

Adoption News

A Quarterly Newsletter from

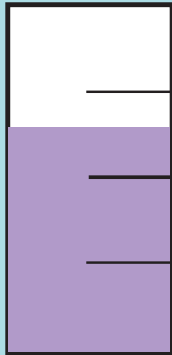
Adoptions From The Heart

Spring 2011

Creative Ways to Fund an Adoption

There is no denying that adoption is an expensive avenue for starting a family. The good news...where there's a will...there's a way. If you're looking to begin building your family through adoption, here are some ways you can lower costs significantly:

GOAL



- **Grants** - money that does not need to be repaid.
- **Loans** - money that must be paid back, usually with interest.
- **Military Families** - military families can receive benefits for adopting.
- **Employer Adoption Benefits** - some employers provide benefits to employees who adopt.
- **Adoption Tax Credit** - based on income, families may be qualified for tax credit (\$13,170 federally in 2010).
- **Fundraisers** - can be fun events to get your community's support!

One local AFTH family, Carla and Kevin, raised almost \$25,000 towards their adoption in a little over 6 months! The couple had always known they wanted to adopt but they waited over 10 years due to the high costs. Carla and Kevin, knew that if they never adopted, they would regret the decision. And so this past year she and her family decided to make it happen. Carla and her husband applied for grants, loans and even held fundraisers for their adoption.

From the very beginning of their process Carla began blogging about her dreams of adopting. She was also able to create a donation link on her blog, allowing family, friends, and other bloggers the opportunity to donate.

This couple wrote letters to family and friends and they personally visited local businesses in hopes of support. A friend of the family suggested hosting a silent auction to raise donations. In a matter of a few weeks, Carla organized a silent auction to benefit their adoption fund. An array of items were donated and auctioned including jewelry, travel packages, landscaping services, hot air balloon rides, sports tickets, and spa packages, and even fun things for kids. By the end of the auction, they were only \$1,000 short of reaching their goal!

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Insert:

AFTH Summer Picnics

Now collecting pictures for the
AFTH 2012 Calendar
Starring **AFTH Children...**

**AFTH wants to
make your child
a STAR!**

**Submit Your
Photos!**

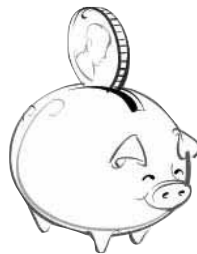
Label Photos: child's name, age, country, parents name & address.

- Send horizontal 4x6 pictures (it helps with design!)
- Send pictures with clean faces and endearing expressions!
- Send seasonal pictures and photos representing holidays!
- Use your digital camera's highest pixel for clarity!
- Send multiple pictures, variety is good!

Deadline July 1, 2011

Email to: KristyG@afth.org or Mail to:
Marketing Team Calendar Search
Adoptions From The Heart
30-31 Hampstead Circle, Wynnwood, PA 19096

Call 610-642-7200 with any questions.



Creative Ways Cont'd

During the process, Carla and Kevin set up a fund with AFTH for their adoption, this way all donations could be given directly to Adoptions From The Heart, for their account specifically. This encouraged people to make donations that could be tax deductible; any family can do the same.

An inspiration to so many others who feel worried about the costs of adopting, they are proof that anything is possible. So apply for grants, loans, and research benefits available, then focus on fundraising. *Get creative, use your imagination and have fun!*

- Write a letter to family and friends
- Start a blog
- Get your church involved
- Have a bake sale, yard sale, carwash
- Host a benefit concert, dance, or dinner party
- Silent Auction, Raffle
- ...even contact your local press

By adopting a baby you are changing lives, and people are willing to help. Adoption is an exciting experience, but to be stress free about funding it, that's icing on the cake!

Say YES to helping today...and extend your generosity to a pregnant woman unable to provide for her own needs and the needs of her unborn child.

Also Accepting Online Donations:
www.afth.org

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

How would you like your donation to be used?

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

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

Name(s) _____

Address _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

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

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



April Showers Bring May Flowers

Baby Showers for Adoptive Parents

Knowing the adoption journey can be an emotional roller coaster as well as a very exciting time for soon-to-be adoptive parents, family and friends are often unsure of the protocol for planning and throwing baby showers.

Rule #1- involve adoptive parents in the planning process to incorporate their preferences and avoid surprises at all costs. Welcome parties instead of showers are typically held for adoptive parents (fathers included) and occur AFTER the baby is home with the family. Adoption social workers recommend waiting until the revocation period for both birthparents pass and some adoptive parents choose to wait until after finalization before holding a welcome party. In addition to the legal reasons behind waiting to celebrate, most adoptive parents need, and want, time to adjust and bond with their baby before making grand introductions to family and friends. In order to incorporate the adoptive parents' wishes into the planning and avoid surprises, be sure to have them sign off on everything from the timing to the guest list.

When planning the theme of the celebration, be sure to avoid references to pregnancy as many decorations and party games for showers automatically build it into the theme. Additionally, be sure the guests are aware the family has grown through adoption. For an international adoption, a theme related to the child's birth country is a great way to celebrate and expose others to a child's heritage. A Sibling Welcome Party is a great way for older siblings to invite all their friends and proudly introduce them to the family's newest addition.

If any other questions arise about proper etiquette for adoption showers, always revert back to rule #1!



Elena's Song

Inspired by the words spoken by their daughter, adopted at the age of 2 from Ukraine, George and Lori Runkle of Virginia put them into a poem. Elena Svetlana Runkle, now 11, is working with her vocal coach to transform this touching poem into a song celebrating her adoption.

Of All, You Chose Me



Oh, Mommy, Oh Daddy
You had so far to go,
There were so many in such need,
So much sorrow,
Of all, you chose me.

Oh Mommy, Oh Daddy
I was so very small,
You knew I was so afraid,
You didn't let me fall,
Of all, you chose me.

Oh Mommy, Oh Daddy
I had so much to overcome,
Feelings I did not know,
Illnesses to be undone,
Of all, you chose me.



Oh Mommy, Oh Daddy,
Maybe it was fate,
Maybe you just knew,
You did not want to wait,
Of all, you chose me.

Oh Mommy, Oh Daddy,
You do so much to help me grow,
You keep me oh so safe,
You always let me know,
Of all, you love me.



AFTH loves to hear how adoptees celebrate their adoption story. Whether it is artwork, poetry, or funny stories they tell, contact Kristy at KristyG@afth.org to share the meaning of adoption through your child's eyes.



From Grief, a Gift

I'm in the midst of losing my grandmother. Losing her to a wicked disease that has transformed her body into a prison from which she cannot escape. Not being able to turn a key became not being able to hold a fork, which became not being able to walk. Now, she cannot speak. But I look into her eyes, a color of brown that Maeve's crayon palette would deem Burnt Sienna, and I see a world of things she wants to say but cannot. I see a life of experiences she can no longer share with those around her. Recipes and rituals once rote to her are now outside her reach, and outside of ours for posterity. Her body has turned on her.

I watch all this play out before me like a car accident, tires screeching with urgency, yet seemingly in slow motion.

I am not unique, I imagine, in having the childhood memory of riding in the front seat of the family car when a parental arm suddenly flings out, steady and firm against the child's chest, as the car brakes to avoid an accident.

Today, dear mirror on the wall, I see that I am my parents after all. My arm now instinctively reaches to Maeve, as if I can somehow protect her from the tragic scene unfolding before us. Yet I know that as the matriarch of the family slips away, I must loosen that grip and expose my daughter to certain pain.

As little as two weeks ago, Maeve could run into her grandparents' home to greet her great-grandmother like countless times before. She'd sit near my grandmother's chair and they would chat, Maeve bringing to life my grandmother's pale blue plastic statues of the Virgin Mary in skits of domesticity or glamorous theater like only a young girl can.

Those rituals are no longer; my grandmother has slipped further away from us.

My grandmother was there the day we arrived home from our three-day stint in a hotel as new parents. She has since attended her dance recitals, kid-centric birthday parties, and even watched from the front row as a cap-and-gown clad Maeve graduated preschool.

Her presence over the years has taught Maeve to be gentle with her touch, to recognize when someone might need extra help. Like "helping" Gram-Gram to the electric lift chair along the stairs that Maeve not-so-secretly wishes was her own plaything, installed not to give mobility to an ailing parent but rather as a grand gesture purely for a granddaughter and her visits! Or the birthday candles Maeve proudly "helps" Gram-Gram blow out on her birthday cake — this despite my grandmother's germ-concerned pet peeve about the whole candle-blowing ritual to begin with.

While their lives have overlapped just a handful of years, the two generations are now forever linked by these memories, these threads that when woven together create a tapestry of family history and heritage.



The grief in eventually losing Gram-Gram will eventually be outweighed by the gift of them knowing one another. Each flavored one another's existence in some unchangeable way that is unique to them — all the while without a shred of shared DNA.

So exactly why is it that so many seek to keep others — with actual genetic proprietary rights! — from living so authentically?

Sealed birth records take what is splintered and force a fracture. As manila files replete with long-sought answers sit in dark, dusty storage units, life outside moves on, time takes its toll and key characters in each story can be lost forever.

Blacking out identifying information weakens the thread of family heritage, to be sure; but such black-lining cannot *erase* a story that's already begun. There is no ink dark enough.

Now, I have no pie-in-the-sky notion that every birth mother, birth father and child will link arms, sing Kumbaya and skip into a forever full only of familial bliss. (Do you know *any* family like this?) Still, we each deserve the opportunity to write our own stories with its full cast of characters. No one should have their story written *for* them, missing chapters be damned.

From Grief, a Gift Cont'd

Yes, Maeve will hurt when she loses her great-grandmother. Yes, my parental arms will instinctively reach for my daughter, trying to lessen the sting for us both. Yes, I will seek solace in knowing it stings because we were lucky enough to know her, to love her, and to share life with her.

Not everyone gets that chance.

The Adoptee's Birthright Bill permits access to original birth certificates. A-1406 awaits a posting before, and vote by, the full New Jersey Assembly. Encourage your legislator to support access to original birth certificates. Call 800-792-8630 for your legislators' names and contact information, or log on to www.njleg.state.nj.us for contact information and a full text of the bill.

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 at www.mamagigi.wordpress.com. Reach her at mamagigi@comcast.net



Adopted Children: Doing Just Fine, Thanks

Adopted children make up about 2 percent of the child population in the United States, or about 1.8 million kids.

According to *Adoption USA: A Chartbook Based on the 2007 National Survey of Adoptive Parents*, published by the Department of Health and Human Services, those kids usually benefit from being adopted: The report describes 85 percent of them as being in "excellent or very good health," with 81 percent of their parents saying their relationships are "very warm and close." Only about 15 percent of adoptive parents say the relationship is "more difficult" than they had expected.

The survey also showed that adopted children are more likely to be read to daily at a young age (68 percent, vs. 48 percent of non-adopted children), more likely to be sung to or told stories on a daily basis (73 percent vs. 39 percent), and participate more in extracurricular school activities (85 percent vs. 81 percent).

Recent Legislation

CONNECTICUT - Connecticut Supreme Court had a landmark ruling stating that two partners with a valid surrogacy agreement can both be named on the children's birth certificates.



ALASKA - The Alaska Supreme Court has ruled that native tribes share jurisdiction with the state in most child custody issues. Disagreement about tribal jurisdiction created difficulties when children in disputed custody cases need health care, enroll for school or apply for social services. The Alaska court's ruling should spur more cooperation between tribes and state officials. The ruling does not resolve all questions surrounding tribal jurisdiction, including whether it extends to parents who aren't tribal members but adopt Native children, or if it applies to families that have limited or no contact with tribes.

AIR FORCE - With thousands of children available for adoption in the U.S., Air Force officials are helping ease the initial financial obligations for those military families opting to adopt. Through the Adoption Expense Reimbursement Program, parents using a legal adoption agency may be eligible for up to \$2,000 per adoptive child, with a maximum reimbursement of \$5,000 in a calendar year, for qualifying expenses.

To qualify for the program:

- Adoption must be finalized while the airman is serving on continuous active duty or full-time Air Guard Reserve duty with orders specifying a period of at least 180 days
- Child must be under 18 years of age and physically or mentally incapable of caring for himself
- Child may not be the biological offspring of the airman or a stepchild
- The adoption must be arranged by a qualified adoption agency that has responsibility under state or local law for child placement through adoption; or any other source authorized by a state to provide adoption placement if the adoption is supervised by a court under state or local law.
- Airmen have 365 days from the final adoption decree to request the reimbursement



Congratulations to Families Who Have Recently Adopted!

Daughters from the USA

Chester & Penny
Timothy & Amy
Anthony & Kelly
John & Ferrel
Michael & Matthew
Steve & Laura
Michael & Jacqueline
Jessica & Shelly
Jed & Sandra (*twins – boy & girl*)
James & Jodee
Alain & Krista
James & Denny
Jeffrey & Lauri
Andrew & Kimberly
Lawrence & Maria
Shawn & Teresa
James & Staci
Ted & Liz
Dustin & Albry

Sons from the USA

Robert & Amy (*twin boys*)
Charlotte
Winford & Charlotte
Pascal & Beverly
Robert & Katherine
Jacob & Abigail
Kelly & April
Jed & Sandra (*twins – boy & girl*)
Scott & Tracey
Andrew & Patricia
Jonathan & Valerie
Patrick & Jennifer
Bowen & Stephane
Jeffrey & Manish
Janette
Peter & Pam
Daniel & Christina
Michael & Lisah

Stay Informed with AFTH!

AFTH's update listserve was created for families waiting in our domestic program. Families in-process can subscribe by sending and email the word "SUBSCRIBE" in the subject line to: AFTHDomesticUpdates-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

DOMESTIC DISCUSSION GROUP- Connect and share with other AFTH families in the domestic program, by joining the yahoo group created to encourage discussion and support. To join, send an email with "SUBSCRIBE" in the subject line to the below address:

AFTHopenadoption-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

AFTH Support Groups

Visit our events calendar at www.afth.org for upcoming support group details.

LANCASTER

Support group meeting for recently placed and waiting families in the area.

• Wednesday, April 13 at 6:30pm

Call (717) 399-7766 to RSVP.

VIRGINIA

Domestic waiting family support groups are being held to bring families together

• Saturday, April 16 at 11am

Call (757) 361-0008 to RSVP.

CHERRY HILL

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

If you are interested in attending, call 856-665-5655 or email MelodyF@afth.org

Waiting family support groups are held for waiting families to come together in support.

Call (856) 665-5655 for information.

DELAWARE

Adoptive parent support groups are held to bring AFTH waiting families together.

• Tuesday, May 3 at 6:00pm

Call (302) 658-8883 to RSVP.

WYNNEWOOD

Adoptive parent support groups are held to bring AFTH waiting families together.

• Monday, April 4 at 7:00pm

• Monday, June 6 at 7:00pm

Call (610) 642-7200 to RSVP.

ALLENTOWN

Adoptive parent support groups are held to bring AFTH waiting families together.

Call (610) 432-2384 for Information.



Adoptions From The Heart®

hosts its

23rd Annual Picnic

Arts & Crafts,
Live Music, Snacks
Face Painting, and Ice
Cream for each child!

Sunday, June 5, 2011
11am-2pm

Fort Washington Park (Flourtown Picnic Area) *See directions

Our way of saying Thank You for choosing Adoptions From The Heart!

Join the AFTH staff and families from both domestic and international adoption programs as we celebrate building beautiful families. Bring your family, a blanket, and a picnic lunch. AFTH will provide some drinks, snacks, and entertainment.

**RAIN or
SHINE!**



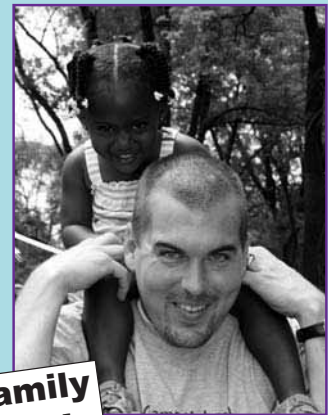
We encourage all our Open Adoption families to invite their child's birth parents.

Send a letter of invitation with your full name and the birth parent's name to your local AFTH office.

Be sure to send your letter soon so your child's birth parents do not miss out on this great event. AFTH will not invite your child's birth parent without your consent.



**Free Family
Portraits!**



Information To Know Before You Go:

MAKE SURE YOU DESIGNATE A SPECIFIC AREA TO MEET
Balloons ARE A GREAT WAY TO HELP CONNECT WITH OTHERS

- Mark all valuables with your name and keep away from trash areas.
- Please supervise your children at all times.
- To cut down on the number of cars, we encourage carpooling.

**DO NOT PARK ON GRASS UNLESS
DIRECTED BY A PARK RANGER!**



Adoptions From The Heart®

2011 Virginia Annual Picnic

Chesapeake City Park

"Fun Forest"

Saturday, June 11th

2:30 - 5:30 pm

Rain or Shine



**Get ready to enjoy our
annual adoption celebration!**

- ♥ Bring a picnic lunch.
- ♥ Grills are available for families to use.
- ♥ AFTH will provide paper products, drinks, and ice.

- Fun & Activities
for Kids of All Ages!
- Playgrounds



"Fun Forest" is the ultimate playground with an imagination center & family adventure area.

Check out the...

- Shaky Bridge • Dolphin Tunnel
- Whisper Dishes • Plant Walk
- Underground Telephone
- Fossil Dig-a-dinosaur
and MUCH MORE!!



Families who adopted through the **Open Adoption Program** are encouraged to invite birth parents to the annual picnic. If interested, please send a letter of invitation for your child's birth parents to the Chesapeake AFTH office and be sure to include your full name and birth parents' names. We will forward the letter to your child's birth parents. Please send letter as soon as possible to allow time for birth parents to respond. **No birth parents will be invited by the agency without your consent.**

RSVP to the Chesapeake office by Wednesday, June 8th: (757)361-0008

Adoption...a beautiful way to build a family.

Connecticut's Annual Adoption Picnic

Come spend an afternoon with old friends and new friends!



Quassy Amusement Park
Sunday, June 26th
11:00am - 4:00 pm

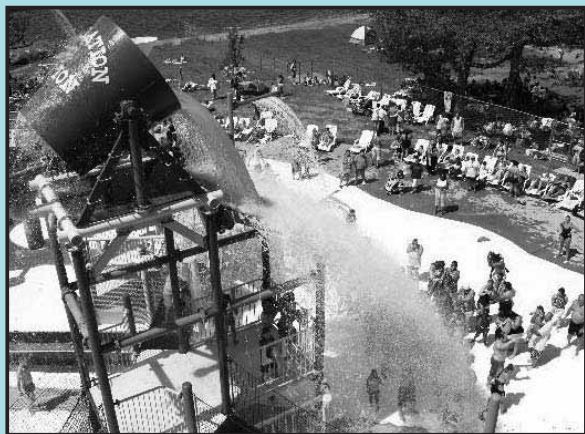
We have a private pavilion with Water Park access, bar-b-que with burgers (and veggie burgers), hotdogs, salads and all the trimmings. Volleyball, horseshoes & bocce also available and free parking too.

Food served from noon until 3pm

Advanced Reservations REQUIRED!

Adults \$17.50 and Children (ages 3-12) \$15

An all-day ride pass can be purchased at the park for \$10.



Please mail your check payable to AFTH:
Adoptions From The Heart
2389 Main St.
Glastonbury, CT 06033

*include names of all attendees, # of adult & children
for reservation, and your address & phone number*

Please contact us if you have questions:

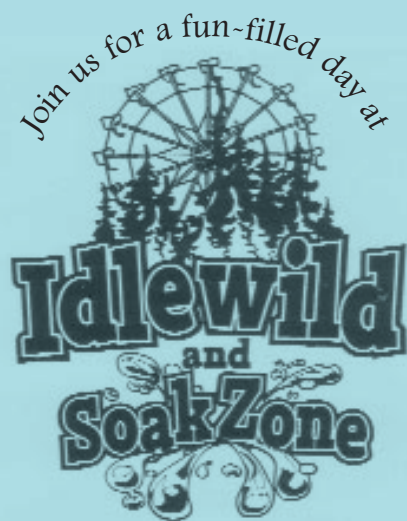
PennyR@afth.org
or call (860) 657-2626

Deadline for Reservations: JUNE 22ND!

 Adoptions From The Heart®

11th Annual Pittsburgh Office Picnic

Friday, August 5, 2011



Exciting rides!

Roller coasters and water slides!

New this year...WAVE POOL!

Bring your own lunch or choose from
several eateries at the park.

Located on Route 30 in Ligonier, PA

Park opens at 10:30 am

**Join us at Pavilion C2 & C3 at 1pm
and meet Ricky Raccoon!**

Directions on website

(724) 238-3666

www.idlewild.com

Cost is \$17.50 per person. Children 2 and under are free.

Tickets will be sent directly to you before the picnic.

If you have questions or need directions ...

Call Katie at (724) 853-6533 or email KatieH@afth.org.

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

of tickets _____ # of people attending _____ Amount enclosed \$ _____

Make checks payable to:

Debbie Cohen

Send this form and payment to:

Adoptions From The Heart
1225 South Main St, Suite 207
Greensburg, PA 15601

Deadline to order: July 22nd

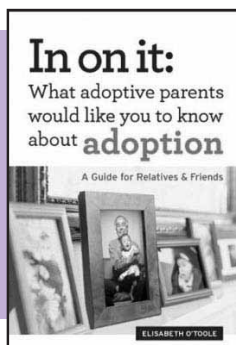
Book Reviews



My Family, My Journey: A Baby Book for Adoptive Families by Zoe Francesca and Susie Ghahremani - This is a fabulous new lifebook for adoptive families. Although

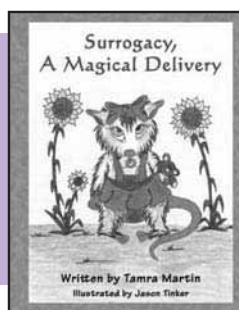
it isn't perfect for families fostering to adopt, it is fabulous for families of open adoption. Designed by adoptive parents, this book includes all the normal baby book milestones but also includes sections such as, "what we know about your birth family", "people who help us on our journey", and "how we found out we were matched and how we celebrated." This book is beautifully illustrated with lots of room for photos and is sure to be treasured for years to come. **AFTH Price - \$12.00**

In On It: What Adoptive Parent Would Like You to Know About Adoption. A Guide for Relatives and Friends by Elizabeth O'Toole -



This book is smart, thoughtful, and full of humor. Elizabeth O'Toole guides readers through adoption—and all the unique stuff that accompanies parenting in a family with adopted children. *In On It* opens a path for friends and relatives to become insiders to the process and is a great resource for

people who want to support their loved ones, but aren't always sure what to do or say. **AFTH Price - \$12.00**



Surrogacy, A Magical Delivery by Tamra Martin -

A tale of a possum family that longs to have children but is finding it difficult so they turn to alternative ways to start their family. This is a great little book to help explain surrogacy

to children. **AFTH Price - \$12.00**

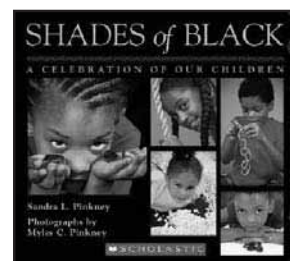
Megan's Birthday Tree: A Story about Open Adoption by Laurie Lears -

Megan's birth mother, Kendra, and her adoptive parents lovingly share a connection with each other and with Megan. When the child was born, Kendra planted a tree, and every year she sends a photo of it to Megan on her birthday. Now she is getting married and moving, and the youngster worries that her birth mother will forget her without the tree as a reminder. She wants to discuss it with Mom, but the words get stuck in her throat, so she asks instead for the story of her birth. Mom recalls, "Kendra loved you so much! Yet she knew she wasn't ready to take care of a baby, so she'd chosen Dad and me to be your parents." Lears captures perfectly the child's anxiety about being forgotten, as well as her delight when Kendra reveals that even though she does not need a reminder to keep Megan in her heart, she has dug up the tree to replant at her new home. Full-color paintings complement the text by depicting Megan's emotions—thoughtful worried, surprised, and joyful. **AFTH Price - \$13.00 (HC)**



Shades of Black: A Celebration of Our Children by Sandra L. Pinkney - This picture

book celebrates the beauty of all African-American children of all shades. Beautiful photos of children go hand in hand with the book's inspiring poem about the beauty of being black. The poem uses wonderful imagery to instill a sense of pride and to explain the wide range of skin and eye color and hair texture all of which are celebrated for their unique beauty. **AFTH Price - \$13.00**



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

AFTH Program Updates



DOMESTIC PROGRAMS - AFTH has been receiving some very positive feedback from pregnant women searching through profiles for families. Most of the women say they prefer the profiles which are longer than just one page front and back. The longer profiles give a better insight into your family and why you are choosing adoption. If you haven't already taken advantage of extending your profile to 5 pages front and back, it may be worth considering doing so.

AFTH is now accepting photos for the 2012 AFTH Building Beautiful Families Calendar ([details on page 2](#)). Make sure you don't miss the July 1st deadline!

***NEW** - A new section of our website has been created to allow current AFTH clients access to forms, articles, and additional resources for the Education Course and Home Study Course. Current AFTH clients are also able to change their contact information for the email blasts as well as their preferences in which email blasts they would like to receive. If you are a current AFTH client and haven't already registered for the client only portion of the website, visit www.aftth.org and click on the "Client Only Site" link on the bottom left side of the home page under Quick Links. Once the request form is filled out and submitted, an AFTH staff member will review your request and approve access to the forms. You will then receive an email saying you have been approved and granting you access to the forms. Access is granted to forms corresponding to the phase of the process the family is in. Access to new forms will be allowed as the family continues through the process.

The AFTH African-American/African-American Biracial Domestic Program has quite a few families in the book. We are continuing to do extensive outreach for African American families and as always continue to do outreach for prospective birthparents.

Webinars specific to this domestic program, which is open to singles and couples living anywhere in the U.S., are held monthly. For more information about an upcoming webinar, visit our online calendar of events at www.aftth.org.

AFTH 2011 picnics will soon be here. We encourage all AFTH families to attend to celebrate adoption and connect with other families. Information on all the summer picnics can be found in the newsletter insert.

Looking for some wet and wild family fun this fall? Stay tuned for more information of an upcoming AFTH event being held in the fall at an indoor water park. As details are available, updates will be posted on the AFTH website, social networking sites, and in the newsletter.

CHINA - Four former AFTH families who transferred to Carolina Adoption Services received matches right before Christmas. This was an unexpected gift for all of the families because their log in date, as we were originally informed, was 6/2/06 but we came to find out was actually late April 2006. Happily, it was not the other way around. We have just received word that the families will be traveling 4/8/11. Unfortunately, their departure was held up due to a number of issues and holidays in China which shut down the Chinese government. It is worth noting that this group originally was made of 17 families back in 2006.

AFTH ASIAN NEW YEAR ITEMS AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE!

All of the items that were once available at the AFTH Asian New Year Party are now available online.

Adult & Children's Clothing
Purses & Wallets
Bracelets & Key Chains
Blow Up Dragons
Fans and Wooden Umbrella
Greeting Cards
Wooden Dolls
Make it Yourself Mobile Kit
Pens & Gold Coins
and Much, Much More!

Hurry...there are only a few left of some of the items!

Visit our online store for pictures and prices:

www.aftth.org

AFTH Program Updates Cont'd



HEARTBEATS - Adoptions From The Heart, would like to introduce to you our new *Embryo Education Program*. This is a very exciting time for our agency and we hope that this new program can benefit your family in some way.

After 25 years of providing domestic and international adoptions services, Heartbeats is applying our experience and knowledge on adoption to embryo placement by providing counseling and support to families, education, and home study services.

This educational program is a four part webinar series. This series will help those families who are pursuing embryo placement. There are so many questions that families, friends and the children born from embryo placement will have. This course has been designed for families who are receiving embryos or considering an embryo placement. Please know that social workers are available to answer any questions you may have. Each course covers different topics of embryo placement including: how many embryos are available for placement, legal issues, embryo terminology, pregnancy results, advantages and disadvantages, family and community support, chances of success, exploring a family's options, genetic siblings, open vs. closed relationships with donor families, worries for the family, and talking and telling your child about donor conception. Register for the Embryo Education Series on our online calendar of events at www.afth.org.

Heartbeats also provides additional services to recipient families such as: embryo/adoption home studies (when required), assisting in creating profile pages, supervising personal meeting between donor and recipient families, and post birth supervisory reports. An embryo home

study can also be used for domestic adoption if you are unsuccessful in embryo placement or are interested in completing the adoption process as well.

The *India Surrogacy Program* continues to move forward. Right now, we have a family who is waiting for the exciting news of a pregnancy by a surrogate. Future newsletters will have updates of the family's progress.

Free webinars about this program are held every other month. The next one will be Tuesday, May 17th at 7pm. Anyone who has an interest in learning more about this program please visit our online calendar of events at www.afth.org.



Heartbeats

ASSISTED REPRODUCTION PROGRAM

LEARN ABOUT AFTH'S HEARTBEAT PROGRAM

♥ SURROGACY IN INDIA
May 17th at 7pm

*NEW - EMBRYO EDUCATION SERIES WEBINARS

♥ Beginning in May
visit the AFTH Online Calendar of Events for
details on topics covered by this four part
webinar education series.

Registration for webinars is required.

Visit our online calendar of events to
register: www.afth.org

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International Adoption News

The U.S. Department of State has issued its Fiscal Year 2010 Annual Report on Intercountry Adoptions, which can be viewed at

http://adoption.state.gov/pdf/fy2010_annual_report.pdf

Sadly, 2010 marked the sixth consecutive year of decline in the number of orphans adopted from abroad to the United States. This news is tragic given the vast numbers of children around the world living without the care of a permanent family, and also surely discouraging for American families pursuing an international adoption.

In total, the number of U.S. immigrant visas issued annually to foreign orphans has decreased by more than 50% over the past five years, from 22,734 in 2005 to 11,059 in 2010. The data also reveals that, nearly three years following the implementation of the Hague Treaty in the U.S., only 20% of adoptions from abroad were Hague Convention cases. In significant part, this reflects the increased administrative complexity, length of processing, and cost involved in Hague cases, as compared to non-Hague (ie. “Orphan”) adoptions.

The figures show that more than 70% of the adoptions in 2010 were from, in order, the following four countries:

CHINA

China continues to be the top “sending” country of children to the U.S. The 3,401 Chinese orphans adopted by American parents in 2010 were actually a few hundred more than in the previous year. (As recently as 2005, however, such children numbered nearly 8,000.) Of important note is that the majority of these adoptions in 2010 were of children deemed by the China Center for Adoption Affairs as “Special Needs” (SN). By comparison, the adoption of children with special needs comprised a small percentage of Chinese adoptions only a few years ago. Of current SN placements, many are of children considered to have minor and/or correctable needs, while others are of orphans with more serious medical and/or developmental concerns. For families currently considering initiating the process of adopting from China, it is only the pursuit of the adoption of a child with special needs that is recommended at this time.

This is due to the protracted process for families seeking to adopt Chinese orphans deemed Non-Special Needs

(NSN). As illustration, in 2010 China referred NSN children to families that sent dossiers to China in April and May of 2006. So, families that submitted their adoption documents in June of 2006 are the ones currently receiving NSN referrals.

ETHIOPIA

Ethiopia remained the source country of more international adoptees than any other country except for China, placing 2,513 orphans with American families, and a total of more than 4,000 worldwide. Further, 2010 marked the eighth consecutive year of increase in the number of children adopted from Ethiopia to the U.S. The future of Ethiopian adoptions, however, looks more uncertain. Effective March 10, 2011, the Ethiopian Ministry of Women’s, Children’s, and Youth Affairs (MOWCYA) announced the intent to reduce, by as much as 90%, its pace of processing of intercountry adoptions to all countries around the world. At the time of the writing of this article, it is too soon to assess the extent to which this new regulation may be implemented, or precisely how it may impact current cases. Also adding to the uncertainty is a recent staffing change at MOWCYA. But, as points of reference, it is estimated that nearly 1,000 adoption cases currently have dossiers accepted in Ethiopia, and that a total approximately 3,000 American families have filed with U.S. Immigration for the Advance Processing of an Orphan Petition (ie. Form I-600A). The proposed reduction in case processing follows revocation by the Ethiopian Charities and Societies Agency in February of the license of one U.S. Adoption Service Provider (ASP) due to the ASP’s alleged improper practices. The Ethiopian government has not officially linked this license revocation to the proposed processing changes. If, however, the proposal to so drastically reduce the number of Ethiopian orphans adopted internationally is a reaction to the one adoption agency’s license revocation, then it seems a disproportionate response, and one with the potential consequence of thousands of additional Ethiopian children languishing in orphanages. The international adoption community has mobilized to advocate for less draconian changes, and to ensure the protection of the rights of all members of the adoption triad. Information regarding recent developments in adoptions from Ethiopia is posted by the U.S. Department of State at http://adoption.state.gov/news/ethiopia_alert.html

International Adoption News Cont'd

RUSSIA

Russia placed 1,082 orphans with American families in 2010, representing the lowest figure in the past seven years. The decrease in 2010 compared to 2009 does not, however, appear based upon any specific systemic change. Rather, it seems more the result of the temporary slowing in the processing of adoption cases following the widely-publicized incident in early 2010 in which an adoptive mother in Tennessee sent her adopted Russian child, unescorted, back to Russia. As the length of time since this event grows, it is hoped that the number of adoptions from Russia to the U.S. can increase in 2011.

SOUTH KOREA

863 children from South Korea were adopted by American families in 2010, representing the smallest annual figure in the past four decades. To provide some perspective, approximately 110,000 Korean orphans have come to the U.S. for adoption over the past half century. Unlike the decrease in adoptions from some other countries, the trend in South Korea seems more for the "right" reasons. It is largely the byproduct of the

country's societal and economic growth into one of the more prosperous and advanced nations in the world, as well as of the gradual destigmatization of adoption in Korea, as domestic adoption within the country is now more actively promoted by the Korean government. Therefore, as the number of Korean orphans in need of permanent family care abroad continues to decrease, so is it likely that the number of international adoptions from South Korea may also continue to decline.

In Conclusion...

Considering the above information, in addition to circumstances that prohibit American citizens from currently applying to adopt orphans from countries including Guatemala, Kazakhstan, and Vietnam, it is expected that the number of adoptions from abroad to the U.S. will, unfortunately, decrease yet again in 2011. Notwithstanding, for those families that are interested in pursuing an international adoption, Adoptions From The Heart continues to provide Home Study, Parent Training, International/Immigration Assistance, and Post-Adoption/Placement Services, and has a wealth of experience in these areas.

Any questions regarding AFTH's international adoption services can be directed to Sam Wojnilower at SamW@afth.org or by phoning AFTH's Main Office at 610-642-7200.

AFTH Welcomes Four New Board Members And Seeking to Fill A Few More Spots

Adoptions From The Heart is pleased to welcome new Board members:

Rita Roitman is a therapist in the Main Line area specializing in adoption issues. She has an MSW and experience in the past working for an adoption agency in New York.

Judith Eckles has her own Public Relations firm called Judith Eckles & Partners in Jeffersonville, PA. She comes to us from Main Line Chamber of Commerce.

Stephen Facenda also has his own media firm called Viamark Advertising. His knowledge of TV and radio advertising is very helpful to the agency.

Another new member is **McKenzie Frankel** who is an Investment broker for Lincoln Investment. She brings experience and expertise in finance. We welcome these new members for the 2010-2011 term.

The agency is looking for a few new Board members for the 2011-2012 term. We would like volunteers from New Jersey and Delaware and will be in need of an attorney and accountant. Please contact Maxine Chalker at MaxineC@afth.org with your interest.



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Upcoming Conferences

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

April 13 - Inter-agency Exchange Resource Bash hosted by the Health & Welfare Council of Westmoreland County-Greensburg, PA

April 28 - Girls Night Out at the Oakdale Theatre in Wallingford, CT

April 30 - Delaware Black Exp held at the Double Tree Hotel in Wilmington, DE

May 6 - Health & Wellness Fair at Delcastle High School in Wilmington, DE

June 25 - "Positively Dover" African-American Festival in Dover, DE

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