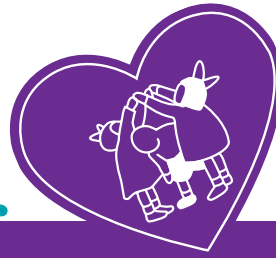


Adoption News



A Quarterly Newsletter from

Adoptions From The Heart

Summer 2010

Dear AFTH Friends

Imagine...

your electric and heat are going to be shut off and you only have \$4.00 to your name



you are pregnant and have 2 hungry children at home with an empty fridge and no money for food.



you are 8 months pregnant and lose your job because you cannot work a full shift on your feet



you are 9 months pregnant and have been evicted from your apartment and this is now your "home"



Now imagine this is your reality... being unable to provide for you and your children's needs - the very basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter, safety, needs which no one should ever go without.

Each of the above situations has been a real life tragedy faced by AFTH birthmothers. It continues to be an increasing reality for more and more pregnant women who come to AFTH to make an adoption plan for their unborn child.

And while some adoptive parents have the means to offer financial support in these situations, more often than not, the financial assistance from families is far exceeded by the actual need. Despite that truth, **AFTH cannot and will not ignore these cries for help.**

continued on inside page...

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AFTH Summer Picnic Recap
Upcoming Fall Ed Classes
Pittsburgh Fall Fun Festival

Dear Friends Cont'd

Health care, paid sick days, food for ourselves and our children, a safe place to sleep at night - all things often taken for granted, but for those without they are seen as a godsend. Ask any AFTH counselor working with a pregnant woman facing such a travesty, she will tell you that having the "birthmother fund" to provide this essential financial aid is not a supplementary service, but a necessary and vital role AFTH and AFTH Supporters play in bettering the lives of women and children in our communities.



Say you will help. Extend your hand by generously offering what you can as a donation to our birthmother fund and **say YES to a woman desperate for help** in securing those basic needs which no one should ever have to struggle to obtain.

Help AFTH today as our need to replenish the dwindling birthmother fund is now.

Donations can be made by visiting www.afth.org and clicking on the "donate" button. Or by mailing the form on page 4 and your donation to the Wynnewood Office. All donations are tax deductible and will help to provide for those without.



Post Adoption Depression in New Fathers?

Becoming a parent is one of the biggest changes that both men and women can go through, yet there is still very little understood about how it impacts mental health, and how many parents will experience mental health concerns. Men are often forgotten about when speaking of post-adoption depression (PADS) or post-partum depression but modern fathers are put under different strains than they were in the past. It is no longer good enough to just be the bread-winner. Over the decades, fathers have become more engaged and involved in child rearing, which has added strain and stress.

Studies are suggesting that 1 in 10 new fathers may have the blues. New fathers are just as susceptible to post-partum depression as new mothers, but it seems to occur in men later than it does in women. Lack of sleep, new responsibilities and/or supporting a wife with depression can often be triggers. Depression in new fathers seems to occur after 3-6 months after the child's birth and is more likely to occur if their partner is experiencing depression.

Despite society's tendency to overuse labels, treatment for clinical depression is essential and more efforts should be made to improve screening and referral for at risk fathers. Men may see depression as a weakness and not want or find it necessary to seek help but mounting evidence suggests that early paternal depression may have substantial emotional, behavioral and developmental effects on children. Depression is nothing to be ashamed of and may require treatment to overcome.

The baby blues, is a temporary "down" period. Tearfulness, fatigue, irritability, difficulty sleeping, mood swings, and other signs of the baby blues usually begin 1-2 days after birth and may last up to 3 weeks.

Postpartum depression is a mood disorder characterized by negative thinking patterns and feelings of hopelessness, sadness, and despondency. Unlike the temporary baby blues, postpartum depression deepens. New parents may feel like they have fallen into a dark hole, have obsessive thoughts, and be unable to shake troublesome worries.

Post-adoption depression is not yet a distinct illness recognized by the American Psychiatric Association. PADS can range from a full-blown episode of severe depression requiring hospitalization or just a simple case of the blues that lasts a month or two. The few scientific studies of PADS indicate that over half of adoptive parents experience it. AFTH recommends talking with your doctor if you or your spouse may be experiencing PADS.



Congratulations to Families Who Have Recently Adopted!

Sons from the USA

Edward & Kim
 Jeffrey & Gretchen
 Todd & Vikram
 Robert & Amy
 Jason & Jennifer
 William & Scott
 Jasen & Stacey
 Joseph & Marsha
 Daniel & Jane
 Drew & Maureen
 Angel & Deidre
 Dean & Trish
 James & David
 James & Theresa
 Christopher & Wendy
 Marcus & Amanda
 Hilary
 Jim & Elizabeth
 Douglas & Barbara
 William & Nicole
(siblings, 1 boy, 1 girl)
 Dwight & Laura
 Patrick & Colleen
 Andrew & Amy
 James & Denny

Daughters from the USA

Albert & Pamela
 Todd & Malila
 Craig & Karen
 Stephen & Paul
 Todd & Aimee
 Matthew & Jenifer
 Christopher & Amy
 James & Lisa
 Joseph & Joanne
 Brian & Kristen
 Gregory & Michael
 Robert & Chris
 Joseph & Shawn
 William & Nicole
(siblings, 1 boy, 1 girl)
 John & Katherine
 Robert & Carolyn
 Paul & Leanne
 John & Marianna

AFTH Support Groups

Visit the events calendar at www.afth.org for more information about upcoming support groups.

LANCASTER

Support group meeting for recently placed and waiting families in the area. Focus for this meeting will be on Lifebooks.

• **Thursday, September 30 at 6:30pm**

Call (717) 399-7766 for more information.

VIRGINIA

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

Call (757) 361-0008 for information.

CHERRY HILL

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

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

Call (302) 658-8883 for information.

ALLENTOWN

Waiting family support groups are held for adoptive parents to come and connect.

Call (610) 432-2384 for information.

Local Sports Celebrities Team Up With AFTH

Join us and our celebrity guests in celebrating AFTH's 25th anniversary and help make our fundraiser a success so AFTH can continue its mission of helping women, children, and families for years to come.

We are excited to announce 3 local well-known sports celebrities are joining our fundraiser:

Honorary guest golfers include SportsRadio 610am personalities Paul Jolovitz and Brian Startare! Gather your team or come as an individual and register soon to share an afternoon of golf with two of Philadelphia's favorite SportsRadio guys! And sharing a few words on what adoption means to her at our banquet following the tournament will be Lauren Hart, adoptive mother, musician and daughter of famous Philadelphia Flyers announcer Gene Hart!

Not a golfer? Join us for our evening banquet beginning at 5:30 including excellent food, 3 hour open bar and silent auction. AFTH Executive Director Maxine Chalker, an adoptee herself, will be in attendance and is excited to be honoring the 25th anniversary of the agency once know as "The Adoption Agency" which she began in the basement of her home and which introduced the benefits of open adoption to the east coast.

If you live too far away to join us at the event, AFTH would be glad to have your support in other ways. We already have some great silent auction items and we are thrilled to accept additional items from other AFTH supporters. No matter how small the gift is, such as a \$5 gift card from Starbucks or Dunkin Donuts, it can draw lots of interest when bundled with other items for a "help to survive the week" or "enjoy the sweet things in life" themed basket.

Some of the items already donated for our silent auction include: *Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade Viewing Passes, Week at a Time Share, Moses Malone Jersey (76ers), Quintin Demps Autographed photo (Eagles), Massage and Spa Certificates, Gym Memberships and Personal Training Sessions, Restaurant Certificates, Ukrainian Tea Set, Fur Coat, Tickets to PA Academy of Fine Arts, Kramer Studios Wall Portrait (\$2,000 value), and more.*

Join us in celebrating not only the past 25 years but also many more years of building beautiful families at the Springfield Country Club in Springfield, Pa (just off 476) on Thursday, September 16, 2010.

REGISTRATION DEADLINE - SEPTEMBER 1ST or sooner when space fills up!
Visit www.afth.org for details and to register today.

Also Accepting
Online Donations:
www.afth.org

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.

Please Make Your Checks Payable To: **Adoptions From The Heart**
mail donation 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) _____

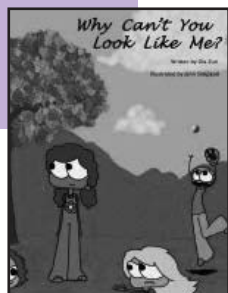
Address _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

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

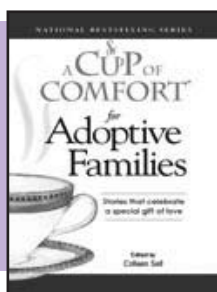
Adoptions From The Heart is a registered, charitable organization. In accordance with PA law, we are required to advise you that a copy of our official registration and financial information may be obtained from either the PA Department of State by calling, toll-free within PA, (800) 732-0999, or the State of NJ by calling (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.

Book Reviews



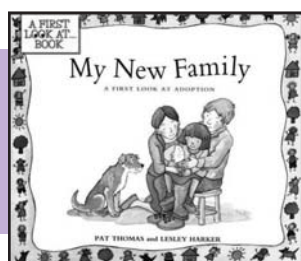
Why Can't You Look Like Me? by Ola Zuri (English and French Edition) - This book is the story of an African American girl adopted by a Caucasian family, and her struggle to find her place

within a predominately white community. Author, Ola Zuri is a trans-racial adoptee and knows first hand the struggle to find where one fits in. This book is light and empowering and great for talking about race and culture with your children. The illustrations are unusual and fun. This is the first in a series of books with topics relating to trans racial adoption, racism, fitting in, questions about family, identity, and most of all, self esteem and self confidence. **AFTH price \$15.00**



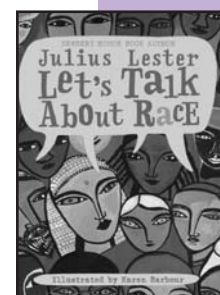
A Cup of Comfort for Adoptive Families: Stories that Celebrate a Special Gift of Love edited by Colleen Sell - This is a story collection that celebrates individuals and families who experience adoption firsthand.

From first-time parents, anxiously awaiting the phone call that their little one has arrived to a single woman crossing the Atlantic to find her heart's child, this inspiring collection will touch every person who reads it. This is a great book to give to extended family members curious about adoption. **AFTH price \$5.00.**



My New Family: A First Look at Adoption by Pat Thomas - This is an easy-to-understand series of books geared for younger children. Each book of the "A First Look At" series explores

emotional issues kids preschool through early school age may experience. This book talks about birth parents, foster parents and adoptive parents. It shows sad moments as well as happy moments. It is a great first look at adoption. **AFTH price \$7.00**

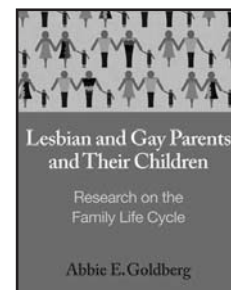


Let's Talk About Race by Julius Lester - This book is a great way to start a conversation about race and racism. Although geared toward children grades 1-5, older children would also enjoy it.

Lester teaches us that everyone has a story that is made up of lots of things like when they were born, what race they are, who their parents are and lots more. His message is that everyone is a person that deserves to be treated with respect no matter what color their skin is and we are all the same underneath. **AFTH price \$7.00**

Lesbian and Gay Parents and Their Children: Research on the Family Life Cycle by Abbie E. Goldberg -

More same sex couples than ever are becoming parents and this book provides a comprehensive overview of the research on same sex parenthood. Ms. Goldberg touches on LGBT experiences raising children through young adulthood, including challenges of interacting with schools and teachers. At the end of the book she speaks to the children themselves about their experiences having LGBT parents. **AFTH price \$45.00**



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

The Importance of Open Adoption Reunions

When asked what open adoption means, one adoptive mother shares what it means to her:

Open adoption allowed us to be a family and it has changed our lives completely. I hardly remember what it was like before Zoe came along! Reunions with Sarah (and Zoe's birthdad, Chris) are very important. We encourage Zoe to be in contact with Sarah often, and we send her pictures via Facebook very frequently (every few days). Zoe will ask to call Sarah sometimes – like one day when she came home from school with a question about her eye and hair color, we just picked-up the phone and asked Sarah! She also likes to send text messages to Sarah. She loves to have open access to her birthparents that way. She really looks forward to seeing Sarah – usually 2 or 3 times a year. Most recently, Sarah took her creek stomping at a local park. It was an easy, inexpensive thing for them to do together and they both had a blast!

Sarah seems a little nervous about seeing Zoe sometimes. Zoe is not nervous at all about seeing Sarah, and she just thinks of her as her birthmom, as if everyone has a birthmom that is different from their “real” mom, too. She absolutely LOVES Sarah, though she has a hard time explaining *how* she loves Sarah. She says that she loves Sarah differently than she loves me, but she can't really explain how its different. We talk about Sarah and Chris at home all the time – there is no secret and no hesitation to talk about them. Zoe likes to share things with them as much as possible.

When Chris comes to see her, she climbs all over him. He usually brings her a small gift back when he goes on business trips, and those gifts are very special to Zoe. Pretty much any gift from Sarah or Chris is very special to her! When Sarah visits, I try to give them some space. I want for Zoe to be able to talk with Sarah openly and ask anything she wants without worrying about it hurting my feelings. Zoe loves to show Sarah her room and her toys and ask her to read books so we are so glad we can do visits in our home or at a park.

I've known Sarah since she was 8 years old, so now that Zoe is almost 7, I'm seeing many similarities between them. Sometimes when Zoe reads, she has the EXACT same look on her face as Sarah did when she was little. I took a picture to send to Sarah so she could see how much Zoe looked like her in that moment. Zoe and Sarah also both love cats (can that be genetic?) and that's a really cool thing for them to have in common.



Zoe and Sarah at a recent reunion

Adoption to Zoe is just normal – there is no other way to describe it. She went through a short period when she thought everyone was adopted, and now she understands that is not the case. She talks about her experience and her birthparents openly and regularly. She has pictures of Sarah hanging in her room and we have pictures of the two of them together hanging in our living room.

Sarah always thanks us for taking care of Zoe. It's really funny to us, because while she thinks we're doing her this huge, life-long favor of raising the child she couldn't care for, we see it so differently. She trusted us with the most precious thing in her life and allowed us to be parents. She thinks she can never repay us for what we do, but we know for *certain* that we can never repay her for what she's done for us.

One Birthmother's Experience

I wanted to let you know I had a nice time at the picnic. I was happy to see Cole and that he is doing well. The family was really nice. Also, I was happy I got to talk to some other birth moms before I left the picnic. It was nice I got their stories. I just thought I was the only one and it helped to know I wasn't. Thank you for the experience to get to know other moms like myself and have a better understanding of what I did for this family.

Kristen

Celebrating Adoption at AFTH Picnics

Agency's 22nd Summer Picnic

AFTH held its 22nd annual picnic at the Fort Washington State Park, in Pennsylvania on Sunday June 6, 2010. It was very hot and humid but we were happy the expected rain held off. An estimated 1500 parents, grandparents, birth parents and children from all over gathered to celebrate adoption.

It is always great to see waiting families, families who just received placements (one family had a 3 week old baby!) as well as families who have been coming for years. We would like to thank all of our families who came out to celebrate adoption with us for making this event successful. We hope to see you again next year!

Thank you to the Raucous Brothers who provided us with a lively reggae sound, five local teens for face painting, Jack and Jill ice cream for supplying all the children with ice cream, Scholastic Inc. for providing arts and crafts and to the AFTH staff who helped all throughout the event.

A special thank you to all the companies that donated food: *Super Fresh, Whole Foods, Wawa, Giant, BJ's, Target, Pepperidge Farm, Herr's, Hershey's, Genuardi's, and Yellow Page Advertising Agency (Michael Offord)*

Virginia Annual Summer Picnic

The day of the Virginia Summer Picnic was a very hot and humid day but everyone who attended was still able to have a lot of fun. More than 100 people attended and this year we are excited to say that we had the largest number of birthparents attend. For several families, this was their first time at the picnic and we were delighted to have several waiting families attend as well. We even had a family who just recently received a placement travel from NYC to visit with their child's birth parents and four full siblings. All in all it was a big success even with the earlier arson attempt at the park which failed to thwart our get together!

Connecticut's Annual Adoption Picnic

Over 200 people joined our Connecticut staff on June 27th at the Quassy Amusement Park for a day of family fun celebrating adoption. Everyone had a wonderful time - the weather was perfect, the food was great and the water park was a blast! We look forward to seeing everyone again next year.



"Girls with Attitude" at the CT Picnic



Caitlyn & MayLei's parents first met during the adoption process and the families since then have formed a very tight bond with each other. The girls are BFFs (Best Friends Forever) and enjoy the picnic together each and every year.

Adoption Education

Fall 2010 Series



Adoptions From The Heart®

We not only Build Beautiful Families, We Help to Strengthen Them!

♥ Richmond, VA

Talking to Your Child About Adoption: A Panel of Adoptive Parents & Professionals

The path to effective communication about adoption begins in infancy. Join a panel of adoptive parents and professionals to listen, share, and learn effective ways to communicate with children about the varied facets of adoption including transracial issues and relating to birth siblings. This is a beneficial class for both domestic and international adoptive parents.

Saturday, September 11, 2010

10:30-Noon

\$10/person or \$15/couple

♥ Greensburg, PA

Hair & Skin Care Techniques for Families Adopting Transracially

Did you know that not all shampoo is equal? You have learned what products make your hair and skin look and feel its best, but what about your baby's? Carla Ansell, an adoptive parent, will demonstrate hair and skin care techniques and educate you on techniques specific to your child's hair and skin care.

Saturday, September 25, 2010

Beginning at Noon

\$10/person or \$15/couple

Our goal is not only to build beautiful families, but to help strengthen them. AFTH proudly offers Education Series designed to support families and their children through pre and post adoption related issues and parenting challenges. AFTH's classes are led by engaging professionals with diverse fields of expertise who are eager to share their knowledge with adoptive parents.

The adoption journey is lifelong. It begins the moment the decision is made to build a family through adoption and continues each day that follows. Each phase of the journey will bring new challenges, so regardless of what stage of the adoption process families are in, whether it's pre or post, AFTH's Ed Series goal is to strengthen families by empowerment through knowledge.

For more information on a specific class, contact the hosting office.

CLASS REGISTRATION

Please fill out the form & return with payment to:

Adoptions From The Heart
30-31 Hampstead Circle
Wynnewood, PA 19096

OR

REGISTER ONLINE at
<http://www.afth.org/community/courses.html>

Classes are \$10/person or \$15/couple
♥ unless otherwise noted

# Attending	Cost	Topic/Location
		<u>Talking to Your Child About Adoption: Adoptive Parents & Professionals Panel</u> Richmond, VA
		<u>Hair & Skin Care Techniques for Families Adopting Transracially</u> Greensburg, PA
		<u>Newborn Childcare</u> Wynnewood, PA
		<u>Hair & Skin Care Techniques for Families Adopting Transracially</u> Lancaster, PA
	♥	<u>Creating a Life Book</u> Glastonbury, CT

Total Amount Enclosed: _____

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

Phone: () _____ - _____

Email: _____

For More Information...

610-642-7200 or contact your local AFTH office

♥ Wynnewood, PA

Newborn Childcare

Learn the basics of infant and child care in a comfortable setting with other adoptive and pre-adoptive parents. The class will be led by Barbara Poole, a RN who will discuss newborn care, feeding and changing your baby, swaddling techniques, choosing a pediatrician, making the adjustment to parenthood, and more! This class is recommended for all adoptive families.

Wednesday, October 20, 2010

7:00-8:30 PM

\$10/person or \$15/couple

♥ Lancaster, PA

Hair & Skin Care Techniques for Families Adopting Transracially

Let's face it not all shampoo is created equal. Sure you know how to make your hair and skin its best, but what about your baby's? Join Shawn Hyson, an adoptive parent and hair stylist and Patti Shatto-Young, an adoptive parent of a transracial family, for a fun evening for pre/post adoptive families adopting transracially. Shawn will teach you hair and skin care techniques that will help you hop the cultural divide and educate you on techniques specific to your child's hair and skin. Patti will focus on the day to day life of living in a bi-racial family.

Wednesday, October 20, 2010

6:30-8:00 PM

\$10/person or \$15/couple

♥ Glastonbury, CT

Creating a Life Book

Sarah Coffey, an adoptive parent, has created her own instructive materials for creating Adoption Life Books and brings tremendous creative energy to the process! This class has always received rave reviews! Don't delay in signing up - this class will fill up fast!

Saturday, October 23, 2010

Beginning at 10:00am

\$25/person + material



Fall Fun Festival



Hosted by: AFTH Pittsburgh Office

Join the AFTH staff and other adoptive families for a day of fun at



Kerber's Dairy on Guffy Road

in North Huntingdon, PA 15642

on

Saturday, October 16th

from

11am-2pm



Purchase your lunch from the deli or bring your own lunch to enjoy at the picnic tables.

Lots Of Fun To Be Had By All

Deli & Baked Goods

Playground

Ice Cream

Hayride

Pumpkin Picking

Feed Llamas & Goats

Face Painting

Corn Stalk Maze

Special Pricing Package:
Hayride, Ice Cream
and a Small Pumpkin
items also sold separately



RSVP by October 13th : Katie at 724-853-6533 or KatieH@afth.org

AFTH Program Updates



DOMESTIC PROGRAMS - We hope your family has joined us at one of our agency picnics this summer. It is always wonderful to see so many families, those who are parents through adoption and those waiting. We were very happy to see so many adoptive families invite their child's birth families to spend the day together. What a wonderful way to make memories for your family and children.

Please take the time to review the newsletter insert listing the Fall Education Classes being offered at various AFTH offices in the upcoming months.

AFTH is excited to announce that we have had 7 more placements than last year in our African-American and African-American Biracial Domestic Program. We still have a need for African-American families and families who are open to full African-American infants. Webinars to learn about this program are being held each month.

AFTH has begun running ads on Facebook geared to women in our service area who may be facing unplanned pregnancies. This new campaign will help to increase awareness and spread the word about the option of adoption. We have already had over 150 women click on the ad titled "Unplanned Pregnancy - we can help" and visited the "pregnant section" of our website. For waiting families, we hope this means an increase in families being selected in the second half of this year.

We continue to see an increase in the need for financial assistance to aid the pregnant women we are counseling. This year our Annual Appeal calls to AFTH friends, families, and adoption supporters to offer what you can as a donation to our Birthmother Fund, which is in dire need of replenishing. Every penny donated to the Birthmother Fund aids pregnant women working with AFTH who are struggling to provide for their basic needs such as food, clothing, and shelter. Say you will join with us to help. All donations, no matter what amount, are graciously accepted. Donations are tax deductible and can be made by visiting www.afth.org and clicking on the "donate" button. Donations can also be made by mailing in the form found on [page 4](#). See the front page newsletter article to learn even more details about how the Birthmother Fund money is being used to help those without.



HEARTBEATS - The Embryo Placement Program has been running successfully. We are now offering our Embryo Education Course online for those families who already have an adoption home study complete and are in need of the Embryo Education to join the program. Webinars specific to the Embryo Placement Program are being held every other month. Anyone interested in attending to learn more can register for the webinar via the online event calendar at www.afth.org.

A great deal of interest has been shown in the Surrogacy in India Program since it became an option for families. We expect to have at least 1-2 clients going through the process quite soon. The program is an excellent opportunity for those wishing to have a biological connection with their child and offers a more affordable option than surrogacy in the U.S. We are offering webinars every other month focused on this program.

For more information about either our Embryo Placement Program or the India Surrogacy Program or to register for an upcoming free online webinar, visit us at www.afth.org/heartbeats.



Heartbeats

ASSISTED REPRODUCTION PROGRAM

**LEARN ABOUT AFTH'S
HEARTBEATS PROGRAMS**

hosting webinars every other month

- ♥ **EMBRYO PLACEMENT PROGRAM**
September 21st at 7pm
- ♥ **SURROGACY IN INDIA**
September 28th at 7pm

Registration for webinar is required.

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



Fostering Friendship

By Gretchen Boger-O'Bryan

Five summers ago, my husband and I shared a picnic blanket with a couple we'd only recently met. Perched in a parking lot alongside the Navesink River in Red Bank, N.J., we awaited the sun to set and the night sky to fill with an extravaganza of colored lights. "The best around," they'd promised.

Fireworks weren't all we were waiting for. That first Fourth of July we spent together was also our last as couples without children. We met during Adoption From The Heart's education classes and, after talking long after the session ended, we exchanged email addresses in a first act of "oh-my-gosh-they-have-the-same-anxiety-and-excitement-and-questions-and-fears-as-us" friendship.

After the next class and later the video shoot, we moved our chats to a nearby restaurant where we shared stories, fielded questions and got to know each other with a fervor - for hours at a clip. Emails seeking advice or sharing thoughts flooded one another's in-boxes. We even talked about the inevitable situation when one couple would become parents before the other. Good thing, because just weeks after that shared Independence Day, the first call from our social worker came. The second followed within the month.

Weeks later we were together again, meeting newborn baby daughters, cuddling them in colossal proportions and propping them next to each other for parent-paparazzi photo shoots. We opened gifts, compared feeding and sleeping schedules, and talked about home visits from social workers. Plans were made for our next

gathering and, much like proud parents of a newly arranged marriage, we imagined their future together.

We've since celebrated birthdays, shared their first aquarium visit (the girls eating fish-shaped crackers from their stroller trays was an irony we noted more than once), left presents under each other's Christmas tree, picnicked at the park, visited the zoo, talked of sharing a vacation someday, had family sleepovers capping hours of boardwalk rides or beach time, and spent cool evenings by a fire with tired kids on our laps, stars twinkling and crickets serenading yet another terrific time together.

Over the years we've shared meltdowns, milestones and diaper drama, asked "what do you do?" when a new stage or behavior has us stumped, and shared countless new-parent anecdotes. We've delighted in confusing strangers who assumed, thanks to the girls' similar curls and complexion, they were twins. "Well," we'd respond with devious smiles, "they're three weeks apart." When one of us welcomed another daughter, we all shared in that joy. We chuckle nervously about the tween and teen years to come, noting our "what do you do?" conversations will be so very different then.



Last year a move took one family out of state, changing the regularity of visits. Yet we still welcomed 2010 together, sitting before a fire in a new home, surrounded by the chaos that is three girls in dress-up, singing into microphones, opening holiday gifts and blowing party horns until their little bodies could take no more.



This summer we spent yet another steamy July evening crowded onto a picnic blanket along the Navesink River. Despite geography and another imminent family move, the foursome-turned-sevensome carried on as usual, continuing a tradition that began five years ago: sharing

stories and making memories, and deepening a friendship that started when making long-haul friends was the last thing on our minds.

A framed photo of the two girls - the once "arranged friends" - sits by my daughter's bedside. Despite current preschool friends and new friends to make at kindergarten this fall, nothing can change the comforting story of her first friend. Recently, one of the girls

Musings of an Adoptive Mama Cont'd

actually reflected on their friendship: "Mom, she's more than a friend, isn't she? She's more like ... a sister." Not bad for a four-year-old!

I'd like to think that when the girls really begin to process their adoptions - each with their own very different story - they can trust the foundation we've

created for them and, much like their folks have done, lean on the friend they have in one another.

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.

Hints and Tips for Hair Care Challenges



For Caucasian families adopting African-American or African-American bi-racial children, hair care can be a daunting experience, but it doesn't have to be. Armed with the proper education, the right technique, and, most importantly, the right products; you can master the art of caring for ethnic hair.

Top four biggest mistakes adoptive parents may make with their child's hair:

Over Shampooing - African-American hair does not require daily shampooing, doing so may actually be damaging to this delicate hair type. On average, African-

American hair only needs to be washed every 5-7 days depending on the hair.

Under Conditioning - Moisture is extremely important, especially during winter months. African-American hair is often much thicker and curlier than Caucasian hair and needs a lot of conditioning to avoid breakage.

Using the Wrong Products - Selection of products is also important as not all oils are created equal. Just because a product claims to be created for "curly hair" doesn't guarantee that it will be suitable for ethnic curly hair. Products created for Nicole Kidman's curly hair may not work for Angela Bassett's hair. Just like all hair, not all products will work for every child's hair and families will need to experiment to find what works best for their child.

Combing & Detangling - Combing a child's hair requires patience and knowledge. Using a wide tooth comb, divide the hair into sections, comb the hair out from the ends of the hair first and then work your way down to the hair at the scalp. Comb while holding on tightly to each section of the hair in order to avoid hurting your child. Always use a moisturizer when combing hair out to soften the hair and ease comb-ability. Your child's favorite movie or tv show is a great distraction while you work. Trying to work too quickly could make hair care a nightmare for you both.

Here are additional resources to find tips and discussions about hair and skin care for African-American children:

Adoptionhair_skincare is a yahoo group that was started by families who have adopted children of African and/or Caribbean descent, and would like to share about hair and skin care. Whether your experienced or not, join in the hair discussions, and learn how to care for your child's hair, offer advice, or share hairstyles. Great for those who have adopted boys and girls! Even welcome to those who are considering adopting a child and would like to prepare.

Adoption.com has a great library of articles including, "Caring for Your African American or Biracial Child's Hair."

Katelyn, adoptive mother of three Liberian children created a YouTube channel to post tutorial videos for other adoptive parents looking for advice on hair care for their black or biracial children. Visit **YouTube.com** and type in Katelynylyn to view her tutorial videos.



International Adoption News

China

AFTH is very happy to report that a group of 7 families recently received referrals from China. As is the present case for all families seeking to adopt children (without identified special needs) from China, these families will have been in process for approximately 5 years by the time they bring their daughters home. This group has already had its pre-travel meeting with Grace Chang of Gracewood. The families are expected to travel to China toward the end of the summer, where they will be escorted in-country by the ever-capable De and Helen, Gracewood's longtime facilitators in China. We are thrilled for these families that their long wait has finally culminated in the referral of their children, and look forward to providing post-adoption services for them!

The China Center for Adoption Affairs (CCAA) continues to focus its efforts on the placement of children with identified special needs. Dozens of AFTH families that had been waiting to adopt children without identified special needs from China have transferred into China's Special Needs program. Nearly all such families have already received referrals, and most of children diagnosed with what are deemed "minor and/or correctable" needs such as cleft lip, cleft palate, upper limb difference, minor heart anomaly, or birthmarks. As such, this has proven an excellent option for many families facing protracted future waits in China's Non-Special Needs process.

Russia

A few months have now passed since the first news of the widely-publicized case in which an adoptive mother in Tennessee sent her adopted Russian child, unescorted, back to Russia. Attached to the 7 year-old boy when he was put on a plane was a note from the adoptive family, stating that it wished the adoption dissolved.

Immediately after this story broke, there were great fears that adoptions from Russia to the U.S. would stop. These fears, fortunately, have not been realized, although there has been a slowing in the pace of adoptions from a number of regions of Russia. Government officials from the U.S. and Russia have been meeting with each other

over the past two months, and have reportedly made considerable progress on a draft of a new bilateral agreement between the two countries on cooperation in the field of intercountry adoption. It is anticipated that this agreement will include additional safeguards for children and families in the adoption process, but the specifics of any new requirements are not yet known.

On a lighter note, Families for Russian and Ukrainian Adoptions (FRUA) is holding its annual Conference on Education on October 15th and October 16th at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. For anyone interested in learning more about the conference or for registration, additional information can be found at <http://www.frua.org/resources/conferences-info>

Haiti

In the end, more than 1,100 Haitian orphans entered the U.S. on Humanitarian Parole Visas following the earthquake in Haiti. The adoptions in the majority of these cases are not yet finalized, and there remains a potentially lengthy and complicated legal road ahead for many impacted families. The adoption community continues to advocate with U.S. Immigration authorities toward creation of a more streamlined path to finalization of these adoptions, and to the granting of U.S. citizenship to affected children.

Haiti has now resumed the processing of adoption cases under its system that existed prior to the earthquake. That system had often involved lengthy wait-times, and it is unknown how long new cases will take to process. Additionally, legal records for many children in Haiti were lost in the earthquake, so verification of children's orphan status may become a challenge for some potential adoption cases. Further, Haitian children will all need help coping with trauma related to the earthquake. Taking all of these factors into account, families seeking to adopt children from Haiti should proceed thoughtfully and carefully, and be sure to receive specialized education to help them to best meet the needs of the children they seek to adopt.

U.S. Immigration

United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) has now completed its centralization of adoption processes. As of July 1, 2010, all U.S. adoption

International Adoption News Cont'd

cases are being processed through the National Benefits Center in Lee's Summit, Missouri. This means that local CIS Field Offices, which had long had responsibility for adjudicating adoption cases, are effectively removed from the process. Among USCIS's stated reasons for this centralization are the goals of having officers whose jobs are dedicated to adoptions, and of creating greater consistency throughout the U.S. in the processing of international adoptions.



Adoptions From The Heart provides Home Study, Education, Post-Adoption/Placement, and additional assistance in support of international adoptions. Questions regarding AFTH's international adoption services can be directed to Sam Wojnilower at SamW@afth.org or by phoning 610-642-7200.



Legislation



ARKANSAS - Arkansas courts overturned a ban on unmarried or cohabitating persons from adopting. They stated the original ruling was an invasion of privacy and unfairly targeted gay and lesbian families. They upper courts stated the original ruling severely limited the number of foster and adoptive families available to children.

CALIFORNIA, FLORIDA, ILLINOIS, NEW JERSEY, AND OHIO - These states are all seeing substantial reductions in the number of children in foster care, according to a June 5 Associated Press article by David Crary ("Foster-care Populations Fall Sharply") on msnbc.com. Nationally, the number of children in foster care fell 11% from 2002 to 2008. The article said these declines are due to several factors, including expediting adoptions and increasing funding for preventative measures that reduce the need for foster care in the first place.

FLORIDA - Governor Charlie Crist no longer supports a ban on gay adoption, he now states that a better approach is to let judges make the decision on a case by case basis. Florida is the only state with an explicit ban on gay adoption in the country.

DEFENSE DEPARTMENT ADOPTION REIMBURSEMENT PROGRAM - This program reimburses service members for certain adoption expenses such as agency and placement fees, legal fees and medical expenses. Service members who serve continuously on active duty for at least 180 days can receive up to a maximum of \$2,000 per child, but can't exceed \$5,000 per calendar year. In 2009, the program distributed nearly 650 payments throughout the services, totaling more than \$1 million. The department also offers service members who adopt up to 21 days of non-chargeable leave to be used in connection with the adoption.

For more information, contact your local family support center or personnel office, or call Military OneSource at 800-342-9647.

SOCIAL MEDIA - New social media technologies such as Facebook can be a double-edged sword for members of the adoption triad. While such technologies often expand the amount and flow of available information and remove the geographical barriers between searching family members, they can also lead people into uncharted territory. Online reunions may occur without the support systems that are often available through more structured means so use caution when using social media as a means of searching.



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Local Sports Celebrities Join AFTH's 25th Anniversary Celebration

(see article on page 4 for details)

AFTH is hosting a golf tournament and banquet fundraiser celebrating its 25th anniversary.

Since 1985, AFTH has placed more than 5,600 children into loving homes and continues to offer free services to women facing unplanned pregnancies who are considering adoption

We hope that you will join together with us in making this event a big success so AFTH can continue its mission of helping women, children, and families for many more years to come.

Together We Can Be Successful!

WYNNEWOOD OFFICE

30-31 Hampstead Circle
Wynnewood, PA 19096
610.642.7200

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
717.232.1787

PITTSBURGH OFFICE

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

NEW JERSEY OFFICE

451 Woodland Avenue
Cherry Hill, NJ 08002
856.665.5655
732.335.8883

DELAWARE OFFICE

18-A Trolley Square
Wilmington, DE 19806
302.658.8883

VIRGINIA OFFICE

1407 Stephanie Way, Suite H
Chesapeake, VA 23320
757.361.0008
804.218.2569

NEW YORK

1.800-355-5500

CONNECTICUT OFFICE

2389 Main Street
Glastonbury, CT 06033
860.657.2626

TOLL FREE NUMBER

1.800.355.5500

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