

Adoption News



A Quarterly Newsletter from

Adoptions From The Heart

Spring 2015

3rd Annual Find Her Footing 5K

\$5,280 Raised in Support of the AFTH Birthmother and Birthparent Scholarship Funds

On Sunday, April 12th, Adoptions From The Heart held its 3rd Annual Find Her Footing 5K to support AFTH's Birthmother Fund and Birthparent Scholarship Fund! The event was held at Delaware County Community College in Media, PA where about 160 supporters of all ages came for a morning filled with family fun activities. Fox 29 News even came to film the runners which aired on the news later that night.

Children lined up across the starting line and kicked off the morning with a fun 100 meter Kid's Dash. Each child was awarded a medal and certificate after sprinting past the finish line. Doc Bresler: Cavity Busters and Boing! Bounce Rentals hosted the Kid's Dash again this year and Boing! brought along a bounce house that all the kids enjoyed.

Before the runners and walkers set out to accomplish their 5K, we had an AFTH birthmother, Heather, speak on behalf of the Birthmother Fund. She shared how important the fund meant to her personally, as well as to other women who are in need of a little extra help. Even Heather's two daughters took the stage to thank the crowd for coming and to thank AFTH for making the last two Christmas' something they will never forget.

Participants enjoyed music provided by two local radio stations, 92.5 XTU and 101.1 More FM. Local business came together and donated refreshments including bagels from Original Bagel in Broomall, refreshing beverages by Ayala's Herbal Water, sweet treats from Insomnia Cookies.

The raffle baskets at the 5K were some of our best yet! Prizes included a Samsung Galaxy Tablet, a Taste of Delaware County basket (valued at \$305) which included gift cards to some of the best local restaurants like Dos Gringos, Spasso, and Stephen's on State. There was also a Family Fun basket (valued at \$335) with gift cards to Sky Zone, Arnolds Family Fun Center, Philadelphia Rock Gym, and passes to museums and Tyler Arboretum. The popular Sports Basket (valued at over \$900) included gym memberships, a massage gift card and Drexel Men's Basketball tickets. The timeshare (valued at over \$1500) was popular again this year. The lovely ladies at Stella and Dot also donated a basket. The 50/50 raffle winner graciously donated her winning back to the Birthmother Fund.

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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

wynnewood office

30-31 Hampstead Circle
Wynnewood, PA 19096
610.642.7200

toll free number

1.800.355.5500

visit our website:

www.afth.org

Be sure to check out the AFTH Facebook page to see all the amazing photos taken by Two Suits and A Dress who donated their photography services. You can also see the Fox 29 News segment.

To everyone who supported through their donations, time, and sweat... THANK YOU! Because of your participation and support we were able to raise \$5280! The real thanks comes from all the men and women who will be helped through the Birthparent Scholarship Fund and the Birthmother Fund. The Birthparent Scholarship Fund was created as a way to assist birthparents get back on their feet and establish a career through higher education. It encourages men and women who have placed children for adoption to pursue their educational goals by awarding scholarships to several applicants each semester. The Birthmother Fund supports women who have or who are working with AFTH and may be facing some unique challenges that require a little financial assistance. A little financial relief from a difficult circumstance can make a huge difference. We hope the Find Her Footing 5K continues to raise awareness for birth parents and enables us to help even more men and women.

Keep an eye out on Adoptions From The Heart's social media for the announcement of the 2016 Find Her Footing 5K Run, Walk and Kid's Dash!

Special thanks to all of our 2015 Find Her Footing 5K Sponsor and Donors:

Delaware County Community College, Bryn Mawr Running Company, 92.5 XTU, 101.1 More FM, Boing! Bounce Rentals, PFit, Kohl's Cares, Doc Bresler: Cavity Busters, Penn National, Beneficial Bank, Keirestu, Two Suits and A Dress, Herbal Water, Insomnia Cookies, Daddi's Mixed Martial Arts, Modell's, Original Bagel, Philly Soft Pretzel Factory, Dos Gringos, Stephens on State, Spasso, Pinocchio Pizza, Champps Americana, Mesa Mexican Grill, Hopes Cookies, Fuel, Travola Restaurant and Bar, Oakmont Pub, Avenue Kitchen, Vertex Fitness, Sweat Fitness, Healing Hands Massage, Drexel Women's Basketball, CGI, Sky Zone, Arnold's Family Fun Center, Philadelphia Rock Gym, CN Skate Place, Tyler Arboretum, Oasis Family Fun Center, and QVC.



Now collecting pictures for the
2016 Calendar Starring AFTH Children



Submit
Your
Photos!

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

- Send horizontal 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!
- Send photos of **only** the children (make them the stars)

NOTE: if you have to send multiple emails due to file size, number the emails so we know we got them all! (eg. 1 of 4, 2 of 4)

Deadline July 1, 2015

Email to: KristyG@afth.org

(Kristy will respond with confirmation of receipt)

Mail to: Marketing Team Calendar Search
Adoptions From The Heart
30-31 Hampstead Circle, Wynnewood, PA 19096

Stella & Dot Raising Funds to Help Birthmothers in Need



For the past month, AFTH has teamed up with Stella & Dot for "Bubbles & Bling: A Birthmother Fundraiser." Not only was there an online trunk show but we were lucky enough to have Stella & Dot come to our Wynnewood office and style attendees with the latest spring and summer styles. The fundraiser was a huge hit, with 100% of the profits going to Adoptions From The Heart. We raised \$500 for the Birthmother Fund.

The fundraiser didn't stop when the trunk show was packed up either! Stella & Dot also made an appearance as a sponsor for our 3rd Annual Find Her Footing and brought along a fabulous raffle basket. They will also be joining AFTH for our June 7th Annual Picnic in Fort Washington.

Donations to either the Birthmother Fund or the Birthparent Scholarship Fund can be made online at www.afth.org or by using the below form.

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

**Credit Cards
Accepted Online:**
www.afth.org

Please use my donation: ___ AFTH Birthmother Fund ___ Scholarship Fund ___ Where It's Needed Most

I'd like to generously donate: \$50 \$100 \$250 \$500 \$1,000 Other: \$ _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ **State:** _____ **Zip:** _____

E-mail: _____

***JOIN THE AFTH PLEDGE PROGRAM:**
___ I authorize Adoptions From The Heart to
invoice me in September, December, and March
for 3 additional quarterly payments of \$ ____ .

Adoptions From The Heart is a registered, charitable organization. In accordance with PA law, a copy of our official registration and financial information may be obtained from either the PA Department of State by calling toll-free (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.



The Key to AFTH's Success

The reason heard again and again when prospective adoptive parent and expecting parents are asked why they choose AFTH... our social workers.

Our social workers know how important individual attention is in this life-changing journey. Every adoption journey is unique. Clients are not a number, but a part of our bigger AFTH family. In honor of National Social Worker Month in March, we asked the online community to share with us a social worker who was very special to them and why. We had so many responses we can't share them all but here are a few:

"Joan Smith from the Pittsburgh office. She was with us through both of our adoptions and a failed adoption. We adore her. She is now family to us." - Sally

"Ashley in Wynnewood, our SW and Nicole in Chesapeake, our BM's SW. Both so very kind, patient and awesome to work with! I have said it over and over, so very many times, and still do not get one bit tired of talking so highly of these two ladies and all of the AFTH staff that we have ever had contact with. You are truly an amazing organization!" - Tracey

"Stephanie from the Lancaster Office. Thanks for keeping Matt and I sane during the overwhelming paperwork stage. Can't wait for the day when you give us The Call!" - Kristin

"Chelsey from the Allentown Office she is amazing! made my process of placing my daughter for adoption the easiest it could have been! Thank You!" - Carly

"Kathy, Penny and Alice all in the Virginia office. They made our adoption experience one to remember!! We could always count on them to be there when we had questions or just needed someone to talk to." - Ashley

"Danielle in Delaware! I love her!" - Samie

"Tammy Christ! What a long journey we had but she was there with us!" - Donna

"Joan Smith was wonderful! We could not asked for more. She was authentic, realistic, compassionate and responsive." - Lynn

"Rae from the Lancaster Office is amazing an has been so helpful an there for me. And Amanda as well, every time I call you can tell she has a smile on her face talking to you. Truly wonderful women." - Amanda

"Jeanne, she was just the best!! Always there for us, good times or bad. And now for our second time we have Ashley, who is also so awesome!! We feel really lucky to have gotten two great social workers to help us through our adoption journeys." - Jeff

"Danielle in Deleware!!! That's one awesome lady!" - Mallorie

"Penny Rearick in CT! She was so kind, helpful, and worked so hard for us to overcome all of our obstacles quickly to bring our sweet daughter home over two years ago." - Heather

"Nicole in Chesapeake! She made my adoption what it is today. Couldn't have done it without her!" - Stephanie

"LOVE LOVE LOVE Stephanie from the Lancaster office! Although I have to say, I have had a great experience from everyone in the Lancaster office- and Hannah and Leah from Wynnewood." - Stephanie

"Tammy was simply amazing as is the rest of the Allentown staff. I'm so happy we're nearby. It would feel like we'd lost part of our family if we couldn't pop by and check in ." - Amy

"Ashley in Wynnewood and Amanda in DE helped our family grow with patience, kindness & love!" - Samantha

"Joan from the Greensburg Office is an angel on Earth!" - Elizabeth

"Joan Smith from the Pittsburgh office and Marilyn Rich from Lancaster! They are both incredibly supportive and professional. We were tremendously lucky to have them." -Becky

“Meredith and Lori in Cherry Hill. They are two amazing ladies and have always been there for me.” - Lori

“Chelsey in the Allentown office was simply the best, we love her!” - Louise

“Kim Whitmore and Michaelina Bendig, wouldn’t have made it through without both of them!” - Wenonah

“Everyone in the Lancaster Office was extremely helpful and supportive in our journey!” - Patti

“Yes, there is. Chelsea from Allentown, Pennsylvania! Wonderful person, not only a social worker, she’s my friend as well!” - Danielle

“Marilyn who moves from Harrisburg Office to the Lancaster Office but the transition for her was seamless to us. She was fabulous and so dear to our hearts. What a fabulous woman!” - Tammy

“Kim and Nicole from the Chesapeake VA office!!! Love you guys!!!” - Andrea

“Everyone in the Lancaster office is awesome!! But a special shout out to Marilyn!” - Lisa

We heard your comments and we agree! AFTH has some of the greatest social workers. We are excited to continue to grow our AFTH families with the help of these wonderful men and women by our side.

Waiting Family and Birthparent Support Groups

Allentown - All waiting families are encouraged to attend our local support group to come together and connect with other families. Light refreshments will be served.
Call (610) 432-2384 or Email TammyC@afth.org

Brooklyn, NY - AFTH has recently expanded support groups to Brooklyn and has been excited to see how well received they have become.
Saturday, May 16th at 11am
Call (610) 432-2384 or Email TammyC@afth.org

Central PA - Both waiting adoptive parent and birthparent support groups are being held for AFTH clients. Come together in support. Contact our office for more details.
Call (717) 399-7766 or Email AmandaK@afth.org

Cherry Hill - One-on-one meetings with social workers to provide support, review profiles and discuss any concerns. Visit the online calendar of events for dates. Time slots are between 6:30-8:30pm.
Call (856) 665-5655 or Email ChrisotpherP@afth.org

Birthmother support groups help connect women who have or are making an adoption plan for their child. Contact for details.
Call 856-665-5655 or Email ChristopherP@afth.org

Connecticut - Support groups for waiting families will be offered throughout the year for families to come together and share their experiences. Contact office for upcoming dates.
Call (860) 657-2626 or Email SusanM@afth.org

Delaware - Birthparent support groups are designed for birth parents to come together in support and to share their adoption story with others who have or who are considering adoption.
Call 302-658-8883 or Email DanielleG@afth.org

Waiting family support groups will also be held throughout the year to bring families together to share experiences to help cope with the wait. Contact the office for details.
Call 302-658-8883 or Email DanielleG@afth.org

Virginia - Birthparent support groups are held quarterly and are designed as a time of support and encouragement for birth parents who have placed children through AFTH. We eagerly welcome new members and hope to see YOU at the next meeting.
Call (757) 361-0008-2384 or Email NicoleF@afth.org for upcoming support group dates.

Adoptive parent support groups bring AFTH waiting families together for extra emotional support during “the wait.”
Call (757) 361-0008 or Email NicoleF@afth.org

Wynnewood - During the waiting process it is important for hopeful adoptive parents to find support in others who understand. Support groups are led by AFTH social workers and cover a wide variety of topics. All prospective families are encouraged to invite extended families to attend the group as well.
Monday, May 4th at 6:30pm
Email AshleyK@afth.org or Call 610-642-7200

Gathering Together for Birthmother's Day

As everyone knows, Mother's Day is always the second Sunday in May. The Saturday just before Mother's Day is another special day but you won't find it marked on the calendar unless you are looking at AFTH's Building Beautiful Families Calendar. Birthmother's Day was first formed and celebrated in 1990 by a group of Seattle birthmothers who wanted a special day to celebrate their unique motherhood. While some birthmothers prefer to celebrate on Sunday for Mother's Day, some women really appreciate the special day to honor their role as a birthmother.



As a way to honor birthmother's this May, AFTH's Virginia Office is hosting a birth parent social event at a local bowling alley. It will be a nice time of relaxation and bonding between special women who have connected through the Virginia support group! The support group has been a great source of friendship for many of the women. Our Virginia staff is so excited to celebrate Birthmother's Day with them. For information about the birth parent event, contact Nicole at NicoleF@afth.org or call 757-361-008.

Most Popular Classes for Waiting Adoptive Parents



As announced in the last newsletter, AFTH is now hosting frequent childcare classes in our local offices geared to waiting adoptive families. These classes are a great way for adoptive parents to learn the basics of childcare while in the comfortable setting of being surrounded by other hopeful adoptive parents.

Here is a recap from a recent childcare class held in Connecticut: Eight prospective adoptive families gathered in Glastonbury for the office's first Infant Care Class, taught by a wonderful instructor, Kim Kelly, who is a nurse as well as an adoptive parent. Participants learned about newborn health and behaviors, feeding, bathing, and diaper changing while having the opportunity to practice their new skills with two realistic, life-size newborn dolls. Classes are scheduled through June and will be added to the online calendar of events as future dates are added.

Just a few months after the childcare class, Connecticut hosted a spring ed series class focused on the Effects of Drug and Alcohol Use During Pregnancy and the classroom was packed with eager hopeful adoptive parent. This is one of AFTH's most popular classes as waiting adoptive parents appreciate the opportunity to learn from an medical professional and gather important information helpful in filling out their profile key.



Don't worry, you don't have to live in Connecticut to take advantage of these great classes.

Here is a list of upcoming classes (pre-registration required in order to reserve your spot):

- Bethlehem, PA - Substance Abuse During Pregnancy, May 2nd at 11am in the Bethlehem Public Library
- Cherry Hill, NJ - Effects of Drugs & Alcohol During Pregnancy, May 6th at 6:30pm in the Cherry Hill Office
- Harrisburg, PA - Childcare Class, June 22nd at 6:30 in the Giant Center
- Virginia Beach, VA - Childcare Class, June 6th from 1-2 at the General Booth Pediatrics
- Wilmington, DE - Childcare Class, June 29th at 7pm in St. Francis Hospital
- Wynnewood, PA - Childcare Class, May 14th at 6:30 in the Wynnewood Office

To register visit the online calendar of events at: www.afth.org/calendar-of-events



Adoptions From The Heart®

hosts its

27th Annual Picnic

RAIN or SHINE!

Sunday, June 7, 2015
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 well as waiting families as we celebrate building beautiful families. Bring your family, a blanket, and a picnic lunch. AFTH will provide some drinks, snacks, and entertainment.

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.

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

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!

Connecticut's Annual Adoption Picnic

Come spend an afternoon with old friends and new friends!



Wickham Park Manchester
Sunday, June 28th
Noon-3pm

-Williams Pavilion-
www.wickhampark.org

**NEW VENUE
THIS YEAR**

We have a private pavilion with access to sports facilities including tennis, volleyball, and horseshoes. There are gardens, ponds, playgrounds and an aviary to explore! There will be plenty of beautiful space to enjoy the day with your family!

Please bring a picnic lunch... snacks and drinks will be provided!
Please note that there is a \$5.00 charge for cars to park.

RSVP REQUIRED!



RSVP By Calling:
(860) 657-2626

Please contact Nancy
with any questions:
NancyM@afth.org
or call (860) 657-2626

Deadline for Reservations: June 18th!



Adoptions From The Heart®

2015 Virginia Annual Picnic

Chesapeake City Park

“Fun Forest”

Saturday, June 13th

Noon - 3:00 pm

Rain or Shine



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

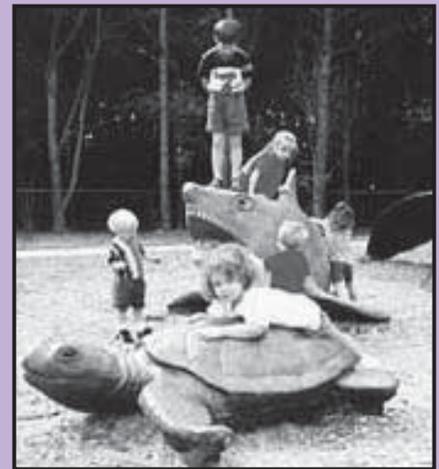
Get ready to enjoy our annual adoption celebration!

- ♥ 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 10th: (757)361-0008 or KimW@afth.org

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

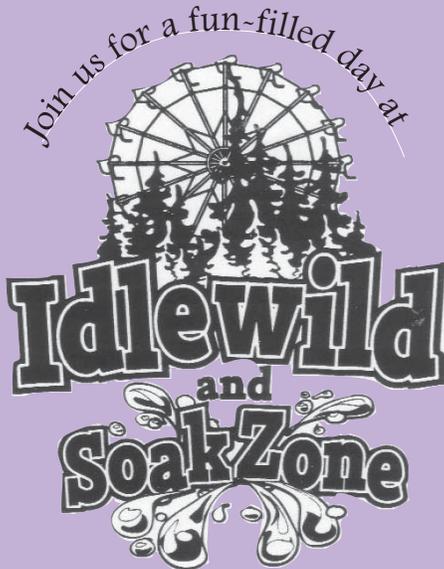


Adoptions From The Heart®

15th Annual Pittsburgh Office Picnic



Friday, August 7th



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 \$21 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

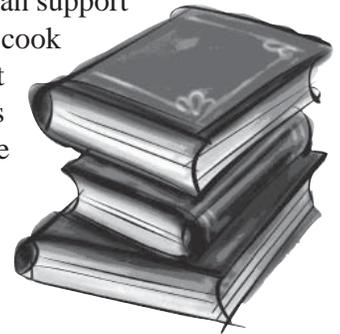
Deadline to order: July 24th

Adoption Related Books at Unbeatable Prices

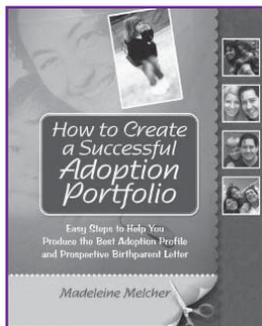
Not only can you snag up some great adoption related books at fabulous prices, you can support AFTH in the process. We have books on international adoption, domestic adoption, cook books, country specific books, children's books, books about birthparent, books about transracial adoption, books that every 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>

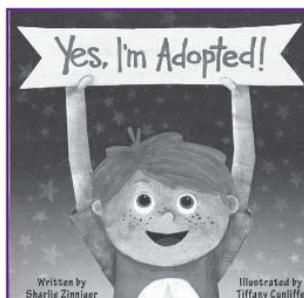


Book Reviews

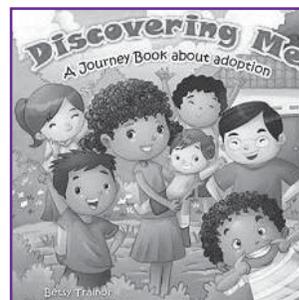


How to Create a Successful Adoption Portfolio: Easy Steps to Help You Produce the Best Adoption Profile and Prospective Birthparent Letter by *Madeleine Melcher*

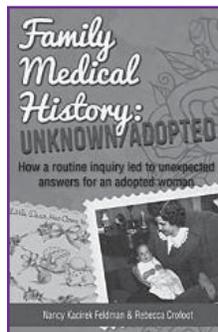
Letter by Madeleine Melcher - For families who are feeling overwhelmed at the prospect of writing an adoption profile, this book is the book for you. This book has a wealth of information, pulling from many resources, particularly from birth mothers themselves, on what women are looking for when they look at these profiles when they are trying to create an adoption plan. It is very easy to read and touches on all the bases: knowing your audience, remembering the guidelines set forth by your agency or attorney, the importance of photos etc. This book is a great place to start and makes the task of writing an adoption profile much more manageable.



Yes, I'm Adopted! by Sharlie Zinniger - This is a sweet story with an empowering message to help adopted children who may feel that different is bad to realize different is just different and different can in fact be very good. There is even a subtle nod to Superman and his being different and adopted. It is a great book for boys and girls alike!



Discovering Me: A Journey Book by Betsy Trainor - This book does a great job of explaining how different families begin. It shows how families can start out in different ways and even the make-up of adoptive families can be different. It also stresses that there are other people may have a similar story. This book is a beautifully written story about adoption.



Family Medical History: Unknown/Adopted - How a Routine Inquiry Led to Unexpected Answers for an Adopted Woman by Nancy Kacirek Feldman & Rebecca Crofoot - Many adult adoptees know the pain of not knowing their

family medical history and the awkward conversations at doctors offices when trying to explain that they were adopted. In fact, medical history is a big reason why many adoptees search for their birth parents. This book describe the process and the roller coaster of emotions that are involved with searching for birthparents. Nancy tells most of the story from her perspective through narrative, letters, and emails. Becky, the social worker for the agency that Nancy was adopted through helps fill in some of the legal gaps and letting readers know what is common and expected along the way.

AFTH Program Updates



DOMESTIC PROGRAMS - Happy Spring...finally! Adoptions From The Heart continues to grow and has seen a great start to 2015. Our quarterly statistics show that from January until March we have done 50 placements! Our agency has been focusing on outreach and maintaining great connections with medical professionals in the community as well as with a variety of different resources for our clients.

AFTH is holding a number of great Education Series classes throughout the Spring that cover a variety of topics. Classes have already begun but there are still several popular classes coming up. Please take a moment to look at what each office has to offer. You can sign up for the Education series on our website at www.afth.org/calendar-of-events. If you have any suggestions for a class you would like to see AFTH hold, feel free to contact your social worker. We are always looking for new classes that would benefit our adoptive parents and we would love to hear from you.

AFTH has welcomed a number of new social workers in our Cherry Hill as well as our Allentown and Wynnewood Offices. Take a moment to check out our new faces at www.afth.org/about/meet-staff/. We are excited to have them on board with AFTH.

All of our offices continue to hold Information meetings and online webinars monthly. The webinars are led by AFTH staff and are geared to families wishing to adopt through AFTH's Open Adoption Program. For more information about an upcoming webinar or meeting, visit our online calendar of events at www.afth.org.

As the spring weather is upon us, we encourage adoptive parents to come out and attend one of our waiting families support groups (see page 5). We have recently expanded our support groups to the Brooklyn area. Please check the calendar of events on our website for dates and times. Our staff would love to see you and catch up after this long winter.

AFTH 2015 picnics will soon be here. We encourage all AFTH families, international, placed and even waiting families, to attend to celebrate adoption and

connect with other families. AFTH staff loves to get a chance to catch up with all our families and see how much the children have grown since last year. The picnics are perfect time for reunions and we encourage all our open adoption families to invite their children's birthparents to the event. Be sure to send your letter soon so your child's birthparents don't miss out on this great opportunity to visit. Please be sure to include your full name (for internal use only) and your child's birthparent's name so that we can pass along your invitation. Information on all the summer picnics can be found in the newsletter insert and on our website.



HEARTBEATS - We welcome anyone wanting to learn more about AFTH's *Embryo Support Services*. The program is an excellent 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. For more details on the program or to schedule a webinar to learn more, contact HannahB@afth.org or call 610-642-7200.

Parent-Child Groups

A unique learning experience is offered to families with young children in the Delaware Valley. After Adoption conducts groups for parents and their children from infancy to four years. What sets this program apart from other parenting programs is that it is more than a play group for the children and more than a support group for the parents.

The leaders, Elaine Frank and Denise Rowe are clinical Social Workers who are trained child development specialists and have experience in Infant Mental Health. What they bring to this program is a blend of the latest child development theory and years of "hands on" work with families with young children. As parents confidence grows the difficult job of raising small children is eased!

Groups meet weekly or bi-monthly, Tuesdays or Thursdays from 10 to 11:30. For details, email elainefrankadopt@gmail.com.



Recent Legislation



CONNECTICUT: After a focused and persistent effort by adoption advocates including agencies, adoptive parents, birth parents and adult adoptees, Gov. Malloy signed into law a bill that restores the right of adoptees whose adoption were finalized on or after October 1, 1983, to obtain a copy of their original birth certificate. The bill goes into effect on July 1, 2015 for any adoptee 18 or older. Pursuant to the new law, adoptees are also entitled to a Contact Preference Form and Medical History Form if they have been filed by their biological parents with the Department of Children and Families. Adoptees may contact the Vital Records Department at the Department of Public Health by calling 860-509-7700.

Notice to biological parents: The new law provides that birthparents may file a Contact Preference Form and updated Medical History Form with the Department of Children and Families, which will be provided upon request of adult adoptees. The Contact Preference Form allows birthparents to indicate whether or not, and how, they wish to be contacted. Birthparents may contact the Department of Children and Families for the forms by calling 860-550-6300.

FLORIDA: The Florida Senate sent Governor Rick Scott a bill on Tuesday, April 14 repealing the state's 1977 ban on adoptions by gay parents. Florida banned gay adoption until five years ago, when an appeals court ruled that the ban was unconstitutional. The bill was designed initially to increase financial incentives to those who agree to adopt children. The measure would offer \$10,000 payments to state employees who adopt special-needs children from the foster-care system and \$5,000 payments to state employees who adopt other foster children

An amendment added to the bill declared that Floridians cannot be denied the opportunity to adopt if they plan to home-school their adopted children. The provision has worried people who point to child-abuse cases in which crimes were committed by home-schooling foster and adoptive parents.

Gov. Rick Scott, who has not said whether he will sign or veto the repeal.

INDIANA: In Indiana, Senate Bill 352 would allow adopted persons in Indiana born between 1941 and 1993 access to their original birth certificates while also allowing for a birth parent to express their preference for contact. Currently, adopted persons born in Indiana outside this time frame are allowed such access. SB 352 passed out of the Senate on January 22nd, 2015, with a favorable vote of 46 to 3.

NEW YORK: In New York, the State Assembly has introduced Bill A2901, which clarifies language and procedures for obtaining birth certificates and medical histories of adoptees; permits an adopted adult to access certain records when they reach the age of 18; and creates a contact preference to be filed by birth parents. The bill has been referred to the Health Committee.

WASHINGTON: The new law gives birth parents the option to file a "contact preference form," on which they can choose to prevent the release of the certificate. They also are given the option of releasing the certificate but requesting not to be contacted.

Whatever they choose, they're required to complete a medical history form in order to submit a contact preference, so that adoptees have information about potential health concerns, even if a parent doesn't want to be identified. More than 250 parents filed some sort of contact preference, the state said. About 180 said they did not want the certificate to be released.



International Adoption News

AFTH prides itself on keeping abreast of news regarding inter-country 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 inter-country 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.

CHINA

Last month two families, with log in date (LID) of December 20, 2006, who were previously in AFTH's China Program received referrals from Carolina Adoption Services (CAS) China Program. It has taken over eight years for these families to receive their non special needs assignments. The next LID for our previous China clients who transferred to CAS is January 16, 2007. It is anyone's guess as to when these matches will come but it will be a year at the very least.

On another note a baby home opened this past January in China's Guangzhou province and was introduced so parents could abandon infants safely rather than leave them on the streets. Most of these babies have special needs such as Down's syndrome, heart disease or cerebral palsy and their parents fear they cannot pay for medical care. The effort was abandoned after too many children were left and the center did not have the means to care for more. About 25 of these homes have opened throughout China. In December China's top legislature formally adopted a resolution easing the one-child policy, allowing couples to have two children if either parent is an only child.

GUATEMALA

The adoption division at USCIS announced that a year ago 57 adoption cases still had to be processed that were left from the time Guatemala shut down. As of this writing there are now 15. The rest have been completed.

KENYA

On February 20, 2015 the Government of Kenya announced the "establishment and appointment of an Expert Committee to review and develop a detailed policy and legal framework to regulate and manage child adoptions in Kenya." The hope is to develop simplified guidelines.

SYRIA

With the chaos of civil war in Syria some Americans would like to adopt children from this ravaged country. However Syria does not allow international adoption because of Shari'ah law. All attempts to adopt from Syria have failed although five million children have been affected by the civil war. Save the Children called it "misguided attention" and noted that international adoption should never be considered in the first phase of an emergency.

NEW VERSIONS OF FORMS I-600 AND I-600A

This is a reminder that as of March 23, 2015 only the new versions of forms I-600 and I-600A will now be accepted by USCIS. Families must make sure they use these newer forms when they file. The forms can be accessed here: www.USCIS.gov/forms.

With 11,000 Facebook Followers,
AFTH's Social Media Adoption
Discussions are in FULL BLOOM!

Our social media has been exploding with specialized content, questions and answers and thought-provoking adoption discussions. Whether you are a prospective adoptive parent, birthparent, adoptee, or adoptive parent already, we want YOU to join in the discussion. Let's Get Talking!



Find AFTH on:

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

Discussing Race: Adoptive Parent Support Group



A very special support group was held on April 7th in our Central PA Office. Not only were extended family members of waiting families encouraged to attend but we also had families travel from as far as Philadelphia to attend the group.

This particular session was focused on a discussion around race and the options families can select they are open to on the profile key. It was a very special treat to have Justin and Mindee and their children Aiden, 4, and Ciara, 2, and their grandparents lead the discussion. This was a family who began their journey envisioning the race of their future child as one thing and then finding out that fate had another thing in mind. And that despite different outward appearances their hearts matched and that what was most important of all.

Below is an email a social worker received from a waiting adoptive mother who attended:

Last night's presentation was a remarkable example of open adoption. It was interesting to hear this family's particular story and to see how the revelation about their first child's heritage ultimately changed their own vision of what their family could---and would---be.

All perspective parents begin their journey to parenthood with certain ideas and expectations of what their particular story and family might be. Last night's family's story was a pleasant reminder that the road to parenthood through open adoption (or otherwise) isn't always what one envisions. But, as with so many things in life, the road to your child and with your child can unfold in crazy, surprising, and amazing ways that may be better than what you had originally imagined.

What struck me most and what I enjoyed best about last night's session was the love and strong sense of family that was shared between all three generations. It was very sweet to see and very generous of all of them to share their story with us hopeful, waiting families.



Congratulations to Families Who Have Recently Adopted!

Daughters

Brian
Bryan & Melissa
Keith & Noelle
Patrick & Angela
Derrick & Corey
Christopher & Pamela
Matt & Jaye
William & Kristina
William & Tracy
Timothy & William
Christopher & Beth
Joseph & Nancy
Eric & Jeannine
Thomas & Lori
Brandon & Ekachai
Lyndon & Janae
Josh & Prutha
Michael & Martin
Peter & Debra
Klaus & Wayne
Rachel & Gretchen
Jason & Marisa
Robert & Evelyn
James & Tiffany
Anthony & Margaret
Brian & Jennifer

Sons

Todd & Emily
Tyrone & Nadine
Matthew & Sarah
Adam & Brigitte
Mark & Andrea
Rashad & Stephanie
Leonard & Barbara
Richard & Julie
Brian & Jill
James & Traci
Michael & Rachel
Elisabeth & Candace
David & Alma
Richard & Jacey
Carl & Jason
Michael & Amy
Francine & Maryann
Etaï & Rachel
Patrick & Meghan
Michael & Gerri
David & Stephanie





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Free Online Webinars

Learn about AFTH's Programs
from the Comfort of Your Home

Domestic Infant Adoption

June 2nd at 7pm

July 7th at 7pm

Registration Required

Calendar of Events at www.afth.org



Let the 30th Year Celebration Begin!

Adoptions From The Heart is so proud to say that 2015 marks our 30th year serving expecting parents, adoptive parents and adoptees. Since 1985, we have been a part of helping to create over 6,460 families through domestic and international adoption.

In honor of this exciting milestone, AFTH is hosting a celebration party with music, entertainment, and fabulous raffles at the Racquet Club of Philadelphia and you are invited to join in the fun. Stay tuned for details. Tickets will be available soon!

OCT
16
2015

Racquet Club
of Philadelphia
Philadelphia, PA

7PM
until
11PM