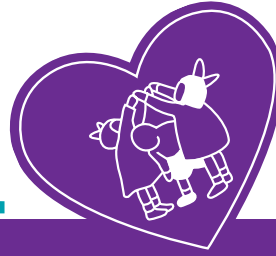


Adoption News



A Quarterly Newsletter from

Adoptions From The Heart

Summer 2008

Strengthening Families Built Through Adoption

At AFTH, our goal is not only to build beautiful families, but to help strengthen them as well. AFTH proudly offers Education Series throughout the year designed to support families and their children through pre and post adoption related issues and parenting challenges. Each spring and fall, AFTH selects topics for our Ed Series that we believe are of interest and value to our families.

AFTH's classes are led by engaging professionals with diverse fields of expertise who are eager to share their knowledge with adoptive parents.

You will find descriptions of all the classes being offered during our Fall Ed Series in the newsletter insert. Classes include CPR, Infant Childcare, Creating Lifebooks, and Talking with your Child about Adoption. Also incorporated are classes such as "Embracing Openness" and "What Your Commitment Means to Me" in which openness in adoption is discussed. The opportunity to hear the impact that different openness commitments have on various

birthmothers is an experience that all families built through open adoption should take advantage of in order to better understand the big picture of what openness means to all members of the adoption triad.

Remember, the adoption journey is lifelong. It begins the moment a family decides to grow through adoption and continues each day after that. 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.

Join us for one of our Ed Series classes this fall. Online registration is available at www.afth.org. For more information on a specific class, contact the hosting office.

AFTH wants to know what you would like to learn more about. We invite families to share their topic ideas with us. If you have a topic that you would like to suggest for a future Ed Series, please email us at adoption@afth.org.

"Ed Series goal is to strengthen families by empowerment through knowledge"

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AFTH Celebrates Its 20th Annual Picnic



A wonderful day was had by all as AFTH celebrated its 20th Annual Picnic. AFTH's Annual Picnic brings families touched by adoption together to celebrate the special bonds they share.

An estimated 1,500 parents, grandparents, birth parents and children from all over gathered together on June 1st in the Fort Washington State Park.

It is a joy to see the many AFTH families who come to the picnic each and every year. This year we also had quite a few domestic families who were joining us for the first time this year to reunite with their child's birthparents. We hope their first picnic experience was wonderful and we hope to see them again next year.

International families also joined in the fun. Some families even hung country flags in trees to mark the meeting place for their travel groups to reunite.

Balloons and toys were handed out to children and there were plenty of free snacks for all. The Raucous Brothers provided us with a lively reggae sound, Freckles the Clown and her friends offered face painting and balloon art, Jack and Jill ice cream was a hit with children of all ages, and AFTH staff helped out with the

arts and crafts. Children also enjoyed a book reading by Grace Chang and a Sing-A-Long with Tom. Families were also able to capture the special day with a free family portrait.

We want to thank all the families attended and made our 20th Annual Picnic a great success. We invite all AFTH families to join us June of next year for another day of family fun!

Virginia Annual Summer Picnic

The AFTH Virginia Office celebrated its annual picnic at the Sandy Bottom Nature Park on May 31st. It was a beautiful summer day and families gathered together to celebrate with AFTH staff.

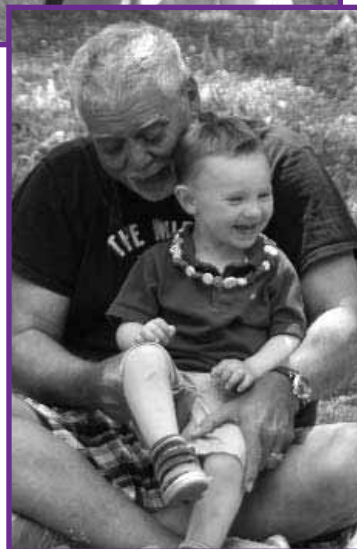
With over 50 people in attendance, it was a fun day for everyone who came. It was exciting to have so many domestic families reuniting with their children's birthparents.

We hope to see everyone at our picnic again next year!



A special thank you to all the companies that donated food:

- BJs Wholesale Club
- Pepperidge Farm
- Genuardi's
- Acme
- Herr's Foods
- Wawa- Bethlehem Pike
- Wawa- Conshohocken State Rd.
- Whole Foods Market
- Super Fresh
- Target
- Yellow Pages National Advertising Placement Services





First Reunion Since Placement

This picnic was the first meeting for all of us since the day we left the hospital with our son. As we drove away, I couldn't help but think how strong and brave she was and how supportive her mom was for helping her through one of the most difficult decisions of her life. What many people don't often realize is that she made this adoption plan out of love. And she will never stop loving him.

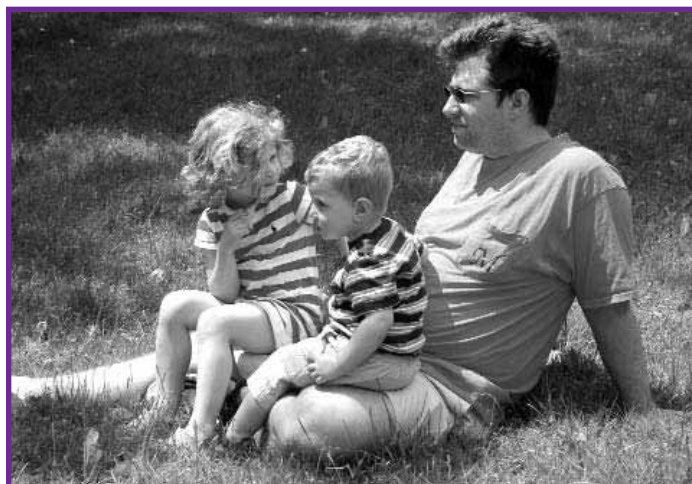
So the day of the picnic, I couldn't wait to see our son's birthmother and her mom. I practically ran into their arms when I caught sight of them. They were equally responsive and I had all I could do to hold back the tears.

This picnic was crucial for all of us to reconnect since it had been a little over 3 months since he was born. During that time he grew and changed so much. Although the pictures helped, watching them snuggle and feed him made us realize how lucky this little guy is to have all of these people adore and love him. What's so funny is he doesn't even have a clue yet!

As he grows and begins to ask questions, it will be so easy to open up his scrapbook and show him pictures of his birth mom and her family.

There will never be a moment of doubt or shame because we are all in this together bonded unconditionally by one little boy who has captured our hearts forever.

Michele & Jeff



New Items for Sale!

AFTH is excited to announce that we have brand new items for sale.



AFTH PURPLE MUGS

By popular demand, the purple mugs are now available for purchase. They are sold in sets of two. **\$14.00 per set**



WEEKENDER DUFFEL BAG

Perfect for a long weekend, a trip to the gym or a roomy carry-on bag. This purple duffel fits a water bottle, has 2 outside pockets a roomy inside, shoulder strap and hand straps. **\$18.00**



AFTH BEACH TOWEL

Be the talk of the beach with this great purple on purple beach towel with the slogan Love Builds a Family! **\$20.00**

Items Available Online

Adoption Benefits & Grants on the Rise

With gas prices soaring sky high and the cost of living elevating, it's hard to believe there is money available for the taking. But there is!

Financial assistance for adoptions is becoming easily accessible and the amount of money available in financial assistance for adoption expenses is increasing significantly.

Grant-awarding organizations are making financial aid available for many adoptive parents. Some organizations are limited to certain types of adoptions, while others are open to all grant applicants regardless of the type of adoption, race, religion, marital status, or sexual preference of the adoptive parent(s). With the help of donors, who can be veteran adoptive parents hoping to help new adoptive parents, these organizations are awarding grants from \$200 to \$15,000.

Adoption benefits are also on the rise. More and more U.S. companies are offering reimbursement for their employees' adoptions, in fact, almost half of all U.S. companies are offering adoption benefits, which is a 12% increase from 1990. According to a study by the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption, the average reimbursement for adoptions provided by employers is \$4,700. Not only are more employers offering reimbursements, some are starting to offer adoption leave- the same as maternity leave- which eliminates the fear of going without pay once your child arrives home.

Other financial assistance options for adoption include federal and state tax credits, military subsidies, low-cost loans, and creative financing, which includes bake sales, car washes, etc. AFTH has created a "Help with Adoption Expenses" flyer to increase awareness of the various types of adoption assistance. Visit our Adoptive Parent Learning Center at www.afth.org to learn more.

If you're saving up to adopt again or know someone who is thinking about adopting, remember financial assistance is available. Now-a-days, every penny counts so tap into reimbursement and grants and begin your adoption journey even sooner!



Legislation

ADOPTION INCENTIVE REAUTHORIZATION BILL INTRODUCED -

U.S. Senator Chuck Grassley introduced legislation (S3038) on May 20 that would extend the adoption incentive program due to expire this year. The Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 established the program; it provides an adoption bonus to states if they exceed their highest number of finalized adoptions from foster care from previous years. The new bill would increase incentive payments, especially for special needs adoptions and adoptions of older children, and would make all children with special needs eligible for federal adoption assistance. The bill would also authorize states to establish a relative guardianship program.

MINNESOTA - Minnesota Governor Tim Pawlenty vetoed legislation (SF3193) on May 16 that would have allowed all adoptees 19 years of age or older in the state to obtain an uncertified copy of their original birth certificate upon request, provided that one of their birth-parents had not submitted an affidavit of nondisclosure.

NEW JERSEY - June 2008, the NJ Assembly again derailed the Adoptees Birthright Bill for another year (A752) as the Human Services Committee hearing came and went and this bill was left off the agenda. The bill came out of the Senate Committee 10-0, and was approved by the full Senate 31-7; it has overwhelming support from the adoption community, citizens of New Jersey, the support of 25 Assembly sponsors, and even support of the governor.

FLORIDA - Florida launched a new campaign, "Explore Adoption," aimed at promoting the benefits of public adoption and urging families to consider creating or expanding their families by adopting a child who is older, disabled or part of a sibling group. The initiative will "put a new face on public adoption" by telling the many stories of families who have enriched their lives by adopting Florida's children.

Hague Accreditation Status Update

AFTH received a letter of denial from COA on June 25, 2008 (this letter has been posted on our website). The letter received from COA provided no explanation as to the basis for denial. AFTH has the right under COA regulations to file a Petition for Reconsideration and will be doing so as soon as COA supplies the basis in accordance with its policies. AFTH has formally requested that COA comply with its rules and supply the details so that AFTH can pursue next steps and answer questions rightfully posed by clients.

AFTH firmly believes it has met or exceeded all standards for Hague accreditation. As soon as COA provides the reasons for the denial, AFTH will pursue reconsideration. Upon submission, COA has 15 days to respond. During all stages of the process, AFTH has provided COA with thorough, prompt and detailed responses that contain substantial factual and legal detail. AFTH will pursue any and all avenues to restore its status to its rightful position.

We continue to request our families to write letters to their Senators, members of Congress, the Department of State, and to COA supporting AFTH and advocating our approval for accreditation. We thank all of those families who have done so already on our behalf; we appreciate your ongoing patience and support.





Congratulations to Families Who Have Recently Adopted!

Daughters from China

James & Emily

Daughters from Guatemala

MaryBeth
Lisa
Jeffrey & Nicole
Rebecca
Tobin & Lisa
Edward & Debbie
Kevin & Kimberly
Lynn
Tina

Sons from Guatemala

Andrew & Shelley
Arthur & Suzanne
John & Jacqueline
Karim & Susanne
David & Shelly

Daughters from Kazakhstan

Edward & Heather
Michael & Anne

Sons from Kazakhstan

Philip & Melissa

Daughters from Russia

Raymond & Jill

Sons from Russia

Derek & Valerie

Daughters from Ukraine

Ken & Stacey
Antonio & Candida

Sons from Ukraine

Michael & Theresa
Antonio & Candida
(sibling group, 2 boys & 1 girl)

Daughters from the USA

Scott & Sandra
Joseph & Megan
Stephen & Elizabeth
Perry & Paulette
Julia
John & Debbie
Paul & Diana
Richard & Janet
Michael & Thelma
Bowen & Stephane
Robert & Lisa
John & Andree
Ryan & Marla
Kathleen & Laura
Joseph & Karrie
Mark & Marlene
Michael & Maria
Joseph & Susan
Richard & Katherine
Geoffrey & Carrie

Shawn & Melissa
Carole & Victoria
Ralph & Josephine
Daniel & Kimberly

Sons from the USA

Keith & Beverly *(twins)*
David & Gina
Curtis & Amy
Corey & Kelly
Rocco & Rebecca
Lawrence & Nancy
Shawn & Allison
Teresa & Jacqueline
Joel & Melanie
Scott & Lisa
Morgan & Amy
Chris & Christine
Scott & Kathy
Michael & Juliann
James & Susan
Dennis & Michele
Peter & Theresa
Matt & Tina
Clifford & Bianka
Brenna





What You Should Know About Vacations

GET GOING: Vacations Improve Your Work

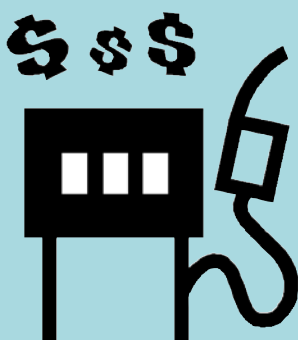
Have you decided to skip a vacation this year because you have too many projects at work or too many items on your fix-it list for your house? Do you regularly pass on your lunch break or eat in your office in order to keep working through lunch?

Vacations give you time to kick back, forget about the office, and get some R&R. But fewer and fewer Americans are doing that according to recent studies. Even though one in three Americans say they are chronically overworked, many employees aren't taking the paid vacations they have earned. A 2007 survey by the recruiting firm Hudson reported that 56 percent of employees do not use all of their vacation time. And of those who do take their vacations, many continue working while they're away.

But when you truly get away from work-by changing your environment and shutting down for extended periods-you return to work less overwhelmed and more energized to meet your responsibilities. In fact, in a study conducted on behalf of Air New Zealand, 82 percent of vacationers experienced a boost in their work performance after returning from a vacation.

Wise people have always known that putting some space-mentally, emotionally, geographically-between you and your job is beneficial. Here are some thoughts on the subject from Leonardo da Vinci, one of the great creative geniuses of all time: "Every now and then go away, have a little relaxation, for when you come back to your work your judgment will be surer since to remain constantly at work will cause you to lose power of judgment . . . Go some distance away because then the work appears smaller and more of it can be taken in at a glance and a lack of harmony and proportion is more readily seen."

Take it from da Vinci: Vacations improve your work



Putting the Pedal to the Metal is Costly

We know you just can't wait to get out of the office and onto the beach however aggressive driving will cost

you at the gas pump. Speeding, rapid acceleration, and last-minute braking can lower your gas mileage by 33 percent when you're driving at highway speeds. For each 5 M.P.H. that you drive over 60 M.P.H., you'll be paying about 20 cents more per gallon.

Keeping Busy On The Drive: No More "Are We There Yet"

Now that you have decided to take a vacation and know how to save money in gas along the way, what in the world are you going to do to make the long road trip easier for your young children?



Why wait to begin the vacation fun until you actually reach your destination when it can begin with the start of your car?

Washington Learning Systems has developed unique "On the Go" activities designed to facilitate positive parent-child interactions during road trips. The material is created to encourage early language and literacy development in infants through preschool age children. For a list of activities go to www.wlearning.com and download the "On the Go" file in the Free Parent Handouts section.

Another great website to find road trip activities for children of all ages is at www.momsminivan.com.

The classics games include:

Car Bingo

The Alphabet Game

I Spy

20 Questions

I'm Going on a Trip and I'm Brining a(n)...

Have your child keep a journal of your vacation. Begin by having them draw a picture of the day's activities on a sheet of paper and on the another page have them write about the day. Upon returning home, you can create a book out of all the pages which will capture the memories of the vacation from your child's eyes.

Most importantly, remember to take breaks in long road trips and allow your child to burn off some energy.

Happy Travels!



Adoption Education Fall 2008 Series

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

♥ WYNNEWOOD, PA

Newborn and Infant Childcare

Be prepared when the time comes to bring your child home. Amanda Beattie is a nurse practitioner and a clinical educator at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and she will help you learn proper techniques to use when caring for your child as you make the transition into parenthood.

Monday, September 15, 2008

6:30-8:00 PM

\$10/person or \$15/couple

♥ LANCASTER, PA

What Your Commitment Means to Me

The amount of openness that you have decided on in your adoption is a very important and personal decision -- only you can decide what is best for your family. In this session, hear from a birthmother about the importance of following through with the promises that you have made. Hear both sides of the story. Hear how promises broken affect a birthparent. In addition, hear from a birthparent about the impact it has when a child's adoptive parents remain committed to their plan.

Wednesday, October 15, 2008

6:30-8:00 PM

\$10/person or \$15/couple

♥ Midlothian, VA

Celebrating National Adoption Month: Create a Lifebook to Last a Lifetime

A hands on session with Michele Deane, AFTH China adoptive mother and co-owner of "Memories Galore." Michele will provide facilitating and thought provoking exercises for the framework of a Lifebook. There is organizational structure and a 90 day plan to finish the project. There is package of materials available for an additional \$50 to start the Lifebook during the session. This is a perfect chance for those who have adopted to make a permanent Lifebook to share with their child now and in the future.

Saturday, November 8, 2008

1:30-4:00 PM

\$10/person or \$15/couple

♥ Cherry Hill, NJ

Embracing Openness

Many adoptive parents are intimidated by the idea of having a relationship with their birth parents. This session will focus on fostering a positive relationship from the initial meeting through the post-placement letters, pictures, and visits.

Wednesday, October 8, 2008

7:00-8:30 PM

\$10/person or \$15/couple

♥ Hazlet, NJ

Infant and Child CPR/AED

Participants will receive one year American Red Cross Infant & Child CPR/EAED certification upon completion of the 4.5 hour course. Course is led by Certified Red Cross trainers and open to pre/post adoptive parents and extended family and friends. Class will have a break and refreshments will be provided.

Saturday, October 18, 2008

10:00AM-2:30 PM

\$50/person

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>Newborn and Infant Childcare</u> WYNNEWOOD, PA
		<u>What Your Commitment Means to Me</u> LANCASTER, PA
		<u>Create a Lifebook to Last a Lifetime</u> MIDLOTHIAN, VA
		<u>Embracing Openness</u> CHERRY HILL, NJ
♥		<u>Infant and Child CPR/AED</u> HAZLET, NJ
		<u>Talking with your Children about Adoption</u> Pittsburgh Office (Greensburg)
		<u>Basic Childcare</u> Pittsburgh Office (Greensburg)
♥		<u>Caring for Infants & Older Babies: What New Adoptive Parents Need to Know</u> Harrisburg, PA

Names: _____

Address: _____

Phone: () _____ - _____

Email: _____

For Information or Questions
610-642-7200 or contact your local AFTH office

♥ Greensburg, PA

Talking with Your Children about Adoption

How and when do I tell my child that they are adopted? And how can I be prepared for the Questions my child will ask about their adoption story? Parents need to share their child's adoption story in a way that is specific to age and to the various developmental stages of a child's life. Join Chrissy Valania, MSW for a discussion about when and how it makes sense to tell your child about adoption and how to prepare for questions your child will ask.

Saturday, September 20, 2008

10:00AM-NOON

\$10/person or \$15/couple

♥ Greensburg, PA

Basic Childcare

Everyone knows becoming a parent is a big responsibility. But how do you choose a pediatrician that is right for you or when should you take your child to the doctor? Darcy Yeloushan is an RN/BSN and she will teach the basics of childcare to help you adjust to parenthood. Come and enjoy a comfortable setting with other pre/post adoptive parents. Bring your questions.

Saturday, October 4, 2008

10:00AM-NOON

\$10/person or \$15/couple

♥ HARRISBURG, PA

Caring for Infants & Older Babies: What New Adoptive Parents Need to Know

Learn the basics of infant and child care in a comfortable setting with other adoptive and pre-adoptive parents. April Stambaugh is a Certified Child and Birth Educator and will discuss newborn care, feeding and changing your baby, choosing a pediatrician, making the adjustment to parenthood, and more! This class is recommended for all adoptive families.

Wednesday, October 8, 2008

7:00-9:00 PM

\$20/person or \$35/couple



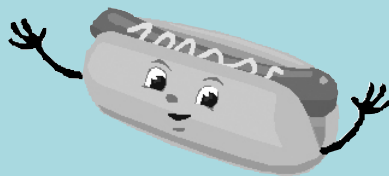
Refreshing Story of Alex's Lemonade Stand

When 4-year-olds say they want to help adults, it's usually with household tasks or some such thing. Not so for 4-year-old Alexandra Scott. When she said she wanted to help, the tiny cancer patient meant she wanted to help her doctors find a cure for kids with cancer.

She planned to raise money through a lemonade stand. With the help of her older brother Patrick, she set up her first "Alex's Lemonade Stand" for childhood cancer in the year 2000. Over the next four years, even as Alex's health declined, the sibling duo staged the annual lemonade event. By the time she died at the age of 8, Alex had managed to raise more than \$1 million.

And, inspired by her example, thousands more children and adults have continued her cause-raising more than \$17 million for childhood cancer research. Cup by cup, Alex's Lemonade Stand Foundation is making a difference in children's lives.

It's Summer - Hot Dog!



The history of the hot dog stretches all the way back to the 9th century B.C. when sausage was mentioned in Homer's Odyssey. But honest-to-goodness frankfurters didn't roll around till the late 1600s in Germany. Some believe that the sausages were first called "dachshunds" or "little dogs" because they resembled the shape of a dachshund. We know them today as hot dogs. And this year, Americans will eat enough of them at major league ballparks to stretch from RFK Stadium in Washington, D.C., to AT&T Park in San Francisco. If that doesn't impress you, on Independence Day Americans will eat enough hot dogs to stretch from D.C. to L.A. five times over. And from Memorial Day to Labor Day-considered "hot dog season" by hot dog enthusiasts-Americans will consume 818 hot dogs every second!

July is National Hot Dog Month. For some interesting hot dog facts and trivia, visit www.hot-dog.org.

Conserve Water and Your Cash Flow This Summer

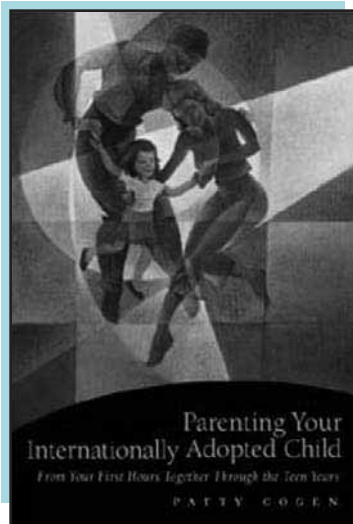
Water conservation is critical to help meet the future needs of communities, and to lessen the strain on our fragile ecosystems. A little water conservation at home can also save you some cash. Here are 10 ways you can reduce water consumption in your life, as recommended by SmartIrrigation.org:

- o Don't let the water run when rinsing your dishes. Fill one sink with wash water and one sink with rinse water.
- o Wash fruits and vegetables in a pan of water instead of under running tap water.
- o Adjust your sprinklers so they're watering your lawn- and not the sidewalks, fences, or street.
- o Water your lawn and garden in the morning or evening when it's cooler to minimize evaporation.
- o Run your washing machine only when it's full. This can save up to 1,000 gallons of water per month.
- o Use a broom instead of a hose to clean your driveway.
- o Shorten your shower time by just one or two minutes to save up to 150 gallons of water per month.
- o Put food coloring in your toilet tank. If you see it seep into the bowl without flushing, you've got a leak. Fix it and you can save up to 1,000 gallons of water per month.
- o Designate one glass for drinking water all day to reduce the number of glasses that need to be washed.
- o Instead of running water through a sprinkler or hose to keep the kids cool during the hot summer days, fill up a plastic pool to be used all day or better yet, join a local community pool so the whole family can keep cool.

Did You Know...

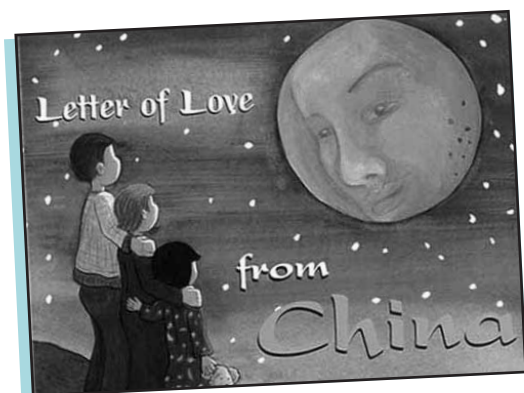
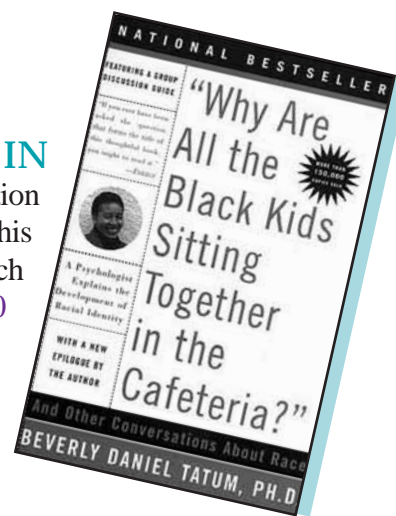
Most homeowners over-irrigate their lawns by 30 percent, which not only wastes water but also washes nutrients into rivers and streams and away from the root zone where plants can use them. For more information, visit www.smartirrigationmonth.org.

Book Reviews



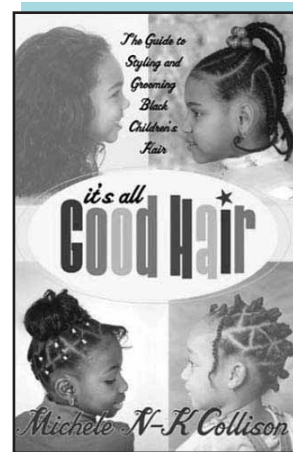
PARENTING YOUR INTERNATIONALLY ADOPTED CHILD - FROM YOUR FIRST HOURS TOGETHER THROUGH THE TEEN YEARS by **Patty Cogen** - This book guides parents in promoting an internationally adopted child's social and emotional adjustment, explaining how to help a child adopted between the ages of six months and five years bond with his or her new parents, become a part of the family, and develop a positive self-image that incorporates both American identity and ethnic origins. Other topics include how (and why) to tell the child's story from the child's point of view; how to handle sleep problems and resistance to household rules; and how to encourage eye contact, ease transitions and separations, and deal with problematic anniversaries (birthdays, adoption day, Mother's Day). With advice on language and school difficulties and the development of self-control and independence, Cogen guides adoptive parents from the initial meeting through their child's teen years. **AFTH price \$14.00**

WHY ARE ALL THE BLACK KIDS SITTING TOGETHER IN THE CAFETERIA by **Beverly Daniel Tatum** - An insightful exploration of the varieties of Americans' experience with race and racism in everyday life. This book looks at some very interesting and complicated social issues and tries to touch on the why's as well as talking about the issues. Retail \$15.95 **AFTH price \$12.00**



LETTER OF LOVE FROM CHINA by **Bonnie Cuzzolino** - This is a beautiful book for any child born in China. This book is written like letter from a birth mother to her daughter explaining the circumstances of why many women place their children for adoption in China. **AFTH price \$14.00**

IT'S ALL GOOD HAIR: THE GUIDE TO STYLING AND GROOMING BLACK CHILDREN'S HAIR by **Michele N-K Collison** - A great resource for learning to care for African-American hair. Filled with tips on general care, and tips on different styling techniques. **AFTH price \$12.00**



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

International Adoption Program Updates

CHINA - China continues to move smoothly when there are assignments. In July we sent eighteen families to China to pick up their children. The CCAA was quite speedy in releasing travel permissions perhaps in anticipation of the Olympics. We do not believe any families will travel in August from any agencies. It will be interesting to see if the pace quickens after August.

GUATEMALA - The new step in the Guatemala process is that PGN/The Central Adoption Authority announced that they were going to interview the birth mother on all cases that haven't received PGN approval. The majority of our cases have successfully completed this new requirement and three cases have since received PGN approval. The New Central Adoption Authority has not really announced any information regarding the future adoption process in Guat. Many families continue to visit their children while they are waiting for their adoption to be finalized, and this is a positive option for families.

INDIA - We are not accepting applications at this time.

KAZAKHSTAN - Seven families completed their adoptions from Kazakhstan and three families traveled to begin the process in the first six months of the year. Most families are now doing the process in three trips due to the courts extending the time between the preliminary. Interest in Kazakhstan has increased lately and that is increasing the time between submitting dossiers and travel. Families who have completed

Got E-mail?

To sign-up for monthly adoption program updates, send an e-mail with the word "subscribe" in the subject line to the appropriate email address:

CHINA - AFTHChinaUpdates-subscribe@yahoo.com

GUATEMALA - AFTHGuatUpdates-subscribe@yahoo.com

INDIA - AFTHIndiaUpdates-subscribe@yahoo.com

KAZAKHSTAN - AFTHKazakUpdates-subscribe@yahoo.com

RUSSIA - AFTHRussiaUpdates-subscribe@yahoo.com

UKRAINE - AFTHUkraineUpdates-subscribe@yahoo.com

VIETNAM - AFTHVietnamUpdates-subscribe@yahoo.com

To become a member of our Domestic online discussion group where you can connect with other AFTH families, send an email with the word "subscribe" in the subject line to the email address below:

DOMESTIC - AFTHopenadoption-subscribe@yahoo.com

adoptions are asked to submit their annual reports to Terry Petrone at the Cherry Hill office at least one month prior to the anniversary of the date of their final court in Kazakhstan. Any questions regarding the reports or the Kazakhstan program can be directed to Terry Petrone at TerryP@afth.org or by phone to the Cherry Hill office.

RUSSIA - AFTH's Russia Partnering Program continues to run well. Two families brought children home from Moscow in the spring, and three more are expected to do so during the summer. Four additional families are awaiting invitations to travel to Moscow to meet the child each hopes to adopt, and another is awaiting a Court date to adopt their child in St. Petersburg. Families continue to receive referrals within a few months of completion of paperwork. Referrals are of boys and girls, as young as 12-36 months and up to 5 years of age.



Program Updates Cont'd

UKRAINE - Adoption from Ukraine continues to be challenging. Families who have traveled in the past six months have had to be in country 4-6 weeks and have multiple appointments before finding referrals they could accept. Two families have traveled and come home without children and one family has made two trips without finding a child they could accept. The SDA seems to be focusing on placing older and special needs children and sibling groups and families who are adopting from Ukraine must be prepared to be very flexible in regard to child request and travel duration. Post-placement compliance continues to be an issue for the Ukrainian government and all families who have adopted are reminded to submit their annual reports to the Consulate of Ukraine in New York at least one month prior to the anniversary of their court date. Questions regarding Ukraine can be directed to Terry Petrone at TerryP@afth.org or by phone to the Cherry Hill office.

VIETNAM - On June 18, 2008, Joint Council led a delegation to Vietnam with the goal of seeing a continuation of children's services, including international adoption, beyond September 1, 2008. Despite there still being a long road ahead before the United States and Vietnamese governments come to an agreement, the delegation is confident that its efforts have advanced the goal of new Memorandum of Understanding by September 1st.

We are thrilled to announce that AFTH recently had a family receive their I-600 approval and the family will be traveling within the next 2-3 weeks. This is wonderful news and we are hopeful for more approvals to come in the near future. AFTH is continuing to receive referrals, however, we are waiting for the official referrals from Vietnam to come through before giving them to families. We do not want families to receive a referral of a potential child and not be able to bring that child home because the official documentation was not received by September 1st. For this reason, we are not distributing any information about potential children until the official documentation is received from Vietnam.



New Program!

Heartbeats: An Embryo Placement Program

AFTH is proud to announce the start of a new option for families.

Our Heartbeats Program allows recipient families to:

- ♥ Have the opportunity to experience child birth.
- ♥ Have the chance to control the pregnancy environment of their child.
- ♥ Maintain contact with the donor family for medical and other background information.

Many couples choose IVF and embryo cryopreservation and lovingly create embryos with the intention of using them to create their family. Often families find that they have additional embryos left after they have completed their family that will not be used. These families are then faced with the dilemma of what to do with these additional embryos. One of the options is to donate these embryos for placement with other families.

Recipient families receive a home study and education course that will cover issues regarding the importance of sharing the child's story with them in a loving, thoughtful manner, how to discuss this program with family and friends and the importance of keeping in touch with the donor family and informing the child that they may have a full sibling that lives with another family.

AFTH is in contact with fertility clinics that have families interested in an open placement for their frozen embryos. As you can imagine, this is a difficult decision for both families involved but a wonderful option for both as well.

AFTH is a non-profit, non-sectarian agency dedicated to giving all families options and this program fits in very well with this philosophy. If you are interested in exploring this new program please contact Kimberly Dotts at KimberlyD@afth.org.



On Using 'Our Friendly Voice'

By Gretchen Boger-O'Bryan

As the sun shone and reggae music filled the air, cars crawled into neat rows in the grass and spilled out eager-and nervous-faced folks looking to spot their loved ones. Family portraits were snapped before lush trees, craft projects beckoned, and children with myriad backgrounds dotted the park's landscape.



My daughter Maeve was in her nearly three-year-old glory, donning a painted butterfly on one hand and waving in the other a balloon-cum-fishing pole - complete with dangling orange fish.

This was my family's third Adoptions From The Heart picnic. Previously, I've taken home new memories and fine-tuned notions about adoption and its impact on all those involved - and this year was no exception.

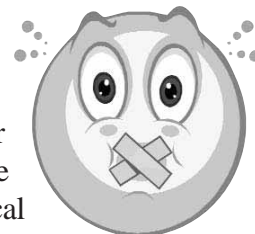
Seeing my daughter evolve from the pudgy baby planted on a picnic blanket in 2006 to this year watching her run with other children and throw her first Frisbee, I was reminded just how many memories and observations she will soon be able to take from this gathering. Impressions that I believe will play a part in helping form her perception of adoption, process her feelings and handle her own story - certainly all crucial layers to the person she will become.

While our little family waited in line for ice cream, I overheard a sweet exchange behind us between a first mother and her son. Her exuberance at being with him was incredibly tangible. They snapped photos and she

pledged to share them with friends who had been counting the days with her until the picnic.

Yet in a different line altogether, another conversation took place. One in which adoptive family members spoke disparagingly - in front of their child - about his or her first mother after she stepped away.

What did the child hear and how much did he or she understand? Did the mother overhear or would someone else in line share with her what they heard? How did it make other young adoptees or biological parents in that line feel?



Respect for all members of the triad is vital; certainly, adoptive parents expect it.

How many of us have fielded baffling questions or jarring comments like: How much did your daughter cost? What did you have pay to get her? Is she your real daughter? Do you have any children of your own? She's so cute, why wouldn't her mother want her? Are you afraid her real mother will want to keep her when you visit?

As an adoptive mother, such encounters make me feel affronted and fired up. I want to defend Maeve's honor, her first mother's honor and respond in a way that might make others reconsider how they view adoption and those living it.

But how can we command that respect if - like the family overheard at the picnic - we aren't living it ourselves?

A recent post I shared on my blog, musings: mamahood&more, outlined points to consider when contemplating whether to adopt. They were written by a fellow adoptive mother who also is an adoptee. Among them was this pearl:

"Don't ever breathe one single negative word about your child's mother, father, state, country, race or culture. Not for any reason. If there are disturbing facts in the situation, state them plainly and support the feelings that may come. But don't add commentary."

Musings Cont'd

It's ironic that "be nice" reminders among adults - never mind those actually schooled on adoption issues - are even necessary. After all, my days parenting a toddler are spent focused on sharing, being kind, taking turns, using our listening ears and speaking in our friendly voice.

Perhaps these are lessons we need to revisit ourselves, for our children's sake. (And all non-listeners will be sent to the naughty spot!)



Gretchen Boger-O'Bryan was placed with her infant daughter in July 2005 through Adoptions From The Heart. An editor in legal publishing, she also is a freelance writer and currently writes about adoption and first-time parenthood on her blog, musings: mamahood&more, at www.mamagigi.wordpress.com. You can reach Gretchen by emailing mamagigi@comcast.net.

Special Events & Announcements

Pittsburgh Annual Picnic

Join Pittsburgh AFTH staff and families for a day of family fun at Idlewild. Park opens at 10am. Gather at pavilion E-1 at 1pm to meet up with other AFTH families and to meet Ricky Raccoon! Cost is \$15.00 per person (children under 2 years old are free). **Deadline to order tickets is July 18th.** Send your checks payable to Debbie Cohen along with your name, address, phone number, number of people attending, and number of tickets you want to:

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

For questions and directions call Katie at 724-853-6533.

Hazlet Play Day

The AFTH Hazlet Office will be hosting its first "Hazlet Play Day" at Holmdel Park in Holmdel, NJ. Children will enjoy the farm and petting zoo, playgrounds, nature walks, and the large grass areas to run around and play. Families can bring a picnic lunch and network with other North Jersey adoptive families. This special day will take place either late summer or early fall. Look for details coming via email blast or **contact the Hazlet Office at (732) 335-8883 for more information.**

AFTH 2009 Building Beautiful Families Calendar

Thank you to all the families who submitted photos to be considered for the 2009 AFTH calendar. They make wonderful gifts and will be available for purchase beginning in early October. Look for details in the next newsletter.

AFTH Support Groups

Adoptions From The Heart proudly offers support groups for waiting families. The groups are a great way for AFTH families to come together in support and share in a discussion.

Harrisburg

Our Harrisburg Office holds support groups for all waiting families on the 3rd Thursday of each month. Meetings are held at the Landis Building at Polyclinic. Mark the date and join us for our next meeting.

- Thursday, July 17 beginning at 7pm
- Thursday, Aug. 21 beginning at 7pm
- Thursday, Sept. 18 beginning at 7pm

Call (717) 232-1787 for info.

Hazlet

Domestic Waiting Families Group

- Wednesday, Aug. 27 from 6:30-8pm
- Wednesday, Oct. 29 from 6:30-8pm

RSVP at (732) 355-8883

Virginia

Our Virginia Office hosts support group meetings in Richmond and Chesapeake areas to bring AFTH waiting families together. Watch your email for detailed information about upcoming support groups. Birthmother support groups are also held to connect women who have or are making an adoption plan for their child.

Cherry Hill

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

Call the Cherry Hill Office at (856) 665-5655 for dates & times

LET'S TALK ADOPTION

Hosted by: CPFA

Saturday, November 1, 2008
8:00am-4:45pm

Rutgers University Busch Campus Center
Piscataway, NJ

For More Information and to Register:
www.cpfanjanj.org

28TH ANNUAL APC CONFERENCE

Sunday, November 23, 2008
8:00am-5:00pm

Weill Cornell Medical College of Cornell in NYC

For More Information and to Register:
www.adtopiveparents.org
or Call 212-304-8479

WYNNEWOOD OFFICE
30-31 Hampstead Circle
Wynnewood, PA 19096
610.642.7200

ALLENTOWN OFFICE
2212 Union Blvd
Allentown, PA 18109
610.432.2384

HARRISBURG OFFICE
4331 North Front Street
Harrisburg, PA 17110
717.232.1787

LANCASTER OFFICE
1525 Oregon Pike, Suite 402
Lancaster, PA 17601
717.399.7766

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

DELAWARE OFFICE
18-A Trolley Square
Wilmington, DE 19806
302.658.8883

SOUTH NEW JERSEY OFFICE
451 Woodland Avenue
Cherry Hill, NJ 08002
856.665.5655

CENTRAL NEW JERSEY OFFICE
1 Bethany Road, Ste 81, Bldg 6
Hazlet, NJ 07730
732.335.8883

VIRGINIA OFFICE
1407 Stephanie Way, Suite H
Chesapeake, VA 23320
757.361.0008

WEST VIRGINIA OFFICE
1.800-355-5500

NEW YORK
1.800-355-5500

CONNECTICUT OFFICE
Local Staff: 800.355.5500

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www.afth.org

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