTH waiting families together. **Call the local office for details.**

Connecticut

Join us for an informal waiting adoptive parent support group! They are held quarterly and guest speakers include; adult adoptees, adoptive parents and adoption professionals. Pre-registration required.

Wednesday, Jan. 11 from 7-9pm

Call (860) 657-2626 or Email JoyceF@afth.org.

Our birth parent support group is an informal session offering a unique opportunity for birth parents to meet others who have made a loving adoption plan for their child and to provide a place to share feelings and coping strategies post adoption. RSVP Required.

Friday, Jan. 13 from 1-3pm

Call (860) 657-2626 or Email JoyceF@afth.org.

Book Reviews

Jessica Lost: A Story of Birth, Adoption & the Meaning of Motherhood by *Bunny Crumpacker & JS Picariello* - This true story of Jessica and her birthmother is told from both perspectives. Raised by a mother with whom she had very little in common, in a family where she didn't look like or think like everyone else, Jessica successfully makes her way in the world yet wonders "where did I come from?" Acting the detective, she sets out to solve the mystery and is rewarded when she finds her birthmother who welcomes her with open arms. Harsh reality and difficult relationships are conveyed clearly with a good sense of humor and compassion.

Becoming Patrick: A Memoir by *Patrick McMahon* - This memoir captures the bittersweet aspects of adoption, search, and reunion in a very moving way. McMahon conveys the pulls between loyalty and curiosity, shame and pride, private and public. It is a compelling story told in a voice that pulls you in and races you along on this very emotional journey.

I Am Latino: The Beauty in Me by *Sandra L. Pinkney* - Similar to her book *Shades of Black*, *I Am Latino* is a celebration of Latino children in all of their various shades, cultures, and customs. Poetic, affirmative text accompanies bright and striking photographs of Latino children

The Colors of Us by *Karen Katz* - A mother and daughter take a walk through their neighborhood noticing all the varying shades of brown. This is a great book to explore the variations in everyone's skin tone. It doesn't specifically talk about race or adoption, however it eloquently speaks about the beauty of all the different shades of skin.



All books may be purchased at the **AFTH Online Store** at www.afth.org.



Congratulations to Families Who Have Recently Adopted!

Sons from the USA

Kelly & Lisa
Randall & Janna
Mark & Kathy
John & Vicki
Rodis & Kira
William & Joseph
Joseph & Susan
Chase & Shannon
Donna & Sarah
William & Jamie
Matthew & Lisa
Denise
Keith & Kim
Brian & Leigh
Patrick & Jennifer
Bryan & Joylette
Edward & Jennifer
Paul & Diana
Sharil
Sarah & Sarah
Jerold & Katherine
Matthew & Gina

Daughters from the USA

Edward & Maureen
Geoffrey & Susan
Clark & Robin
Tom & Stacie
David & Cara
Rachel
Michael & Pamela
Jonathan & Christine
Christian & Hayden
John & William
Jarred & Paul
Aaron & Kimberly
Robin
Brett & Joie
Thomas & Kristine
Luigi & JoAnn



A Splashtastic Good Time

was had by all who attended!

On October 16th, lots of families join together in supported of AFTH at the CoCo Key indoor water resort in Mount Laurel, NJ.

Over 90 people came out for an exciting day of fun, including water slides, a lazy river, hot tubs, and lots of other water activities for kids of all ages! AFTH beach towels could be seen all over the water park.

Birthparents and adoptive families were able to spend time together in celebration of adoption and the children had a blast splashing and sliding and spraying water all day long.

Several AFTH staff and board members came to join in the fun in support of adoption. Even AFTH's Executive Director Maxine Chalker joined in the water park excitement as she zoomed down the water slides.

Together we raised over \$900 in support of AFTH. Thank you to everyone who was able to make it. And for anyone who missed it... CoCo Key will be offering a very special discount for AFTH families throughout November in honor of National Adoption Month (more info coming soon).

**Special thanks to Jessica Akre, AFTH adoptee, who successfully helped to promote the fundraiser as a part of her Bat Mitzvah Project.*



AFTH Holiday Events & Activities

Allentown Office

Holiday Cookie Exchange Party

The Allentown Office will be hosting their annual Holiday Cookie Exchange on December 11, 2011 from 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm at the Hanover Township Community Center. This year we will be creating our own ginger bread houses. Please join us for an afternoon of fun and please bring a dozen of your favorite cookies to share with everyone. We look forward to seeing you there!

Sunday, December 11th from 1-3pm

Location: Hanover Township Community Center

RSVP by December 2nd by calling 610-432-2384 or emailing KarenF@afth.org

Central PA Office

Holiday Party

Join us for a holiday celebration with staff and other AFTH families. Enjoy fun activities for all the children! In honor of the season of giving, each family is asked to bring a item to donate to the Water Street Mission, the only year-round emergency shelter in Lancaster, PA. Some of the highly needed items: toiletries, cereal, canned fruit, 5lb bags of sugar, boxes of pasta, and baby supplies especially baby wipes and diapers size 4, 5, and 6. We look forward to seeing many of you there.

Tuesday, December 6th from 6:00-8:00pm

Location: Central PA AFTH Office

RSVP by December 2nd by calling 717-399-7766 or emailing AmandaK@afth.org

Cherry Hill Office

Holiday Party for Adoptive Families

Meet and greet other AFTH families and join AFTH staff for punch, holiday cookies and cheer to celebrate the holiday season.

Wednesday, December 7th from 4:30-6:30pm

Location: Cherry Hill AFTH Office

RSVP by November 23rd by calling 856-665-5655 or emailing MelodyF@afth.org

Cherry Hill Office

Holiday Party for Birthparents

Join AFTH staff for refreshments and meet other AFTH birthparents. Come together in support and to celebrate the holiday season.

Friday, December 2nd from 4:00-6:30pm

Location: Cherry Hill AFTH Office

RSVP by November 23rd by calling 856-665-5655 or emailing MelodyF@afth.org

Connecticut Office

Holiday Party

Time to reconnect with old friends and make some new friends too! Come enjoy a light buffet lunch, activities for the kids, and Santa will be stopping in for a visit!

Cost Per Person:

\$20/person age 7 and up

\$15/child age 18 months - 6 years

Free - children under 18 months

Saturday, December 3rd from 11am - 2pm

Location: Hilton Garden Inn in Glastonbury, CT

RSVP by November 25th - email JoyceF@afth.org or call 860-657-2626 or send payment to the CT Office.



AFTH Holiday Events & Activities

Virginia Office



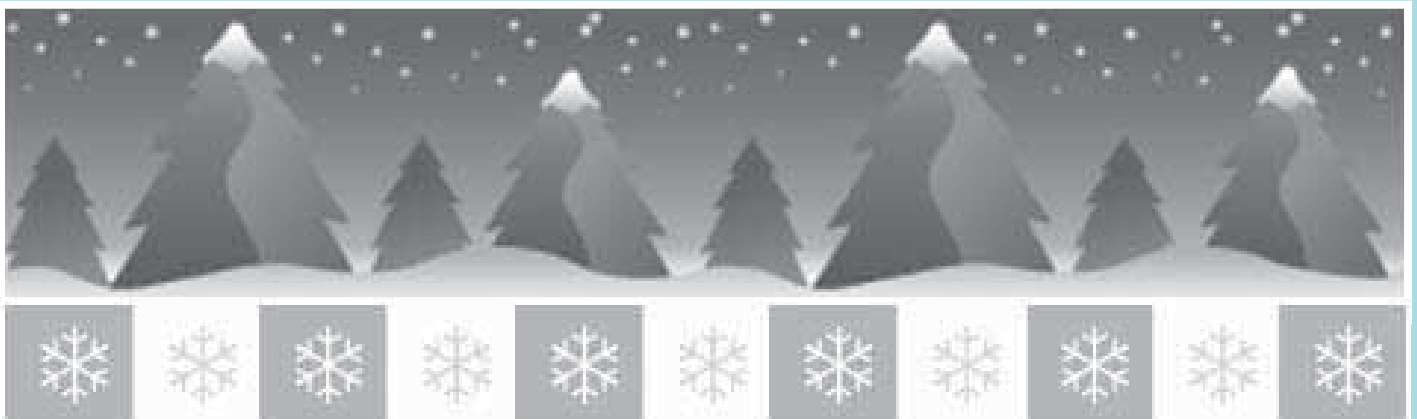
Holiday Party

Annual Virginia Holiday party with Santa and games for the children. Bring a dish to share (pot luck) and a token non-perishable item -or two- for the church pantry. Adoptive families, if you would like to invite your child's birthparents, please send a letter of invitation to be forwarded along.



Saturday, December 10th from Noon - 2pm

Location: the St. Martin's Episcopal Church in Williamsburg
RSVP by December 8th by calling 757-361-0008 or emailing



Pittsburgh Annual Fall Festival

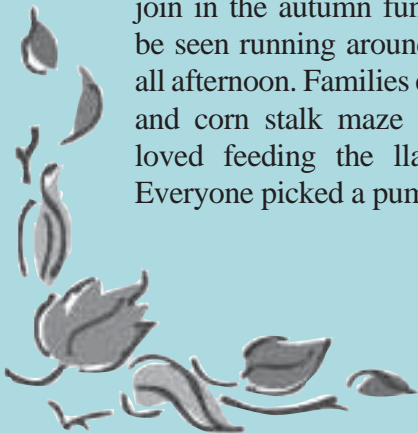
The weather may have been dreary but the spirits were warm as AFTH families came together for the Fall Festival held each year by the Pittsburgh Office at Kerber's Dairy.

More than 50 people came to celebrate adoption and join in the autumn fun. Children could be seen running around the playground all afternoon. Families enjoyed a hayride and corn stalk maze and the children loved feeding the llamas and goats. Everyone picked a pumpkin too!



Families visited over lunch and let's not forget about the delicious ice cream - the pumpkin cheesecake was a fan favorite.

It was wonderful to have all those who have attended and we look forward to visiting together again next year.



Building Beautiful Families 2012 Calendar

Calendar Sell Quickly...
Order Yours Today.

Hurry and order your copies today as they are flying off the shelves. Help us have a record breaking year of calendar sales benefitting the Birthmother Fund. **Copy this form** for friends, family, church, co-workers, neighbors and spread the word in support of a great cause!

The calendars make wonderful gifts. It is truly a gift that keeps on giving as **all the proceeds go towards the AFTH Birthmother Fund**. The fund provides financial assistance to women who are making an adoption plan and are struggling to provide for their basic needs during pregnancy - food, shelter, clothing, heat, etc.

The article "Living on \$40 a Month" in the AFTH Summer Newsletter (can be viewed at www.afth.org) highlighted some of the women like Cindy who benefitted from the AFTH Birthmother Fund this past year. So spread the word and encourage others to support this fundraiser not only **because your child is a star** but also because each year there are **more and more women like Cindy** who are struggling to make ends meet on so very little.

Calendars Prices:

Purchased at an AFTH office - \$12.00
Online & Those Being Mailed - \$13.50



Building Beautiful Families 2012 Calendar

Complete Form and Return with Payment

Name: _____

Phone: (____) _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

_____ # of Calendars x \$13.50 (includes shipping)

_____ # of Calendars x \$12.00 (PICK UP at Office)

which office: _____

= \$ _____ **Total Enclosed**

Make Checks Payable to:
Adoptions From The Heart

Mail Payment and Form To:
Adoptions From The Heart
30-31 Hampstead Circle
Wynnewood, PA 19096

The Unexpected Treasure

Open adoption celebrates the connection between all members of the adoption triad: birth families, adoptive families, and the adoptees. And no matter the level of openness, more often than not, there is an item - the child's hospital bracelet or a photo taken at the hospital - honoring and celebrating that special bond.

We often hear about heartwarming gifts adoptive families send to birthparents, particularly birth mothers, - cards, pictures, handmade art projects or unique necklaces or bracelets acknowledging the shared bond. These tokens of gratitude are often held onto as symbols of the commitment to honoring the special connection. These families share an extraordinary bond and reminders of that bond are deeply cherished.

Given the gift of their beloved child, many AFTH adoptive parents honor this gift by sending mementos over the years to their child's birthparents to let them know how important they are and that they are being thought of throughout the year. It is less common by none the less special when a birthparent shares a gift with their adoptive family.

Anne and Joseph knew they were given the most amazing gift of all when they adopted their baby girl not too long ago. Over the past holiday season, they were overwhelmed with appreciation when they received another unexpected expression of love from their daughter's birth father, this time the gift was for their child.

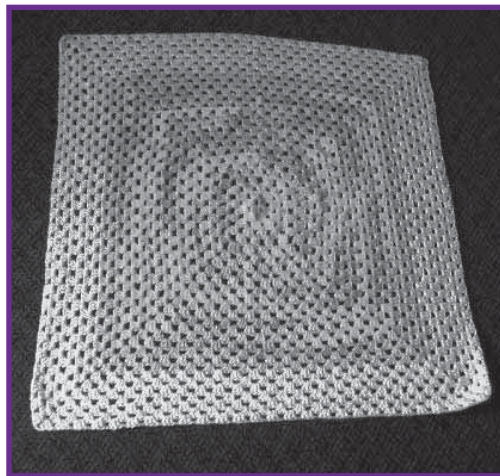
The women of the AFTH Virginia Office were deeply moved themselves when an active-duty Navy birth father arrived at the office with a special gift; a gorgeous handmade afghan with all colors of the rainbow. He came with a request that it be mailed to his child's adoptive parents. The man had just come back from a sea-duty deployment and told the ladies how the time at sea passed much quicker when he kept himself busy

It is quite common for navy personnel to take up knitting while they are deployed to pass the time but *this* knitting project had a much deeper meaning.



A few days later, Joseph and Anne unwrapped the gift. They were overcome with joy. "The rainbow colors caught our attention and reminded us that we are all a part of our daughter's history and life." Joseph and Anne say that "it is something for us, as adoptive parents, to use in the future to explain the wonderful gift of adoption. We are so thankful for such a warm display of love and affection." The fact that her birth father took the time to make the gift himself meant more than anything. "Many things show love, but something handmade is a treasure."

"Many things show love, but something handmade is a treasure"



A black and white photo cannot accurately capture the beauty of the afghan nor the expression of love behind it!

The adoptive parents have since sent the birthfather a picture of their baby girl swaddled in her afghan. He was deeply touched by the photograph and grateful that Joseph and Anne took the time to send it to him. He felt so much emotion knowing that she would always have the blanket he made. It meant just as much to him to be able to give her a gift as it did to her family to receive it.

These two families share a connection unlike any other and the exchange of "I'm thinking- of-you" is so incredibly sentimental. The birth father expresses his wish for his little girl "I hope she grows up with it, and looks back and realizes how much she was loved."

There is no limit of the number of hearts that can love one child!

AFTH Program Updates



DOMESTIC PROGRAMS - As we begin to prepare for the upcoming holiday season, we hope that many of our AFTH families will consider joining us in celebration at our office holiday parties. [See insert for more information.](#)

In the 2010-2011 fiscal year, Adoptions From The Heart has placed a total of 161 infants in adoptive homes. Unfortunately there were 12 families who suffered a disruption, but AFTH is happy to report that of those 12 families, so far 11 of them have been placed with a baby!

During the first quarter of our current fiscal year, we have placed 37 infants through our Domestic Program. Social workers in each office continue to do outreach to spread awareness about AFTH's free services to women considering making an adoption plan for their infants.

Adoptions From The Heart continues to work hard in providing birth parents with all the services they need and continuing to provide counseling, education, and placement services to our adoptive parents as well.

AFTH would like to remind any families who are thinking about adopting to attend one of our free information meetings where you will be able to learn more about the different programs that we offer. AFTH is always looking for new prospective adoptive families especially families who are willing to consider adopting an African-American or biracial child. Information meetings and webinars are held monthly. For more information about the upcoming meetings, [visit our online calendar of events.](#)

To all of the adoptive families who have been placed, please remember to send your pictures and letters to the birth mother's office once a month for the first 6 months and then once a year (at least one week before your child's birthday) until your child is 18 years old. We have many birth parents who are calling asking for their pictures and we are finding that they were never received from the adoptive parents. We really appreciate if families make sure they are sending the pictures to the birth parents on time. Please send between 10-15 pictures and a 1-2 page letter with an update on how the child is doing. Rest assured that even if you do not hear from the agency confirming that we received the

pictures, we are automatically sending out the photos to the birth parents or we are holding them in our office for if/when the birth parent is ready to receive them. It is so important for birth parents and adopted children to have these memories and positive experiences in open adoption. Remember that birth parents are trusting that you will honor the promise and commitment you made to them, the agency, and your child to send these updates. Thank you all!

We also want to remind all families that AFTH has a great Education Series available with classes in various offices. Visit the calendar of events at www.afth.org to register on upcoming classes. The upcoming courses are:

November 9, 2011 - Wynnewood, PA
Transracial Adoptions/Adoptee and Her mother Speak

November 15, 2011 - Central PA Office
Hair & Skin Care Techniques for Families Adopting Transracially

Stay in the loop of upcoming events and activities...go to the News & Events Section of www.afth.org and at the bottom of the page you will see a link to register for email blasts. You can opt out at any point in time.

CHINA - The most current group of China families to receive assignments left for China on Saturday, September 17th with visa appointments set for September 29th. They returned to the U.S. with their children on October 1st.

The next group waiting to receive assignments have a LID (log in date) of 8/3/06, which we have been told, is correct. There are only three active families with this date who have managed to hang in for the last five years. Two are from Allentown Office and the other is from Pittsburgh. In general, waiting families with LIDs through 7/28/06 are receiving assignments so it looks like the next three waiting families may receive matches a little sooner than anticipated although nothing is certain. Rumor has it that the reason for the two weeks worth of matches is due to the fact that the CCCWA has been closed because of their recent move and that expectations should not rise for future time frames.



HEARTBEATS - There are no new pregnancies in the *India Surrogacy Program* since our last update, however excitement mounts for the happy couple whose surrogate is now going into her fifth month. The baby is due to be born in late February.

To learn more about the India Surrogacy Program join us for our free online webinar on November 15th at 7:00pm. To register for the webinar, visit our online calendar of events at www.afth.org or contact Roberta Evantash at (610) 642-7200 or RobertaE@afth.org.

The *Embryo Placement Program* is growing again! We have partnered with a new embryo placing agency, Crystal Angels. Crystal Angels will be helping AFTH match our waiting families with embryos. The wait time to be matched is only running about 1-3 months. So sign up today!

We will be holding a Free Webinar information meeting to discuss our new partnership with Crystal Angels and the requirements for the Embryo Placement Program. The next webinar is scheduled for Tuesday, November 15th at 6:00pm. Visit the **online calendar of events** to register for this free webinar.

Embryo Education Series courses are running quarterly as well. The next series will be starting in January! These courses will cover different topics including: Talking to your Children about their Embryo Placement, Talking to your Children about having Full Biological Siblings that Live with Another Family, The Pro's and Cons of an Open Embryo Placement, Telling Friends and Family about Embryo Placement, and much more. Additional

reading materials and useful resources are provided in addition to the courses themselves.

To learn more about the Embryo Education Series courses and to register, visit the online calendar of events at www.afth.org. For questions about the Embryo Ed Series or Embryo Placement Program, contact Jeanne McGee at JeanneM@afth.org or by call (610) 642-7200.



Heartbeats
ASSISTED REPRODUCTION PROGRAM

Learn About AFTH's Heartbeat Programs

Free Online Webinars on November 15th:

Surrogacy in India at 7pm
Embryo Placement Program at 6pm

Registration for webinars is required.
Visit the Calendar of Events at www.afth.org

Embryo Education Series
Register open for January classes

for fees & details of topics covered by this one-of-a-kind four part webinar ed series...
visit our calendar of events at www.afth.org

Got E-mail? Stay Informed with AFTH!

The update listserve is a way for families in our domestic program to stay in the loop of agency updates related to the domestic program. Families in-process can subscribe to the listserve by sending a message with the word "SUBSCRIBE" in the subject line to: AFTHDomesticUpdates-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

To connect, support, and share with other AFTH families in the domestic program, join the yahoo group created for discussion and support. To join, send an email with "SUBSCRIBE" in the subject line to the below address:

DOMESTIC DISCUSSION GROUP- AFTHopenadoption-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

Russia and U.S. Sign Bilateral Adoption Agreement



On July 13, 2011, the United States and the Russian Federation signed an “Agreement Regarding Cooperation in Adoption of Children.” This bilateral treaty had been under negotiation for more than one year, following the occurrence of high-profile and tragic events involving a few Russian adoptees in the U.S., the most widely publicized of which being when, in the early part of 2010, a single adoptive mother from Tennessee sent her adopted child, unescorted, on a flight back to Russia. The goal of the Agreement is to “provide additional safeguards to better protect the welfare and interests of children and all parties involved in inter-country adoptions.” Adoptions from Russia to the U.S. have continued to take place during the course of negotiations but, as has been the case in recent years with adoptions from most “sending” countries around the world, the number of children adopted has decreased. The treaty is reciprocal, and is a positive signal of both countries’ commitment to the continuation of adoptions into the future.

The specifics of any new adoption rules are now in the process of being written, and will need to be approved by both governments. Therefore, it will still be a few months until the Agreement goes into effect, and until precise guidelines are known. Anticipated changes to the process, however, include:

- Prospective adoptive parents should receive more timely and comprehensive medical and psycho-social information regarding children referred, prior to the finalization of adoptions in Russia. This would allow for families to better anticipate the potential needs of a referred child, thereby further informing their decisions in the adoption process.
- Prospective adoptive parents may be required to obtain additional evaluation and training during the adoption process, some of it targeted to the specific needs of the child referred in a given case. In turn, families and their agencies would be able to pre-identify community supports to help best meet a particular child’s needs upon placement in the adoptive home.
- Russia is expected to no longer permit “independent”

adoptions. This would mean that only U.S. adoption agencies accredited by the Russia Ministry of Education (MOE) would be permitted to facilitate adoptions in Russia. Such agencies will continue to be able to contract with adoption service providers such as Adoptions From The Heart to provide home study, education, post-adoption, and other services to adopting families residing in states in which the provider agency is licensed.

- United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) may add a “pre-approval” step (as has been used in the past with other countries such as Guatemala) to the adoption process. This would allow USCIS to review a family’s suitability and eligibility in light of a particular referred child’s needs, prior to the finalization of an adoption in Russia.

- “Improvement of post-adoption reporting and monitoring” may involve increased reporting on adopted children being sent to Russia in the months and years following completion of an adoption, enhancing the Russian government’s ability track adoptees’ care, growth, and development over time. For example, Kazakhstan, Ukraine, Vietnam, among other countries, presently require for adoptive families to submit reports to them until adopted children reach adulthood. While some families may view this as an imposition, I have come to see this as a wonderful opportunity for thousands of families to show sending countries that the overwhelming majority of adopted children are thriving and flourishing in a manner that could not have been possible had they continued to live outside the care of a permanent, loving family. My hope, in turn, is that this can provide appropriate data and context for governments as policy and perceptions of intercountry adoption continually evolve.

When the new Agreement goes into effect, it will not apply retroactively to adoptions that have already occurred. Further, families with dossiers already registered in Russia, but who have not yet accepted the referral of child, are to be able to complete their processes under “pre-Agreement” rules. No temporary suspension of adoption processing is anticipated as the treaty is implemented. Adoption agencies wishing to maintain accreditation in Russia will need to reapply

for this within sixty days following the Agreement's entry into force. The MOE would then be charged with responding to such applications within one month of their submission. Agencies seeking initial authorization to operate in Russia will also be permitted to apply for accreditation, under a somewhat lengthier timetable.

All considered, the signing of this Agreement between Russia and the US can be viewed as a positive development for adoptions. While 2010 was a year in which many were concerned about the future of adoptions from Russia to the US, there is now reason to be hopeful that such adoptions will not only continue to occur, but that they will be supported by

a new bilateral treaty aimed at improving the inter-country adoption process and further protecting the rights and interests of adoptive children and other involved parties.



AFTH provides Home Study, Education, Post-Adoption/ Placement Services, and other assistance in support of international adoptions. Please contact Sam Wojnilower at 610-642-7200 or SamW@afth.org with any questions about the agency's international adoption services.



Recent Legislation & Studies



ILLINOIS - Under the amended Illinois Adoption Act, starting November 15, 2011, adults born on or after January 1, 1946, in Illinois who were surrendered or adopted, can request a non-certified copy of their original Illinois birth certificate, which typically includes the birth parents' name(s), age(s) and place(s) of birth. The Illinois Department of Public Health is providing a Birth Parent Preference Form which will provide the option for birth parents to request their identifying information remain confidential.

RHODE ISLAND - July 1, 2011 Governor Chafee signed a law granting adoptees age 25 and over the right to have their own original birth certificates for the first time since 1944.

MISSOURI - A provision in the major tax credit overhaul scheduled for debate this month by the Missouri Senate would scrap a state subsidy for international adoptions, the St. Louis Post-Dispatch reports. The provision would shift the tax credits to make them available for parents who adopt children in the state's foster care system and donors who give to certain social services agencies geared to helping abused or neglected children. Federal - H.R. 1681, the "Every Child Deserves a Family Act" now in the House, would require any adoption agency contracted by the government to seek permanent placement for foster children to give equal consideration to gay and lesbian couples or risk losing its government funding. A companion bill is being prepared for the Senate and will likely be presented later this year.

CANADA - Saskatchewan judge has ruled that a woman who gave birth to a baby girl named "Sarah" in 2009 is not actually the child's mother, in a decision that exposes the gap between legislation and reality in modern parenthood. "John" and "Bill," the same-sex couple who are now properly called the parents of "Sarah," who was conceived with John's sperm and an ovum from an anonymous donor, and carried to term by "Mary." In granting John and Bill's request, supported by Mary, to remove Mary's name from Sarah's birth certificate, Madame Justice Jacelyn Ann Ryan-Froslic of the province's Court of Queen's Bench, noted that the law defines a "mother" as the woman who delivered a child, and presumes she is also a parent, which is no longer always true. "It is clear from the definition of 'mother' contained in The Vital Statistics Act, 2009, that Mary, the gestational carrier, is Sarah's mother for the purposes of that act, as she is the woman from whom Sarah was delivered. Naming her as Sarah's mother on the registration of live birth raises a presumption that she is also Sarah's biological mother," the judge wrote. "In this case, I am satisfied on a balance of probabilities that Mary, the gestational carrier, is not Sarah's biological mother. I am also satisfied neither (John nor Bill) nor Mary ever intended that Mary would assume any parental rights or obligations with respect to Sarah. As such, a declaration that Mary is not Sarah's mother is warranted."



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Upcoming Conferences

Come and visit the AFTH booth at the following events. For more details on these events, visit our online calendar of events at www.afth.org.

November 12th

NWCC Orphan Care Expo in Pittsburgh, PA

November 13th

Just Love-Adoption, Foster, Orphan Care in Doylestown, PA

November 19th

National Adoption Day in Dover, DE

November 20th

APC's 31st Annual Adoption Conference in Brooklyn, NY

wynnewood office

30-31 Hampstead Circle
Wynnewood, PA 19096
610.642.7200

delaware office

18-A Trolley Square
Wilmington, DE 19806
302.658.8883

allentown office

2212 Union Blvd
Allentown, PA 18109
610.432.2384

virginia office

1407 Stephanie Way, Suite H
Chesapeake, VA 23320
757.361.0008
804.218.2569

central pa office

1525 Oregon Pike, Suite 402
Lancaster, PA 17601
717.399.7766
717.232.1787

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pittsburgh office

1225 South Main St., Suite 207
Greensburg, PA 15601
724.853.6533

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