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## Woman Of The Week: MAXINE CHALKER

### Maxine Chalker, Founder, Executive Director, Adoptions From The Heart, speaks to Marilyn Russell

By Marilyn Russell

November is National Adoption Month so we're featuring Maxine Chalker, a committed advocate to this cause. Adoptions from the Heart has placed over 4000 infants and toddlers in loving homes since its creation in 1985. Adoptions From The Heart is a private, non-profit, non-sectarian adoption agency, licensed in PA, NJ, NY, DE, WV, VA and approved for placing children with CT families. Services are provided to clients without



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regard to race, color, religion, ancestry, sex, marital status, disability, sexual orientation, age or limited English proficiency. If you are considering adoption, Maxine and her qualified staff would like to help you build the family you've been dreaming of.

WOTW: Tell me a little about your position with Adoptions From The Heart (AFTH)?  
 Maxine: I am the founder and executive director of Adoptions From the Heart (AFTH). I worked as a social worker for a public child welfare agency doing adoptions and felt that adoption should be done differently – namely that they should be more "open." I am an adult adoptee and therefore have an understanding of how adopted children feel about not knowing their background. They primarily want to know "WHY" they were placed for adoption. They might also want to know information about their birth parents and if they have siblings. And, later, as adults, they usually want to know medical and social information.

I founded AFTH in order to better help all those involved in the adoption triangle (adoptive parents, birth parents and children) so they could have answers to their questions and be

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comfortable about the decisions they were making.

WOTW: How many positions did you hold prior to this one?

Maxine: Before going to college I had clerical position and then upon receiving my BSW and MSW degrees from Temple University, I went to work for a public Child Welfare agency where I worked for 7 years.

WOTW: What is the best thing about your position?

Maxine: It allows me the opportunity to continually strive to do things better and differently, all while being creative. It also allows me to become acquainted with many international cultures and help my social work staff to become open to these cultures and new ideas.

WOTW: What is the hardest thing to accomplish?

Maxine: Adoption is full of ups, downs and uncertainties. Families NEED to be very flexible and have lots of patience. Unfortunately, some do not. One of the more challenging aspects of the position is trying to explain and support families in our ever-changing world of new forms, new laws, and more.

WOTW: Of what are you most proud?

Maxine: I have watched the agency grow from my basement office to (now) 11 offices in seven states. I have seen thousands of happy families created. What more can anyone ask?

WOTW: Describe your philosophy and how you utilize it with your responsibilities at work.

Maxine: My philosophy is that there should be very few hard and fast rules. Of course, there are state and national laws and regulations that must be followed, but there is still room for creativity and flexibility within the system. Every case is different and every family is different and they should be treated as such.

WOTW: What is one thing you've always wanted to do?

Maxine: I wish that I had pursued a law degree as well as my social work degrees. I love the law and all its various ins and outs.

WOTW: What (if any) is your guilty pleasure?

Maxine: I love to dance and any chance I have to go to a party or an event where there's dancing is very exciting for me.

WOTW: What's next for you and Adoptions From the Heart?

Maxine: We are always interested in new technology. We are starting to hold information meetings on the Internet and using Power Point for many courses that we offer for our families. We have very up-to-date communication within the agency and a data base that can give us many answers and ways to evaluate our performance and improve our services. I know that this will continue to grow and change as we move forward.

If Adoption is something you've thought about, please contact Adoptions from the Heart at [www.afth.org/](http://www.afth.org/) or think about attending one of their upcoming programs:

Explore Adoptions from China, Guatemala and Vietnam Meetings on Thursday, November 9 in Allentown, PA - Our program facilitators will be attending this meeting and available to answer your questions. Call for free registration: 610.432.2384 Thursday, November 16 in Wynnewood, PA - Please call for your free registration: 610.642.7200 Thursday, November 16 in York, PA \* Start Time: 6:30 pm - Join our program facilitators

who will be at this information session to answer your questions. Please call for your free registration: 717.399-7766

If you've like to nominate a Woman of the Week, please email me at [mrussell@phillynews.com](mailto:mrussell@phillynews.com) or [mrussellpr@hotmail.com](mailto:mrussellpr@hotmail.com), and be patient – there are so many amazing women being nominated, I can't get to everyone, but eventually I will.

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