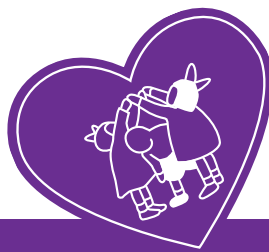


# Adoption News



A Quarterly Newsletter from

Adoptions From The Heart

Summer 2012

## See How YOU Change Lives Through the Birthmother Fund

AFTH continues to be a leader in domestic adoption by helping pregnant women who are considering adoption. Since June of 2011, over 153 women worked with AFTH to make an adoption plan for their babies. These women, in addition to the many who have previously worked with AFTH, have unique stories and face unique challenges. Sometimes the need is as simple as an ear to listen or a shoulder to lean on but sometimes their circumstances lead to a greater need. No woman's struggle is more or less important and all needs, big or small, deserve help and support.

Each voice is so very important to hear. Below are just some of the voices bringing to light the personal struggles of only a few of those whom AFTH has worked with since July. Those in need are not demanding financial help but are silently trying to find a way out. A little financial relief from difficult circumstances can make a huge difference and AFTH has seen it propel women into a better place with ongoing stability. The silent struggles these women are facing are given a voice by the social workers who are watching over them in support.

**No need to wonder how your donations are helping ...  
Listen to their stories and see how donors like YOU change  
lives through the AFTH Birthmother Fund.**

### **Escaping Abuse:**



**The AFTH Birthmother Fund literally saved my life and the lives of my children age 2 and 4.** I was living with my abusive, drug addict husband who would disappear for weeks at a time without paying our bills. **I knew I needed out!** The women's crisis center was too far to walk with my little ones and my car needed repairs which my husband refused to make to keep me home. AFTH hired a mechanic to do the repairs. I escaped to the shelter and then got permanent housing, however I didn't have grocery money for the first month on my own. AFTH provided groceries and gave me gift cards for Christmas to buy my children clothes and a few toys. Thank you to those who gave to the fund because **without the help I don't know where I would be.** My goal is to gain more stability so I can return the favor to AFTH and help another woman in need.

*Tracey from Pittsburgh*

*Cont'd on page 2...*

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Fall Ed Series Classes

## OFFICE LOCATIONS

**ALLENTOWN OFFICE**  
2212 Union Blvd  
Allentown, PA 18109  
610.432.2384

**CENTRAL PA OFFICE**  
1525 Oregon Pike, Suite 402  
Lancaster, PA 17601  
717.399.7766

**CONNECTICUT OFFICE**  
2389 Main Street  
Glastonbury, CT 06033  
860.657.2626

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

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

**NEW YORK**  
1.800-355-5500

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

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

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

**TOLL FREE NUMBER**  
**1.800.355.5500**

**VISIT OUR WEBSITE:**  
**[www.afth.org](http://www.afth.org)**

### Kicked Out Because of Choosing Adoption:



Making an adoption plan was hard to do but being kicked out by my Mom because of doing it was devastating. My children and I were left without a place to live. Public housing had a waiting list and I didn't know where to go. AFTH paid a security deposit for alternative housing until I could get into public housing. It is one thing for me to have to live on the streets after being kicked out but my children – no way! **Because of AFTH's help, my children didn't have to live on the streets until we found a new place to live.** Toni from Central PA

### Living on \$0 Income Until Cleared By Doctor to Return to Work:

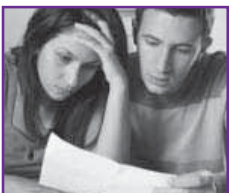


Choosing adoption for my baby was the right thing. I work full time but **at minimum wage, I was just making ends meet with my two other children. My C-section left me unable to work for 8 weeks.** Without a paycheck, I couldn't pay rent and was getting evicted. AFTH covered 2 months of rent so I could keep my apartment. I'm back to work now but **I can't imagine having to take my children to a shelter because I couldn't go back to work right away after having a baby.** Lori from Western PA

### Unable to Provide for More than the Minimum:

I didn't know what I was going to do because my kid's **school has a dress code and they outgrew last year's clothes and I didn't have any extra money.** AFTH gave me a Target gift card so I could purchase clothes for them to wear to school. Kelsey from Delaware

### Job Loss Changes Stability:



We placed our newborn but were also parenting a son together. **I lost my job and then our house** and we moved in with my parents. Our car needed an inspection and with no way to get to work **my girlfriend was about to lose her job.** AFTH saved her job by paying for the inspection and gave us Walmart gift cards to help buy food. **AFTH got us through one of the most difficult times in our lives.** Alex, birthfather from Harrisburg

### YOUR donation WILL help change someone's life.



Donations to the AFTH Birthmother Fund can be made online at [www.afth.org](http://www.afth.org) or by mailing in the form on page 3. All donations are tax deductible.

Sincerely,

*Maxine Chalker*

Maxine Chalker  
Founder & Executive Director

# History of the United Way Donor Program



In 2012, United Way is proud to celebrate its 125th anniversary. It all began in 1887, when a Denver woman, a priest, two ministers and a rabbi recognized the need for cooperative action to address their city's welfare problems. They created an organization to serve as an agent to collect funds for local charities, as well as to coordinate relief services, counsel and refer clients to cooperating agencies, and make emergency assistance grants in cases

which could not be referred. The movement which spread throughout the country became the United Way. More than 125 years later, United Way is still focused on mobilizing the caring power of communities and making a difference in people's lives.

Thousands of companies participate in the United Way workplace campaign each year. The purpose of the workplace campaign is to give organizations and their employees the opportunity to learn about their community's needs and give them a convenient opportunity to get involved. The United Way workplace campaign provides an easy way for employees to make contributions to worthwhile organizations in their area.

AFTH is listed as a donor option and is eligible to receive contributions through the United Way Donor Program. Your United Way contribution to Adoptions From The Heart will help us to continue our dedicated service to adoptive parents, pregnant women, and children.

## 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 page 2 for addresses)

- 3) Enter the amount of your pledge and your payment method (e.g. check, payroll deduction, etc.)

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

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

Also Accepting  
 Online Donations:  
[www.afth.org](http://www.afth.org)

**How would you like your donation to be used?**

\_\_\_ Use my gift to help birth mothers in the U.S.    \_\_\_ Use my gift where it's needed most.


☐ \$50   
 ☐ \$100   
 ☐ \$250   
 ☐ \$500   
 ☐ Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

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



Adoptions From The Heart is a registered, charitable organization. In accordance with PA law, we are required to advise you that a copy of our official registration and financial information may be obtained from either the PA Department of State by calling, toll-free within PA, (800) 732-0999, or the state of NJ by calling (973) 504-6215. A copy of our official registration and financial information may be obtained from the state of NY upon written request to the Office of the Attorney General, Department of Law, Charities Bureau, 120 Broadway, New York, NY 10271. A financial statement is available upon written request from the VA State of Office of Consumer Affairs, (800) 552-9963.

## Son of Mine: Becoming a Father Through Adoption



“You know, at 38 years old, I thought my world view was pretty stable. I figured that I had already formed most of my basic opinions and core values. But the day Aidan came into our lives, my world turned upside down in so many beautiful ways—it’s been just awesome.” Justin is a mail carrier by day, a musician by night—and now—a father ‘round the clock.

Justin and his wife Mindee met in college and have been spouses, best friends, and confidantes for nearly two decades. Up until less than two years ago, neither of them could have fathomed just how different their lives might have been if they had been able to start a family. Like many couples, Justin and Mindee struggled with infertility. It was only after they exhausted multiple treatment options and weighed their financial situation that they considered adoption. Consequently, while most of their friends were having children and becoming parents in their twenties, Justin found the time to moonlight as a songwriter, musician and music critic, whilst Mindee pursued a graduate degree. Now that they are in their late thirties, their lives are a little flip-flopped. Most of their friends have children in high school; Justin and Mindee are changing diapers.

Whether or not they express it openly, men who face infertility issues are often particularly angered and frustrated by the inability to continue their bloodline. Before becoming a father through adoption, Justin would have agreed. But for him, the focus has shifted from “bloodline” to “clan.” He is genuinely excited by the prospect of giving another human being a good family, a sense of belonging, and a strong foundation. “I look at my own parents a little differently since Mindee and I adopted our son, Aidan. We’ve always been close, but sharing in the joy of raising Aidan has truly brought us closer together... and it just warms my heart to see that Aidan loves them just as much as I do.”

The couple adopted their son Aidan, now nineteen months old, through Adoptions From the Heart when he

was less than one week old. Because he and his wife tried for so long to start their own family, Justin feels that it strengthened their resolve to become “really good parents” and gave them a deep appreciation of even the most mundane aspects of parenting. “We had a lot of time to intellectualize the process and to learn as much as we could about both parenting and adoption.”

Justin describes the process as “completely transformational.” What seemed like potentially just the next phase in a series of emotional concessions actually culminated in a brief but life-altering meeting of child, birth parents, and adoptive parents; a configuration often referred to as the “adoption triad.” Justin sees it as a “win-win-win situation for everyone involved in the process.” Ultimately, he hopes for his son Aidan that adoption doesn’t define him, but rather that it becomes just a part of the fabric of his life story. “Even now, we say things like “‘Aidan, we are so happy your birth-mom chose us’. We aren’t going to hide the fact that he is adopted from him or drop the ball on him during dinner one evening when he’s twelve. This is his story; we are all just simply grateful to be supporting characters.”

Justin and Mindee are now beginning preparations to adopt a second child—only the waiting doesn’t seem so unbearable this time around. At the onset of their first adoption, they were still grieving the loss of fertility and were unsure of their true feelings about starting a family through adoption. Raising their son Aidan and having a much better idea of what to expect from the adoption process is helping to make the navigations through mountains of paper work and policy seem almost trivial. Sharing with family and friends about the decision to adopt a second time is exciting.

Justin is a reflective father who appreciates the gift that he has been given. He has been through the ups and downs of struggling with infertility in his marriage, but is elated with the outcome of adoption. He has been blessed with a beautiful son, and feels that this was “meant to be.” “For any man entering the adoption process— if you have any doubt about your own ability to accept and raise a child who is not biologically yours— I want to assure you that you can and you will love and embrace that child as your own.”

*Cont’d on Next Page...*



Justin, who is a natural storyteller, has continued, albeit less frequently, to compose songs and perform occasional live shows. He recently wrote a song for Aidan that details his thoughts and feelings about becoming a father through adoption. The song is aptly entitled "Son of Mine":

## Son of Mine

Son of mine, clouds are often silver-lined  
 Son of mine, our paths in life are intertwined  
 So many tears of joy we shed for you, my boy  
 And bid farewell to some bitter times  
 Our deepest wish came true when we laid eyes on you  
 Now we're singing praise and nursery rhymes  
 Oh, son of mine

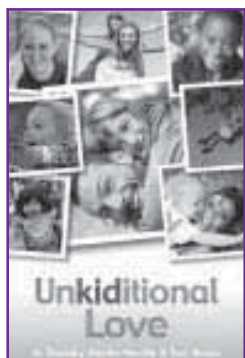
Son of mine, may you grow up strong on a fertile vine  
 Son of mine, may you live life full and age like wine  
 When things get tense and they just don't make sense  
 Stop and catch your breath for a little while  
 And if you ever feel you got a lousy deal  
 Remember that you're loved and you just might smile  
 Oh, my dear child

And when you look in the mirror, tell me who you see  
 Is he any reflection of your mother and me?  
 When I look in your big brown eyes, I tell you what I see...  
 You are the heart and soul of this family

Don't underestimate the twists and turns of fate  
 That led you straight into our clan  
 And if it be God's will,  
 we'll help you gain the means and skill  
 To fulfill your goals, dreams and plans  
 Oh, as you become a man  
 Son of mine, little fire burning bright  
 Son of mine, Phoenix rising in the night  
 Oh, I love you... son of mine

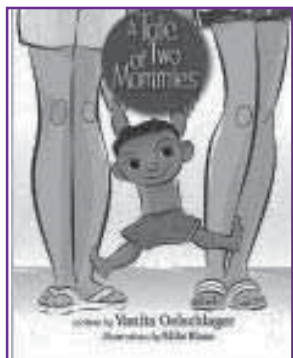
© 2012 Southern Bound Music (ASCAP)

## Book Reviews



*Unkidental Love* by Dorthy Martin Neville & Tom Russo - Writing alternating chapters *UnKidental Love* gives you the parenting perspectives of both a mother and a father. This unique style of writing and responding to what the other has written on a subject really helps open your eyes and think more about your parenting style. A great book that touches on many different aspects of parenting. Blending families, adoption, teenagers, toddlers and more. This is a unique book on parenting that shows that while we are all not perfect we can do a good job at parenting. [Amazon.com price \\$16.95 \(paperback\) or Kindle \\$9.99](#)

*A Tale of Two Daddies* by Vanita Oelschlager - An adorable tale of a little girl with two daddies. Her friends ask her questions about what its like to have two daddies. Fun illustrations tell the story while the two kids play showing that her family is the same as anyone else's. This is a great book for LGBT parents and for anyone wanting to teach tolerance and that just because a family looks different doesn't mean it functions differently. [Amazon.com price \\$8.95](#)



*A Tale of Two Mommies* by Vanita Oelschlager - While at the beach two other kids ask a little boy about having two mommies. Just like *A Tale of Two Daddies*, this book has little kids asking questions about what its like to have two mommies. Another great book with fabulous illustrations. [Amazon.com price \\$8.95](#)

[Amazon.com](#) gives AFTH a small donation from each book purchased through the AFTH bookstore on Amazon at: [astore.amazon.com/lovebuilfam0e-20](http://astore.amazon.com/lovebuilfam0e-20)

## Protecting Your Child's Natural Hair While Swimming



This article comes from Rory, adoptive mother and Chocolate Hair, Vanilla Hair blog author. Find Rory's blog and the full article at: [www.chocolatehairvanillacare.com](http://www.chocolatehairvanillacare.com)

Protecting natural hair while swimming is probably the number one question parents ask during the summer months. Even for our straight-haired friends, swimming in the ocean and/or chlorinated pools can wreak havoc on hair. However, taking a few precautionary steps will allow your naturally curly child every bit as much the opportunity to enjoy swimming as the next kid, while still maintaining a healthy head of hair.

### What Chlorine and Salt Do to Hair

Chlorine and salt both have a drying affect on hair because they strip away its natural oils, leaving the strands exposed to either chemicals and/or moisture loss. When the hair is devoid of it's natural protection, it can become overly porous (damaged). The more you swim, the more those precious oils are depleted, and the more vulnerable the hair strands become. Ever wonder why blond hair will sometimes turn green from swimming? Have you ever seen a penny that's oxidized and turned green? Believe it or not, the same thing that is happening in chlorinated water! That is probably the most visual example of hair that has absorbed the oxidized metals, and an illustration of just how harsh swimming can be on hair when the hair is not properly protected.

Darker hair can also turn a slight greenish color, especially under certain lighting, but most of the time we really only notice the tangled, dried-out mess that results from hair that has damaged. Either way, swimming can cause problems on all types of hair, not just curly kids, and the tips in this article are applicable to everyone who swims regularly.

### Option One: Cover the Hair While Swimming

The first option to protect against damage is keeping the hair from getting wet in the first place. This is done, to varying degrees of success, with the use of a swim cap (or two). Swim caps work best if the ears are covered. Does that mean you can't use one if your child doesn't like that? No, just know that if you've used a swim cap and they've leaked, it could be because the ears are not covered. It might also mean that the swim cap is too big.

Swim caps need to be snug to be effective, and often times that can be a little difficult to do with styled hair. Sometimes it's a two-person operation to get them on. Katie over at Keep Me Curly made an excellent video to show how to easily get a swim cap on and off, with the help of her daughters (visit Rory's blog to see the video).

### Types of Swim Caps

See Rory's Blog for details about the types of swim caps (Silicone, Latex, and Lycra) and what she recommends

### Pros and Cons of Swim Caps

#### Pros

- Simply the best way to protect against the damaging affects of pools and the ocean by keeping the the hair dry.

#### Cons

- Can snag and/or break hair while putting on and taking off.
- Can often be a two-person operation to get them on and off.
- Do not fit over all hairstyles.
- Can make a child feel self-conscious of she/he is the only kid wearing one.
- Swim caps work best when the ears are covered and some kids don't like that.

### Option Two: Wet the Hair Before Swimming

Although swim caps are the best way to protect against the damaging affects of water, there are plenty of naturals

## Swimming Cont'd...

who swim just fine without them. The way that they do so is by wetting the hair with fresh water before swimming. This works for one very simple reason: There is only so much water a strand of hair will absorb. If you fill the hair up with fresh water, it is not going to suck up any of the “bad” water from the pool or ocean. It’s already saturated to capacity.

To add an additional layer of protection, you can “seal” this fresh water in with conditioner. The layer of conditioner on the outside will help keep the fresh water inside the hair. Further, some people will even use a silicone-based product (yes, the same stuff that is used in the swim caps spoken of above) to seal the hair. However, when doing so it is important to remember that if you use anything that “seals” the hair, that means that nothing new can get in, even after it’s been “rinsed.” You will need to use a clarifying shampoo to remove silicone-based products, so the downside of using them regularly is that the hair can dry out from too much washing. That’s why most people compromise and just use a water-soluble conditioner. It’s not a full-proof method and there will be some water that will eventually get into the hair, especially if swimming every day and/or for long periods of time but with proper rinsing and moisturizing afterward, it is very effective.

With this option, it also requires rinsing the hair after swimming with fresh water, then reapplying a moisturizer and sealing that in. This is a good option for kids and tweens who are beginning to care for their own hair because rinsing their hair and adding products is something they can do themselves. Parents with a lot of little ones who’s hair they have to care for might find it just easier to use a swim cap than do all of these steps for several heads of hair.



### Pros and Cons of No Swim Caps

#### Pros

- Allows kids to not be the only kid with a swim cap on.
- Can be done with any hairstyle (although some more easily than others).

#### Cons

- Some pools will restrict hair product usage, including conditioners.
- Requires a lot of effort before and after swimming to ensure proper care.
- Constant manipulation of the hair can cause breakage.

### Hairstyles for Swimming

Box braids and twists are usually the easiest for swimming without a cap as they can be easily rinsed and maintained, both before and after swimming. Cornrows and flat twists are excellent choices to be worn under swim caps as they are usually flush to the scalp, allowing for a better fit. Puffs are fine, too, just so long as the hair can somehow make it’s way to the top of the cap (the area with the most room). Bantu knots are usually not the best as they neither fit well under caps, nor stay put very well while swimming. Extensions will work fine with and without swim caps, although making sure that you have the right sized cap for the extra hair is important, as is making sure that they dry quickly before they get smelly. For details on swimming with specific styles such as yarn extensions or locs, see Rory’s blog.

### Be Tolerant of Less-Than-Perfect Hair

As I’ve mentioned often in other posts, children like to play. I personally feel they should be allowed the opportunity to experience their childhood without constantly worry about their hair. There is a fine line between teaching them to be responsible for their hair needs, and teaching them to hate their hair because it’s “so much trouble.” Perfectly slicked hair is not a part of childhood in our house, and fuzzies are a regular part of curly-haired life. If you can be tolerant of them, your child will likely be able to enjoy his or her hair more, while still being able to swim and play.

There is no right or wrong way on how to approach swimming and hair. It’s really just a matter of personal choice and what works best for your family. Some people are consistent swim cap wearers, others won’t touch the things. There are even some who do a combination of the two methods (wet and condition the hair and use a swim cap), so clearly everyone has their own preference. As with most things related to natural hair, it will likely take some experimenting with the different options to figure out what works best for you and your family.

So what do you do if you have dry, brittle, and/or green hair from swimming? Check out Rory’s post on Chelating versus Clarifying when it comes to washing on her blog: [www.chocolatehairvanillacare.com](http://www.chocolatehairvanillacare.com)



# Celebrating Adoption: AFTH Picnic Recaps

## *Agency's 24th Picnic - Ft. Washington, PA*

AFTH held its 24th annual picnic at the Fort Washington State Park in Pennsylvania on Sunday June 3, 2012. We enjoyed a perfect afternoon until a "little rain" came at the end of our day. We were so excited to host an estimated 1500 guests this year, including adoptive parents, grandparents, birth parents and children from all over who gathered to celebrate adoption.

New activities for our families included a hair care demonstration by Chanell of Ego Hair Salon in Ardmore, PA. Chanell spoke with several families about products and techniques particularly for children adopted transracially. Also this year, UnKiditional Love authors Tom Russo and Dr. Dorothy Martin-Neville hosted a book signing. UnKiditional Love presents the wisdom these two have learned through experience and training about the trials, joys and demands of parenting—books can be purchased through Amazon.com. And also a big hit this year was a generous hotdog stand provided by Thom & Donna Rossi. The Rossi's have adopted twice through AFTH and generously supplied, grilled, and divvied out hundreds of hotdogs for our guests this year. They also accepted donations for the agency. Thank you to each of you for kindness and support of Adoptions From The Heart.

Raffles, Raffles, Raffles! This year our guests had the opportunity to win four various raffle baskets with gift certificates, toys, and AFTH gear; a cash prize from our 50/50; two week-long vacation time shares; passes to Walt Disney World in Orlando, FL, and autographed memorabilia from the Philadelphia Flyers. AFTH also rolled-out some new T-shirts for the whole family (infant-adult)! Shirts can be purchased through our online store.

A special thank you to Trinidad North and Paul Downie for providing smooth rhythms of the steel drum band; Tom Picard of Music Fun with Tom, 5 local teens for stellar face painting, AFTH board members Stephen Facenda, McKenzie Frankel, and Shari Shaw Leibert; and of course the AFTH staff and friends who helped make our event possible. This picnic truly is a day of celebration and we are so thankful for the families adoption creates!

**A heartfelt thank you for their donations and support goes out to :** ARNOLD FAMILY FUN CENTER, CLEAR CHANNEL, COMCAST, DELMARVA BROADCASTING, DUTCH WONDERLAND, EASTERN STATE PENITENTIARY, GENAURDI's, GIANT, HERR's, HERSHEY's, JJ SNACK FOODS, JUST BORN, LEHIGH VALLEY IRON PIGS, PACKET PUBLICATIONS (MARY KYLE), PHILADELPHIA FLYERS, RITA ROITMAN (AFTH BOARD MEMBER), SESAME PLACE, TEE'S GOLF CENTER, UPPER DARBY SUMMER STAGE, WALGREENS, WALT DISNEY WORLD, WAWA, WEGMANS, WHOLE FOODS MARKET, WPVI-TV, YELLOW PAGES & INTERNET MARKETING CORP. (MICHAEL OFFORD, AFTH BOARD CHAIRMAN)

## *Virginia Summer Picnic*

We had 77 attendees join AFTH staff at the picnic. This year we had a record breaking number of open adoption reunions. We had 8 birthmothers join us for visits with families and another one that was stuck in traffic and ended up meeting with the family on the Peninsula later that day. Many of the birthmothers brought extended family. The weather was hot but bearable and thankfully no rain! We hope to see even more families next year.

## *Connecticut Summer Picnic*

We could not have asked for a more beautiful day for our picnic at Quassy! Lake Quassapaug was dotted with sail boats, the sky was blue, the sun was shining and everyone was smiling! Approximately 150 people joined together for a day filled with fabulous fun, food and old friends and new. We were thrilled to have 6 reunions with birthparents as well this year!





# Fall 2012 Adoption Education Series



## Not only Building Beautiful Families, but Helping Strengthen Them Too!

The Education Series is designed to support families with opportunities to learn about adoption related topics. The adoption journey is lifelong, so regardless of what stage of the adoption process families are in, AFTH's goal is to strengthen families by empowerment through knowledge.

### ♥ Cherry Hill, NJ

#### Legal Night

Attorney Donald Cofsky, a member of the American Academy of Adoption Attorneys, will conduct an open forum on adoption related legal issues. If you have questions about birth parent rights, the finalization process in New Jersey, making a will and establishing a guardianship plan for your adopted child, or any other legal issues this is your opportunity to ask the expert.

**Tuesday, October 2, 2012**

**6:30-8:30pm**

**\$10/person or \$15/couple**

*Call (856) 665-5655 with questions.*

### ♥ 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 17th, 2012**

**7:00-8:30pm**

**\$10/person or \$15/couple**

*Call (610) 642-7200 with questions.*

### ♥ Lancaster, PA

#### Hair & Skin Care Techniques for Families Adopting Transracially

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 including braiding. Various product, books, and hand-outs will be available. Children are also welcome for a fun evening of learning.

**Thursday, October 4, 2012**

**6:30-8:30 PM**

**\$10/person or \$15/family**

*Call (717) 399-7766 with questions.*

### ♥ Richmond, VA

#### Effects of Drug and Alcohol Use During Pregnancy

Martha Kurgans, Women's Services Coordinator and Program Specialist, Office of Substance Abuse Svcs, Virginia Dept of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services, will provide crucial and helpful information on the effects of substance abuse during pregnancy. The information will be helpful in making educated decisions for the profile key for waiting families as well as providing insight for those with children already placed. Come and join us with your questions.

**Thursday, October 18, 2012**

**6pm-7:30pm**

**\$10/person or \$15/couple**

*Call (757) 361-0008 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  
[www.afth.org/community/courses.html](http://www.afth.org/community/courses.html)*

**Classes are \$10/person or \$15/couple**

<i># Attending</i>	<i>Cost</i>	<i>Topic/Location</i>
		<u>Legal Night</u> <b>Cherry Hill, NJ</b>
		<u>Challenges for LGBT Families</u> <b>Glastonbury, CT</b>
		<u>Hair &amp; Skin Care Techniques for Families Adopting Transracially</u> <b>Lancaster, PA</b>
		<u>Hair &amp; Skin Care Techniques for Families Adopting Transracially</u> <b>Pittsburgh, PA</b>
		<u>Effects of Drug/Alcohol Use</u> <b>Richmond, VA</b>
		<u>Infant Care Class</u> <b>Wynnewood, PA</b>

**Total Amount Enclosed:** \_\_\_\_\_

*Name(s):* \_\_\_\_\_

*Address:* \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

*Phone:* (     ) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

*Email:* \_\_\_\_\_

**For More Information...**  
**Call 610-642-7200**  
**or contact your local AFTH office**

## ♥ Pittsburgh, PA

### **Hair & Skin Care Techniques for Families Adopting Transracially**

Did you know that not all shampoo is equal? You have learned what products make your hair and skin look and feel it's best, but what about your baby's? Carla Ansell, an adoptive Mom of 11, will demonstrate hair and skin care techniques and educate you (including various ways of braiding hair) and provide information on specific products and ways to take care of your African-American child's hair and skin.

**Saturday, October 20, 2012**

**10am-Noon**

**\$10/person or \$15/couple**

*Call (724) 853-6533 with questions.*

## ♥ Glastonbury, CT

### **Challenges for LGBT Families**

Adoption and child rearing in and of themselves have many blessings and many challenges - most of which are only discovered as time unfolds. As both the parents and the kids continue to grow through the various levels of development as people, how do relationship, understanding your own relationship patterns and styles, along with your perspectives on societal issues all become important elements of effective parenting. Having a strong support system is imperative if you are to grow in laughter and faith as you confront all these challenges. For same-sex couples who are involved in the adoption process, whether just beginning the journey or completely immersed, the challenges can be even greater. This workshop, which is both didactic and interactive, confronts many of the issues presented to you as adoptive parents and specifically as same-sex parents. Issues ranging from pregnancy for one partner, to dual adoption, socializing with other parents, sexuality, divorce, and a variety of other topics will be presented but always with an emphasis on the particular audience members and their specific needs. Come prepared to participate – or simply to listen and learn.

**Tuesday, September 25, 2012**

**6:30-8:30pm**

**\$10/person or \$15/couple**

*Call (860) 657-2626 with questions.*



## Recent Legislation



**FEDERAL TAX CREDIT** - Scores of adoption and child welfare organizations, including the Adoption Institute, have formed a coalition to preserve the federal adoption tax credit. If no action is taken by the government soon, the current \$12,650 credit will expire on December 31, 2012 and not be refundable for the 2012 tax year. And in 2013, only those adopting children with special needs would be eligible for \$6,000 in qualifying expenses. To support the effort to save the federal tax credit, call your U.S. House members and urge them to co-sponsor the Making Adoption Affordable Act (HR4373). The bill would increase the tax credit to \$13,170 and make it permanent and refundable for all adoptions, including the 2012 tax year.

**HAGUE** - The Hague rules require countries to establish a central adoption authority and a checks and balances system to protect orphans and keep the adoption system from being corrupted. The Hague rules were established after a string of cases involving children being kidnapped or sold into the black market. Years ago, international adoptions were a fairly quick process, but now, people are waiting longer and requirements have become more complex or discriminatory. Scientific measures could easily be used to determine if a child has been relinquished by his or her biological mother, making the adoption process quicker while ensuring the safety of the children. However government agencies seem to be against this measure and so the international adoption process continues to be drawn out extensively for adoptive parents.

**NORTH CAROLINA** - The American Civil Liberties Union and its North Carolina chapter filed a lawsuit on June 13 seeking to overturn the state's prohibition on second-parent adoption by same-sex couples. The North Carolina Supreme Court banned the practice in December 2010. The ACLU filed the challenge on behalf of six same-sex couples with children, arguing they should have the same safeguards that other families enjoy.

**NEW JERSEY** - New Jersey legislatures have proposed a bill that would require adoption agencies to maintain a child's religious upbringing when placing the child in an adoptive or foster home. It is now on to the full assembly and State Senate for final approval and passage. AFTH strongly opposes this bill, for it would raise the barrier to finding permanent homes for children. This bill would further limit the number of possibilities for the children. An AFTH adoptive parent has begun a petition against this bill on Change.org.

**NEW JERSEY** - State lawmakers are poised to consider a new measure that would allow residents to formally contract with, and pay, women to carry a donated embryo to term. Three states criminalized surrogacy after the Baby M ruling, New Jersey never did, despite a ruling from a bioethics commission that said the state should do just that. Making a legal distinction between "gestational carriers" and surrogates is the newest front in this decades-long fight.



## AFTH Program Updates



### DOMESTIC PROGRAMS - AFTH

is excited to announce that this fiscal year has been another success for AFTH! We have placed 170 children in loving homes since July 1st, 2011. Congratulations to all the families and thank you for opening up your hearts to adoption!

We hope that your family was able to attend one of our agencies annual picnics (see insert for picnic recaps). 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 to the picnic for years. We would like to thank all of our families who came out to celebrate adoption with us and made these events so special. We hope to see you again next year! Don't forget the AFTH Pittsburgh Office will be hosting their 12th Annual Picnic on Friday, August 3, 2012, at Idlewild! Visit [www.afth.org](http://www.afth.org) and click on the News & Events Section for registration details.

Take the time to review the newsletter insert listing the classes being offered in AFTH's Fall Education Series. Classes are being offered at various AFTH offices in the fall and include the following topics:

[Effects of Drug and Alcohol Abuse During Pregnancy](#)  
[Hair/Skin Care Techniques for Those Adopting Transracially](#)  
[Adoption Related Legal Issues](#)  
[Infant Care Class](#)  
[Authors of Book: Unkiditional Love](#)  
[Challenges for LGBT Families](#)

**To All of Our Placed Families:** AFTH continues to see an increase in the number of pregnant women AFTH is counseling who are in need of some financial support due to their circumstances. Please take a moment to read the story on the front page and **see how donations to the AFTH Birthmother Fund are changing lives.** We are calling on AFTH families, friends, adoptions supporters and advocates to please consider making a donation to the AFTH Birthmother Fund this year. The 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. Donations can be made online via the Donate Button on [www.afth.org](http://www.afth.org) or by **completing the form found on page 3.** AFTH and the women helped by the fund each year extend gratitude to all those who donate to help others in greater need.



### HEARTBEATS - We recently had clients

in the [Surrogacy in India Program](#) who made their first trip to the surrogacy clinic in India. They came back with a glowing report. Here is what they had to say:

"The trip went really well. Even though it was really early in the morning, a couple of employees from the clinic were waiting to pick us up at the airport. The apartment in which we were put up was nice and was right next to the clinic, so it was convenient for our daily appointments. Someone from the clinic was always available to take care of our every need. They even arranged a sight seeing trip for us. We truly couldn't have asked for anything more! The only drawback of this trip was the weather. It was unbelievably hot (we were there at the hottest time of the year)!"



*Joshua, AFTH's first Surrogacy in India baby.*

We would also like to introduce Joshua, AFTH's first baby born through the Heartbeats Surrogacy in India Program. Joshua was born in January 2012 and is doing very well.

Are you interested in learning more about the Heartbeats Surrogacy in India Program? Join us for a free online webinar hosted by the Surrogacy in India Program Coordinator on July 24th at 7:00pm or on September 11th at 7:00pm. To register for these or any other AFTH webinars, visit our online calendar of events at [www.afth.org](http://www.afth.org) or contact Roberta Evantash at (610) 642-7200 or [RobertaE@afth.org](mailto:RobertaE@afth.org) with any questions you may have regarding the Surrogacy in India Program.

Families continue to show interest in the Heartbeats' *Embryo Placement Assistance* services, with several having recently participated in agency-sponsored webinars. The program remains an excellent option for families in which a woman is able to carry an embryo donated by another family. Wait times for matching between recipient and donor families are approximately 1-2 months.

The next free informational webinar for the Embryo Placement Program is scheduled for 6pm on September 20, 2012. This webinar is a great way to learn about the program, and to ask any questions you may have regarding the process.

The next four-part Embryo Education Series will be offered in September and October. These webinars address topics such as: talking with children about embryo placement, potential contact with genetic relatives, and many other related topics.

To register for any of the above meetings, visit AFTH's online calendar at [www.afth.org](http://www.afth.org). Contact Sam Wojnilower at [SamW@afth.org](mailto:SamW@afth.org) or 610-642-7200 with any questions about Embryo Placement Assistance services.



## Upcoming Conferences

Visit the AFTH booth at the following events. For details on these events, visit our online calendar of events at [www.afth.org](http://www.afth.org).

### August 19th

Pride in the Park in Allentown, PA.

### October 25th

Girl's Night Out in Wallingford, CT

### November 3rd

CPFA Conference in Piscataway, NJ  
Paths to Parenthood in Malborough, MA

### November 21st

APC Conference in Brooklyn, NY

## AFTH Support Groups

Visit [www.afth.org](http://www.afth.org) for details.

### CENTRAL PA

Support group for recently placed and waiting families.

Tuesday, September 25th from 6:00-8:00pm

Call (717) 399-7766 or email [AmandaK@afth.org](mailto:AmandaK@afth.org) by Sept. 24th to Register.

### VIRGINIA

Adoptive parent support groups bring AFTH waiting families together.

Call (757) 361-0008 or email [NicoleF@afth.org](mailto:NicoleF@afth.org)

### Cherry Hill, NJ

One-on-one Support - Social workers available to meet with NJ waiting families to provide support, review profiles and discuss any concerns families may have. Must register for time slots between 6:30 and 8:30pm.

Tuesday, August 21st from 6:30-8:30pm

Call (856) 665-5655 or email [TerryP@afth.org](mailto:TerryP@afth.org) by August 15th to register.

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

Call 856-665-5655 or Email [TerryP@afth.org](mailto:TerryP@afth.org)

### DELAWARE

Support groups bring AFTH waiting families together.

Call 302-658-8883 for information.

### WYNNEWOOD

Adoptive parent support groups bring AFTH families together in support during the "wait".

Monday, September 10th from 6:30-7:30pm

Email [AshleyK@afth.org](mailto:AshleyK@afth.org) by Sept. 7th to register.

### CONNECTICUT

Join us for an informal waiting adoptive parent support group! They are held quarterly and guest speakers include adult adoptees, adoptive parents and adoption professionals. Pre-registration required.

Call (860) 657-2626 or Email [PennyR@afth.org](mailto:PennyR@afth.org).

### ALLENTOWN

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

Call (610) 432-2384 for information.

## International Adoption News



**U.S. Department of State:** Effective April 13, 2012, the cost of filing U.S. immigrant visa applications decreased from \$404 to \$230. This reflects the elimination of the \$74 immigrant visa application surcharge, along with a \$100 reduction in the actual application fee. The new fee is now in effect for adoption cases processed via U.S. embassies and consulates throughout the world.

**Guatemala:** Nearly 5 years after the suspension of adoptions from Guatemala to the United States, up to 350 impacted adoption cases remain pending. On April 10, 2012, following a meeting with U.S. Senator Mary Landrieu, Guatemalan President Otto Perez Molina said that he hopes to resolve these cases. Only 9 U.S. immigrant visas, however, were issued for adoption cases between July 1, 2011 and May 1, 2012 by the U.S. Embassy in Guatemala.

Separately, the U.S. Department of State (USDOS) issued a statement regarding a particular past adoption from Guatemala that has been in the news. The case in question involves a girl adopted from Guatemala by a Missouri family in 2008. In 2011, based upon evidence brought by the purported birth family suggesting that the child had been abducted as an infant in Guatemala in 2006, a Guatemalan judge had ruled that the child should be returned to her birthparents, and that her passport should be revoked. In May, USDOS found that it does not have jurisdiction to accept the case. Rather, USDOS stated that the proper venue for pursuing the case would be in state courts. USDOS added that, if this case had been processed under the Hague Convention, then USDOS would have been able to accept the case for review. As such, the child remains in Missouri with her adoptive parents, against whom no allegations have been made that they were aware at the time of the adoption that she might have improperly become eligible for adoption.

**Haiti:** The Haitian government ratified the Hague Convention on June 11, 2012, and is expected to soon establish criteria for accreditation of foreign adoption agencies wishing to provide adoption services in Haiti. As of the writing of this article, it is unclear if or how this will affect pending cases, or the timing and guidelines of future filings by Americans to adopt children from Haiti.

Previously, Haiti's adoption authority, l'Institut du Bien Etre Social et de Recherches (IBESR), had informed the U.S. Embassy in Port-au-Prince that, effective May 7, 2012, it was suspending the processing of new adoption cases. This suspension, which was not designed to apply to cases filed with IBESR prior to May 7, 2012, was projected to run through July 31, 2012.

**Kazakhstan:** The Kazakhstan Ministry of Education and Science (MoE) has confirmed that the governmental decree approving its new policies to process intercountry adoptions went into effect on April 5, 2012. In May of 2012, the MoE confirmed approval of 2 U.S. accredited adoption service providers (ASP's) to process intercountry adoptions. Therefore, following a 2 year suspension, the MoE is resuming acceptance of applications for adoption from American families.

**Kyrgyzstan:** Similar to neighboring Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan also has now accredited 2 U.S. ASP's to perform adoptions in Kyrgyzstan, meaning that American citizens can once more apply to adopt children from there. Of note is that these 2 ASP's are different ones than those accredited to provide adoption services in Kazakhstan.

**Romania:** The Romanian Office for Adoptions announced that its new adoption law went into effect on April 7, 2012. The new law, however, only allows for intercountry adoptions of Romanian children by relatives within the fourth degree of kinship, the spouse of the child's biological parent, and Romanian citizens who are habitually resident abroad.

**Russia:** The bilateral adoption agreement signed between the Russian and the U.S. governments in 2011 was submitted to the Russian State Duma for ratification. The Russian Children's Rights Advocate said that he hoped it would be ratified in June. As of the writing of this article, however, there is no further information to report in this regard.

Negotiation of the bilateral agreement was largely prompted more than two years ago when an adoptive mother in Tennessee put her seven year-old adopted



## *International Adoption News Cont'd*

Russian son unescorted on a plane to Moscow, with a note attached to him stating that she no longer wished to be his parent. The legal proceedings in Tennessee regarding this case finally concluded on May 17, 2012. Having previously assigned civil responsibility to the adoptive mother, and having previously found her liable for child support, a Circuit Court judge in Shelbyville ordered her to pay \$58,420 in child support arrears, which represents the entire cost of the child's institutional and medical care since his return to Russia. The court additionally found the adoptive mother responsible for child support payments in the amount of \$1,000 per month until the child turns 18 or is, once again, adopted. The funds are to be held in an account payable to the child when he reaches age 18. Now nine years of age, he continues to reside, along with a number of other Russian orphans, in a foster residence near Moscow.

Taking a much broader view of the welfare of Russian children living in substitute care settings, data sadly shows that the prospects for permanency for such children continue to decline. Over the past several years, Russia-imposed constraints have led to a nearly 50% decrease in the number of Russian orphans adopted by foreigners. At the same time, the number of such orphans placed annually with Russian families dropped from 111,700 in 2007 to 72,500 in 2010. Current estimates are that more than 700,000 children in Russia are being cared for by the government, 371,700 of which are growing up in state institutions. According to the Russian state prosecutor's office, the fate of those who ultimately "age out" of orphanages is terribly bleak; approximately 40% are later arrested, 40% become addicted to drugs and/or alcohol, and 10% commit suicide. In light of these shockingly disturbing figures, it is hoped that the number of adoptions from Russia to the U.S. can increase following Russian ratification of the aforementioned bilateral treaty.

**Vietnam:** USDOS determined in February that intercountry adoptions from Vietnam would not resume at that time, even as the Hague Convention was entering into force there. As there remains some hope, however, that USDOS may find

Vietnam ready to resume intercountry adoption to the U.S. by the end of 2012, a number of U.S. ASP's have begun working with Vietnam to become accredited to provide adoption services there.

*Adoptions From The Heart provides Home Studies, Education, Post-Adoption/Placement Reports, and other assistance in support of international adoptions. Contact Sam Wojnilower at 610-642-7200 or SamW@afth.org with any questions about the agency's international adoption services.*



## **Congratulations to Families Who Have Recently Adopted!**

### **Sons**

Neil & Lindsay  
William & Charles  
Steve & Haley  
Donald & Laura  
Stuart & Sarah  
Steven & Teresa  
Jeremy & Andre  
Philip & Laura  
Vincent & Michael  
Michael & Lisa  
Samuel & Renee  
Michael & Renee  
Jason & Christina  
Daniel & Kathlene  
Robert & Jacqueline  
Noelle  
Susan & Kay  
Charlie & Kim  
Christopher & Lisa  
Richard & Sheila  
Ezra & Irene  
William & Scott  
Harald & Tamara  
Thomas & Tyler

### **Daughters**

John & Linda  
Robert & Greta  
Andrew & Kelly  
Brian & Jennifer  
Lisa  
Eric & Erin  
Scott & HoYin  
Julian & Sari  
Jason & Melissa  
Michael & Andrea  
Dennis & Lisa  
Francine & Maryann  
Paul & Christine

### **Twins (boy & girl)**

Alexei & Karla  
Ralph & Amy





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## FREE ONLINE WEBINARS

LEARN ABOUT AFTH'S  
PROGRAMS FROM THE  
COMFORT OF YOUR HOME

### DOMESTIC INFANT ADOPTION

AUGUST 7TH AT 7PM  
SEPTEMBER 4TH AT 7PM

### SURROGACY IN INDIA

JULY 24TH AT 7PM  
SEPTEMBER 11 AT 7PM

### EMBRYO PLACEMENT PROGRAM

SEPTEMBER 20TH AT 6PM

*Registration Required*

Visit the Calendar of Events at [www.afth.org](http://www.afth.org)

## Find AFTH On...

Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest,  
Google+ and WordPress

## Got E-mail?

The listserve is a way for families to stay in the loop of agency updates related to the domestic program. Waiting families can subscribe by sending a message with the word "SUBSCRIBE" in the subject line to:

### DOMESTIC LISTSERVE -

[AFTHDomesticUpdates-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:AFTHDomesticUpdates-subscribe@yahoogroups.com)

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

### DOMESTIC DISCUSSION GROUP

[AFTHopenadoption-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:AFTHopenadoption-subscribe@yahoogroups.com)