

# Adoption News



A Quarterly Newsletter from

Adoptions From The Heart

Spring 2014

## Find Her Footing 5K Success!

\$4,500 Raised in Support of the AFTH Birthmother Fund

On April 6th, Adoptions From The Heart held its 2nd Annual Find Her Footing 5K to support AFTH's Birthmother Fund! The event was again held at Delaware County Community College in Media, PA. Over 180 supporters of all ages came out for the family fun-filled morning!

At 9:15am children ages 2-10 lined up across the starting line and the event kicked off with a fun 100 meter Kid's Dash. Each child was awarded a medal and certificate upon crossing the finish line. The Kid's Dash was hosted by Boing! Bounce Rentals who donated a bounce house for the kids to enjoy after they dashed their hearts out!

Just before the runners and walkers headed off on their 5K journey, we had Heather, an AFTH birthmother, speak on behalf of The Birthmother Fund. She shared how important the support of the fund meant to her personally as well as to other women who are in need of a little extra help. Additionally, Chris, an AFTH adoptive father, announced his exciting plans to run a 50K next year in conjunction with our 5K to raise money and awareness for the AFTH Birthmother Fund. Yes, that's not a typo...50K! You can follow his journey through social media: Twitter @AFTH\_50K; Instagram afth\_50K and on Wordpress afth50K.wordpress.com.

Everyone who participated and even those who were just there to cheer the runners and walkers on celebrated the finishing of the race with music provided by Philadelphia's country station, 92.5 XTU; bagels donated by Original Bagel of Broomall; baked goods donated by Broomall Acme; cupcakes donated by Cupcakes Gourmet and pretzels donated by Philly Soft Pretzel Factory of Springfield.

Prizes donated by Modell's Sporting Goods in Media as well as Vertex Fitness in Bryn Mawr were given out to the top finishers for each age group. The top two finishers, Colin Bodel & Samantha Simonsen, were given \$25 gift cards to Bryn Mawr Running Company. Amy Kyriakos raised over \$500 for The Birthmother Fund and was awarded a group tour of QVC as well as some AFTH goodies.

Check out the AFTH Facebook page for amazing photos taken by Two Suits and A Dress as well as volunteers from Marple Newtown High

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### Insert:

AFTH Summer Picnics

## OFFICE LOCATIONS

### ALLENTOWN OFFICE

2212 Union Blvd  
Allentown, PA 18109  
610.432.2384

### CENTRAL PA OFFICE

1525 Oregon Pike, Suite 402  
Lancaster, PA 17601  
717.399.7766

### CONNECTICUT OFFICE

703 Hebron Ave., 1st floor  
Glastonbury, CT 06033  
860.657.2626

### 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

### NEW YORK

1.800-355-5500

### PITTSBURGH OFFICE

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

### VIRGINIA OFFICE

1407 Stephanie Way, Suite H  
Chesapeake, VA 23320  
757.361.0008

### WYNEWOOD OFFICE

30-31 Hampstead Circle  
Wynnewood, PA 19096  
610.642.7200

### TOLL FREE NUMBER

**1.800.355.5500**

### VISIT OUR WEBSITE:

**www.afth.org**

School's Interact Club. We'd like to thank Two Suits and A Dress as well as all of those who came out to volunteer for the 5K.

### To everyone who supported through their donations, time, and sweat...

*thank you, thank you, thank you!* Because of YOUR participation and support, we were able to raise **more than double** the funds that were raised at the event last year! The real thanks is coming from all the women who will be helped through the AFTH Birthmother Fund with the money raised through this event. The Birthmother Fund supports women who have or who are working with Adoptions From The Heart. AFTH has worked with thousands of pregnant women considering adoption. Each woman is facing unique challenges and many find themselves in need of a little additional financial support to help with housing, food, transportation etc. in order to regain their footing. Those in need are not demanding financial help but are silently trying to find a way out. A little financial relief from difficult circumstances can make a huge difference and AFTH has seen it propel women into a better place with ongoing stability. It's our hope that the Find Her Footing 5K will raise awareness and allow us to continue to help more and more women.

### Special thanks to our 2014 Find Her Footing 5K Sponsors and Donors:

*Delaware County Community College, Bryn Mawr Running Company, 92.5 XTU, Fast Signs, Main Line Today, Boing! Bounce Rentals, PFit, Kohl's Cares, National Penn Bank, Healing Kneads, Tee's With A Purpose, Doc Bresler: Cavity Buster, Vertex Fitness, Modell's, Herbal Water, Iron Hill Brewery, Original Bagel, Philly Soft Pretzel Factory, Acme, Cupcakes Gourmet, Avenue Kitchen, Grand Slam, Philadelphia Zoo, Adventure Aquarium, Oasis, & QVC.*



**Don't Delay Register Today...www.afth.org**

The 2015 Find Her Footing 5K Walk/Run & Kid's Dash is April 12th  
With your help, 2015 can be the biggest event yet!



## Letters to AFTH Social Workers

As a way to jump start National Social Work Month in March, we asked our Facebook fans to post Dear (specific AFTH social worker) letters telling us about a special social worker who made a lasting impression on them and why they mean so much to the family. AFTH wants to honor the dedication and hard work of our social workers who have touched your lives by sharing a few of the responses we have received.

Dear Lori -I don't even know how I'd have gotten through our journey without you. I came to you pretty broken but you gave us hope again. You supported me and held my hand through all the ups and downs - even when I drove you nuts. Having you and Melody there to share the amazing day we got to meet our son was a memory I'll hold close to my heart forever. You girls became family to us!!! Thank you for putting your whole heart into your profession and for making a difference for so many of us!! We love and miss you - Renee, Sam and Vincent xo

Dear Ashley - From the moment we had our first "Learn about open adoption" meeting until today, it has been all Ashley, all the time! You have been just fantastic with us, even when I would ask so many questions. Thank you to Ashley for treating us like we were your only family, even though you have many others. I can not say enough about AFTH and the wonderful people you have in your organization. Also, a huge shout out the Nicole in Chesapeake! She made our hospital experience fantastic, supported us and most importantly supported our birth mother. Both Ashley & Nicole made our placement wonderful, again, treating it like it was their first time too!! We will forever be shouting from the roof tops that AFTH is the BEST because of wonderful, caring SWs like Ashley & Nicole!! All our love, - Tracey, Pat & DELANEY!!!

Dear Lori (Cherry Hill Office), You have been a great support to me, before, during and after my 2 adoption journeys. You have a special place in all of our hearts! About 9 years ago, I had a disappointment that occurred in the hospital. The staff from the Allentown Office were there with me, and provided me with support, love and the courage to continue my journey. The social workers were the best! - Kimberly F.

Dear Tammy, You rock. We actually had FUN doing the trainings and getting to know you as you got to know us. I love that we still touch base from time to time. Thanks for being awesome. - Barbara K.

Penny, I don't think I have to tell you that this super S belongs on you. - Diane A.

We are grateful for Laurie Moorehead. She was a constant support throughout the wait, a disappointment and some tricky times during our son's placement. She checked in with us and was always available. She never lost her patience with us and always found the words that were the balance of comfort and honesty. We can never thank her enough for all that she did for us. We are grateful to Laurie, Michaelina Bendig and AFTH for helping us to meet the most wonderful little boy in the world! - Kara B.

*Cont'd on Page 5...*

## Birth Mother's Day Brunch - Cherry Hill, NJ

The Saturday just before Mother's Day is Birthmother's Day and it was created by a group of Seattle area birthmothers, in an effort not only to educate, but more importantly, to honor and remember women who had made adoption plans for their children. This group of birthmothers decided to create a special day set apart from Mother's Day and so on Saturday, May 12, 1990, these women celebrated the very first Birthmother's Day.

This year our Cherry Hill Office is offering a support group on Birth Mothers Day as a way to observe the special day and connect with other birth mothers and covering topics such as experiencing holidays after making an adoption plan, coping with grief and loss, open adoption through the years, ongoing future contact, etc. Most of the time will be spent as discussion while enjoying a provided brunch.

*Saturday, May 10th from 11am-1:30pm at the Cherry Hill, NJ Office*

If you are a birthmother who is interested in attending, please contact Kate at [KathrynJ@afth.org](mailto:KathrynJ@afth.org) or call the Cherry Hill Office at 856-665-5655. **RSVP by May 5th required for a head count for brunch.**



## Surviving the Wait in Adoption

By: Michael Strouse of *Two Dads, One Family: A Journey Into Parenthood and Beyond*

Recently Vinnie and I spoke on a panel called ‘Surviving the Wait.’ While Vinnie and I had a relatively normal wait time for a placement, we had a unique story. Sitting next to a couple that waited almost 3 years, our wait felt even shorter. A little over four years since we walked into that same building, our ‘wait’ seems so like such a small blip in our history now. On the other side, it is so much easier to see that Lydia was meant to come to us, worth that time and stress and that Kian found us through a destiny set in motion by Lydia’s placement.

Looking into the eyes of the waiting parents, though, I went right back to the stress and emotional roller coaster of those 10 months. I saw my self-doubt, pain, obsession and despair. I was able to laugh off a few of my behaviors but the reality is, waiting can be brutal on adoptive parents. You aren’t just setting a goal in adopting, you are trying to realize a dream. With something so special and so personal, it was impossible for me to release my life to the hands of fate. (Let’s be honest here, I am not able to do that with most things... ok, everything!) The way the process works is that you pour your life out into these profiles and then you face rejection until you don’t. Most people aren’t wired to deal with that volume of rejection and it does take a toll on your self-esteem. You can’t help it. All of your demons come out. Am I too fat? Is it because I am gay? Should I have worn something different in this photo? Did I talk with my hands too much in our video? It’s ridiculous but it is completely human!

There’s also the setbacks inherent in the adoption process. We had one disappointment and one very painful disappointment/eventual placement. They brought me to darker places than I had seen in my adult life. I was swept off my feet with a gust of pain like I had never felt. Vinnie and I had to get back up together and face this pain. We were lucky to have each other plus great family and friends but it was still hard.

Vinnie also reminded me of how I kept track of all of the families on the agency’s website and saw when they came down. I’d hold onto a twinge of jealousy that they probably got their baby but also was happy to know we were one step closer to our baby.

I heard one bit of wisdom that resonated with me last night. One of the other panelists, who also self-identified as a ‘Type A’, said that her lack of control in the wait was probably a good thing for her as it prepared her for parenthood. Knee deep in toddler-dom, I agree wholeheartedly. There’s sometimes the illusion of control in our house but we are just teetering on the edge of meltdown, boo-boo, food throwing or flying socks in Target. It was an adjustment for me and was probably made easier because I ceded control during our ‘paper pregnancy’ to the adoption process. Beyond that, I look to our disappointments and near disruption as a small window into the pain felt by birthparents. While I know they cannot compare in scope, they did allow me to better empathize with the pain they feel.



With all of this said, I don’t want to scare anyone away from adoption because it is a wonderful and beautiful thing. I have two amazing children and my family has been extended to include perfect strangers that did find faith in our profiles. But like many things that have great rewards, there are great hurdles.

So what is our wisdom for surviving the wait?

Make sure to keep living your life! You aren’t going to get a baby any quicker by sitting at home and thinking about how it hasn’t happened yet. Be a richer parent when your time actually comes by having dinners out, traveling, planting a garden or learning to speak Mandarin.

Be OK with yourself. You can have moments of self doubt. It is natural. Just don’t stay there. Realize those thoughts for what they are and go back to being you! If you need help with that, reach out. I made sure to share my feelings with Vinnie and others, ahem-this blog, when I needed to. When it was really bad, Lori, our Social Worker, knew exactly what to say to me to get me back in the saddle.

*Cont’d on Next Page...*

*...Surviving the Wait Cont'd*

Know that there are others that understand your situation. In one of our worst moments, we attended a baby care class and found another couple that also had a tumultuous journey. Knowing we weren't alone was comforting to us! Those outside of the adoption community might find the emotional aspect of the wait hard to relate to. Use the resources at your disposal to connect. Whether you are attending classes, participate in a message board or just talk with someone who understands, keep yourself connected to your ultimate goal - becoming a parent!

Have faith! No matter what, there's a miracle in adoption. Though it is a series of human choices, those choices come together in amazing ways to make you a family. Destiny, fate, hand of God, however you'd like to term it, it's real and wonderful! Your baby will come to you in the right time. Know that truth!

*Michael and Vinnie worked with Adoptions From The Heart to help grow their family. This article originally appeared on their blog Two Dads, One Family after the couple participated on a panel at the AFTH Spring Ed Series class "Surviving the Wait" held in our Cherry Hill Office. For more from them and to follow their continued journey of parenthood, visit [2dads1family.blogspot.com](http://2dads1family.blogspot.com)*

*Letters to Social Workers Cont'd from Page 3...*

Joan Smith (Greensburg, PA office) is a true angel and our saving grace! We loved her from the moment we met her and we were so blessed to have her as our SW. She found her true calling! Thanks Joan!- Elizabeth M.

Dear Jeanne, From the day we first met you last year, we knew that we were in great hands and that we had chosen the right place. You got us through all the paperwork with no problems, you stayed on top of us to do it all in a timely fashion and we did. When we had an interruption in July, you were with us the entire time, calling and emailing us to make sure we were ok. We learned so much from you about open adoption and from that we were able to teach our families and friends about it too. We will never forget getting that call from you, even as you were on maternity leave yourself. You always said when it's meant to be, it'll happen and you were certainly right about that. I really hope you realize the impact you've had on so many peoples lives by helping us complete our family. We can never say thank you enough, but we will certainly try to. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts, Love Jeff, Sam, and Peyton

## AFTH Support Groups

Adoptions From The Heart understands how important it is for ongoing support for those going through an adoption process. We also believe that coming together with others who have or who are going through the same process can be extremely helpful. Each AFTH office offer support groups throughout the year both for expecting/birth parents as well as waiting adoptive parents. We encourage everyone to get involved! Contact your local office for more details about upcoming support groups.

### ALLENTOWN

Call (610) 432-2384 or Email [TammyC@afth.org](mailto:TammyC@afth.org)

### CENTRAL PA

Call (717) 399-7766 or Email [AmandaK@afth.org](mailto:AmandaK@afth.org)

### CHERRY HILL

A special Birth Mother's Day Bruch is being held in May (see page 3 for details)

One-on-one Support - Social workers available to meet with NJ waiting families to provide support, review profiles and discuss any concerns families may have. Must register by the Wednesday prior to the meeting for time slots between 6:30-8:30pm.

**Tuesday, May 20th**

**Tuesday, June 17th**

Call (856) 665-5655 or Email [KathrynJ@afth.org](mailto:KathrynJ@afth.org)

### CONNECTICUT

Call (860) 657-2626 or Email [PennyR@afth.org](mailto:PennyR@afth.org).

### DELAWARE

Come and join other waiting families for support and get connected! Topics will include "Surviving the Wait" as well as discussion of recent birth parent situations.

**Thursday, May 23rd at 6pm**

Call 302-658-8883 or Email [DanielleG@afth.org](mailto:DanielleG@afth.org)

### PITTSBURGH

Call (724) 853-6533 or Email [DebbieC@afth.org](mailto:DebbieC@afth.org).

### VIRGINIA

Call (757) 361-0008 or Email [KimW@afth.org](mailto:KimW@afth.org)

### WYNNEWOOD

Call 610-642-7200 or Email [AshleyK@afth.org](mailto:AshleyK@afth.org)

**Donor Update!**

# How Your Donations Are Helping Women

Those who joined us at the Find Her Footing 5K heard from a birthmother who received assistance from the AFTH Birthmother Fund and what it meant to her. Donations made to the fund go directly to those in need. A social worker may see an empty fridge when visiting a birthmother who has two children at home and doesn't have money for groceries. Or a birthmother who had a C-section and doesn't have paid time off and cannot immediately return to her job will not have money for rent. Instead of telling you even more stories of how it *could* be used, we would like to share a few specific stories of how your donations *were* used the past few months:

**Jen**, a birthmother from our Allentown Office, was living in a hotel which did not allow her to receive mail and so in order for her to obtain medical assistance, she needed an address to receive mail. AFTH covered the cost of a PO box as well as provided her with groceries when she was struggling to make ends meet.

**Cassie** from Pittsburgh was homeless and moving from shelter to shelter. She had two toddlers staying with relatives because despite a full time job at Burger King, Cassie was not able to care for all their needs. Two weeks before delivering, she secured low-income housing however did not have the funds to purchase a bed, table or even a couch. Imagine sitting and sleeping on the floor at 9 months pregnant let alone after giving birth. Cassie had also applied for food stamps however upon being discharged from the hospital, the food stamps were not yet available. Through the Birthmother Fund, AFTH purchased some basic furniture as well as groceries. Cassie says there would have been no way she would have been able to survive the weeks following her delivery without food or even a bed to sleep on. She is now doing very well and in addition to continuing to work full-time at Burger King she is taking classes and working towards a degree in nursing.

**Sarah** worked through our Virginia Office and because she was homeless, had no way of getting in touch with us or even an ambulance when she went into labor and so the Birthmother Fund purchased a pay by minute phone for her to use when she went into labor.

**Jamie** was also working through our Virginia Office and was kicked out of her home because her family disagreed with her decision to make an adoption plan for her baby. She went against their wishes, moved forward with an adoption plan, and was left with no place to live. The Birthmother Fund covered her hotel stay for the weekend while she made plans and found other living arrangements.

**Heather** was working with Michaelina in our Wynnewood Office and because she was unable to pay her cell phone bill, she was finding it impossible to apply for jobs because they had no way of contacting her for interviews. AFTH provided her with a cell phone which was critical to reaching her goal of finding employment and providing for herself and her children.

**Jennifer** is a birthmother who is suffering from a severe life-altering handicap. She does not have a supportive family life however she is attending a state college and is determined to finish her degree. Despite her family's lack of support, she is extremely driven to overcome her physical handicap and improve her quality of life through education. The AFTH Birthmother Fund provided her a small boost in financial support during the holidays as encouragement for all that she is doing to better her life and overcoming the challenges she is facing.

For more information on the AFTH Birthmother Fund, visit [www.afth.org](http://www.afth.org).

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

**Also Accepting Online Donations: [www.afth.org](http://www.afth.org)**

Adoptions From The Heart 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 (973) 504-6215. A copy of our official registration and financial information may be obtained from the state of NY upon written request to the Office of the Attorney General, Department of Law, Charities Bureau, 120 Broadway, New York, NY 10271. A financial statement is available upon written request from the VA State of Office of Consumer Affairs, (800) 552-9963.



# Adoptions From The Heart®

hosts its

## 26th Annual Picnic

RAIN or  
SHINE!

Sunday, June 1, 2014  
11am-2pm

Fort Washington Park (Flourtown Picnic Area)

### Those using GPS systems:

State parks do not have street addresses, so use  
44 W. Mill Rd., Flourtown, PA 19031

It is the address of the home across the street from the park.

### Thank You for choosing Adoptions From The Heart!

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

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

Free Family  
Portraits!



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.

### 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!*

# Connecticut's Annual Adoption Picnic

Come spend an afternoon with old friends and new friends!



**Quassy Amusement Park**  
**Sunday, June 29<sup>th</sup>**  
**11:00am - 4:00pm**  
Food served from noon until 3pm

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

## Advanced Reservations REQUIRED!

**PRICE NOW INCLUDES - all day ride, beach and waterpark passes!**

**Adults \$31**

**Children (ages 3-12) \$28.50**

**& Children Under 2 are Free**



Please mail your check payable to AFTH:  
Adoptions From The Heart  
703 Hebron Avenue, 1st floor  
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:**

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

***Deadline for Reservations: JUNE 23RD!***



# Adoptions From The Heart® 2014 Virginia Annual Picnic

**Chesapeake City Park  
"Fun Forest"**

**Saturday, June 7<sup>th</sup>  
Noon - 3:00 pm**

**Rain or Shine**



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

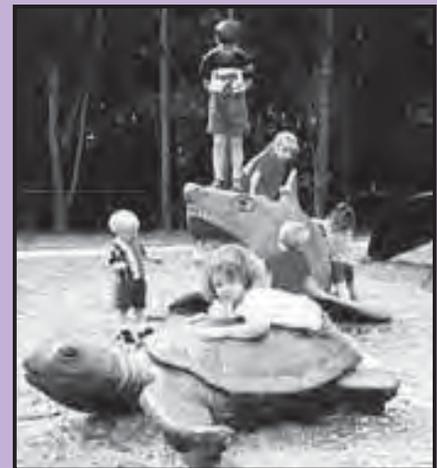
**Get ready to enjoy our  
annual adoption celebration!**

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

**Check out the...**

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

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



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 by Wednesday, June 4th: (757)361-0008 or [JennyH@afth.org](mailto:JennyH@afth.org)**

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

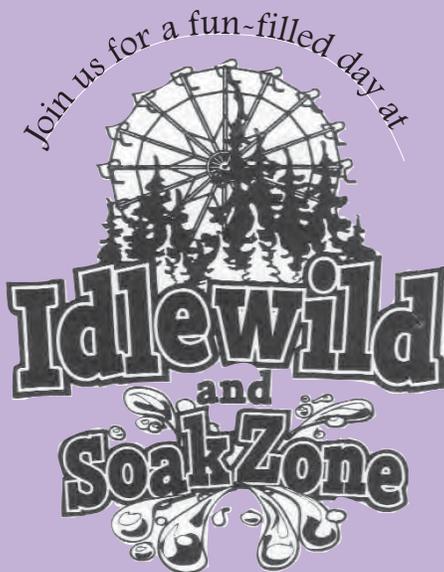


Adoptions From The Heart®

# 14th Annual Pittsburgh Office Picnic



Friday, August 1st



Exciting rides! Seven Themed Areas!  
Roller coasters and water slides!  
WAVE POOL and Kiddie Pool!

BRAND NEW - lazy river!

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*

*Directions on website*

*(724) 238-3666*

*www.idlewild.com*

Cost is \$20 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

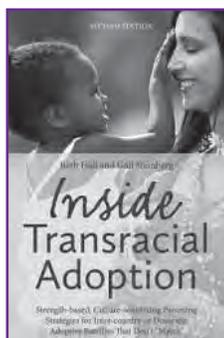
**Deadline to order: July 18th**

# Adoption Related Books at Unbeatable Prices

Not only can you snag up some great adoption related books at fabulous prices, you can support AFTH in the process. We have books on international adoption, domestic adoption, cook books, country specific books, children's books, books about birthparent, books about transracial adoption, books that every prospective adoptive parent should read, books for adoptees and so much more. Start your search here and take advantage of these amazing prices before our inventory runs out:

**AFTH's Amazon Storefront:** <http://tiny.cc/AFTH-Amazon-Sales>

**AFTH Blog Recommends:** <http://tiny.cc/AFTH-Book-Store>

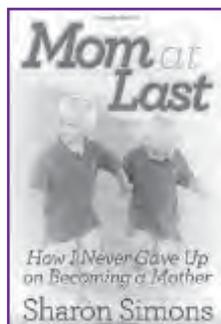


## Book Reviews

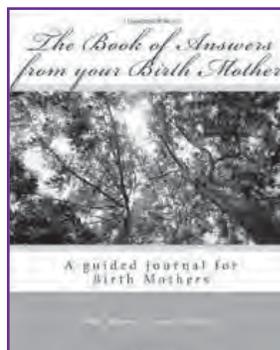
**Inside Transracial Adoption** by Beth Hall & Gail Steinberg - There are a lot of books available discussing white parents raising children of color but Hall & Steinberg were writing about this topic before many even considered

it to be a topic. There are so many new books on this subject, in fact, it's hard to pick just one. We recommend that you read more than one because there are many really good ones out there but if you only pick one, this would be our recommendation. We have been recommending this book to families for years and this updated version makes it even more relevant. This book is a straight-in-your-face, no-holds-barred look at raising a child of a different race, confronting your own known or maybe unknown prejudices, and providing parenting strategies. There are also examples to help you navigate through many of the challenges you may encounter when raising a child of a different race. Hall & Steinberg teach you how to help children build a strong sense of identity so they are comfortable answering questions and dealing with difficult situations. A must read for families considering adopting a child of a different race. [Amazon \\$14.82](#) [Kindle \\$13.99](#)

**Mom at Last: How I Never Gave Up on Becoming a Mother** by Sharon Simons - This book is filled with heartbreak and with joy. We struggle along



with Sharon as she faces infertility, the painful and degrading treatments, and even a late term miscarriage. We are witness to the often frustrating process of adoption and the tragedy of foreign orphanages. We rejoice as Sharon and her husband bring their children home. This book is an interesting read no matter if you have been touched by adoption or not. It is the story of tragedy and hope and ultimately love. [Amazon \\$15.39](#) [Kindle \\$7.99](#)



**The Book of Answers from Your Birth Mother: A guided journal for Birth Mothers** by Jenny Lynn Delancy - No matter what the level of contact is between birth and adoptive parents, this is a great book

for birth parents to share a bit of themselves with their child. This guided journal asks questions about likes, dislikes, favorite games, movies and members of the family. Some of the questions toward the end of the book deal with religious views, and the circumstances surrounding making an adoption plan. It also includes a section about her dreams for the future as well as information about the birth father. This is a great keepsake for a birth parents to pass on to an adopted child. It will help provide answers a child may have as they grow up and these answers will come directly from his or her birthmother through her own words. [Amazon \\$11.66](#)

## AFTH Program Updates



**DOMESTIC PROGRAMS** - AFTH continues to grow awareness about our services in the community by connecting with new agencies and hospitals. AFTH staff has also attended many different adoption conferences over the last few months which has helped AFTH to create new connections and expand our reach even further.

Our social workers have been providing personalized hospital trainings to social workers on counseling women who are considering adoption to further educate staff on adoption policies and practices. This has been a great way for our agency to educate hospital employees on adoption and gain a deeper connection with the hospitals inviting us in to speak to their staff.

Additionally, over the course of the last few months, each branch office has been increasing its focus on outreach and connecting with new medical professionals and different resources in the community for our clients. We are excited to say that we have seen direct results from the our social workers' outreach efforts as well as our trainings! The number of emergency placements AFTH has received since the start of spring has been incredible, which has been keeping our social workers extremely busy.

AFTH kicked off our Spring Ed Series with our first courses held in April. Don't worry, there are still several classes coming up. These are a great way to better education yourself on the different challenges and experiences that come with adoption. We have had wonderful attendance for our classes and hope that you will consider joining us as well. Visit the online calendar of events at [www.afth.org](http://www.afth.org) for details. If you missed a class you are interested in, contact your social worker and let them know that is a topic you would like to see in our next ed series in the fall.

AFTH 2014 picnics will soon be here. We encourage all AFTH families to come and celebrate adoption and connect with other families. Information on all the summer picnics can be found in the newsletter insert.

AFTH offices continue to hold information meetings and webinars monthly for those interested in learning

more about our program. The webinars are specific to the AFTH Out-of-Area Domestic Program and focuses on families wishing to adopt through AFTH however live outside our CT, NY, NJ, PA, DE, and VA service area. Our Domestic Program is open to singles and couples living anywhere in the U.S. For more information about an upcoming webinar or meeting, visit our online calendar of events at [www.afth.org](http://www.afth.org).

### ANNOUNCEMENT FROM VIRGINIA OFFICE:

With the recent repeal of the 2006 marriage amendment (and a newly elected Democratic Governor and AG), **Virginia can now accept same sex couples** for home studies and our domestic program. **We can resume showing expecting mothers profiles of same sex couples from other states as long as they are married or have a civil union.** We are very excited about this as the change in law has given the CHOICE of the family back to the birth parent where it belongs. Our Virginia Office was waiting for verification from both licensing and VA ICPC as well as our VA adoption attorney prior to making this exciting announcement.



**HEARTBEATS** - Our *Embryo Support Services* offer an option for families in which a woman is able to carry an embryo donated by another family. Wait times for matching between recipient and donor families average approximately 1-2 months. A webinar can be offered to those wishing more details and can be scheduled at your convenience. The webinar is a great way to learn about the program and to ask any questions you may have regarding the process.

AFTH has also developed an Embryo Education Series specific to addressing the needs of families created through Embryo Adoption. The webinars in this series address talking with children about embryo placement, potential contact with genetic relatives, and many other related topics.

To schedule an informational webinar or for details about the Embryo Education Series, please contact Jeanne McGee at [JeanneM@afth.org](mailto:JeanneM@afth.org) or 610-642-7200.



## Recent Legislation



**NEW JERSEY** - New Jersey's state Senate Health, Human Services and Senior Citizens Committee approved a bill (S873) that would allow adoptees to access their original birth certificates and learn their biological parents' names, contact information (if available), and family history. The bill also defines a procedure whereby birth parents are able to formally indicate whether they would like to be contacted directly, through an intermediary, or not at all. The bill passed through both Houses and is now awaiting the Governor's signature.

**INDIANA** - HEA 1222 creates a non-refundable \$1,000 tax credit per adopted child beginning taxable year 2015. It also tasks a legislative study committee with examining effective adoption programs in other states and providing recommendations for improvements regarding legal and regulatory costs associated with adoption in Indiana.

**LOUISIANA** - Legislation to establish enforceable, legal contracts for surrogacy births in Louisiana was heavily amended to reflect the concerns of conservative Christians who opposed a similar bill last year. The changes would put more restrictions in place for surrogacy contracts than the original legislation included.

The legislation would only allow surrogacy contracts between a married couple of opposite sexes and a woman between the age of 24 and 35 years old who has given birth previously. Other arrangements would not be allowed. This version of the bill excluded same-sex couples, unmarried people and singles who want to be parents from surrogacy. Under current law, no surrogacy arrangement is protected, but none is illegal either. The way the new bill is written, gestational surrogacy when it is not compliant with this law will be illegal.

This new bill would not allow couples to pay a woman for carrying a child to term, which is a common practice. Medical bills and other pregnancy-related costs will still be able to be covered by the couple wishing to be parents and if the woman who is pregnant falls ill and cannot work, the couple will be able to reimburse her for lost wages.

But new language in the legislation would prohibit couples who need to use a donor egg or sperm on top of a surrogate to have a child from setting up a legal contract. In the new bill, the woman who carries the pregnancy is also now referred to as a "gestational mother" rather than a "carrier".

**MICHIGAN** - House Bill 4647 allows judges to approve adoptions for children under the age of 1 after three months of supervision. Current law requires a six month supervision period before an adoption is considered final. HBs 4646-48 aim is to eliminate unnecessary difficulties in the direct placement adoption system that have hindered children from being adopted in a timely manner and created additional stress for adoptive parents. The bill package now heads to the governor for consideration.

### Online Book Club - *Breeding in Captivity* by Stacy Bolt

*Breeding in Captivity* takes us on Bolt's journey to have a child at "advanced maternal age," first with the help of a fertility specialist and then through an adoption agency. This isn't your typical serious memoir about struggling with infertility; it's an entertaining, witty read that perfectly balances humor with its more poignant moments. You will be rooting for the quirky, lovable couple through their fertility struggles and adoption adventures. It's about the hundreds of internet message boards that's soul purpose is to talk about "baby dancing." It's about meeting expecting mothers and deciding on open adoption. It's about being chosen and then having a mother change her mind. But ultimately, it's about hope, how life can surprise you, and laughing through the insanity.

The questions we will be discussing are ones that most anyone touched by adoption can relate to. We hope everyone will join in our discussions throughout May and June on our AFTH Facebook Page.



## International Adoption News

AFTH prides itself on keeping abreast of news regarding intercountry adoption. The agency continues to provide Home Studies, Education, Post-Adoption/Placement Reports and Services, and other assistance in support of international adoptions, despite no longer having placement programs in foreign countries. AFTH collaborates with many agencies across the United States that do provide intercountry adoption placement services. Contact your local AFTH office to see how we can help you with your adoption process, including referring you to one of these partner agencies. For details on AFTH's intercountry adoption services, contact Roberta Evantash at 610-642-7200 or [RobertaE@afth.org](mailto:RobertaE@afth.org).

**CHINA:** Families expecting a referral in the near future or those in the midst of the post placement process must now make sure that the photos for the report are printed on PHOTO PAPER ONLY. Original photos MUST be submitted on photo paper with the captions already on the photos BEFORE they are printed onto photo paper. There should be only TWO photos per page with EIGHT total. "Ideal" photos are full face shots of the child and at least 1-2 photos with her parents/family. Photos of the child unclothed or partially clothed, with food on her face, group or unclear shots are less than ideal. Captions should include the date, location and who is in each shot such as "Ellen playing in backyard with sister Jennifer, 6/5/11." AFTH sincerely appreciates your compliance with this new rule.

**Ethiopia:** In troubling news, four current and former employees of a South Carolina-based adoption agency named International Adoption Guides (IAG) were indicted in February for allegedly conspiring to defraud the United States in connection with IAG's adoption services in Ethiopia. The defendants are accused of engaging in a five-year conspiracy of obtaining adoption decrees and U.S. visas by submitting fraudulent adoption contracts signed by Ethiopian orphanages that never cared for or housed the children, of paying bribes to an Ethiopian official, and of agreeing to create counterfeit U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service forms.

**Haiti:** The Hague Convention entered into force in Haiti on April 1, 2014. On March 27, 2014, the U.S. Department of State (DOS) issued a notice stating that it will be able to process intercountry adoptions from Haiti that are initiated on or after April 1, 2014. While D.O.S. cautions that delays may occur as the Convention is implemented in Haiti, there is hope in the adoption community that Haiti may be able to achieve what few developing countries have; the continuation, without interruption, of adoptions to the U.S. upon its

transition to the Convention.

**India:** Following a "temporary freeze" that lasted more than a year, the Indian Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA) announced in February it was resuming acceptance of intercountry adoption applications, but only from Nonresident Indians (ie. Indian citizens residing outside of India). CARA is presently allowing only up to 50 such applications (worldwide) per month. CARA also posted data showing the number of Indian orphans annually placed for both domestic and intercountry adoption decreased by more than 50% between 2011 and 2013.

**Kazakhstan:** DOS has begun sending letters to some 450 families who appear on a list provided by the Government of Kazakhstan of U.S. families that have not submitted required post-adoption reports to Kazakhstan regarding their adopted children. Families that adopted orphans from Kazakhstan committed to send such reports every six months for the first three years after the adoption, and annually thereafter until children are 18 years old. The annual updates, including photographs of the child, can be self-reports from the families. Those that adopted their children via AFTH's Kazakhstan program can send reports to the attention of Terry Petrone at AFTH's office in New Jersey, for forwarding to Kazakhstan. Reports can also be directly mailed to the Visa and Consular Section, Embassy of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 1401 16th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036.

**Russia:** More than one year after Russian lawmakers passed a bill banning adoptions to the U.S., Russia once again created news when, in February, Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev signed a decree banning foreign same-sex couples, as well as single people from countries where same-sex marriages are legal, from adopting Russian children.

## International Adoption News Cont'd

**Ukraine:** Amid unrest in Ukraine, on March 11, 2014 DOS posted notice that, at that time, it was not aware of delays in the intercountry adoption process in Ukraine. DOS stated that it had received information from the Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs that it remained open and that delays were not expected in the issuance of Ukrainian passports to adopted children. Of course, the situation in Ukraine (vis a vis Russia) continues to evolve, and U.S. families in Ukraine completing an intercountry adoption are encouraged to communicate directly with the U.S. Embassy in Kyiv.

Regarding post-adoption reports, the failure of some families to submit these is a major issue of concern for the Ukrainian government. Ukrainian legislation requires adoptive parents to provide information about adopted Ukrainian children's living conditions and educational progress annually during the first three years following the adoption, and then triennially until children's 18th birthday. Reports, including photographs of the child and family, can be mailed to the Consular Office of the Embassy of Ukraine, 3350 M Street NW, Washington, DC 20007, or emailed to [adoption@ukremb.com](mailto:adoption@ukremb.com) or [adoption.ukremb@gmail.com](mailto:adoption.ukremb@gmail.com). The requested format to be used can be found at <http://usa.mfa.gov.ua/en/consular-affairs/services/accounting/adoption>

### Adoption Discussions are in Full Bloom on Social Media!



Our social media is exploding with content and thought-provoking adoption discussions. Whether you are an adoptee, prospective adoptive parent, birthparent, or adoptive parent already, we want you to join in.

You can find us on:

**Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest, Google+, WordPress & Tumblr**

AND...AFTH had such wonderful responses to our first online book club discussion in January that we are starting our second book *Breeding in Captivity* by Stacy Bolt in May (see page 9 for details). Let's Get Talking!



## Congratulations to Families Who Have Recently Adopted!

### Sons

Paul & Kristin  
Matthew & Christie  
Michael & Meredith  
Scott & Elizabeth  
Brian & Andrea  
Alexander & Ryan  
Ryan & MaryAnn  
Michael & Jennifer  
John & Pamela  
Anthony & Jessica  
Walter & Kimberly  
Alison  
Julius & Carey  
Dwight & Laura  
Bryan & Lisa (twins)  
Michael & Sally  
John & Madeline  
Brian & Kathleen

### Daughters

Michelle  
Scott & Lacey  
Michael & David  
Michael & Tara  
Matthew & Andrea  
Christopher & Christine  
Joseph & Rosemarie  
Evan & Lauren  
Jeffrey & Manish  
Phillip & Donna  
Jeremy & Sara  
Alan & Alex  
Mark & Jennifer  
Joseph & Joanna





# Adoptions From The Heart®

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*or current resident*

### Is Our Mailing List Current?

Are your name and address incorrect? Want to be removed from mailings? Are you receiving more than one copy? Let us know: [adoption@afth.org](mailto:adoption@afth.org)

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## FREE ONLINE WEBINARS

LEARN ABOUT AFTH'S PROGRAMS  
FROM THE COMFORT OF YOUR HOME

### DOMESTIC INFANT ADOPTION

MAY 6TH AT 7PM

JUNE 3RD AT 7PM

*Registration Required*

*Calendar of Events at [www.afth.org](http://www.afth.org)*

## Get SOCIAL Find AFTH On...

Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest,  
Google+, WordPress & Tumblr

## Got E-mail?

The listserve is a way for families to stay in the loop of agency updates related to the domestic program. Waiting families can subscribe by sending a message with the word "SUBSCRIBE" in the subject line to:

### DOMESTIC LISTSERVE -

[AFTHDomesticUpdates-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:AFTHDomesticUpdates-subscribe@yahoogroups.com)

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

### DOMESTIC DISCUSSION GROUP

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