

Adoption News

A Quarterly Newsletter from

Adoptions From The Heart

Fall 2009

Birthfathers: A Missing Link

When most people think of the adoption triad, they think of the birth mother, adoptive family and the child; but there is a missing piece to this picture. Birthfathers may be the most overlooked individuals in the adoption process, but it is important to remember that they have the same parental rights as the biological mother. Some birthfathers contest an adoption not because they actually want to parent the child, but because they are angry at being treated as if they didn't exist. The open adoption process welcomes birthfathers and helps them to identify ways to stay involved in their children's lives.

Birthfathers' needs and wishes should be respected and discussed in order to create a plan that is inclusive of all parties. Many birthmothers simply assume things will be easier if the birthfather remains unnamed. The birthmother may not even be aware that the birthfather has legal rights. She also may have personal reasons for counting him out.

No social worker, lawyer, or adoptive parent can force a birthmother to name the birthfather

if she is determined to keep him anonymous, but it is always better to include all parties when possible.

Along with having the same rights as birthmothers, birthfathers are also entitled to the same services and counseling as birthmothers and

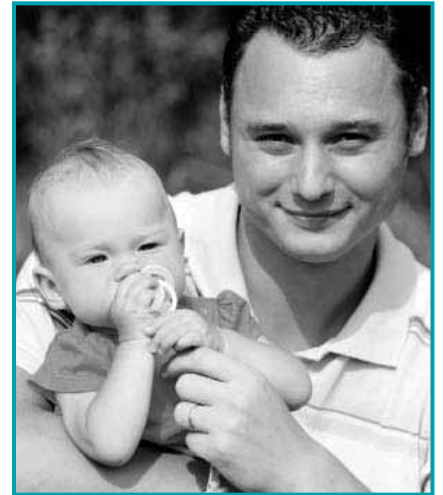
Adoptees want and deserve to know their birthfathers just as much as their birthmothers

are encouraged to take advantage of them. There are many social obstacles for birthfathers to overcome when considering adoption. Many men believe that "real men keep their children" or that family and friends will think less of them for creating an adoption plan, but a responsible father is one who ensures that all of his child's social, emotional and financial needs are met by whatever means necessary. Deciding on adoption is not shameful but an honorable, difficult and loving choice.

By being involved in an open adoption plan and committing to an ongoing relationship with the child and the adoptive family, birthfathers are taking an active and important role in ensuring the well-being of their child. When children have little or no contact with their biological fathers, they

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Birthfathers Cont'd

tend to develop unrealistically strong feelings of love or hate for them - casting birthfathers as heroes or villains. The ongoing contact afforded by open adoption allows birthfathers to develop realistic and balanced relationships with their children.

Adoptive children want and deserve to know their birthfathers just as much as their birthmothers. Both birthparents provide critical keys to a child's emotional security and his or her genetic history.



Holiday Gifts for Birthparents

Families from our domestic programs planning on sending gifts to their child's birthparent(s) to AFTH, we ask that all gifts are sent before Thanksgiving. This will give the agency enough time to process and send the gifts along to the birth parents. Remember Harrisburg mailings should be sent to the Lancaster address and Hazlet mailings to the Cherry Hill address. AFTH also asks families 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. Please make sure to include your full name on the packages to ensure that we send them to the appropriate family.

November is National Adoption Awareness Month National Adoption Day: Saturday, November 21st

As those who have been touched by adoption know, November is National Adoption Awareness Month.

This November, AFTH is celebrating the over 5,500 children who were placed in loving homes through AFTH since 1985, and the many more to come each year that passes.

As an effort to help spread awareness about adoption, AFTH reaches out to local libraries, book stores, and coffee shops asking for them to celebrate National Adoption Month by giving out bookmarks and hanging up posters we have designed for this special month.

AFTH is also working this month, and every month, to get more positive adoption stories in the media. Last year, we had many families submit editorials to their local papers about November being National Adoption Month and what adoption means to them. We invite any families interested in submitting an editorial to their local

newspaper about adoption this November to email KellyM@afth.org. Submitting an adoption-related editorial is a great way to participate in our National Adoption Month Awareness campaign.

For those families created through adoption, adoption is celebrated 12 months a year. Adoption is celebrated the first time you hold your child in your arms and then again each and every time thereafter. Children celebrate adoption when they sit down with their parents and read their favorite adoption focused children's books. Adoption is celebrated in moments when you realize your child really understands the idea of adoption and how they came to your family in precious moments like mentioned in Gretchen's column on page 10. Adoption is celebrated the moment your social worker calls you and says "you have been selected!"

Adoption is a celebration in itself. A celebration of love. Love that extends beyond biological ties and connects families through a common bond.

Whether you are still waiting for "the call", celebrating your first holiday season with your child, or are beginning the adoption process for a second or third time, AFTH wishes you a very happy National Adoption Month and warm wishes during the holiday season and throughout the New Year.

Happy Holidays to You From AFTH!





Congratulations to Families Who Have Recently Adopted!

Sons from the USA

Jeremy & Francesco
John & Janet
Douglas & Kristen
Gwen
Laurie
Stephen & Jeffrey
Robert & Jill
Scott & Marianne
Philip & Rachel
Steve & Nicole
Michael & Meaghan
Allen & Sandra
Tanya
Paul & Shiela
James & JoElle (twins)
Kevin & Janice
Stephanie
Michael & Jessica
Tracy & Clint

Daughters from the USA

Christopher & Jeannine
Synthia
Stephen & Kelly
Greg & Wendy
Joseph & Grace
Christopher & Heather
Michael & Karen
John & Suzanne
Lawrence & Moira
Joanna & Lisa
Raymond & Dawn
John & Patricia
Robert & Jacqueline
Michael & Victoria
Luigi & Joann
Girvan & Patricia
Jeremy & Michael
George & Susan
Thomas & Carol

Sons from China

James & Christine
Jean Noel & Patricia (twins)

Daughters from China

James & Jennifer
Michael & Jacquelyn
Ronald & Janice
Scott & Barbara
Krista
Craig & Carol
Eric & Tania
Steven & Kristen

Sons from Russia

Eric & Billie
Camilla

Children from Kazakhstan

John & Bilu (Boy & Girl)

Got E-mail? Stay Informed with AFTH!

A new update listserve has been created for families in our domestic program. Families in-process can subscribe to the listserve by sending a message with the word "SUBSCRIBE" in the subject line to:

DOMESTIC - AFTHDomesticUpdates-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

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

DOMESTIC DISCUSSION GROUP- AFTHopenadoption-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

New CDC Rule Has Devastating Impact on Internationally Adopted Children

New CDC regulations have been instituted for China beginning July 1, which indicate that immigrants to the U.S., including adopted children over the age of two, must undergo a successive series of tests to indicate that they are free of TB, and if they fail the screening, they are required to wait until full treatment is administered in the country of origin before coming to the U.S.

This means that many U.S. parents will be required to stay in the foreign country for an extended period of time (up 12 months or more) or be forced to abandon their child back to the care of the orphanage or find a foster family abroad that would be willing to care for their child. For an orphan the implications of this could be devastating; being once again separated from people they are bonding with and placed back in an orphanage or a foster situation.

On a conference call held on August 7 between the CDC, Department of State, congressional offices, adoptions agencies, attorneys, various independent doctors, and children's organizations, the CDC asked a renowned expert to discuss the issue (Dr. Jeffrey R. Starke, M.D., FAAP of the Texas Children's Hospital). Dr. Starke immediately and definitively stated that there were only 2 reported cases in the world of a child having been known to transmit TB and that he could comfortably state that more than 99% of children with active TB are not contagious. TB generally is not considered infectious in children, as children don't have the lung power required to expel the germ. He stated that the culture tests on children are not reliable and implied that they are of little use in these situations. In addition people with TB are generally considered to be non-contagious within 2-4 weeks of taking medication.

Natural born children of U.S. citizens are not required to undergo these medical exams to get back into the U.S., but orphans, now children of U.S. citizens, must languish in foreign countries and be denied access to U.S. healthcare. This is discriminatory.

We would like to see changes at the CDC. Either they have judged adopted children not worthy of the same

rights and benefits as other Americans, or worse, have absolutely failed to consider the fundamental question of who it is they are writing these regulations for.

In an attempt to gain support and advocacy on this issue in broader terms, Joint Council launched a petition requesting that the CDC change its protocols and more appropriately protect the health of America.

Another way to prevent problems like this in the future would be to pass legislation stating that internationally adopted children immediately obtain U.S. citizenship upon the finalization of their adoption overseas. If legislation like this had been in place, internationally adopted children would not be treated as an immigrants but as U.S. citizens and would be allowed to return to the U.S. with their parents.

Due to advocacy on the part of many adoption advocates, the CDC has chosen to revise its 2007 Tuberculosis Technical Instructions. The criteria described in these addendum Technical Instructions are based on physiologic aspects of childhood tuberculosis disease and children's ability to transmit tuberculosis disease. These criteria do not apply to adults or children with tuberculosis disease associated with higher levels of transmissibility. For the most part the addendum does help adopted children who are required to have a sputum culture to travel to the U.S. immediately after the test, even while results are pending. However, there are certain criteria that may keep the child in-country but the addendum also provides for waiver petitions to be filed.





Legislation



RECESSION CAUSES DROP IN EMPLOYERS OFFERING ADOPTION BENEFITS - A July 16 Wall Street Journal article by Sue Shellenbarger, "Targeting 'Feel-Good' Benefits," reports that the number of employers offering adoption assistance had fallen from a high of 22 % in 2006 to 10% in 2009. The article notes that despite the recession, a few companies are starting to include adoption assistance among their employee benefits. Hewitt Associates finds that only 0.1% of employees take advantage of such benefits annually, so they are not typically expensive to implement.



ADOPTees & BIRTHPARENTS ADVOCATE FOR ACCESS TO BIRTH CERTIFICATES - According to a July 22 article in the Philadelphia Inquirer, "Adoptees protest for access to original birth certificates," about 120 adoptees and birthparents protested outside the National Conference of State Legislatures annual meeting in Philadelphia. They advocated for state law changes to restore the right of adult adoptees to gain access to their original birth certificates.

HEP A VACCINE RECOMMENDED - On Feb. 25, the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) updated its guidance by recommending hepatitis A vaccination for all previously unvaccinated persons who anticipate close personal contact (e.g., household contact or regular babysitting) with an international adoptee from a country of high or intermediate endemicity during the first 60 days following arrival of the adoptee in the United States," ACIP concluded. "The first dose of the two-dose hepatitis A vaccine series should be administered as soon as adoption is planned, ideally two or more weeks before the arrival of the adoptee."

VIRGINIA - A new Virginia law took effect on July 1 that allows enforceable "cooperative adoption" agreements between adoptive and birth parents. The law provides birthparents the right to seek to enforce these "cooperative adoption" agreements.

WASHINGTON, D.C. - An apparently ground-breaking law went into effect on July 18 in Washington, D.C. that allows the consenting spouse or unmarried partner of a woman who gives birth through artificial insemination to be the child's legal parent, and to be listed as such on the birth certificate. The Domestic Partnership Judicial Determination of Parentage Amendment Act of 2009 (A18-0084) also states that the partner in a registered domestic partnership - straight or gay - is the presumed parent when his/her partner gives birth.

Love Builds Families Blog

<http://afth.wordpress.com>

AFTH has a new blog and is looking for adoptive families, adoptees, and birthparents to share their stories and experiences for additional blog posts. We are looking for blog posts about any topic surrounding adoption that you think would benefit other members of the adoption triad or anyone considering adoption. It can be a brief write up or a longer story. If you already have a blog, send it to us so we can link to it and vice versa.

Here are some example topics to help get your creative juices flowing: school experiences, transracial adoption topics, meeting your child's birthmother, in-country experiences, scrapbooking, creative ways to finance adoption, experiences of your extended family related to adoption, etc. The list goes on and on.

Send your blog contributions to: HeidiG@afth.org

Humanitarian Aid: Call for Help

Vietnam Project for Children Left Behind

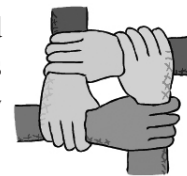
Although adoptions in Vietnam have shut down, the children left behind still need help. Tam Binh Orphanage has contacted us and asked AFTH to help them with a project to build a new facility for their handicap children. The project will include housing, new lavatories, physical therapy room, studying room and an activities room. In addition to raising money for the project, AFTH will oversee all the building plans through completion.

Tori Update and Continued Need for Help

AFTH has been collecting money to help aid a very special little girl, Tori. At only 9 months, when most babies are beginning to crawl, Tori began fighting for her life after being diagnosed with a rare and aggressive brain tumor.

Despite the many ups and downs since being diagnosed, this past July Tori celebrated one year post stem cell transplant when all of her post transplant tests came back normal.

At the end of August, Tori experienced her first day of nursery school. She was excited to go to school and make new friends.



Less than a month after Tori's first day of school, an MRI revealed that she had begun to experience a set back. In addition to her shunt becoming clogged and putting pressure on her brain, a substance appeared on the MRI and after more testing, her doctor believed this was a new tumor forming and not just a residual affect of radiation. Tori was admitted to the ICU and scheduled for surgery. Tori's surgery went well, the shunt was revised and is now working properly. Tori has headed home from the hospital and her family is now awaiting the biopsy results to determine the next course of action.

As you can imagine, this has been very hard on Tori's family. Donations to help her family with the tremendous medical expenses not covered by insurance are still being accepted. Please make sure to designate the donation for the "Tori Fund". We want to thank you on behalf of Tori's family for giving as generously as you can.

United Way Donor Program

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 from your company's United Way representative.
- 2) The agency's donor number is different in each area. The AFTH donor number for your area can be found in your United Way booklet.

PRINT: ADOPTIONS FROM THE HEART and the local branch office's address (see back page of newsletter) 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.

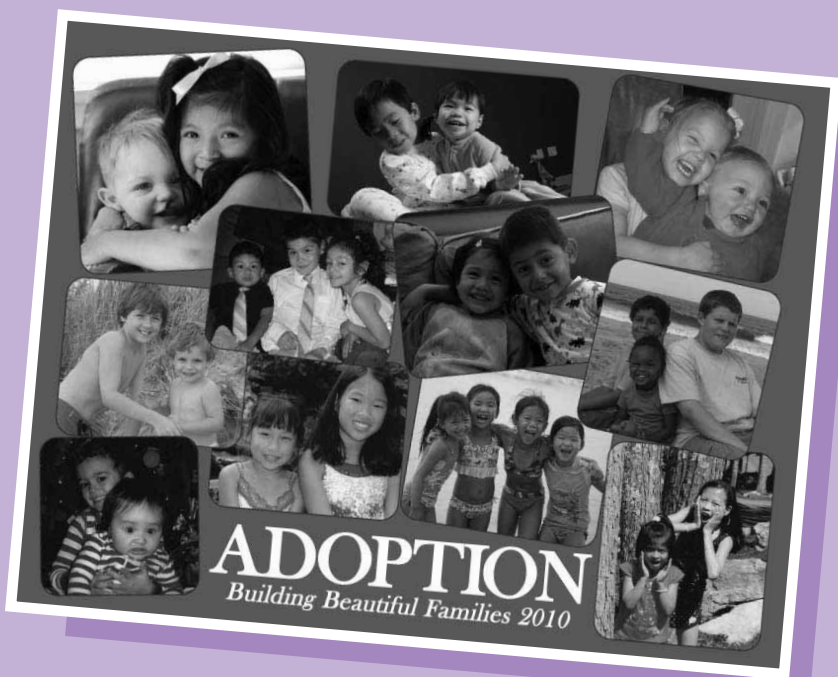
Thank you for considering us. We greatly appreciate your support!

Building Beautiful Families 2010 Calendar

**CALENDARS SELL QUICKLY...
ORDER YOURS TODAY.**

AFTH is proud to announce our 2010 *Building Beautiful Families Calendar* is **now on sale!**

The calendars make wonderful gifts for family and friends. 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.



Building Beautiful Families 2010 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!



The calendar also 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.

CALENDARS PRICES:

Purchased at an AFTH office - \$12.00

Online & order form purchases - \$13.50

AFTH Events and Activities

CHERRY HILL OFFICE



Trick or Treat

Bring your little ghosts and goblins to the office and get a special treat!

Thursday, October 29th from 4-7pm

RSVP by October 23rd by calling 856-665-5655 or emailing JenniferB@afth.org



ALLENTOWN OFFICE

Holiday Open House & Cookie Exchange

Join us for a holiday celebration with staff and families of Adoptions From The Heart. Enjoy fun activities for all the children! Tasty holiday treats and refreshments will be provided. If you like, bring your favorite cookies to share with everyone. We look forward to sharing this time with all of you.



Tuesday, December 1st from 6:30 - 8:00pm

RSVP by November 25th by calling 610-432-2384 or emailing TammyD@afth.org



Holiday Open House

Join us for punch and holiday cookies to celebrate the holiday season.

Thursday, December 11th from 4-7pm

RSVP by December 4th by calling 856-665-5655 or emailing JenniferB@afth.org

CENTRAL PA OFFICE

Holiday Open House

Join us for a holiday celebration with staff and families of Adoptions From The Heart. Enjoy fun activities for all the children! Tasty holiday refreshments will be provided. We look forward to sharing this time with all of you.



Wednesday, December 16th from 6:30-8:00pm

RSVP by December 11th by calling 717-399-7766 or emailing AmandaK@afth.org

CONNECTICUT OFFICE

Holiday Party

Visit from Santa, good food, and great friends! Cheryl Bisailon will again be taking pictures with Santa. There will also be face painting for the children.

Cost Per Family: TBA

Watch for future email blasts for updated information about the holiday party.



**Saturday, December 5th from 11am - 2pm
at The Gallery in Glastonbury, CT**

RSVP by November 30th by calling 860-657-2626 or emailing PennyR@afth.org

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 for the church pantry. Adoptive families: let us know if you are attending and would like to have a visit with your child's birthparents.

Saturday, December 5th from Noon - 2pm

at the St. Martin's Episcopal Church in Williamsburg
RSVP by December 3rd by calling 757-361-0008 or emailing VAReception@afth.org





Celebrate The Year of the Tiger!

All AFTH Families
Invited to Attend!

14th Annual Asian
New Year Celebration

Saturday
January 23, 2010
Noon - 3pm

Crowne Plaza Valley Forge - NEW!
260 Mall Blvd.
King of Prussia, PA 19406

J oin the F un!

Lunch and beverages will be served.

Cultural items, clothes, and books will
be for sale. *(Cash or checks only)*

Crafts for children of all ages.

Games for the older children.

Face Painting!

Mix of Asian and American dance, song,
and entertainment!

Spencer Studios will be taking family &
travel group portraits. Free 4 x 6 photo & fun
frame to take home with every purchase of
photo package.

Bring your extended family,
and meet new families!



Adoptions From The Heart®

Directions to the Crowne Plaza Valley Forge 260 Mall Blvd., King of Prussia, PA 19406 (610) 265-7500

From PA Turnpike East or West: Take Exit 326 (Valley Forge). Proceed to Valley Forge Park Exit 327; merge right onto North Gulph Road. Proceed to Goddard Blvd make a right. Proceed to Mall Blvd, make a left. After the 2nd traffic light, the hotel will be on the left.

From Route 202 North: Follow 202 North. At the first intersection (North Gulph Road), cross over the intersection and make a left onto Mall Blvd. The hotel will be on the right after the 2nd traffic light.

From Philadelphia: Take I-76 West to Exit 327 (Mall Blvd). Go down the ramp to the traffic light and turn left onto Mall Blvd. After the 2nd traffic light, the hotel will be on the left.

From Route 422 East: Take the First Avenue Exit. Turn right at the traffic light onto North Gulph Road. Proceed 2 traffic lights and make a left onto Goddard Blvd. At the end of Goddard Blvd. make a left onto Mall Blvd. After the 2nd traffic light, the hotel will be on the left.

From I-95: Take Exit 7 (476 North Plymouth Meeting). Follow 476 North to Exit 16B (76 West to Valley Forge). Follow 76 West to Exit 327 (Mall Blvd). Go down the ramp to the traffic light and turn left onto Mall Blvd. After the 2nd light, the hotel will be on the left.

From Route 202 South: Follow 202 South to the King of Prussia Mall. Make a right onto Mall Blvd. Hotel will be on the right after the 2nd traffic light.

Make a weekend of it!

Rooms at the Crowne Plaza have been blocked off until 12/24/09.

The new hotel has many perks: located across the street from the King of Prussia Mall and 2 miles from Valley Forge Historical National Park, complimentary access to Bally Total Fitness adjacent to hotel, courtesy shuttle service within 5-mile radius of hotel and free wireless high-speed internet access in every room.

Call 610.265.7500 for reservations and mention ***Adoptions From The Heart***

Adoptions From The Heart's Asian New Year Celebration 2010

Please clip this form and return with payment by January 8

We will stop accepting orders if the party reaches capacity. We encourage early registration!
Confirmation of order will be emailed to you.

You may also order tickets by credit card online at:
http://www.afth.org/news_events/asian_new_year_rsvp.php

Name: _____ Email: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____ Phone: _____

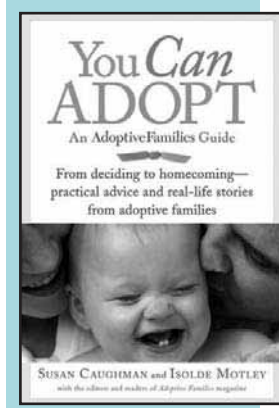
Country adopted from (Circle one): China Vietnam USA Russia Ukraine Kazakhstan Guatemala

# of Children Under 2.....	_____	X \$0 =	FREE
# of Children 2-5.....	_____	X \$10 =	_____
# of Children 6-12.....	_____	X \$15 =	_____
# of Adults.....	_____	X \$30 =	_____
		Total =	_____

Checks should be made payable to: ***Adoptions From The Heart.***

**Please mail this form to: Adoptions From The Heart Asian New Year Celebration
30-31 Hampstead Circle, Wynnewood, PA 19096**

Book Reviews



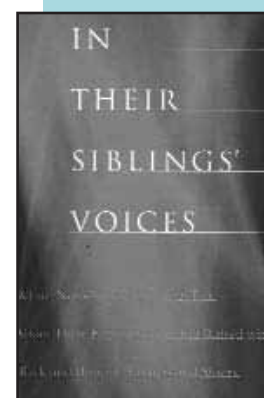
YOU CAN ADOPT: AN ADOPTIVE FAMILIES GUIDE: by Susan Caughman and Isolde Motley - From Adoptive Families magazine, the country's leading resource on adoption, this warm, authoritative book is full of practical, realistic advice from leading attorneys, doctors, social workers, and psychologists, as well as honest, intimate stories from real parents and children. It is easy to read and follow and answers questions that you may not have thought of. A great place to start for parents just looking into adoption and also a great book for parents already in the process. Topics include, where to start, costs, the wait, accepting a match or referral, what happens if the adoption falls through, how to talk to your children and much more. **AFTH price \$12.00**

MOMMIES, DADDIES, DONORS, SURROGATES: ANSWERING TOUGH QUESTIONS AND BUILDING STRONG FAMILIES: by Diane Ehrensaft - An extraordinarily sensitive yet comprehensive book about the issues raised when building a family through assisted reproduction. She covers everything from the fears and fantasies of parents-to-be to whether, when, and what to tell children about their origins. There are many books out there on this topic but this is one of the best we have found. Extremely insightful and helpful. **AFTH price \$15.00**



THE GREAT CALL OF CHINA by Cynthea Liu - In the Great Call of China, the main character, Cece, who's an adopted teen, has more important things to focus on. She wants to learn more about her heritage, maybe even find her birth parents! Reading Cynthea Liu's enthusiastic depiction of Chinese culture, as well as the intersection of Chinese and American cultures, made me want to hop on a plane tomorrow. I especially liked reading about the Terra Cotta Warriors in Xi'an. Liu's secondary characters in the book deserve a shout-out; my favorite was Jessica, a Chinese-American who struggles to follow her own dreams instead of her parents' demands. Great read for teens and girls who think there's more to life than Juicy Couture. A YA novel with real substance. **AFTH price \$8.00**

IN THEIR SIBLINGS' VOICES by Rita J Simon & Rhonda Roorda - Shares the stories of twenty white non-adopted siblings who grew up with black or biracial brothers and sisters in the late 1960s and 1970s. These siblings offer their perspectives on the multiracial adoption experience, which, for them, played out against the backdrop of two tumultuous, politically charged decades. This book helps readers fully grasp the dynamic of living in a multiracial household and its effect on friends, school, and community. While the times have changed race does still matter in America and this book reminds parents to be racially conscious and not pretend that the world is now color-blind. **AFTH price \$23.00**



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

AFTH Program Updates

HEARTBEATS - We held our first Webinar focused on Embryo Placement in August and attendees found it very informative. The Webinar gave attendees the chance to learn more about the program and ask an AFTH counselor any questions they had. Webinars specific to the Embryo Placement Program will continue to be held monthly. Anyone interested in attending to learn more can register for the webinar via the online event calendar at www.afth.org.

The India Surrogacy Program, another program of Heartbeats, is also now up and running. We hosted our first information meeting focused on the India Surrogacy Program in September. We were pleased to have a representative from Surrogacy Abroad Inc., our partnering agency for this program, come and lead the meeting.

To learn more information about either our Embryo Placement Program or the India Surrogacy Program, visit us at www.afth.org/heartbeats.

DOMESTIC - We continue to be busy counseling pregnant women but are now seeing an increase in women contacting us to place their older, toddler age child or children for adoption. If you are interested in increasing the age range of the situation you would be accept on your home study and profile key, please contact your social worker.

We would like to encourage you to review the current Education Series and attend as many as possible. We always have very positive feed back from our families who attend these sessions.

Adoptive Parent support group meetings are being held in every office, please come and meet other families from your area, get updates on our programs and hear adoption related topics. (*see calendar of event on website or page 11 for more details*)

CHINA - For the time being, it is best for readers to subscribe to the AFTH China Updates list serve for information on this program. There have been a number of changes decried by the China Center of Adoption Affairs(CCAA) and AFTH is looking into various of options that will best serve our families. Please contact your local office for instructions on joining if you are not already subscribed to the list serve.

RUSSIA - It is with great disappointment that AFTH is no longer accepting applications to this program. AFTH's Russia partner agency, CWAA, lost its accreditation in Russia and, consequently, being unable at this time to refer additional Russian children for adoption by U.S. families. AFTH's Russia partner agency had been accredited in Russia since 1995, and had never before lost its accreditation. It was 1of 5 U.S. adoption agencies to have had its Russia accreditation revoked in August.

Per the Russian authorities, the revocation was due concerns related to an adoption that occurred 3 years ago. That particular adoption has "disrupted" (meaning that the child is no longer living with the adoptive family). While "disruptions" are the exception in international adoption, they do unfortunately happen occasionally due to circumstances with a child and family. However, given that 4 other U.S. agencies also lost their accreditation around the same time, it seems that what happened to AFTH's Russia partner agency may be part of some larger agenda.

What has taken place does not have any legal impact on adoptions that have already occurred. As such, it remains essential that families that have adopted children from Russia continue to comply with their post-placement commitments. And, fortunately, what occurred did not impact cases in which families had already traveled to Russia and officially accepted referrals. So, 3 more



Program Updates Cont'd

Russian children who had been referred to AFTH families were able to be adopted, and have since been placed with their adoptive families.

Needless to say, AFTH's Russia partner agency's loss of accreditation was a blow to families that had not yet received referrals. AFTH has been able to offer recommendations for alternative processes to these families, and will continue to support these families in their adoption plans. AFTH will continue to monitor

developments, and to assess the viability of reopening this program in the future. The AFTH Russia listserv remains operative, and updates will continue to be sent out as circumstances develop.



AFTH Agency & Office News

Pittsburgh Annual Picnic



Over 500 people joined the AFTH Pittsburgh staff for a day of family fun at Idlewild Park for their 9th 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 pleased to see families from all of our international programs as well as families who

adopted through our domestic program. And we were especially glad to welcome several birthparents to the picnic to reunite with their children and their adoptive parents. Be sure to get your AFTH beach towels before next year's Idlewild picnic. We look forward to seeing everyone again in 2010.



Connecticut Moved

Same Programs...
Same Great Social Worker...
New Location.

Adoptions From The Heart's Connecticut Office has moved. Our emails and phone number remain the same, only our fax number and address are different. We invite you to stop in and check out our new location

NEW ADDRESS: 2389 Main Street, Glastonbury, CT 06033
NEW FAX NUMBER: 860-659-1625

Become an AFTH Facebook Fan

AFTH now has a Fan Page on Facebook. With over 200 fans and growing, AFTH created a Facebook Fan Page to increase awareness about adoption related issues and concerns as well as to announce upcoming AFTH events and meetings. If you have a Facebook account, we invite you to become a fan of AFTH. We welcome discussion and sharing about adoption related topics. To find our fan page, log into your Facebook account and search "Adoptions From The Heart." We also have a direct link to our fan page at www.afth.org. We look forward to seeing you there!

Stay Up-To-Date With AFTH Email Blasts

In an effort to Go Green while continuing to keep families and professionals in the loop of upcoming activities and events, AFTH is now using email blasts as the primary source of dispersing general information. Email blasts are a great way to spread the word while saving paper! In addition to quarterly E-Newsletters, email blasts go out to inform families of holiday parties, Asian New Year Party, summer picnics, advocacy needs, education series etc.

To be sure that you are not missing out on AFTH email blasts, please visit the Newsletter Section of our website and subscribe your email address. You will then be able to select the type of information you want to receive AFTH notifications about.



Miles of Mama Memories

By Gretchen Boger-O'Bryan

This summer Maeve and I shared a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity as we piled into the car with my mother - three generations of girls - and hit the open road. Our ultimate destination? A visit with my sister in Arizona. We'd decided to make the journey as memorable as the destination and vowed to drive only two-lane roads or smaller, and take the route we wanted, no matter how indirect.



We left New Jersey on a ferry bound for Delaware, then began to drive the coast: Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia; in Florida we'd hang a right and head through Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas and New Mexico before reaching my sister in Arizona.

On the return trip we'd see the heartland, hopping onto Route 66 as well: New Mexico, Texas, Oklahoma, Missouri, Illinois, Indiana and Kentucky; we'd veer south to take in the rolling hills of West Virginia before crossing into Pennsylvania and, with a click of our ruby red shoes and an EZPass swipe or two, we'd be home in New Jersey.

Making this trip with my four-year-old daughter and mother was something special - full of girl power, of course, and many laughs, fun discoveries and extraordinary moments - even some adoption-related.



It wasn't lost on me that I was sharing an adventure with my daughter - one in which I would watch her grow and experience slices of small-town America - and her first mother B, wasn't alongside her to take it all in as her everyday mom.

B missed watching Maeve's eyes widen at the sight of wild ponies on Virginia's Chincoteague Island. (From here on, all animals spotted from inside the car during the 6,000 miles we covered were immediately deemed "wild" - "Mama! Look, wild cows! Wild sheep!")

She also missed being evacuated from a North Carolina aquarium when the fire alarms sounded and fire trucks rushed to the scene. After worrying about the fish, Maeve decided they were safe in the water because, after all, water puts out fire.

As we sat in a cart pulled by mules along the charming streets of Charleston, South Carolina, Maeve counted palm trees, delighted in spotting other carriage rides in the distance, and got personal with a mule excitedly licking Maeve's shirt - seems it had remnants of maple syrup from breakfast! B couldn't hold Maeve in her arms and giggle about that.

In Georgia, Maeve hit a milestone in the pool - jumping from the side into the water and my nearby arms - without holding a hand. It was me there to gush and shower her with pride.

Maeve ate her first clam and her first fried green tomato on this journey, which also found us on a swamp boat in Louisiana searching for alligators. The next morning's breakfast featured a zydeco band, a raucous dance floor and such culinary adventures as beignets and boudin. Maeve studied every move being made on the dance floor. I knew how much she wanted to be out there - a day doesn't pass for her without dancing - but she couldn't bring herself to do it. I could so easily read her tortured thoughts - a result, of course, of being her everyday mom.

At Texas' Cadillac Ranch, Maeve stood in awe at the row of cars, colorful with graffiti, planted hood down in the middle of farmland. While tourist folks in the know brought spray paint to leave their mark, this three-generation road trip team, savvy after weeks on the road, had to leave its tag after some improvising. Maeve has learned how to write her name - but I certainly hope that trying to do so in peach nail polish, on an old Cadillac, alongside her mom and grandma, remains one of her childhood memories.

Oklahoma proved surprisingly quirky - from its sort-of famous blue whale, a now-defunct swimming hole still beloved by the locals who fish from it and play inside its two-level belly - to the largest cement totem pole in the world.

There are many stories of adventure to share, and more than a thousand wonderful pictures - but there's one snapshot I will forever keep with me, and it didn't happen with a camera around my neck.

In between silly splashes and watching tiny lizards scurry by my sister's pool, Maeve said matter-of-factly (with some words running together and lost): "Mama? When [B] had me from her belly ... couldn't take care of me ... but Gretchen and Thomas ... mama and daddy ..."

I stared in disbelief. Then, with a swell of excitement, she sing-songed: "and that's how I found you!" 🎵 🎵

Four years of sharing her adoption story, keeping B a topic of conversation in our home and photos in her bedroom of them together, and this was the first time Maeve raised the topic herself. It was bittersweet. Happy and relieved we'd been doing our job, ensuring her story is part of her. Sad as she now begins to process her loss.

The adoption wheels of her mind have begun to turn and while I'll not always be able to read her mind like that morning at the zydeco café or provide every answer to every question, I'm grateful to have the information we do, the contact with B we've shared, and hope that holds some of the peace she will seek in the future.

For now, though, we'll continue to take each adventure - and surprising moments of clarity from a four-year-old - as they come, embracing the quirky places, the surprising finds and the small but oh-so-cherished moments that make up our family's journey.

Gretchen Boger-O'Bryan was placed with her daughter in July 2005 through Adoptions From the Heart. An editor and freelance writer, she has an adoption and first-time parenthood blog, musings:mamahood&more, at www.mamagigi.wordpress.com. Reach her at mamagigi@comcast.net.



AFTH Support Groups

CENTRAL PA

HARRISBURG - All Waiting Families support groups are held on the 3rd Thursday of each month at the Landis Building at the Polyclinic .

LANCASTER - Domestic Family Support Group

Check the calendar of events at www.afth.org or call (717) 399-7766 for more information.

VIRGINIA

Adoptive parent support groups are held to bring AFTH waiting families together. **Check the calendar of events at www.afth.org for upcoming dates.**

Birthmother Club - series of monthly gatherings for birthmothers to come together in support.

Oct. 25 - Scrapbooking photos received of child

Nov. 22 - Decorate picture frame to send child

Dec. 13 - Decorate holiday cards for child

Call (757) 361-0008 for information.

CHERRY HILL

Birthmother support groups are held to help connect women who have or are making an adoption plan for their child. Call 856-665-5655 or email JenniferB@afth.org if you are interested in attending.

Waiting family support groups are held on the 3rd Wednesday of each month at the Cherry Hill Office.

Call (856) 665-5655 to RSVP by the Friday before. Pre- Registration Required for Meetings.

DELAWARE

Adoptive parent support groups are held to bring AFTH waiting families together. **Check the calendar of events at www.afth.org or call (302) 658-8883 for more information.**

ALLENTOWN

Waiting Families Support Group

Check the calendar of events at www.afth.org or call (610) 432-2384 for more information



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LET'S TALK ADOPTION

hosted by Concerned Persons for Adoption

Nov. 3rd at Rutgers University

Visit: www.cpfanjanj.org

ORPHAN CARE EXPO 2009

hosted by North Way Christian Community

Nov. 14th in Wexford, Pa

Visit: www.northway.org

2009 FAMILY CONFERENCE

hosted by Rainbow Families of New Jersey

Nov. 14th at Monclair State University

Visit: www.rainbowfamiliesnj.org

29TH ANNUAL APC ADOPTION CONFERENCE

hosted by Adoptive Parent's Committee Inc.

**Nov. 22nd at St. Francis College
in Brooklyn, NY**

Visit: www.adoptiveparents.org/

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www.afth.org

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