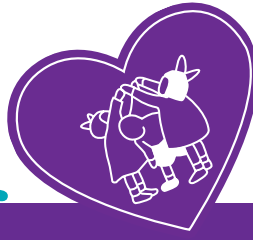


Adoption News



A Quarterly Newsletter from

Adoptions From The Heart

Summer 2011

Living on \$40 a Month

Cindy is one of the 127 women who worked with Adoptions From The Heart this past year to make an adoption plan for her infant.

Here is Cindy's story:



Cindy is a single woman whose work requires she be on her feet 8-10 hours a day. She worked up until the day she delivered. Because she doesn't get paid sick leave, Cindy needed to return to work just 4 days after delivering her baby. Within weeks of returning, her position was terminated.

Cindy immediately began seeking work. Times are tough and despite being willing to do any kind of work, Cindy was having great difficulty finding openings. After paying rent with unemployment compensation, Cindy was left with only \$40/month to cover transportation, food, and phone.

What would you do with \$40?

Cindy quickly fell behind on her rent. She needed to use a portion of her unemployment check to pay for bus fare and phone expenses she accrued during her urgent job hunt.

How long could you live on \$40/month?

Within about three months, Cindy was faced with eviction. She found a part-time job which was helping her to barely meet her expenses, but it was not nearly enough to pay back the due rent.

Donations from people like you helped Cindy!

AFTH was able to use donations from the Birthmother Fund to help Cindy pay her back rent and keep her from being evicted. Currently Cindy is working at her part-time job while continuing to look for a full-time position. She has also applied for a Pell Grant with hopes of returning to school in the fall to build upon her skills so she can obtain a more stable job to better provide for herself.

Cindy was ONLY ONE of the women needing help from the Birthmother Fund this year.

Shandi & Brian – homeless married couple, staying in tent on a plywood platform in park, living on food stamps, using local day center to shower and network for jobs, walking 3 miles each week to sell plasma for \$25 (*donated two bikes – couple able to travel for job opportunities, plasma donation, and food*)

continued on page 2...

In This Issue



- 3 What Influences a Birthparent's Profile Pick
- 3 AFTH Social Networking
- 4 Musings Column
- 5 Promise is a Promise
- 6 Demystifying Au Pair
- 6 New AFTH Families
- 7 NJ Adoptee Bill Vetoed
- 7 Book Reviews
- 8 AFTH Program Updates
- 9 Heartbeats Program Updates
- 9 United Way Donors
- 10 International Updates
- 10 Legislation & Studies

Insert:

[AFTH Summer Picnics Recap](#)
[NEW Splashtastic Event](#)
[Fall Ed Series](#)

Jan – diabetic, high risk pregnancy, kicked out of home at 7 months pregnant and living in shelter (*provided for housing expenses*)

Brittani – living in a domestic violence shelter, unpaid maternity leave from job and unable to pay move-in costs for transition housing, deadline for housing opportunity fast approaching (*covered move-in costs from shelter to apartment*)

Kara – suffering from post partum depression, boyfriend lost job, about to be evicted (*provided counseling for Kara and helped with utilities and back rent so they could keep their apartment*)

Crystal – 2 children at home, not able to work last month of pregnancy, unable to pay utilities (*provided food and covered costs of utilities for the month*)

In this economy, more often than not, the financial need of birthparents far exceeds the ability of adoptive parents to offer support and AFTH cannot provide for every birthmother in need without help from donors like you. The women needing financial help varies; the need for donations from adoption supporters like you is urgent and the need is now.

Please think about your ability to give and remember Cindy’s story of living on only \$40/month and how a little extra help from your donation can go a long way.



Based on the average needs AFTH sees...

A donation of \$100 can provide food to fill an empty fridge and clothing for a job interview.

A donation of \$150-\$200 can cover utilities and phone about to be shut off.

A donation of \$350+ can prevent a pregnant woman from being evicted from her apartment.

The generosity of donors is always appreciated no matter the size of the donation. The assistance provided is life changing to the women in need of a little extra help.

Donations Made TODAY can help a woman in need TOMORROW!

You heard the stories of the women who were in need of assistance this past year. Partner with AFTH and make a donation for women who will be in need this coming year.

How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world. ~ Anne Frank



Donations can be made online by visiting www.afth.org or by mailing the below form. All donations are tax deductible and all gifts will go directly to help women in need.

Also Accepting Online Donations: www.afth.org

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.



AFTH 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 and from the CT Department of Consumer Protections by calling (860) 713-6170.

What do Birthparents See as Important When Choosing Adoptive Parents?

Social workers are often asked “what is the most common reason a birthmother chooses a particular adoptive parent or couple?” The answer to that question is as wide-ranging as the women working with AFTH. It may be based on professions or hobbies, where they live, how they spoke about open adoption in their profile, the place they vacation each year, or simply because of a connection the birthparents felt to the family.

One birthmother told us she choose an adoptive parent because she loved the fact that he plays Scrabble every week with his neighbors. Another woman says she

chose an older couple because she hoped their life experiences gave them the wisdom she said she did not yet have with her youth. A third birthmother says she picked a same-sex couple because she knew their options for having a family were limited and once she met them she knew they would love her child just as much as she does.

The Early Growth and Development Study is a national ongoing study of birthparents and adoptive parents and provides insight into birthparent’s choices and the things that influences those decisions.

When choosing a particular family to adopt the child, it was “pretty important” or “very important” that:

- 94% There were educational opportunities for the child
- 93% They had a close marital relationship
- 91% They were financially secure
- 72% They had the type of family you would have liked when you were growing up
- 51% One of the adoptive parents would stay at home with the child
- 41% They had a nice house
- 36% There were children in the neighborhood
- 34% The adoptive family was unable to have biological children
- 33% They had the type of family you grew up in
- 32% They liked to do activities that you would have liked to do
- 27% They had the same religious background as you
- 19% They liked to do the same activities as you
- 17% They had physical characteristics that were similar to your own
- 14% They had a playground or swing set

When birthparents were deciding to make an adoption plan, it was “pretty important” or “very important” that:

- 95% Ability to see and select the adoptive parents
- 84% Able to talk with or email or meet potential adoptive parents before the birth
- 60% Access to post-adoption services like counseling, support groups, and updates from adoptive parents
- 47% Receiving Counseling
- 26% Able to talk with other people who had made an adoption plan
- 22% The agency or adoptive family paid for medical care

SOURCE: Early Growth and Development Study, grant R01 HD042608, NICHD and NIDA, NIH, U.S. PHS.

Visit AFTH at...



WordPress

<http://afth.wordpress.com>



Facebook

www.facebook.com/AdoptionsFromTheHeart



Twitter

http://twitter.com/@afth_org



On Missing Teeth, and So Much More

They're dropping like flies. Little white enamel-covered flies.



Tonight, when Maeve is sleeping, floating in slumberland, her body resting up for another day of intense summer play, the quarter-laden Tooth Fairy will make yet another appearance in our neighborhood, at the homes of two of Maeve's friends.

As for Maeve, she's not yet welcomed this mysterious visitor. There's been no flutter of wings that brush by her sleeping face or tiny bits of sparkle left behind on her pillow. And if her deeply rooted pearly whites are any indication, that visit isn't on the Tooth Fairy's itinerary anytime soon. (This, despite her pulling and pushing on each, sure that "this time" something's come loose.)

Tooth talk is fast and furious among the five- and six-year-old set, with gleeful announcements and excited displays of tooth-wiggling and look-at-my-tongue-poking-through-the-new-hole moments.

Inevitably these casual celebrations of coming of age turn to tallies – who's lost how many and when. Then, as if on cue, comes the natural jump to tales of genetics: When Sally's mom got – and lost – her first tooth, if Harry's dad was in preschool or first grade when he lost his and whether his teeth came in early or late, and what all of this means for their progeny.

At this point in the conversation, of course, there's not much I can contribute. Spurred by maternal instinct, my mind wanders to my own childhood and tooth timeline in an effort to uncover some sort of predictor for Maeve. But in a flash I am back, a bit embarrassed I'd sort of *forgotten* about my path to parenthood and the lack of DNA threads tying Maeve and I together. There simply is no charted course we can follow as she nears these biology-based milestones.

The truth is, of course, I never *really* forget. Not just because, as an adoptive mom and a wife to an adoptee, adoption has hugely impacted my life. No. I don't forget because each day I am presented with yet another opportunity to see my daughter learn, struggle, celebrate, fail and overcome – and I know her first mother is missing it all.

Sometimes I am there with tears of joy – seeing her dance her heart out in the year-end recital, graduate from kindergarten, earn her next karate belt with ease, or finally conquer the sight word that had eluded her. When Maeve left her training wheels in the dust, her eyes lit and my heart swelled.

Other times, I shed tears of frustration – a friend's rejection that left her broken-hearted and confused, her recent wrestle with particularly intense stuttering (the medical forms at the speech pathologist's office asking if there was a genetic predisposition), or a temper tantrum or bad choice that comes seemingly out of nowhere and with full force.

Still, whether celebrating or struggling, we are together and this could make it possible to "forget," to consider myself and my carefully crafted family a *whole* unto itself – daily reminders like developmental milestones and medical history forms be damned.

But the fact is, we are not whole. Maeve's own story is missing key players. And because of that, our family's cast of characters is not quite complete.

At this time, contact with Maeve's first mom B. is entirely in her control – her stepping back some time ago means we can only wait, our arms open and our hearts committed, for her to be ready. Honestly, it's not an easy place to be.

No matter how much I love Maeve, or how "perfectly" I try to love her, celebrate her and support her, I will never be her first mother, the woman who made her and brought her into this world. The world in which she now celebrates, struggles and finds herself landing in all the confusing places inbetween.

And therein lies a loss that cannot be swept under the carpet or placed neatly into a box to rest on a forgotten shelf. As Maeve's mom — but not her first mom — it's a struggle: How can I make her feel whole when she has such a fundamental loss? I am all too aware that my very presence in her life is because someone else is absent.

My mama role means ensuring my child is healthy, happy, generous and kind; that she is whole. The work to do that, of course, is monumental. It can be exhilarating and uplifting, it can be exhausting. Depends on the day.

As we merged onto the highway after leaving this year's adoption picnic, Maeve shared an observation from her perch in the backseat: "Hey, Mom? Dad? I didn't see B. there."

No, Maeve, you didn't.

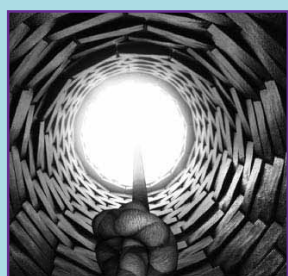
But oh how we wish you did. She could try to wiggle a tooth loose for you and share with you her own tooth timeline. She could hug you hard when you fall, try to

make sense of confusion, twirl your curls around her own finger and clap as loudly as we do when you soar. We could all work on being whole together, in our own version of a family that makes sense for everyone.

And it would be monumental. And exhilarating. And uplifting. And exhausting.

But most of all, it would be amazing.

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



A Promise is a Promise

Imagine falling into a well and the only way out is to grab onto a rope offered by a caring and supportive adult. This adult offers you safety and security and you are

drawn towards their kindness. You have faith they will protect you and you trust them to do as they promise so you grab the rope and begin to climb to safety. You feel elated and cannot believe that another human could be so respectful and take responsibility for your well-being

Suddenly, as you are half way up the rope, the adult begins to let go and you are suspended in mid-air trying to determine what happened. You are flooded with a sense of defeat, betrayal, and loss. Immediately you think perhaps the helper might be in danger and you wonder if they are alright. Then you wonder if you did something wrong to cause the problem. You could be hanging there suspended for a few seconds, a minute, an hour, a day, or weeks....

Now put yourself in the place of a birth parent who is promised future pictures, letters, and visits when an adoption plan is made. As a person in crisis, you want what is best for your child and you make the ultimate sacrifice to be sure your child is safe and protected. You feel very pleased there is an agency like Adoptions From the Heart with a philosophy that is respectful and caring of your needs both now and in the future. You are reassured by the caring and supportive staff at the agency that a promise is a promise and you are so glad

pregnant women are no longer treated as they were in earlier times. It is great to be treated with dignity and respect....but what if you were promised pictures, a letter, or a visit and the adoptive family did not respond?

In the past, there was no legal recourse for birth parents because in PA a promise made for future contact was just that, a promise. With the implementation of PA Adoption Act 101 on April 27, 2011, an agreement made by birth and adoptive families is now legally binding when filed with and approved by the Court if all parties so choose. With a court approved contract, all parties to the adoption show their good faith that they intend to remain dedicated to their promise to uphold the mutually agreeable, future contact agreement.

On the very first day this law took effect, Adoptions From the Heart had the first birth and adoptive family submit their future contact agreement at the Lancaster County Court House before Judge Hoberg. Since that time, all parties have been very satisfied with the outcome. They had planned to exchange pictures and letters and visit on a mutually agreed upon date, time, and location. They expressed their satisfaction with the new law and there is a mutual respect between the birth and the adoptive family. Now, no one feels like they are hanging from that rope in the middle of a well!

Recently, the Central Pa Office held a training to answer questions about the new law. If you have any further questions about how this could affect you, please do not hesitate to call your social worker for more details.

Demystifying Au Pair Childcare

Finding and keeping good childcare can be a seemingly endless struggle. Selecting childcare is a very personal matter, one that many parents spend hours on, researching available options and seeking recommendations from family and friends. Many people don't really understand the au pair program and don't know that an au pair can be a very affordable, quality childcare option. If you are open to a live-in situation, an au pair might just be what you've been searching for. "I did the math (in-home care for less than \$8 per hour) and realized that I would be saving \$19,000 annually by trading in my nanny for an au pair" said Melisa Barlow, a host mom on Cultural Care Au Pair's program. "The savings motivated me to seriously consider a live-in when I hadn't before." Melisa's family has had four au pairs and was initially attracted to the program because of the affordability, but continues because of the greater flexibility and the meaning that cultural exchange has brought to her family.

What is an au pair? The definition of an au pair is "on par" or equal, based on the idea that an au pair becomes like a member of the family. Au pairs are young adults ranging in age from 18-26 and that arrive in the United States on a J-1 Visitor Exchange Visa. They typically come for one year, but can extend their stay to two years. Au pairs hope to acquire a better understanding of the cultural aspects of American life, while living with an American family and caring for their children.

There are a lot of misconceptions associated with the au pair program:

Au pairs are for the rich and famous

Au pairs don't want to work nights/weekends

Au pairs are women

Once an au pair arrives I am all alone in making it work.

They let anyone on the Au Pair Program

Not having a native speaker will affect my child's language development

Au Pairs act only as a babysitter

When considering the best child care option for your family, you need to ask yourself some questions...

See facts for the above myths, list of questions you should ask yourself, and for a money saving special offer for AFTH families...see the article in its entirety at www.afth.org in the Newsletter Section (under News & Events).



Congratulations to Families Who Have Recently Adopted!

Sons from the USA

Howard & Lisa
Christopher & Heather
Brian & Kevin
Craig & Kristina
Thomas & Stacy
Edward & Cheryl
Anthony & Jodi
Brian & Angela
Sal & Anne
Kevin & Carla
Larry & Tara
David & Jodi
William & Michelle
Rocco & Rebecca
Jonathan & Melisa
Curtis & Amy
David & Jessica
Michael & Carrie
Steven & Nicole
James & Cecilia
Loren
Ryan & Michelle
Carlos & Joseph
Christopher & Maria

Daughters from the USA

Clayton & Jennifer Elizabeth
Jeffrey & Linda
Vincent & Michael
Terry & Felicia
Kathleen
Sara
Parvies & Christopher
William & Monique
Calvin & Margaret
Jason & Amy
David & Jennifer
Stephen & Elizabeth
Nathan & Erin
Timothy & David
Jason & Jamie

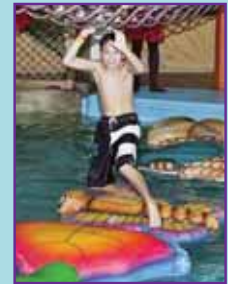




Adoptions From The Heart®

Invites you to join us this fall for a ...

Splashtastic Good Time!



58,000 Sq. Ft of Splashtastic Fun Includes:

- **Mount Kilimanjaro** – Family Raft Ride
- **Snake Eyes** – Famous Tube Slides
- **Samazon Adventure** – World's Tallest Ropes Course!
- **Congo Bongo Adventure River** – Lazy River
- **Tim-Buk-Tu** – Water Tree Fort that's buckets of fun!
- **Lizard Lagoon** – Great for Toddlers
- **Sam's Slam dunker** – Play hoops in the pool!
- **Crocodile Flats** – Cargo Obstacle Course
- **Flowrider** – Area's ONLY Indoor Surfing Simulator!
- **3,000Sq. Ft. Modern Arcade**
- **Full-service Cafe** (no outside food allowed)

Enjoy summer fun in October!

A Day of Fun for the whole family

Sahara Sams Oasis in West Berlin, NJ is New Jersey's Largest Indoor Water Park and the home of AFTH's newest Family Event.

October 16th beginning at 11am (*must arrive before 2pm*)

Children Under 2 - Free

\$25.00/person (reduced rate)

\$45/person (includes an AFTH towel)

**Bring Towels (or purchase an AFTH one) & Change of Clothes and
BE READY FOR SOME FUN!**



REGISTRATION DEADLINE: October 1, 2011

Visit www.afth.org and click on the News & Events to Register

Picnics Celebrating Adoption

Agency's 23rd Summer Picnic

AFTH held its 23rd annual picnic at the Fort Washington State Park, in Pennsylvania on Sunday June 5, 2011. We were fortunate enough that the rain held-off and the temperature was perfect. Over 1000 adoptive parents, grandparents, birth parents and children from all over gathered to celebrate adoption.

There were many new families in attendance this year, with babies everywhere. It is always great to see new families who are just starting the adoption process and families who just received placements as well as families who have been coming for years - one family celebrated their 19th year with the agency!

Families enjoyed the infectious reggae music by the Raucous Brothers, stellar face painting, Jack and Jill ice cream, wonderful crafts donated by Scholastic Inc. and lots of fun with Tom's Music.

Five lucky families won raffles this year including our three children's raffle baskets. An adoptive couple with their newly placed twins won a much needed week-long vacation! And their children's birthmother won the 50/50 cash prize...talk about lucky!

We would like to thank all of our families who came out to celebrate adoption with us for making this event wonderful. We hope to see you again next year!

A special thank you to our major event sponsors:

WEGMANS, WHOLE FOODS MARKET, & SCHOLASTIC, INC.

and to all the companies that made donations:

Comcast, SoJo Radio, Wawa, Giant, Genaurdi's, BJ's,

Pepperidge Farm, Herr's, Hershey's, Rita Roitman, and

Yellow Pages and Internet Marketing Corp. (Michael Offord)

Virginia Annual Summer Picnic

Despite the intense heat, 70 people came for a day of fun in celebration of adoption. We had 2 international families and 8 domestic families - 4 of them had birthparent reunions. We were also very excited to have 10 waiting families join in the fun. All the children had a blast at the Fun Forest and the parents did too. We hope to see even more new families next year!



Connecticut's Annual Adoption Picnic

Over 175 people joined our Connecticut staff on June 26th at the Quassy Amusement Park for a day of family fun celebrating adoption. We were excited to have domestic families reuniting with their children's birthparents at the picnic. The weather was perfect and everyone had lots of fun. The food was great and the water park was a blast for children of all ages. We hope to see you again next year.

Adoption Education

Fall 2011 Series



Adoptions From The Heart®

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

AFTH offers an Education Series designed to support families with opportunities to learn about pre and post adoption related topics. AFTH's classes are led by professionals 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. So regardless of what stage of the adoption process families are in, whether it's pre or post placement, AFTH's goal is to strengthen families by empowerment through knowledge.

♥ Wynnewood, PA

Infant Care Class

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 5, 2011

7-8:30 PM

\$10/person or \$15/couple

Call (610) 642-7200 with questions.

♥ Harrisburg, PA

Caring for Infants and Older Babies - What New Adoptive Parents Need to Know

Join April Stambaugh, a certified childbirth educator, as she teaches the basics of infant and childcare in a comfortable setting with other adoptive and pre-adoptive parents. This class includes newborn care, feeding and sleeping adjustment to parenthood and much more. Come with any questions you may have.

Thursday, October 13, 2011

7-9 PM

\$20/person or \$35/couple

Call (717) 399-7766 with questions.

♥ Richmond, VA

Building Relationships with Birthparents

A panel of adoptive parents and birthparents will discuss their unique situations regarding openness along with suggestions on how to build a healthy and rewarding relationship for all members of the adoption triad.

Saturday, October 22, 2011

Noon-1:30

\$10/person or \$15/couple

Call (757) 361-0008 with questions.

♥ Wayne, NJ

Open Adoption Q & A

Is open adoption right for you? Come talk with AFTH staff and adoptive parents about the benefits of open adoption. Hear from a panel of adoptive parents with different levels of open adoption experiences.

Thursday, October 13, 2011

6:30-8:30 PM

\$10/person or \$15/couple

Call (856) 665-5655 with questions.

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>Infant Care Class</u> Wynnewood, PA
		<u>Building Relationships with Birthparents</u> Richmond, VA
♥		<u>Caring for Infants & Older Babies</u> Harrisburg, PA
		<u>Open Adoption Q & A</u> Wayne, NJ
		<u>Hair & Skin Care Techniques for Families Adopting Transracially</u> Lancaster, PA
♥		<u>Ethnic Hair Care Demonstration</u> Cromwell, CT
		<u>Hair & Skin Care Techniques for Families Adopting Transracially</u> Greensburg, PA

Total Amount Enclosed: _____

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

Phone: () _____ - _____

Email: _____

For More Information...

610-642-7200 or contact your local AFTH office

♥ Lancaster, PA

Hair & Skin Care Techniques for Families Adopting Transracially

It is time to take the mystery and frustration out of caring for your child's hair. We want to aid parents who have or will adopt transracially in caring for their children's unique hair and skin. A hands-on demonstration will be provided of techniques to use for your children. Various product, books, and hand-outs will be available. Please join us for an evening of fun and learning.

Tuesday, November 15, 2011

6:30-8:30 PM

\$10/person or \$15/couple

Call (717) 399-7766 with questions.

♥ Cromwell, CT

Ethnic Hair Care Demonstrations

Join us and other adoptive parents for a hand-on learning experience with demonstrations of caring for and styling ethnic hair. Sample products will be available. Bringing children is optional.

Monday, September 19, 2011

6:30-8 PM

\$25/ family

Call (860) 657-2626 with questions.

♥ Greensburg, PA

Hair & Skin Care Techniques for Families Adopting Transracially

Did you know 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 mom of 11, will demonstrate skin and hair care techniques (including various ways of braiding hair) and provide education on specific products and ways to take care of your African-American child's hair and skin.

Saturday, October 8, 2011

10am-Noon

\$10/person or \$15/couple

Call (724) 853-6533 with questions.



NJ Adoptee Birth Certificate Bill Vetoed

For years and years, many organizations in NJ have been pushing for a bill to allow adult adoptees to obtain their original birth certificates. The House and Senate in NJ finally agreed with adoptees by passing bill S-799 but Governor Christie refused to sign the bill in its current form. Christie stated that “safeguards are needed to best balance the needs of adoptee seeking the identity of their biological parents with the expectations of birth parents who may wish for their identifies to remain private.” How can it be balanced when adoptees in NJ have no rights or ability to obtain their original birth certificates and haven’t for the past 70 years? Currently, it takes a court order to access this basic familial information.

In this age of Open Adoption, most members of the adoption triad are agreeing to exchange confidential information and this has not stopped pregnant women from choosing adoption. To the contrary, many studies have shown open adoption actually gives birthmothers more peace in their decision. For those birthparents who do not want their names accessed, S-799 has a clause permitting birthparents to request that the Registrar of Vital Records redact their names from the birth certificate. In states where similar legislation has been enacted, less than 1% of birth parents have actually taken this route. And despite birthparent organizations agreeing with the adoptee groups who say that birthparents were never promised anonymity, Christie vetoed the bill and is said to instead favor another bill pushed by the Catholic Church which will require adoptees to pay an intermediary to try to contact the birthparents before allowing access to the original birth certificates. N.J. Catholic Social Services has done fewer and fewer adoptions each year and is going out of the adoption business entirely. Many of the adoptions that would be affected by this bill were done privately and attorneys certainly did not make a promise of anonymity.

This bill’s veto was a grave injustice to adoptees especially when many states are now passing legislation to sanction agreements between adoptive and birth parents to remain in contact. Governor Christie, how about passing a bill that secures adoptees’ rights too?

Book Reviews

Snowflakes: A Flurry of Adoption Stories by *Theresa Kellher* - This collection of stories is great for anyone who has a connection with adoption. It gives insights from the perspective of children and teens as well as other family members. This book allows you a peek into life before, during and after adoption: the happy, the sad, the challenging, and the delightful. It's unique because it tells about adoption from the viewpoint of children and teens who have been adopted. **AFTH Price - \$21**

The Brotherhood of Joseph: A Father’s Memoir of Infertility and Adoption in the 21st Century by *Brooks Hanson* - This book offers men a chance to be heard and women the rare opportunity to view the struggle with infertility from the male perspective. It addresses the anger, frustrations,

heartbreak and sense of helplessness involved in the struggle with infertility. **AFTH Price - \$26 Hardcover**

What I Want My Adopted Child to Know: An Adoptive Parent’s Perspective by *Sally Bacchetta* - This book gives a tender, revealing look at adoption from the parent perspective, covering the joys and challenges that are unique to adoptive parenting. Bacchetta reminds her children “You’re not unique because you’re adopted. You’re unique because you’re you!” She also acknowledges that adoption has a life-changing impact on everyone involved - the child, birth parents, adoptive parents, and the extended family on both sides. It is rare to find a book that takes the specific and applies it to the general in such a way. A must read for adoptive parents and those considering adoption. **AFTH Price - \$13**

All reviewed books are available at www.afth.org or by calling (610) 642-7200.

AFTH Program Updates



DOMESTIC PROGRAMS - We hope your family was able to attend one of our agencies annual picnics! The agency picnics are always a wonderful time for families to come together and celebrate adoption. It is always great to see new families who are just starting the adoption process, families who just received placements 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 another year and making these events so special. We hope to see you again next year!

Don't forget the AFTH Pittsburgh Office will be hosting their 11th Annual Picnic on Friday, August 5 at Idlewild and Soak Zone! Deadline for registration is July 22nd. *See the registration form in newsletter insert.*

Our next big agency event will be held at Sahara Sams Oasis in West Berlin, NJ on October 16th. Beginning at 11am, come join AFTH for a Splashtastic Good Time! Registration deadline is October 1. For more information *see newsletter insert* or visit www.aftth.org and click on the News & Events section to register.

Twice a year, AFTH hosts education classes specifically designed for the needs of adoptive families. Fall classes include: Building Relationships with Birthparents, Infant and Older Baby Care, Open Adoption Q & A, and several offices are holding Hair and Skin Care Demonstrations for Transracial Families. *See the newsletter insert for class details and locations.*

An important announcement to all of our families residing in Pennsylvania or families who have been placed and are using PA law...

In the past, voluntary future contact agreements made between adoptive and birthparent in PA were based on the honor system and were not legally binding, until now. On October 27, 2010, Pennsylvania Governor Edward Rendell signed Senate Bill 1360 Post-Adoption Contact Agreements into law. The new law, which went into effect on April 27, 2011, now makes the voluntary contact agreements for both public and private adoptions official and legally binding when filed with and approved by court. Families should have received a

notification letter from their AFTH social worker explaining the new ACT 101 law. Please sign and return these letters to your local office as these signed letters are now required by our state licensing. If you have any questions or concerns regarding the ACT 101 law, please contact your social worker who would be happy to review the details. Due to this new law, AFTH has updated the profile key for waiting families to include the question "how many legally enforceable visits families are willing to have with the birth parent they are matched with". All waiting families are asked to fill out a new profile key and return it to their AFTH office as soon as possible. This ensures that a family is being shown for only the appropriate situations

AFTH is excited to announce that this fiscal year has been another success! We have placed 161 children in loving homes and we congratulate all the families and thank them for opening up their hearts to adoption!

To all of our placed families: we continue to see an increase in the need for financial assistance to aid the pregnant women we are counseling. This year AFTH reaches out to placed families, friends, and adoption supporters to consider offering what you can as a donation to our Birthmother Fund. 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. All donations, no matter what amount, are graciously accepted and are tax deductible. To see how donations made to the Birthmother Fund have directly helped women in need over this past fiscal year, *see "Living on \$40 a Month" beginning on the front page.*

AFTH Waiting Family Support Groups

AFTH understands the waiting process can be hard for families and so AFTH local offices host support groups for waiting families to come together in support. Support groups are led by AFTH staff and will cover a variety of topics designed for waiting families. Visit our events calendar at www.aftth.org for upcoming support group details.



HEARTBEATS - Three more families applied to the *India Surrogacy Program* this past month. We have four families actively pursuing pregnancy and we are happy to report that one couple has just learned that their surrogate is pregnant. This is exciting news and we will keep you informed of their progress. All of our surrogacy couples have chosen to use the services of Indian egg donors connected to our clinic affiliation however there are many other different options open to couples and individuals interested in the program. The next free online webinar will be September 20th at 7pm. Anyone interested in learning more about this program call Roberta Evantash at 610-642-7200 visit register for the webinar at www.afth.org.

The *Embryo Education Program* is new and improved! Heartbeats is now offering an Embryo Education Series. Our four-part education series is designed for those considering embryo placement as well as those already in programs. Since embryo placement is a relatively new concept, there are many questions families, friends and children born from embryo placement will have and our webinar series is designed to assist families with answers to those questions. The Heartbeats Embryo Education Series is one of the only detailed education courses available that is designed specifically for the needs of families pursuing embryo placement and includes vital education covering the issues and concerns for after a child is born as well as provides resources to continue to use as the child grows up.

INTRO TO EMBRYO PLACEMENT - \$35

Part I: Basic Facts about Embryo Placement

Embryos Available for Placement
Legal Issues regarding Embryo Placement
Embryo Terminology & Pregnancy Results
Date: Wednesday, September 14 from 7-8pm

THREE COURSE SERIES (PART II, III, IV): - \$105

Part II: Why Choose Embryo Placement

Advantages and Disadvantages of Embryo Placement
Family and Community Support
Chances of Success
Date: Tuesday, September 27 from 7-8:30pm

Part III: Importance of Talking with your Child born through Embryo Placement

Genetic Siblings
Open vs. Closed relationships with Donor Families
Worries for the Recipient Family
Date: Wednesday, October 12 from 7-8:30pm

Part IV: How Do I tell my Child about Embryo Placement?

Talking and Telling about Donor Conception
Guide for Parents with children aged 0-17 and over
Date: Tuesday, October 25 from 7-8:30pm

Webinars are held quarterly and additional reading material and resources will be provided for the three course series. Visit the online calendar of events at www.afth.org for details and to register.

United Way Donor Program

AFTH is listed as a donor option and is eligible to receive contributions through the United Way Donor Program. Your United Way contribution to AFTH will help us to continue our service to adoptive families and birthparents.

We greatly appreciate your support! Every gift helps women, children, and families.

How to Make a Contribution to AFTH Through the United Way Donor Option Plan:

- 1) Request a Donor Option Card from your company's United Way representative.
- 2) The agency's donor number is different in each area. The AFTH donor number for your area can be found in your United Way booklet (*you can do this even if it is not listed in your particular United Way booklet*)

PRINT: ADOPTIONS FROM THE HEART and the local branch office's address (see back page of newsletter)

- 3) Enter the amount of your pledge and your payment method (e.g. check, payroll deduction, etc.)
- 4) Complete the form & return it to your United Way representative.



International Adoption News

CHINA

Four AFTH families arrived home in April with their children from China! As is the present case for all families seeking to adopt children (without identified special needs) from China, these families were in process for more than 5 years by the time they brought their daughters home. AFTH extends its congratulations, and is now providing Post-Adoption services for them. Five additional AFTH families received and accepted referrals from China in June of 2011. These families all look forward with great anticipation to traveling to China to adopt their daughters.

The China Centre for Children's Welfare and Adoption (CCCWA), formerly known as the China Centre for Adoption Affairs (CCAA), has published updated guidelines on Home Study reporting and Post-Placement tracking. For Home Studies, the CCCWA has added requirements regarding reference letters, adoption training, and evaluation of prospective adoptive families. These requirements will apply to new adoption applications that arrive (ie. are "Logged-In") in China after October 1, 2011. Regarding Post-Placement reporting, the CCCWA will be requiring supporting documentation regarding children's health and education, as well as additional photographs of children. Further, in addition to the two Post-Placement Reports that had formerly been required for each case at 6 and 12 months following the adoption of a child, China will now be requiring a total of six Post-Placement visits, scheduled at 1, 6, 12, 24, 36, and 60 months following children's adoptions. These new Post-Placement guidelines will apply to families that receive Travel Authorization (to go to China to adopt their children) after August 1, 2011. Of note for many AFTH families, these new CCCWA guidelines do not apply to adoptions that have already been completed.

ETHIOPIA

As had been feared, the Ethiopian Ministry of Women's, Children's, and Youth Affairs (MOWCYA) has drastically reduced its pace of processing of inter-country adoptions to all countries around the world. This reduction may be by as much as 90% by comparison to the number of such cases processed last

year. In 2010, more than 2,500 Ethiopian children were adopted by American families. With this figure expected to plummet in 2011, many of the more than 3,000 "waiting" American families that have filed petitions to adopt from Ethiopia with the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services seem likely to face protracted adoption processes.

KYRGYZSTAN

Processing of inter-country adoptions from Kyrgyzstan was halted in October of 2008, by the Kyrgyz government due to concerns regarding its adoption system. On May 6, 2011, President Otunbaeva signed into law an amendment to the Family Code to enable the government to establish new adoption regulations, and tasked the government to bring legislation into conformity with this new law within 3 months. This is hopeful news, although it remains uncertain as to when new adoptions from Kyrgyzstan may proceed.

RUSSIA

Government officials from the U.S. and Russia continue to work toward a bilateral agreement between the two countries on cooperation in the field of inter-country adoption. It had been expected that U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton would go to Moscow to sign such a treaty in May. However, as is sometimes the case with like things, this signing was postponed, possibly to July. The specifics of any new requirements under a bilateral agreement are not yet confirmed. In the meantime, adoptions between Russia and the U.S. continue to be completed under existing guidelines.

SOUTH KOREA

South Korea's Ministry of Justice set rules making it possible for adults who were adopted from South Korea to obtain dual citizenship in South Korea and the country in which they grew up. This change came from an amendment to the law on citizenship; in mid-April, 19 adoptees gained dual citizenship. Dual citizenship is something that has long been offered to international adoptees by foreign countries such as Russia and Ukraine, but not by many other countries.

UKRAINE

On June 8, 2011, the President of Ukraine signed a new

International Adoption News Cont'd

law regarding adoption. Per this law, which goes into effect on July 11, 2011, authority to process adoptions will shift from the Ukrainian State Department on Adoptions (SDA) to the Ukrainian Ministry of Social Policy. To allow time for transitioning of responsibilities, Ukraine has announced that, as of July 11, there will likely be a temporary suspension of adoption processing. The duration of such a suspension is presently unknown.

When adoptions resume under the auspice of the Ministry of Social Policy, only Ukrainian children age 5 and older will be eligible for inter-country adoption. Additionally, orphaned children will need to be eligible for at least one year for adoption within Ukraine, prior to such children becoming available for international adoption.

Exceptions to this can include:

- An adoptive parent is a child's relative
- A family adopts a sibling group, in which at least 1 of the children meets the age and eligibility requirements
- A family adopts siblings of previously adopted children
- A child suffers from one of the diseases from the "special" list of the Ministry of Health (The current list

includes children with Down syndrome, HIV, and a few other serious health conditions. It is possible that it will be amended to include more types of special needs.)

VIETNAM

Since 2008, it has not been possible for American citizens to apply to adopt orphans from Vietnam. On May 8, 2011, Vietnam's new adoption law went into effect. Vietnam continues in its efforts to implement the new law, toward its goal of ratification of the Hague Convention. The U.S. Department of State (USDOS) projects that the Convention could enter into force in Vietnam as early as November of 2011. Once this should occur, USDOS would then evaluate whether it feels the procedures leading to the adoption of a child from Vietnam conform to the standards of the Convention, and of the U.S. Intercountry Adoption Act. While Vietnam's recent steps are welcomed by USDOS, adoptions between Vietnam and the U.S. remain closed at this time, and it remains uncertain as to when they may resume.

Any questions regarding AFTH's international adoption services can be directed to Sam Wojnilower at SamW@afth.org or by phoning AFTH's Main Office at 610-642-7200.



Recent Legislation & Studies



NEW JERSEY- Adoptee rights advocates condemned Gov. Chris Christie's conditional veto of a bill that would have allowed adult adoptees access to their original birth certificates. Christie made several recommendations for new legislation which he said would "best balance the needs of adoptees seeking the identity of their biological parents with the expectations of birth parents who may wish for their identities to remain private." *See page 7 for more details.*

RHODE ISLAND- On June 20th, the Rhode Island House unanimously approved a bill (S 0478 Sub A) allowing adult adoptees to obtain copies of their original birth records, with some restrictions introduced by the Senate before its approval. The final measure has been sent to Governor Lincoln Chafee, who has six days to veto the legislation, sign it, or allow it to become law without his signature.

OPENNESS PROMOTES FAMILY CONVERSATION AND ADOPTION IDENTITY - A longitudinal study of openness in 184 families involving in-depth interviews and questionnaires – when adopted youth were adolescents and again as young adults - found that contact with birth relatives assisted adopted persons in their development of a coherent adoptive identity, in part because this contact promoted more frequent adoption-related conversation within the adoptive family.



Adoptions From The Heart®

30-31 Hampstead Circle
Wynnewood, PA 19096

NON-PROFIT
ORG
US POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT # 36
WAYNE, PA



or current resident

Adoption News is a publication of Adoptions From The Heart, a private, non-profit, licensed agency.

Upcoming Conferences

Come and visit the AFTH booth at the following events. For more details on these events, visit our online calendar of events at www.afth.org.

July 20-25th

“Assuring a Legacy” - 19th Annual PA Permanency Conference at the Lancaster Host Resort and Conference Center in Lancaster, PA

October 1st

CPFA’s 30th Annual “Let’s Talk Adoption” Conference hosted at Rutgers University

November 20th

31st Annual Adoption Conference hosted by APC at St. Francis College in Brooklyn, NY

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

VISIT OUR WEBSITE:

www.afth.org

Is Our Mailing List Current?

Do you wish to be removed from future mailings? Are you receiving more than one copy? Are your name and address incorrect? Please let us know by e-mailing adoption@afth.org.