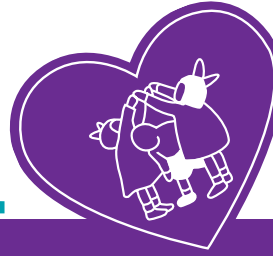


# Adoption News



A Quarterly Newsletter from

Adoptions From The Heart

Fall 2008

## Angel in Adoption Award

Adoptions From The Heart is pleased to announce one of our own, Mary Daily was honored for her dedication to improving the lives of children through adoption by being named a 2008 Congressional Angel in Adoption™.



Mary began her career as a social worker for Planned Parenthood of Camden County, New Jersey supporting pregnant women through the difficult decision of placing their child for adoption.

After having a family, Mary became a Trauma Social Worker for an inner city hospital, assisting families and their loved ones.

Taking on a second job, Mary began working at AFTH as a part time social worker and experienced the process of adoption from start to finish. Mary's position became full-time and she knew she had found a home with AFTH. Now, twenty years later, she is the agency's Director of Social Services, overseeing activity with social workers throughout the agency.

During her years of experience

working in the adoption community, Mary has helped to build thousands of families and has aided in the expansion of the agency's reach by opening new offices in several states, including two offices in New Jersey.

Outside of the agency, Mary conducts workshops at conferences, is an active member of New Jersey's Adoption Council, and is involved in assisting legislators and licensing changes.

Mary feels it's rewarding to watch the development of how adoption has changed over the years and how the agency has done the same - coming to understand a new level of openness and its importance.

She points out that today almost everyone you meet has been touched by adoption in some way and she is happy to be a part of these families' lives in such an amazing way, empowering adoptive and birth parents to have knowledge, and a connection, to each other.

Mary is happy to see families proud of whom they are!

## In This Issue



- 2 Getting "The Call"
- 2 United Way
- 3 Heartbeats Program
- 4 Meeting My Birthparents
- 4 AFTH Event Recap
- 5 Legislature and AFTH Office News
- 6 New AFTH Families!
- 7 Book Reviews
- 8-9 Program Updates
- 10 Musings of an Adoptive Mama Column
- 11 What Does Adoption Mean to Your Family?

### Insert:

For Sale: AFTH 2009 Calendar!  
Holiday Events & Activities  
Office Support Groups

## “The Call” That Changes Your Life

What a coincidence! In a waiting Parents Support Group Meeting, a waiting adoptive mother received, "the call," the call that their profile was chosen by a birthmother who had just given birth!

On Saturday, August 16, Karen sat in the AFTH Virginia Office's conference room with other waiting families listening to recently placed families say over and over, "it will happen." Karen, who along with her husband, Kevin, had been waiting for over a year for their baby, was feeling a little sorry for herself and thought, "When will it happen for me?" At that moment, she heard VA social worker, Alice's cell phone ring.

Alice, who had recently completed Karen and Kevin's home study update, passed her cell to Karen so she could directly hear the news from DE social worker, Danielle who tells us, "Making those calls is one of the best parts of my job."

Alice, who is usually on the phone giving adoptive parents the good news, said, "I've never realized the actual physical shock, 'the call' has on the recipient. Karen was shaking! I had to hold her and tell her what to do; call your husband, call your mother, get the car ready, because no one can think at that moment." Directly relating to what a recently placed adoptive parent was just saying in the support group that morning: you have to be prepared, the call can come at any time and when it happens, you can't think.

"I was in shock, a good kind of shock, my husband didn't believe me," Karen said.

Karen and Kevin then drove four hours to Delaware to pick up their son, Collin. In the car ride they were on the phone with a family member who was reading off baby names. "We didn't even have a name picked out," said Karen. "We had a stroller and some furniture for the baby room, but no baby clothes."

Karen received so much support from the other waiting families in the meeting, one family even offered baby clothes to take with her to Delaware. Alice said, "Everyone in the meeting wondered what the odds were to receive, 'the call' when sitting around talking about

## Supporting AFTH Through the United Way?

Adoptions From The Heart is listed as a donor option and is eligible to receive contributions through the United Way Donor Program

Your United Way contribution to Adoptions From The Heart will help us to continue our dedicated service to adoptive families and birthparents.

### How to Donate Make a Contribution to Adoptions From The Heart Through the United Way Donor Option Plan...

1) Request a Donor Option Card when you receive your pledge card from your company's United Way representative.

2) Because the agency's donor number is different in each area, you can find the AFTH donor number in your United Way booklet.

**PRINT: ADOPTIONS FROM THE HEART** and the **nearest branch office's address** on the card (*you can do this even if it is not listed in your particular United Way booklet*).

3) Enter the amount of your pledge and your payment method (e.g. check, payroll deduction etc)

4) Complete the form & return it to your United Way representative.

**Thank you for considering us.  
We greatly appreciate your support!**

being ready for 'the call!'"

Another waiting adoptive parent in the meeting said, "I'm never going to miss another support group meeting!"

[See insert for information on support groups being held in your area.](#)



# Heartbeats

## EMBRYO PLACEMENT PROGRAM

In our last newsletter, we announced the beginning of AFTH's new Embryo Placement Program called Heartbeats. Because we received such a warm response from readers, we would like to now explain more about what AFTH's role is in the Embryo Placement Process by answering some common questions we've been asked.

### Is Embryo Placement the Same as Adoption?

In some ways, there is a similarity to Open Adoption although it is NOT adoption because it is governed by contract law, rather than adoption law. It also may involve recipient families that are at a different stage of the infertility process than adoptive families. Some donor families may wish to select and meet the family who will be receiving their embryos and others may not. They may wish to know if a live birth results from their donation and may or may not want to keep in touch with a family who is raising a full sibling of their child. Each situation is unique in the level of involvement of the recipient family and the Heartbeats Program allows for each family to choose what is right for them.

### Is Heartbeats Involved in the Medical Treatment Aspect of Embryo Placement?

No. Heartbeats involvement focuses on the counseling and education aspect of the process preparing families to either donate or receive embryos. Families may use their own clinic or physician to perform the actual medical procedure and treatments. Heartbeats can also refer a clinic or physician in your area to perform the medical procedure if need be.

### Why does the Heartbeats Program Require a Family Assessment?

Many clinics and embryo donors want recipients to undergo some type of assessment to ensure that recipients have been screened for police and child abuse records, as well as educated on the specific concerns that may affect families created in this way. Heartbeats calls this a Family Assessment and it is required of all recipients. Donating families and clinics are more likely to turn to our families knowing that they are from

varying backgrounds, educated and prescreened.

### Do Donors Maintain Their Parental Rights?

No. A contract is signed and notarized by the donating couple authorizing the embryo donation. Once this informed consent has been signed, the donors have no legal claim to either the embryos or any children which may be born as a result of the donation. All rights are relinquished prior to the embryo implantation. The recipient mother is considered the child's legal mother at birth and if married her spouse is considered the child's legal parent as well. There is no need to "adopt" the child after birth.

### Can I Donate my Stored Embryos to a Heartbeats Family?

Absolutely. Heartbeats encourages anyone who has stored embryos to consider this option; sharing the gift of family with another family going through infertility struggles. There are no costs involved for donating families. Donor families may choose their own level of involvement in choosing a recipient family. Knowing if a child is born as a result of the donation and having a level of contact after birth similar to open adoption may also put donors' minds at ease.

### Why Should We Choose AFTH's Heartbeats Program?

Unlike many other embryo placement programs, Heartbeats is non-sectarian and non-denominational and is open to singles as well as couples because we believe that everyone should have the opportunity to choose embryo placement as a way to build a family. With over 23 years experience facilitating open adoptions between birth and adoptive parents, AFTH's Heartbeats program has the background necessary to counsel both parties in an open or confidential embryo donation.

**For more information about Heartbeats, please visit us at [www.afth.org/heartbeats](http://www.afth.org/heartbeats) or contact Kimberly Dotts at 1-888-330-3362.**

## Meeting My Birthparents

### As Told By a Young Adoptee

Ever since I understood the term "adoption" and what it means, I have wanted to meet my birth parents. When I was younger, my dream was just that of a naïve child. I did not understand the complexity of feelings. I heard from my birth parents twice when I was eight and I constantly dreamt about meeting them.

There was a period in time when I received no letters and sunk into a state of depression. I did receive help and my adoptive mother hired a social worker to help locate my biological parents. After about a year, I got a call saying that she had found my birth father's family. I was extremely excited; I was going to meet my birth father! Do I look like him? Are our personalities similar? What was he like at my age? These questions flooded my head, but new-found information stopped these thoughts. My birth father had passed away about five years earlier, and I did not know what to think. I was sad, but excited to meet my biological uncle and my four younger cousins (one of whom was adopted from Romania).

I was nervous on the drive over to their house, which is less than an hour away. I knocked on the door, my hand shaking and my thoughts racing a mile a minute. My uncle opened the door and greeted me with a hug, followed by a hug from his wife. My adoptive parents came with me and we all had a great time. I met my biological grandparents, who told me many stories about my birth father. We shared pictures and experiences. I then spoke with their adopted daughter and we exchanged stories about what it is like to be adopted. I cherished the time I had with my biological family and I look forward to seeing them again. I want to take this time to thank my social worker for all her hard work, and maybe one day, I will meet my birth mother.

Story was contributed by Samantha, 19 years old, who was adopted through AFTH in 1989 and wanted to share her story.

### Did You Know...

A major study links adoption openness to better outcomes for parents. Based on data from 323 adoption triads sampled from 33 agencies in 10 states, greater openness in adoptions is linked with more satisfaction with the adoption process for both adoptive parents and birthparents and with more positive post-adoption adjustment for birthmothers and birthfathers.

## Recap on Recent AFTH Events



### Hazlet Play Date

One a sunny day in September, many families came together in celebration of the common bond they share. Over 50 people joined the Hazlet staff at Holmdel Park for a play date. The giggles could be heard throughout the park as the children played with each other and parents enjoyed spending time with other adoptive parents they had become close to during their adoption process. Fun was had by all!



### Pittsburgh Annual Picnic

Over 400 people joined the AFTH Pittsburgh staff for a day of family fun at Idlewild Park for their 8th annual picnic. Children were visited by Ricky Raccoon during lunch and after gathering together for a picnic, families enjoyed a beautiful day at Idlewild. We were especially glad to welcome three birthparents to the event to reunite with their children and their adoptive parents. We look forward to seeing everyone there again next year.





# Legislation



## RISE IN HIV CHILDREN BEING ADOPTED FROM OVERSEAS

- American families are opening their hearts and their homes to children with HIV. While the numbers are still small, there has been an increase in the number of US families adopting HIV positive children from overseas. The U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services Mike Leavitt said HIV-positive adoptees pose no public health threat in America and Congress is set to repeal legislation that requires those with HIV to get waivers to enter the U.S. For adopted children with HIV, the waiver requirement can increase the 9 to 12-month adoption process by about two weeks.

## ADOPTION INCENTIVES BILL HEADS TO THE SENATE

- This measure would double the amount states receive for the completion of certain adoptions. If a state boosts adoptions of special-needs children above its previous high point, it would thereafter receive \$4,000 per adoption, up from \$2,000; for increasing adoptions of children over age 9, in the same way, a state would receive \$8,000 per child, up from \$4,000.

The bill also would establish "Family Connection Grants" to spur placement of foster children with blood relatives such as grandparents, or aunts and uncles. Relatives who adopt those children would receive the same federal payments as non-relatives who adopt a child out of foster care. The bill also would make older foster children eligible to receive support benefits until age 21, expand programs to bring foster children to and from school, and extend all program benefits to Indian tribes as well as states .

Adoption advocates say it is the most comprehensive overhaul of the adoptions incentives program since its inception in 1997. The current incentives expire Sept. 30, so Congress is rushing to send this legislation to President Bush, who is expected to sign it.

**NEBRASKA** - Nebraska was the last state to enact a "safe haven" law - and it took its approach much further than any other, allowing anyone (not just a parent) to abandon a child under 19 (rather than just an infant).

**NEW YORK** - Adoptees can now access their identifying information once they reach the age of 18, if the biological parents have filed a consent form with the adoption information registry. The law requires that adoption consents and surrender documents include a birthparent registration form stating whether they agree to identifying information being provided upon the adoptee's signing up with the registry. The law allows biological parents to revoke their consent at any time. The form provides them with information about the adoption medical information sub-registry.

## AFTH Office Information

### Connecticut Office

ARC of Connecticut has merged with Adoptions From The Heart and our new Glastonbury Office will now be serving the state of Connecticut. The office has already done a large outreach push in order to draw potential birthmothers in their area which in turn benefits all families in our domestic programs as it increases the number of birthmothers working with our agency.

### Hazlet Office Closing

It is with great sadness that we announce the closing of our Hazlet, NJ office. While the Hazlet office was extremely convenient for some of our Northern New Jersey clients it was not in a convenient location for our social workers who were working with birth parents in this area. With the slow down on international adoptions across the country and the closing of most of our international programs this office has been unable to meet its budget. It is for these reasons that we have sold the building and will be closing the office as of Oct. 15, 2008. We will be hiring a consultant in the Northern NJ area to work with birth parents and will consider reopening an office in this area once we have established the correct placement that would work well for both clients and social workers working with pregnant women considering adoption. Cases that were being handled by this office will be transferred to either our Cherry Hill, NJ office or our Allentown, PA office. Please bear with us during this interim time; we hope that we will be able to reopen an office in this area again soon.



## Congratulations to Families Who Have Recently Adopted!

### Daughters from China

Linda  
Brian & Jeanne  
Kenneth & Erin  
Craig & Jeanette  
Christie  
Douglas & Karen  
Melanie  
Gregory & Anne  
Patrick & Robin  
Thomas & Laury  
Barbara  
Ciro & Mary  
Michael & Karen  
Rae Ann  
Douglas & Susan  
Albert & Lori  
Douglas & Melissa  
Drew & Berylle

### Sons from China

Kevin & Janine

### Daughters from Guatemala

Kathleen  
Pamela  
Janice  
Andrew & Shelley  
James & Mariangela  
Mark & Lisa

### Sons from Guatemala

James & Terri  
Gregg & Penny  
Mindy

### Daughters from Kazakhstan

Christopher & Trish  
Joseph & Sonia (2 children)  
Steve & Becky

### Daughters from Russia

Richard & Bethany  
Joseph & Michelle

### Sons from Russia

Andrew & Kim

### Daughters from the USA

William & Laurie  
Chris & Terry  
Joseph & Kristin  
David & Kimberly  
Robert & Caroline  
Alain & Krista  
Thomas & Carrie  
Chad & Jelena  
Donald & Leah  
James & Stanley  
Ryan & Stacey  
David & Noreen  
John & Vanessa  
Christopher & Christine

Agustin & Mary

### Sons from the USA

Jon & Michaela  
Andrew & Mandy  
Ronald & Rona  
Robert & Kari  
Edward & Christina  
Shawn & Jennifer  
Kevin & Karen  
Ryan & Mandi (twins)  
Barbara & Lesley  
Scott & Kimberly  
William & Vanessa  
Paul & Christy  
Nathan & Stephanie  
James & Bridget

### Sons from Vietnam

Mark & Angela  
Michael

### Daughters from India

Rajiv & Kalpana



# Building Beautiful Families 2009 Calendar

**NOW AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE.**

AFTH is proud to announce our 2009 *Building Beautiful Families Calendar* is **now on sale!**

The calendar, featuring AFTH children, makes a wonderful holiday gift for family and friend. It is truly a gift that keeps on giving as proceeds go towards AFTH's humanitarian aid efforts including a fund which offers financial assistance for birthmothers struggling to provide for their basic needs during this challenging time in their lives.



This year the calendar features a **UNIQUE PULL-OUT INSERT** including a section to record information vital for a babysitter to have in an emergency, as well as a section to record special dates to be used year after year.

**Celebrate adoption, and order your calendars today before they are gone!**

## CALENDARS PRICES:

Purchased at an AFTH office - \$12.00  
Online & order form purchases - \$13.50

## Building Beautiful Families 2009 Calendar

**COMPLETE FORM AND RETURN WITH PAYMENT**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

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

= \$ \_\_\_\_\_ **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

**Or Visit AFTH Store to Order Online!**



# AFTH Events and Activities



## Asian New Year Celebration

We will be hosting our 13th Annual Asian New Year Celebration on January 10, 2009. This year, we are extending an invitation to all AFTH families, no matter what program families adopted through, to come and celebrate the Asian New Year with us.

Look for more information closer to the date on our website under the news and events section.

## CHERRY HILL OFFICE

### Halloween Open House

Join us for some Halloween fun at our office open house. Children are welcome to come in costume and parents too! Refreshments and activities will be provided for everyone to enjoy. Get your costumes out and come socialize with other AFTH families and staff.



**Thursday, October 30th from 4pm-7pm**

*RSVP by October 27th by calling 856-665-5655 or emailing [JenniferB@afth.org](mailto:JenniferB@afth.org)*



### Holiday Party

Start the holiday season with some fun and stop in and celebrate with us in Cherry Hill. Meet and visit with other AFTH families and enjoy refreshments as we all come together for some holiday cheer!

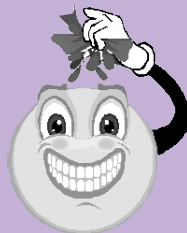
**Thursday, December 4th from 4pm-7pm**

*RSVP by October 27th by calling 856-665-5655 or emailing [JenniferB@afth.org](mailto:JenniferB@afth.org)*

## HARRISBURG OFFICE

### Holiday Party

Come and celebrate the holiday season with AFTH staff and other families. A simple holiday craft and refreshments will be provided. Join with other families and let us celebrate the joy of the season together.



**Tuesday, December 9th from 6pm-8pm**

*RSVP by December 4th by calling 717-232-1787 or emailing [JudiD@afth.org](mailto:JudiD@afth.org)*

## LANCASTER OFFICE

### Costume Party

We want to welcome all families to join us for a costume party. We encourage both children and parents to dress up and come ready to have some fun. Activities for children and refreshments will be provided. This is a great opportunity to visit with other families you have met during the process and to meet new ones.

**Saturday, October 25th from 10am-1pm**

*RSVP by October 23rd by calling 717-399-7766 or emailing [AmandaK@afth.org](mailto:AmandaK@afth.org)*

### Crocheting & Knitting Group

Kick off National Adoption Month with this unique support group where crafting and socializing are combined. We will begin making blankets to be donated to hospitals and orphanages. Everyone is welcome to join us. No experience is necessary, just a willingness to learn. Upon RSVPing, you will be sent a small list of supplies that you will need to bring with you. Refreshments will be provided.



**Thursday, November 13th from 6pm-8pm**

*RSVP by November 6th by calling 717-399-7766 or emailing [AmandaK@afth.org](mailto:AmandaK@afth.org)*

### Holiday Cookie Party

Join us in celebrating the holiday season with a cookie exchange at our office. Come together with AFTH staff and families for an hour of holiday cheer. Bring your favorite cookies to share with everyone.



**Thursday, December 11th from 5:30-6:30pm**

*RSVP by December 10th by calling 717-399-7766 or emailing [AmandaK@afth.org](mailto:AmandaK@afth.org)*

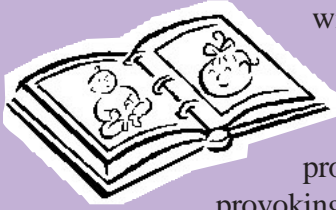


# AFTH Events and Activities Cont'd

## VIRGINIA OFFICE

### *Celebrate National Adoption Month*

This November celebrate adoption by creating a lifebook that will last a lifetime. Join us for a hands on session with Michele Deane, AFTH China adoptive mother and co-owner of "Memories Galore." Michele will provide facilitating and thought provoking exercises for the framework of a Lifebook. There is organizational structure and a 90 day plan to finish the project. There is package of materials available for an additional \$50 to start the Lifebook during the session. This is a perfect chance for those who have adopted to make a permanent Lifebook to share with their child now and in the future.



**Saturday, November 8th from 1:30pm - 4pm**

**Cost is \$10/person or \$15/couple**

Register online at [www.afth.org](http://www.afth.org) or email [IrisL@afth.org](mailto:IrisL@afth.org)

### *Holiday Party*

Come celebrate the holiday season with crafts, door prizes, food, and of course Santa! Join AFTH staff and families for an afternoon of fun. Bring a dish to share with others: if your last name starts with A-G bring a main dish, H-R side or salad, and S-Z dessert. Since the holiday spirit is about giving, please bring a non-perishable item for the church pantry.



**Saturday, December 6th from Noon - 2pm  
at the St. Martin's Episcopal Church in Williamsburg**

RSVP by December 4th by calling 757-361-0008 or emailing [IrisL@afth.org](mailto:IrisL@afth.org)

## ALLENTOWN OFFICE

### *Annual Cookie Party*

Join us for our 5th Annual Cookie party. Bring a dozen of your favorite cookies to share. If you're lucky, there might even be a surprise visit from a Jolly Old Fellow. Come and enjoy the beauty of the season with special friends!



**Thursday, December 11th from 6pm - 7:30pm  
at the home of Gretchen VanVelsor and Sandy Evans**

RSVP by December 5th by calling 610-432-2384 or emailing [KarenF@afth.org](mailto:KarenF@afth.org)

### *Breakfast with Santa*

The Buck family is once again sponsoring a Breakfast with Santa to support China's Tomorrow Plan which benefits Chinese orphanages. This event consists of a breakfast buffet, live entertainment, and a very special visit with Santa. After breakfast, you can choose to cut your very own Christmas tree, take a horse drawn wagon ride, and visit the Holiday Gift Shoppe. Space is limited so register today to reserve your space for this very special holiday gathering!



**Saturday, November 29th in the morning**

For more information about pricing and for directions visit [www.whitechristmaschalet.com](http://www.whitechristmaschalet.com)

## DELAWARE OFFICE

### *Open House*

Join AFTH staff, parents and children for a casual evening of conversation and refreshments. Meet and greet the new members of the Delaware staff and get to know your social worker while mingling with other adoptive families. Halloween candy will be provided and children and parents are welcome to wear costumes.



**Tuesday, October 21st from 6:00pm-8:00pm**

No RSVP necessary just drop in and say hello.



### *National Adoption Day Celebration*

The Delaware court invites adoptive families to join them for a celebration of adoption on National Adoption Day at the Delaware Technical and Community College in Dover, DE.

**Saturday, November 15th from 9:30pm-4:00pm**

Visit <http://courts.delaware.gov/cprb> for more info. or contact the Delaware office for a registration form.

## CONNECTICUT OFFICE

### Knitting Group

Join us and participate in our efforts to send two large boxes of beautiful hand knitted items to an orphanage in Ukraine. We have the yarn, needles, and the know-how! Don't know how to knit - we'll teach you. We need to get to work on some more items to send. Our group meets each month in our office for an evening of socializing and of course knitting!



**Wednesday, October 15th from 7:00pm-9:00pm**  
**Wednesday, November 19th from 7:00pm-9:00pm**  
**Wednesday, December 17th from 7:00pm-9:00pm**  
*Contact Penny at 860-657-2626 for more info.*

### Holiday Party



We will be hosting a holiday party for staff and families to come together to celebrate the holidays. Details to be determined. RSVP is required so contact us for more information if your family would like to attend. We would love to see you there.

**Saturday, December 6th from 1pm - 4pm**  
**at The Gallery in Glastonbury, Ct**  
*RSVP by December 1st by calling 860-657-2626*

### Mentoring Program

Would you like to be a mentor or be mentored? Our mentoring program is up and running! This program is a way for adoptive families to connect with each other to build a unique support system. We are always seeking new mentors and always welcoming new families who would like to be assigned a mentor.

*Contact Penny at 860-657-2626 for more info.*

## PITTSBURGH OFFICE

### Holiday Party

Lets come together to celebrate the holiday season this year. Join us for our holiday party which is sure to be a great afternoon of family fun. Children will enjoy a puppet show and a visit from Santa.

**Sunday, December 7th from 2pm - 5pm**  
**at the New Stanton Fire Hall**  
*RSVP by November 26th by emailing [KatieH@afth.org](mailto:KatieH@afth.org)*

## AFTH Support Groups

Adoptions From The Heart proudly offers support groups for waiting families. The groups are a great way for AFTH families to come together in support and share in a discussion.

---

### HARRISBURG

Our Harrisburg Office holds support groups for all waiting families on the 3rd Thursday of each month. Meetings are held at the Landis Building at the Polyclinic. Join us for our next meeting.

- Thursday, Oct. 16 beginning at 7pm
- Thursday, Nov. 20 beginning at 7pm
- Thursday, Dec. 18 beginning at 7pm

**Call (717) 232-1787 for more information**

---

### VIRGINIA

Our Virginia Office hosts support group meetings to bring AFTH waiting families together.

- Saturday, Nov. 8 beginning at 11am  
in Midlothian, VA

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

**Call (757) 361-0008 for more information**

---

### CHERRY HILL

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

Adoptive parent support groups are also being held to bring waiting families together for support.

- Wednesday, Nov. 5 beginning at 7pm  
Topic: "Managing the Waiting Time"  
We welcome both domestic & international families.

**Call (856) 665-5655 for more information**

---

### DELAWARE

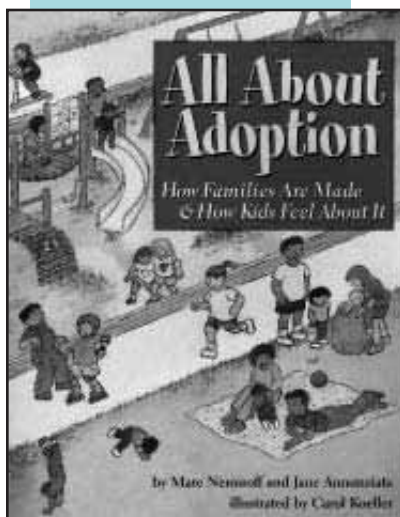
Our Delaware Office is hosting a Domestic Waiting Family Support Group this December.

- Tuesday, Dec. 2 beginning at 6:30pm

**Call (302) 658-8883 for more information**

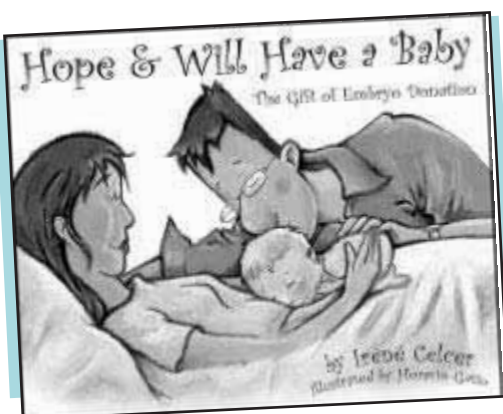
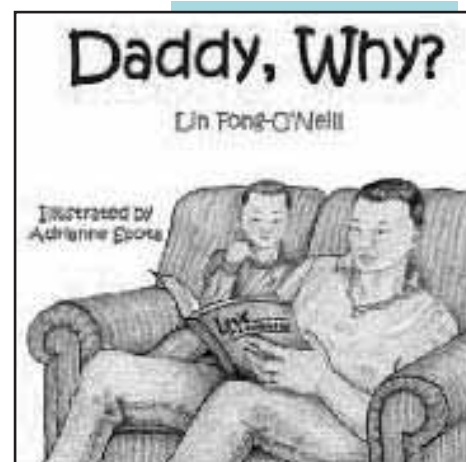
## Book Reviews

In celebration of National Adoption Month in November, the featured books in this newsletter edition are wonderful stories which can be read to children as a way of opening up a discussion about adoption.



**ALL ABOUT ADOPTION: HOW FAMILIES ARE MADE & HOW KIDS FEEL ABOUT IT (Paperback)** by Marc A. Nemiroff & Jane Annunziata - For children adopted at any age and from any country, *All About Adoption* explores the what, how and why of adoption, as well as the many feelings kids can experience as they grow up. And for parents, an extensive afterword discusses the unique practical and emotional dimensions of adoptive children and their families, with suggestions for answering the most challenging questions. **AFTH Price \$10.00**

**DADDY WHY? By Lin Fong-O'Neill** - This beautiful book is unique because it is told through the eyes of a father to a son. In this book, the father uses the upcoming adoption of a sibling to explain to his son that love happens regardless of age, appearance, or racial makeup. The more one gives love, the more love they receive. This charming book is wonderful in anticipating the fears many children experience while waiting for a new sibling, and deals is helpful in alleviating questions in regard to trans-racial adoption. **AFTH Price \$17.00**



**HOPE AND WILL HAVE A BABY: THE GIFT OF EMBRYO DONATION** by Irene Celcer - This book is a welcomed addition to the children's books genre of non-traditional family building. What stands out when reading this story is that the subject matter never veers from the overriding message that children born into our world through reproductive efforts are loved and cherished. Told in a language a child can understand, read the tale of how mom and dad met, fell in love, and ultimately built a family. **AFTH Price \$20.00 (HC)**

To learn more about AFTH's new Heartbeats:Embryo Placement Program visit [www.afth.org/heartbeats](http://www.afth.org/heartbeats)

**All reviewed books are available in our branch offices, online, or by calling (610) 642-7200.**

## AFTH Program Updates

This section has been revised to now provide updates on all of our programs including Domestic and Heartbeats. Due to our Hague status, we are no longer accepting any new applications for the majority of our international programs, however we felt it was important to continue providing updates for those programs for which we have families in-process. Once we no longer have families in-process, those program will be removed from this section. We encourage families in-process to join the listserves for more regular updates on their program.

**HEARTBEATS** - For more information on our new Embryo Placement Program see article on page 3 and visit [www.afth.org/heartbeats](http://www.afth.org/heartbeats) or call 1-888-330-3362.

**DOMESTIC** - As always, AFTH continues to do outreach and advertising for birthmothers. At the beginning of the college fall semester, AFTH connected with local campuses and even held some trainings for RAs. An AOL Instant Messenger account has also been created making it easy for women considering making an adoption plan to chat with us online. Social workers have been holding trainings for clinics and hospitals to increase awareness about the process of adoption and to build referral sources.

Webinars focusing on the African-American Domestic Program are held each month and we are continuing to seek diverse families for this program.

In 2007, 131 families were created through our domestic program. 127 families have received domestic placements so far in 2008 - only 4 less than last year and we still have 4 months to go in 2008. It is exciting to see this increase in placements and it is great news for everyone in the domestic programs.

**RUSSIA** - AFTH's Russia Partnering Program continues to run well. 3 families brought children home from Moscow during the summer, and a fourth family brought a child home from St. Petersburg. 9 additional families are awaiting invitations to travel to Russia, either to adopt their child in Court, or to meet the child each hopes to adopt. Families continue to receive referrals within a few months of completion of

paperwork. Referrals are of boys and girls, as young as 12-36 months and up to 5 years of age. While the travel expenses are high for this program, these are many beautiful young children available for placement in a short period of time.

**UKRAINE** - Ukraine is open for families who are open to children 6 and older with minor or correctable conditions. The in-country process continues to be challenging and families must be prepared to be patient and flexible regarding child referrals. It has been getting more difficult to complete the process in less than 4 or 5 weeks since it is often taking 2-3 appointments to get an acceptable referral. Time from dossier submission to travel is expected to shorten to a few months so for appropriate families this process could be completed in less than a year. Questions regarding Ukraine can be directed to Terry Petrone at [TerryP@afth.org](mailto:TerryP@afth.org)

**CHINA** - In July, 18 families traveled to China and brought 17 daughters and 1 son (a boy was requested) home. We congratulate these families and wish them much happiness. The next group of families who are expecting referrals are those with a log in date of 2/16/06.

**GUATEMALA** - Many Guatemala cases are finishing up. 2 families traveled in July to bring children home and 3 in August. The majority of the cases have PGN approval. There has a delay getting the new birth certificates after PGN approval due to the new RENAP agency that is in charge of issuing the birth certificates. Some cases have been waiting 45 business days.



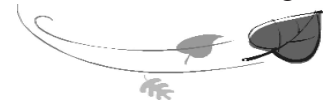
## Program Updates Cont'd

**KAZAKHSTAN** - Congratulations to our 3 families who completed their adoptions and the 3 who traveled on their 1st trips in August and September. It is anticipated that several more families will have travel dates by the end of the year. The government of Kazakhstan has announced that it will be requiring agencies working in the country to register with the Consulate by September 15, 2008, and that only Hague accredited agencies are eligible to register. AFTH has been working with the Consulate and with a Hague approved agency on a transfer plan. The new agency will continue the program in Kostanai with the same n-country team and the goal is to have this transfer occur with as little inconvenience for the families as possible. The changes will affect families in process who have not yet submitted dossiers to the Consulate and as soon as all of the details have been worked out a letter will be sent to all of the affected families with full information. Families whose dossiers were submitted to the Consulate prior to July 19, 2008, will continue to be processed as AFTH cases. Questions regarding Kazakhstan can be directed to Terry Petrone at [TerryP@afth.org](mailto:TerryP@afth.org).

**VIETNAM** - The existing Memorandum of Understanding between the United States and Vietnam expired on September 1, 2008. We are saddened that

despite the efforts of the American adoption community, the United States and Vietnam could not reach an agreement on a new Memorandum of Understanding. The Vietnamese Department of International Adoption has indicated that any American families with dossiers currently in Vietnam, who have not received an official referral, will have their cases closed and their dossiers returned to them by the DIA. There are no specific details or time frames regarding the return of dossiers. On September 8, 2008, JCICS announced that the Vietnamese government has issued a formal diplomatic request for negotiations to begin again regarding intercountry adoptions between the United States and Vietnam. Vietnam has named a high ranking Vietnamese official who will be in charge of their negotiations. JCICS continues to advocate for the children and adoptive families involved in this suspension of adoptions and is hopeful for a positive response from the United States.

Adoptions From The Heart is pleased to announce that 10 families have been matched with children. Two families traveled to bring home their children. Congratulations to Mark and Angela and Michael on the completion of their adoptions. 8 families are waiting for I-600 approvals to travel.



### Got E-mail?

To sign-up for monthly adoption program updates, send an e-mail with the word "subscribe" in the subject line to the appropriate email address:

**CHINA** - [AFTHChinaUpdates-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:AFTHChinaUpdates-subscribe@yahoogroups.com)

**GUATEMALA** - [AFTHGuatUpdates-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:AFTHGuatUpdates-subscribe@yahoogroups.com)

**INDIA** - [AFTHIndiaUpdates-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:AFTHIndiaUpdates-subscribe@yahoogroups.com)

**KAZAKHSTAN** - [AFTHKazakUpdates-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:AFTHKazakUpdates-subscribe@yahoogroups.com)

**RUSSIA** - [AFTHRussiaUpdates-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:AFTHRussiaUpdates-subscribe@yahoogroups.com)

**UKRAINE** - [AFTHUkraineUpdates-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:AFTHUkraineUpdates-subscribe@yahoogroups.com)

**VIETNAM** - [AFTHVietnamUpdates-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:AFTHVietnamUpdates-subscribe@yahoogroups.com)

To become a member of our Domestic online discussion group where you can connect with other AFTH families, send an email with the word "subscribe" in the subject line to the email address below:

**DOMESTIC** - [AFTHopenadoption-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:AFTHopenadoption-subscribe@yahoogroups.com)



## Firsts: Hers, Mine and Ours

By Gretchen Boger-O'Bryan

A child's firsts are something dear to a parent's heart. Whether it's that first taste of baby cereal, an unsure, wobbly first step or the fleeting sound of the first mama or dada, such moments are treasured.

Of course, firsts continue beyond babyhood. There's the first pedaling of a tricycle or the morning they finally wrangle their shirt over their head unassisted. As parents, we catch our breath at the hint of such a moment, and watch, recording it all to memory.

My household is now firmly planted in The Threes and unlike Maeve's baby months, the firsts are less predictable. She recently came home from preschool with more than an art project. There were worksheets. Her father and I stared in disbelief. Somehow we're parents to a child not only old enough to draw a line from a number six to a set of six apples, but a teacher comments on it!

Wasn't it just yesterday we met the seven-pound her in the hospital nursery?

We're now making a picture dictionary. We look through magazines and cut pictures beginning with the letter of the week, and she pastes them onto the appropriate page of her notebook. While searching for C items, we stopped at a boy with curly hair. She pointed, "Curly like me!"

Curly, indeed. The soft corkscrew ringlets that adorn her head bounce and shine, much like the girl herself. For someone like me with straight hair, caring for the curls of my bi-racial daughter certainly has been an education.

Lately when our morning de-tangling ritual had become a bigger struggle than usual I knew it was time for a haircut, something I'd put off in an effort to grow those sweet curls.

The task reminded me of pre-adoption classes at our local Adoptions From The Heart office. We had discussed inevitable situations like another parent at the park asking if my husband is black, or Maeve's friends asking why her mom doesn't share her cocoa skin.

Sure, bringing a child for a haircut might seem relatively mundane, but the fact I'm an adoptive mother changed how I approached the process. I knew bringing Maeve to my salon wouldn't do her justice so I chose a local shop that caters to her ethnicity.

With a camera in one hand and Maeve's little paw in the other, I battled the butterflies in my belly as we entered the salon, jingle bells clanging against the door. I tried to ignore the curious glances of folks trying to make sense of the situation.

Maeve took the hairdresser's hand and walked to the wash sink. She dutifully followed every direction and a few booster-cushions later, Maeve was perched at the hairdresser's station, donning a dog-and-cat cape, and watching herself - and others mid-beautification - in the mirror's reflection. By then I was too busy snapping photographs for posterity to pay any sort of mind to pesky belly butterflies.

When she was done with the trim, Maeve walked me to the back of the salon where the older girls sat under bubble dryers. She chose a vacant chair and scrambled up, settling in underneath the giant plastic lid. Just another one of the girls.

Just as we prepared to leave, snips of curls clutched in my hand as a memento, I was thinking how smoothly everything had gone when Maeve's hairdresser asked, in a not-so-quiet voice, "So, where is she from?"

As the butterflies summoned to attention, I was reminded that it's just this sort of everyday experience those agency classes had prepared us for. I looked down at my daughter, who didn't seem to notice the question, and readied my answer.

I'm certainly not shy about discussing adoption - both my husband and daughter were adopted, we actively work to have Maeve's birth family in our lives, I write about adoption and help facilitate a support group for the triad. It's just that as Maeve gets older, adoption becomes more her story to tell (or not) than ours.

Since these childhood firsts belong more to her rather than us as her parents, our focus has begun to shift from

simply enjoying the pleasure of each milestone to protecting Maeve's privacy, wary of questions that she can hear yet that were asked as if she couldn't. My answers matter more than ever before.

Maeve's first haircut presented a first for me as an adoptive parent - venturing into an unknown, following through publicly on the commitment we made to raise our daughter in a way that embraces her culture and background.

As a parent in general, I'll continue to hone my reaction to all the firsts yet to come - adoption-related or not: going out alone with friends, turning the key in an ignition, primping for a date, writing a paper, coming home with a broken heart, completing a college application.

But first things first: Next week my little Maeve boards a bus with her preschool classmates to visit a pumpkin farm.

Spiked cider, anyone?

---

*Gretchen Boger-O'Bryan was placed with her infant daughter in July 2005 through Adoptions From The Heart. An editor in legal publishing, she also is a freelance writer and writes about adoption and first-time parenthood on her blog, musings:mamahood&more, at [www.mamagigi.wordpress.com](http://www.mamagigi.wordpress.com). She is also a co-facilitator of an adoption support group in New Jersey for all members of the triad. Reach her at [mamagigi@comcast.net](mailto:mamagigi@comcast.net).*



### *Holiday Gifts for Birthparents*

For families in the domestic programs planning on sending gifts for their child's birthparent(s) to a local AFTH office, we ask that you also include funds to cover the cost of shipping the gift from our office to the birthparent's address. We appreciate your consideration in this matter.

## Celebrate National Adoption Month What does Adoption Mean to Your Family?

In honor of National Adoption month, take time as a family to reflect on what adoption means to you. Find time at dinner, or after a bedtime story, or driving to school to talk about adoption.

Most people today are touched by adoption in one way or another.

Adoptive parents may see adoption as the dream of having a family coming true, or being able to see their spouse in a new light as a Mom or Dad. Maybe to you it means having nieces and nephews or grandchildren to spoil.

Birthparents may see adoption as bitter sweet. It is a heartbreaking loss mixed with a way for their child to have a life they could not provide.

For foster care children, adoption means a future, a home, and most importantly love.

Or maybe most beautifully put from the mouths of babes...

- "I look different than my parents but we love each other just like everyone else."
- "Adoption means I have adoptive parents and birth parents - more people who love me."
- "I grew in my Mommy and Daddy's hearts before I was born"

Adoption social workers usually find the meaning of adoption throughout the beautiful moments of their jobs. For some, it is when they get to make "the call" to a waiting family telling them they have been chosen by a birthmother. For others, it is seeing the birthparents reunite with the adoptive families at our annual picnic. Still for others, it is the radiating joy they see in clients during their first post-placement visit.

The meaning of adoption varies from family to family and person to person. It is the bond that hundreds of thousands of families share. It is the connection that we are to celebrate this November.

So what is the best answer to what adoption means?

**SIMPLY PUT....ADOPTION MEANS LOVE!**

## LET'S TALK ADOPTION

Hosted by: CPFA

Saturday, November 1, 2008  
8:00am-4:45pm

Rutgers University Busch Campus Center  
Piscataway, NJ

For More Information and to Register:  
[www.cpfanjanj.org](http://www.cpfanjanj.org)

## 28TH ANNUAL APC CONFERENCE

Sunday, November 23, 2008  
8:00am-5:00pm

Weill Cornell Medical College of Cornell in NYC

For More Information and to Register:  
[www.adtopiveparents.org](http://www.adtopiveparents.org)  
or Call 212-304-8479

**WYNNEWOOD OFFICE**  
30-31 Hampstead Circle  
Wynnewood, PA 19096  
610.642.7200

**ALLENTOWN OFFICE**  
2212 Union Blvd  
Allentown, PA 18109  
610.432.2384

**HARRISBURG OFFICE**  
4331 North Front Street  
Harrisburg, PA 17110  
717.232.1787

**LANCASTER OFFICE**  
1525 Oregon Pike, Suite 402  
Lancaster, PA 17601  
717.399.7766

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

**DELAWARE OFFICE**  
18-A Trolley Square  
Wilmington, DE 19806  
302.658.8883

**NEW JERSEY OFFICE**  
451 Woodland Avenue  
Cherry Hill, NJ 08002  
856.665.5655 Southern NJ  
732.335.8883 Central NJ

**VIRGINIA OFFICE**  
1407 Stephanie Way, Suite H  
Chesapeake, VA 23320  
757.361.0008

**WEST VIRGINIA OFFICE**  
1.800-355-5500

**NEW YORK**  
1.800-355-5500

**CONNECTICUT OFFICE**  
76 Eastern Blvd. Suite 7  
Glastonbury, CT 06033  
860.657.2626

**TOLL FREE NUMBER**  
**1.800.355.5500**

**VISIT OUR WEBSITE:**  
[www.afth.org](http://www.afth.org)

### Is Our Mailing List Current?

Do you wish to be removed from future mailings? Are you receiving more than one copy? Are your name and address incorrect? Please let us know by e-mailing [adoption@afth.org](mailto:adoption@afth.org).



Adoptions From The Heart®

30-31 Hampstead Circle  
Wynnewood, PA 19096

NON-PROFIT  
ORG  
US POSTAGE  
PAID  
PERMIT # 36  
ARDMORE, PA



2008