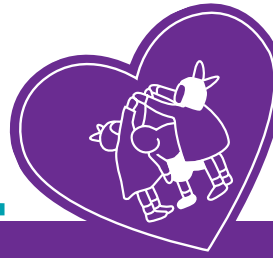


Adoption News



A Quarterly Newsletter from

Adoptions From The Heart

Summer 2009

Spreading the Word about Open Adoption

Since Adoptions From The Heart's inception in 1985, the agency has been an innovative leader in the field of adoption. As an adoptee herself, Maxine Chalker founded Adoptions From The Heart as one of the first adoption agencies on the East Coast to promote open adoption.

Maxine's passion to promote open adoption came from her own personal experience as an adoptee. She was adopted at birth through a closed adoption and spent years looking for clues about where she came from. Because of the personal struggles she encountered as a result of her closed adoption, Maxine knew that she wanted to start an agency that did things differently.

Maxine wanted to empower women facing unplanned pregnancies with the ability to make choices during this time when they may feel like their life is out of control. Birthmothers can now choose the adoptive couple, openness level, and even choose to receive updates as her child grows up.

Because of the lack of answers she had about her own background,

Maxine wanted to provide adopted children with the gift of knowledge. Knowing where someone comes from is such vital part of self actualization and being able to give that gift to an adoptee eliminated years of wondering, "Who am I?"

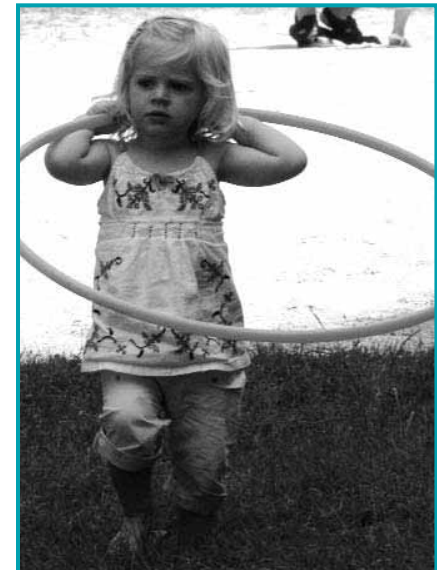
Open adoption helps to achieve all these goals and benefits all the members of the adoption triad.

Maxine also wanted to empower and educate adoptive parents with knowledge so they would be able to answer the questions their children have about where they came from.

Known as a leader in the field of open adoption, Adoptions From The Heart was asked to share its expertise. Michaelina Bendig, who has spent over 15 years as an adoption consultant for Adoptions From The Heart, flew to Missouri to spend the day training the LFCS staff on the open adoption process and benefits. Michaelina was able to answer the staff's questions and to provide them with the tools to begin developing an open adoption program for their own clients.

See page 2 for the follow up letter AFTH received from LFCS stressing the value of the information shared.

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Spreading the Word Cont'd

Open adoption helps to achieve all these goals and benefits all the members of the adoption triad. Children grow up knowing they are loved by two sets of parents; their biological parents who made the selfless decision to create an adoption plan for them and their adopted

parents who nurtured and raised them.

Over the past 24 years, Adoptions From The Heart has continued to carry on with Maxine's vision to advocate for open adoption and continues to do so.



June 8, 2009

Dear Maxine;

I wanted to take a minute to thank you so much for allowing Michaelina Bendig with Adoptions from the Heart to come and train the Lutheran Family and Children's Services staff last week. The information that she presented was so helpful, in large part because of her professionalism and enthusiasm but also because of the great support she gets from her agency.

While our agency has been in the adoption field for 140 years, open adoption is something that we haven't done routinely. The information that Michaelina presented was progressive and passionate. It was very clear that she works with a very professional and supportive team of people. We truly appreciated the ideas that we could implement immediately that don't cost a huge amount of money, such as outreach and how everyone's job is to recruit birth parents and adoptive parents to name just one.

The information that Michaelina presented reenergized everyone and we have dedicated weekly group time to examine our practice and make improvements, in addition to setting long term and short term goals.

We are so excited that we have found an agency that has similar values and mission about adoption and we really appreciate the new and fresh ideas about outreach and marketing. It is really wonderful that two agencies from different areas can assist each other to improve services to clients. We truly appreciate the beginning of what I know will be a very fulfilling partnership! We look forward to our paths crossing again and if there is ever anything we can do to return the favor, please feel free to let us know.

We are deeply grateful for your generosity!

Sincerely,

Christine White, MSW, LCSW
Assistant Child Welfare Director

Humanitarian Aid in Vietnam

Below are photos from the donations AFTH made to orphanages in Vietnam (*full details of the project in Spring newsletter, page 3*).



Education scholarships were presented to 100 students at the Tam Binh Orphanage. Each child also received a messenger bag to help carry their books.



Thi Nghe Orphanage received a washing machine and water filter machine.



In addition to bath towels and changing pads, both orphanages also received 160 cans of infant formula.



Adoptions From The Heart is now listed on the Give Back America Online Charity Mall. Every time you shop, AFTH can receive a generous commission at no cost to you!

With over 375 participating stores, it is as easy as a click of the mouse and even your routine online shopping can help benefit AFTH. The company you buy from is the same, the price you pay is the same, and this time GiveBackAmerica.com will send a percentage to AFTH.

Getting ready for an upcoming vacation but don't have time to drive around from store to store? Get all your shopping done online. Go to Expedia.com to book your flight, Hotels.com to reserve a room, Target.com and Macys.com for all the latest trends, ToysRUs.com for activities for your children during the trip, and of course Barnes&Noble.com for the summer reads. By doing all your shopping through the Give Back America Charity Mall, AFTH would receive 13% of your purchases.

Just remember to begin your shopping at the Give Back America AFTH link on our homepage. After you click on the link, be sure to bookmark the site and add it to your favorites to make it even easier to shop, shop, shop.

Federal Adoption Tax Credit: Assisting Families With Adoption Expenses

Mark E. Goldman, an adoption attorney, is often asked if there are programs to assist families with the cost of adopting a baby. Unlike all other ways of building a family, there is a tax credit to help offset the costs of adoption. In order to help educate adoptive parents about the adoption tax credit, he has written an article outlining the most commonly asked questions.

Mark recommends families consult with a tax professional to determine the specifics of how the tax credit can help their individual family, however, his article is a general summary of the tax credit and how it works.

For the full article visit our blog: <http://afth.wordpress.com> or go to our Adoptive Parent Learning Center at www.afth.org.

Russia Partnering Program: Two Families Complete Their Second Adoptions

One measure of an adoption program's success is whether families who have adopted a child through the program choose to apply to adopt via that program for a second time. So, it is with pride that AFTH's Russia Partnering Program can claim its first two "second timer" families.

AFTH's Russia Partnering Program places children from orphanages in Moscow and St. Petersburg with American adoptive parents. AFTH's Russia "partner" is Children of the World Adoption Agency (CWAA), which has been accredited by the Russian Federation to perform adoptions since 1995. AFTH and CWAA have been collaborating on Russian adoptions for the past two and a half years, during which time 41 children (26 boys and 15 girls) have been placed into the loving adoptive homes of AFTH families.

John and Marybeth Raidy were the first AFTH family to adopt a child from Moscow through AFTH's Russia Partnering Program, and were overjoyed to bring Alex



into their home in December of 2006. Then, they applied to AFTH for a second time in 2008, and were so very happy to welcome Luke (also from Moscow) into their family in March

of 2009. The couple and their sons (as well as their enthusiastic dog, Hudson!) have adjusted wonderfully to one another. Marybeth reports, "We've had the pleasure witnessing a 16 month-old (Luke) discovering just about everything. And Alex likes to tell me what a 'great helper' he is, and we certainly agree! Now that I see Alex and Luke together, I can't imagine them being apart. Adopting a second child from Russia was the best decision we could have made. Our family just feels complete."

Over the past two decades, tens of thousands of children orphaned in Russia have been placed with American families, more than from any country other than China.

And with the dramatic slowing of Chinese adoptions to the United States (and to other "receiving" countries), Russia may well be the top "sending" country to the U.S.

AFTH is actively recruiting families to provide homes for Russian children

in 2009. While there are many factors that contribute to the large number of children living in Russian orphanages, the common denominator remains poverty. This leads not only to some Russian birth families not being able to care for their children, but also to there not being enough Russian families able to adopt such children. Estimates are that there are 200,000 children currently residing in

Russian orphanages, and the sad reality is that the majority of these children will never enjoy the opportunity and permanency offered by adoption.

As is adopting from any foreign country, adopting from Russia is complicated. For example, the process often involves three trips (and the additional costs associated with such travel). This said, since December of 2006, 37 AFTH families have traveled to Russia through the AFTH Russia Partnering Program, and all have been able to successfully complete their adoptions and bring their children home. (Four families were each able to adopt two children at once during their respective processes.)

Joe and Michelle Baker were the first AFTH family to adopt a child from St. Petersburg via the program. They were thrilled to bring Gabrielle home in March of 2007. Later that year, Michelle recalls, "On the day after



Christmas in 2007, as I drove down the road with my daughter, all I could think of was Russia. It was as if my heart had a GPS, and the voice was saying make a right turn and head back to St.

Petersburg. I couldn't wait for the holiday season to be over so I could call Sam at Adoptions From The Heart. It's a totally unexplainable feeling, other than to say --- you know we had to go! And, in June of 2008, we traveled back to Russia to meet Ava." Both Gabrielle and

Russia Program Cont'd

Ava are bright, beautiful little girls who are absolutely thriving. Michelle adds, "Our family is now complete, and it's truly amazing to see the two girls together. As they play, you can see how much they really love and need each other. These two sisters are loved more than the miles we traveled, and the oceans we crossed."

Of the ten AFTH families that have adopted children thus far in 2009 through AFTH's Russia Partnering Program, all but one have done so in less than one year's time from when their Adoption Home Study was completed. This timeframe is shorter than the ones currently associated with adoptions from most other sending countries. However, in today's difficult economic times some families have needed to reconsider their plans to grow their families via adoption, so AFTH has experienced a decrease in the number of applicants to the Russia Partnering Program. Therefore, AFTH is actively recruiting families to provide homes for Russian children. All eligible families are welcome, and AFTH is particularly seeking families open to the adoption of boys, as there are very few remaining waiting families in the program open to adopting a boy.

Regarding adopting for a second time, Marybeth says, "Just knowing what to expect, and working with the same people, made things seem less intimidating the second time around. I always felt comfortable calling AFTH for some comforting words when I was feeling a little anxious. We loved being in Moscow, and found all the

people we dealt with there to be extremely helpful. We felt lucky to work with Alla (CWAA's agent) on both adoptions. She always prepared us for the events of the day, and gave us helpful cultural tips along the way. We'll always fondly remember our times with Alla, as well as with our driver, Igor, on the busy streets of Moscow. And, we'll always be thankful to Sam, AFTH, CWAA, and Alla for helping us to find the family we've always dreamed about having."

9 out of 10 families were home with a child in less than one year after completion of their home study

For families considering adoption, a free seminar on international adoption, focusing on adopting from Russia, will be held at AFTH's

Wynnewood Office on **Tuesday, July 28th, at 7pm.** Interested families can register for the meeting by going to the AFTH Website at www.afth.org or by calling the Wynnewood Office at 610-642-7200. For your reference, AFTH is also happy to provide you with contact information of families that have recently adopted children from Russia. Any further questions about AFTH's Russia Partnering Program can always directed to Sam Wojnilower by calling the Wynnewood Office, or by sending an email to SamW@afth.org.



Love Builds Families Blog

<http://afth.wordpress.com>

AFTH has a new blog and is looking for adoptive families, adoptees, and birthparents to share their stories and experiences. We are looking for blog posts about any topic surrounding adoption that you think would benefit other members of the adoption triad or anyone considering adoption. It can be a brief write up or a longer story. If you already have a blog, send it to us so we can link to it and vice versa.

Here are some example topics to help get your creative juices flowing: school experiences, transracial adoption topics, meeting your child's birthmother, in-country experiences, scrapbooking, creative ways to finance adoption, experiences of your extended family related to adoption, etc. The list goes on and on.

Send your blog contributions to: HeidiG@afth.org



Legislation



ECONOMY MAY BE INFLUENCING DECISIONS ABOUT PARENTING AND ADOPTION

- A May 19 [USA Today](#) article by Wendy Koch, "Struggling Families Look at Adoption," reports that a half-dozen large adoption agencies in the country have seen an increase in inquires about adoption from women with unplanned pregnancies. The article reports that many of these women considering placing their children for adoption are in their 20s, already have at least one child, and are facing economic hardships.

DROP IN ADOPTIONS FROM CHINA ATTRIBUTED PARTLY TO INTERNAL CHANGES

- In an April 12 CNN report by Emily Chang on the slowdown of international adoptions from China, a number of factors were cited as contributing to the reduction -- not only including new regulations issued in 2007, but also changes within China itself. The report, "Finding a Home: Fewer Children Up for Adoption in China," said the landscape of adoptions in China has altered because of regulatory changes narrowing the types of people who can adopt abroad; it also said better education and a growing economy have contributed to shifts in Chinese attitudes about adoption and the value of daughters, so that both interest in adoption and the financial means to adopt have both increased. Currently, the wait for an international adoption of a child from China can be up to five years.

DESPITE RECORDS, INTERNATIONAL ADOPTEES MAY NOT BE IMMUNIZED

- There are reasons to suspect that the vaccine records of children adopted from overseas may not accurately reflect immunity due to documentation inaccuracies, falsification of vaccine certificates, lack of vaccine potency and impaired immune response (possibly due to stress or malnutrition), according to a recent study published in the May Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine (Volume 163, Issue 5). The study, "Predictive Value of Immunization Records and Risk Factors for Immunization Failure in Internationally Adopted Children," found children adopted from China were less likely to have immunity than those from

Russia. The researchers suggested revaccination as a cost-effective option for parents whose children showed no immunity.

ETHIOPIA - May 13, 2009, the U.S. State Department issued a notice reporting that the Ethiopian First Instance Court had temporarily stopped accepting cases involving abandoned children referred by orphanages in Addis Ababa, citing concerns over the dramatic increase in the number of these cases and possible unethical practices involving a few that had come to light in recent months. The suspension will last until a full inquiry into the situation is completed.

FLORIDA - May 14, 2009, the Florida Court of Appeals unanimously reversed a lower court ruling and held that the state must recognize adoptions granted to same-sex couples in other states. The court further noted that the same-sex relationship of the parents was irrelevant for the purpose of enforcing the rights and obligations in an adoption. The case involved a custody dispute between a lesbian couple who had completed a second-parent adoption in Washington State and subsequently moved to Florida.

GEORGIA - May 5, 2009, Georgia's Gov. Sonny Perdue signed into law a measure that amends the state's child adoption laws to include the "adoption" of embryos conceived through in vitro fertilization and stored in cryopreservation. The Option of Adoption Act (HB388) is the first statute in the United States to provide a legal framework for the "adoption" of embryos by providing the option to obtain a court approval for the procedure as well as clarifying the rights of genetic donors and adoptive parents.

SOUTH KOREA - May 21, 2009, the South Korean Ministry of Justice announced it will submit a bill to the National Assembly in July that would allow Koreans who had been adopted and raised overseas to restore their Korean citizenship without having to relinquish the nationality of their new countries.

Celebrating Adoption at AFTH Picnics

Agency's 21st Summer Picnic

AFTH held its 21st annual picnic at the Fort Washington State Park in Pennsylvania on Sunday June 7, 2009. It was a beautiful day filled with beautiful families. Toys were handed out to children and there were plenty of free snacks for everyone.

An estimated 1,500 parents, grandparents, birth parents and children from all over gathered to celebrate adoption. International families hung flags from the various countries they adopted from in the trees and gathered with their travel groups. Several domestic families also visited with birth parents.

It is always great to see new families 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!

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

Virginia Annual Summer Picnic

Virginia families enjoyed a festive gathering at the Chesapeake City Park Fun Forest on Saturday, June 13, 2009. In spite of torrential rain and adverse conditions, 122 adoptive and birth families attended. In addition to local domestic families, we enjoyed the company of families from Pennsylvania and families as far away as Michigan. Local families who adopted from Russia, Guatemala, and China also attended with one former travel group enjoying a mini reunion with two families from New York. Once the rain receded and the clouds lessened, children enjoyed the playground designed for all ages. We are looking forward to doing this next year at the same location.

Connecticut's Annual Adoption Picnic

Over 250 people touched by adoption joined our Connecticut staff on June 28th at the Quassy Amusement Park for a day of family fun. 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.



AFTH Support Groups

CENTRAL PA

Waiting adoptive parent support groups are being held in Lancaster and Harrisburg to help bring AFTH waiting families together in support.

HARRISBURG - All Waiting Families support groups are held on the 3rd Thursday of each month at the Landis Building at the Polyclinic .

LANCASTER - Domestic Family Support Group
Check the calendar of events at www.afth.org or call (717) 399-7766 for more information.

VIRGINIA

Adoptive parent support groups are held to bring AFTH waiting families together. **Check the calendar of events at www.afth.org for upcoming dates.**

Birthmother support groups are also held to connect women who have or are making an adoption plan for their child. **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. **Call 856-665-5655 or email JenniferB@afth.org if you are interested in attending.**

Waiting family support groups are held on the 3rd Wednesday of each month at the Cherry Hill Office.

Call (856) 665-5655 to RSVP by the Friday before. Pre- Registration Required for Meetings.

DELAWARE

Adoptive parent support groups are held to bring AFTH waiting families together. **Check the calendar of events at www.afth.org or call (302) 658-8883 for more information.**

ALLENTOWN

Waiting Families Support Group
Check the calendar of events at www.afth.org or call (610) 432-2384 for more information

Food Allergies & Traveling

According to the Food Allergy Initiative, more than 11 million Americans have food allergies of varying degrees of severity – including 2% of the adult population and 8% of children less than 3 years of age. Each year over 30,000 people seek emergency hospitalization for food-induced anaphylaxis – a life-threatening allergic reaction.

One of the great pleasures of foreign travel is interacting with local people and sharing in the local cuisine, but ordering food when you have food allergies or restrictions can be challenging.

SelectWisely is a company that specializes in customized travel translation cards specific to various food allergies and medical conditions.

Here are some SelectWisely traveling tips:

- Stay healthy by eating right.
- If you're buying packaged foods from a grocery store, show your SelectWisely card to the store clerk and ask them to check the product label. Product labeling is not the same as in the United States, so be cautious.
- Some countries use potentially allergic foods in their sauces and seasonings for flavoring and thickening.
- Drink only sealed bottled water or carbonated drinks in cans or bottles. Make sure the seal on the cap is not broken. Avoid fountain drinks. Remember that ice cubes fall into this same category.
- Carry snacks – packaged crackers, bottled water.
- If purchasing foods from an open air market, purchase thick skinned fruit that you can peel like bananas or mangos. Stay away from foods that might be washed in local tap water. Use your own knife to cut the fruit.
- Bring a package of antihistamine – like Benadryl.
- When ordering or purchasing food, open your wallet or passport and pull out your SelectWisely card. Show both sides of the card. Point to the picture of the food with the international prohibitory sign. Make sure they understand.

Be sure to order your customized translated card before traveling at: www.selectwisely.com

Adoption Education

Fall 2009 Series



Adoptions From The Heart®

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

♥ Midlothian, VA

Race Does Matter: Facing and Accepting the Challenges of Transracial Adoption

Join adoptive parent and Pediatric Nurse Practitioner Debra Hearington as she shares her personal experience and expertise in transracial adoption. Learn ways to encourage positive racial identity while acknowledging societal biases and prepare your child to handle uncomfortable situations and discrimination.

Saturday, October 10, 2009

1:00-3:00 PM

\$10/person or \$15/couple

♥ Cherry Hill, NJ

Bringing Baby Home

Whether you are chosen by a birth mother months ahead of time or chosen for an emergency placement this class will provide you with a guide to basic baby items you should have ready as well as tips for handling the wait for Inter-State Compact approval.

Wednesday, October 14, 2009

7:00-9:00 PM

\$10/person or \$15/couple

Our goal is not only to build beautiful families, but to help strengthen them. 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. 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 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.

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>Race Does Matter: Facing and Accepting the Challenges</u> MIDLOTHIAN, VA
		<u>Bringing Baby Home</u> CHERRY HILL, NJ
		<u>Financing Adoption</u> LANCASTER, PA
♥		<u>Caring for Infants & Older Babies: What New Adoptive Parents Need to Know</u> Harrisburg, PA

Total Amount Enclosed: _____

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

Phone: () _____ - _____

Email: _____

For More Information...

610-642-7200 or contact your local AFTH office

♥ 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.

Exact Date and Time To Be Announced!

Watch your email and the website event calendar for more information about this class.

\$20/person or \$35/couple

♥ Lancaster, PA

Financing Adoption

Ever wish you could speak with a financial professional about the pre/post adoption financial challenges? Now you can. Kathryn Sotiriadis-Mobley at PNC Bank in Harrisburg will be providing tips on selecting the right way to finance you adoption and how to control and reduce your monthly expenses. Learn how the federal tax credit regarding adoption will affect your family. Get information on employer assistance and tips about creative ways to finance adoption to help put your dreams within reach.

Tuesday, October 6, 2009

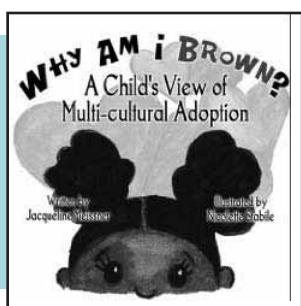
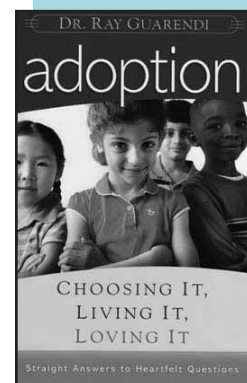
7:00-9:00 PM

\$10/person or \$15/couple



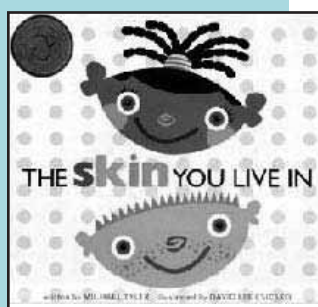
Book Reviews

Adoption: Choosing It, Living It, Loving It by *Dr. Ray Guarendi* - Relying on his experiences raising 10 adopted children, Guarendi has written a book that asks some of the most common adoption questions. Each chapter is written in question and answer format that offers practical advice on questions such as, talking to your children, adoption self image, why choose adoption, and more. This book is easy to read and a great book to share with family members to help them understand adoption. Retail price \$14.99. **AFTH price \$12.00**



Why Am I Brown? A Child's View of Multi-Cultural Adoption by *Jacqueline Meissner* - Although adoption is very fulfilling for each member of the family, the difference in cultural characteristics and the questions that go along with being different do arise in the young mind of the child. However, this book shows that even though there are differences on the outside, on the inside we are all the same. **AFTH price \$18.00**

Star of the Week by *Darlene Friedman & Roger Roth* - It's Cassidy-Li's turn to be her kindergarten class' "star of the week," so she begins her autobiographical poster with a photograph taken in China at the time of her adoption. Other snapshots introduce her American family, friends, and favorite activities; but Cassidy-Li realizes she does not have a photograph of her birth family. With a little help from her family, she comes up with the perfect way to include them. This book is helpful for any parent whose child may not have any photos of their birth parents. Hopefully this book can open the lines of communication and help your family come up with ways in which to overcome some of those awkward school assignments. Retail price \$17.99. **AFTH price \$ 14.00**



The Skin You Live In by *Michael Tyler* - This rhythmic poem with pictures of children, encourages each of us to look in the mirror and celebrate who we are and the joy of friendship. This is a collection of simply presented thoughts about self-esteem, acceptance, and diversity. A must have book for everyone! Retail price \$14.95. **AFTH price \$ 12.00**

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

AFTH Program Updates

HEARTBEATS - The Embryo Placement Program is up and running. We are partnering with Snowflakes (Nightlight Christian Adoptions) for embryo placement. Snowflakes has been doing embryo placements since 1997, and is a wonderful agency. We are thrilled to be partnering our program with them. There have been many calls of interest regarding the embryo program and we are looking forward to our first families going through the process. Keep an eye on our website for upcoming free webinars on embryo placement.

AFTH is also in-process of developing surrogacy programs in India and Guatemala. More information to come in the Fall Newsletter.

DOMESTIC - Thank you to all our waiting families for your comments and understanding in getting the new Profile Keys completed and returned to your social worker by July 1st. We continue to see an increase providing counseling to pregnant women and the new keys are allowing us to present more families to them for their consideration.

We want to remind families to include their full names (first and last) and addresses on mail we are receiving, especially when sending their birth family letter and pictures. Please remember we remove the letter and pictures from your envelope and send them with our return address on the envelope to your birth family. As your family grows, it can be difficult for us to know what birth family is to receive these much anticipated letters and pictures without your last names.

Our staff reports very positive feedback from their families who have signed up for the domestic update list serve and those who have joined the domestic discussion group. If you haven't done so already, we encourage you to join. *See page 9 for details on how to register.* AFTH is also now hosting a blog called Love Builds Families. To visit our blog go to: <http://afth.wordpress.com>.

We continue to see an urgent need for African American and Bi-Racial adoptive families for our domestic program and encourage you to talk about adoption and our domestic program with family, friends and co-workers.

RUSSIA - AFTH's Russia Partnering Program continues to be a successful one. During the spring, 5 AFTH families adopted children from Moscow (including one family that adopted a sibling group of 2 children!), and one family adopted a child from St. Petersburg. Another family has traveled to St. Petersburg and accepted the referral of a sibling group of 2 children, and one additional family has accepted the referral of a child in Moscow.

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. At this time, there are only a few AFTH families still waiting to receive referrals, so there is a need for additional prospective adoptive families to apply so that AFTH will have enough families ready to adopt eligible Russian orphans. This is particularly so for families open to the adoption of a boy.

AFTH will hold a free information meeting on Russia adoption on July 28, 2009 at 7pm at the Wynnewood Office. To register for the meeting and/or request additional information, please contact the Wynnewood Office at 610-642-7200 or visit the AFTH website at www.afth.org.

UKRAINE - There are currently no families in process for Ukraine. Questions regarding this program can be directed to Terry Petrone at TerryP@afth.org.

GUATEMALA - We only have 2 cases left in our Guatemala program and both cases are waiting for PGN



Program Updates Cont'd

approval. We are hopeful that they will be wrapped up in the very near future.

CHINA - On June 24th, our China families with a log in date of 3/17/06 finally received their referrals. There were 9 referrals in all and one family received a set of twin boys. Congratulations to all!

As stated on our listserv:

We are hearing of new information that has to do with new screening and treatment requirements for tuberculosis, pertaining to children between 2 to 14 years of age, that will be initiated on 7/1/09 by the Children's Immigrant Visa Unit (ACIVU) at the U.S. Consulate in Guangzhou. As of this date, panel physicians will be required to follow the 2007 Technical Instructions for TB Screening and Treatment issued by the Center for Disease Control (CDC).

This newly instituted process could add substantial time to a family's trip if a child's skin test is not deemed "normal". At the least this could add days to the trip and

perhaps longer. Many Chinese children do test positive for TB because of immunizations they are given as babies although this does not mean they actually have TB. Joint Council on International Children's Services (JCICS) is in talks with the department of state to see how this can be resolved. We will update you when we have further information.

KAZAKHSTAN - The final families in the AFTH Kazakhstan program are expected to travel within the next few months. Three families traveled in the first six months of 2009 and there are 3 families waiting for invitations. Fewer children have been available for international adoption due to more in-country adoption so the invitations have been taking longer. This program of AFTH is now closed to new applicants.



Got E-mail? Stay Informed with AFTH!

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 as shown below. These listserves are for outgoing agency messages.

CHINA - AFTHChinaUpdates-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

RUSSIA - AFTHRussiaUpdates-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

UKRAINE - AFTHUkraineUpdates-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

NEW A new update listserv has been created for families in our domestic program. Families in-process can subscribe to the listserv by sending a message with the word "SUBSCRIBE" in the subject line to:

DOMESTIC - AFTHDomesticUpdates-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

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

DOMESTIC DISCUSSION GROUP- AFTHopenadoption-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

NEW **AFTH LOVE BUILDS FAMILIES BLOG** - <http://afth.wordpress.com>



Waiting ... for Hindsight

By Gretchen Boger-O'Bryan

It's been four years since I became a mother. Four years since I met my daughter on a sunny Tuesday afternoon, just 24 hours after learning my husband and I had been chosen to be her parents.

Perhaps because of Maeve's upcoming birthday or her giggly reminders that she's not my "baby" anymore, I found myself revisiting entries in a journal I started when Maeve arrived. Here are excerpts from a letter I wrote to myself:

I know that right now you are aching to be a mother and most times it feels like it will never happen, and that no one understands the hole in your heart.

I know that right now your daydreams and nightdreams are filled with hopes of sharing your life with a child. And with these dreams come snippets of happiness like nothing you have felt before. I know that when you wake up, the gleeful butterflies slow to uneasiness as you remember it is not yet your time. And even though you have never truly known the happiness in being a mom, you know it exists because in those dreamy moments it taunts you with its blissfulness.

Your journey has been long and as you wait for your phone to ring and your life to change with "Hello?" you are asking yourself about when and if and why not and how-come-it-hasn't-happened-yet. Please do not let these questions haunt you and eat at your soul.

You wake each morning and your first thought, even before you have silenced the alarm clock, is whether today will be The Day. I also know that, in the dark of night, when another day has passed without news, you

drift to sleep slowly and painfully, tears of helplessness wetting your pillow and stuffing your nose.

You mark each passing day in the calendar of your mind, making hopeful promises that motherhood might arrive by Memorial Day. Then Mother's Day. Then your birthday. As these dates come and go, you rest your hope for on July 4. I wish I could convince you to simply enjoy these days for what they are.

You have prepared a nursery with every detail a top priority. I know that walking by the room and its still rocking chair and empty crib do not hurt as much as if the room was still an office with papers, computer, files and desk. Instead, it is full of hope.

I also know that when you reach out to your social worker to ask whether your profile has been shown and to discuss the wait that seems unbearable, you will not like the answer. You will not like being told to be patient because the right baby will find you. These sentiments seem hollow, like a fortune cookie gone stale.

While your husband was adopted and this avenue has always been part of the family plan, I know that when crafting that master plan on the cocktail napkin in your mind, you didn't count on the waiting and powerlessness of it all. You question whether your heart will ever feel full from all the boo-boo kissing you are desperate to do. How do I know these things? I am you.

But I am you, two years wiser — and there are things you should know.

Gigi, you will become mamagigi and there is nothing else like it. Your smile will be wider, deeper, brighter. Your laughs will be heartier, louder, snortier. Your love will be boundless.

And that disappointing fortune about things working out? You would double, triple the wait without a second thought if it means the child that makes you a mom is this little girl Maeve. She is so wonderful in all her babyhood and sassiness and smartness and silliness and tenderness and juiciness that you will wait however long it is you must wait — for her.

And when she gently pats your arm tonight, then your

Mama Musings Continued...

chest, then your shoulder, and with each tender toddler touch she coos, “Mo-mmy” ... “Mo-mmy” ... “Mo-mmy,” as if she is just confirming who you are, you will smile in your soul and answer “Yes” ... “Yes” ... “Yes.”

Knowing, loving and mothering Maeve are gifts worth waiting for. Hang on. Dig deep. A courageous woman will choose you. And you will love her and need her to be part of your life forever.

Mamagigi-to-be, she is worth a million forms and fingerprints, hundreds of home visits and all the tears your eyes can silently shed in the dark of night. I promise.

And the daughter she will share with you? She is beyond all your wildest daydreams and nightdreams. I promise.

Gretchen Boger-O'Bryan was placed with her daughter in July 2005 through Adoptions From the Heart. Managing editor of a legal newspaper, she also is a freelance writer and has an adoption and first-time parenthood blog, musings:mamahood&more, at www.mamagigi.wordpress.com. Reach her at mamagigi@comcast.net.



Congratulations to Families Who Have Recently Adopted!

Sons from the USA

Jim & Trish
Timothy & Carla
Gary & Joanna
Thomas & MaryBeth
Mark & Cheryl
Andrew & Allison
Mark & Elizabeth
Alexander & Nela
Mark & Carol
Randall & Margaret
Dilip & Jill
Christopher & Bethany
Hillary
Mark & Michelle
Donald & Laura
Dennis & Suzanne
Erica
Matthew & Karen
Joseph & Katherine
Kathleen

Daughters from the USA

Stephen & Tracy
Thomas & Stacy
Valdo & Dinorah
Tommy & Eureka
Kevin & Danielle
Jesse & Christina
Stephen & Stephanie
Scott & Daren
Michael & David
William & Francesca
Dexter & Kathleen
Bret & Michelle
Aaron & Katherine
Scott & Robin
William & Deana
Kyle & Angie
Brian & Suzanne
William & Melissa
Daniel & Lisa

Daughters from China

Kenneth & Michele

Daughters from Russia

Steven & Cheri (*siblings*)
Daria

Sons from Russia

Karen
Dana
Steven & Cheri (*boy & girl*)

Daughters from India

Mujeeb & Naseem



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FREE INFORMATION MEETING ON Russia Adoption

July 28th at 7pm
in the Wynnewood Office

To Register, visit our online meeting calendar
or call 610-642-7200

PA GOVERNOR'S CONFERENCE FOR WOMEN

Sept. 17th at the PA Convention Center in Philadelphia
Visit: www.pagovernorsconferenceforwomen.org

THE AFRICAN AMERICAN FAMILY CONFERENCE

Oct. 3rd at the PA Convention Center in Philadelphia
Visit: <http://africanamericanfamilyconference.com>

LET'S TALK ADOPTION

hosted by Concerned Persons for Adoption
Nov. 3rd at Rutgers University
Visit: www.cpfan.org

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