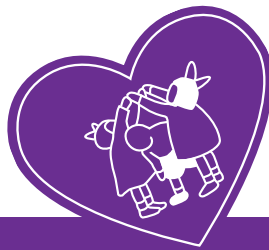


Adoption News



A Quarterly Newsletter from

Adoptions From The Heart

Winter 2013

AFTH Holiday Donation Aides 68 Children and 32 Mothers

AFTH Donated Over \$11,000 in Gift Cards this December

Each year just before the holiday season, AFTH identifies birthmothers who are parenting other children at home who are in need of a little additional financial assistance to get through the holiday season. This year, AFTH social workers identified 68 children and their mothers to be recipients of gift cards. AFTH's donation of gift cards helps birthmothers to purchase groceries, clothing and toys for their children during the holidays.

Thank you to AFTH supporters who helped by making a gift card donation. We received \$1,395 in gift card donations from AFTH clients and supporters to help bring cheer to families in need this holiday season. AFTH was overwhelmed by the response of donations as we saw more than double the gift card donations that we received last year. Your donated gift cards went directly into the hands of birthmothers who had need of them most, so thank you again for your generosity.

Each year after mailing out the gift cards, we hear back from many of the birthparents we have been able to help out with the donations. Here are a few of their thank yous we wanted to pass along to you:

Ali, a 16 year old birthmother from Western PA, hugged her mother and cried tears of joy when she was presented with the gift card donation. She said that AFTH gave her a Christmas they wouldn't have otherwise had because they didn't have any money.

Carrie, a birthmother from Central PA called her social worker to thank AFTH for thinking of her and her 4 children as she was able to give them a nice holiday thanks to the gift cards that were donated.

Tiffany, a New Jersey birthmother, called to thank AFTH for the donation. She received the gift cards at a perfect time as she was displaced because of hurricane Sandy and was just placed in a new apartment.

Penny in our Connecticut Office received this text from Diane: "Miss Penny. God bless you and your organization. Thank you soooooo much. God gave me an angel when he put you in my life. May God bless you multiple the blessing you are to me. Thank you."

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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

703 Hebron Ave., 1st floor
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

Here are some more thank yous the agency received showing how a little bit of financial help to mothers during the holiday season can make all the difference.

Dionne, a birthmother who worked with our Pittsburgh Office, has two toddlers she is parenting and said she was so grateful for the wonderful Christmas gift from AFTH. Because of it she was able to buy toys for her children for Christmas that she could not have bought without the gift from the agency. She said how thankful she was that AFTH thinks of their birthmoms long after they have placed their babies.

Trisha of Western PA told Joan in our Pittsburgh Office she was like a Godmother to her because Joan somehow knew that she desperately needed money to have a Christmas for her 2 young children. Her ex-husband no longer pays child support and she had no other family to help her. She said that "head of our agency must be an angel because she really gives to those that need it."

Kim, a social worker in our Virginia Office called Crystal to let her know to be expecting the gift cards. She doesn't live in a safe neighborhood and Kim wanted her to keep her eyes out for the card. Crystal, who had placed two children through AFTH, thanked her over the phone and began to cry as she told Kim how she appreciates everything AFTH has done for her. Since Kim met Crystal in 2008, her life has been pure turmoil. After a divorce which included a 2 year struggle for custody of her children, her boyfriend of several years was in a severe accident. Clayton, the birthfather of the two placed children, has been through several surgeries just to regain his ability to walk. Even with the surgeries, he is unable to work and has not been approved for disability. With Clayton and her three boys all being dependant on her, Crystal is working very hard to provide for their needs and keep their home. Kim reached out to her in December only to find out that three days earlier Crystal was diagnosed with cervical cancer that spread. She will soon be going through an extensive procedure to locate and treat all of the cancer and being the optimist that she is, told Kim "at least we have insurance now." Crystal is only 31 years old and Clayton is 26. Even though she continues to face challenge after challenge in life, she has always expressed how grateful she is to know her other two boys placed through AFTH are well taken care of by their adoptive parents. Crystal has told Kim how thankful she is that AFTH continues to be there for her and that she is eternally grateful for everything we have done to offer support, including the much needed gift cards just before the holidays.

These women are not only thanking AFTH, but they are also thanking all the families and adoption supporters who have made donations. Those who have graciously given to the Birthmother Fund or sent in gift cards so that AFTH may delegate those funds to those who need it most.

Want to help even though the official gift giving season is over?

The financial burdens don't stop just because the holiday season has passed and AFTH's Birthmother Fund continues to need replenishing so we are able to offer help to all those who need it most throughout the year. Donations earmarked for the Birthmother Fund may be made online at www.afth.org or by sending checks to the Wynnewood Office 30-31 Hampstead Circle, Wynnewood, PA 19096. Additionally, gift card donations (Visa, Target, Walmart, Acme, etc) are accepted year round and are passed directly to women in need.



AFTH Does Outreach to Clients that Adopted Children from Guatemala

In October, at the direction of AFTH Executive Director Maxine Chalker, a letter was mailed to the nearly 500 families that adopted children from Guatemala via AFTH during the years 2000-2009. The purpose of the letter was to remind these families of the need for some of them to complete steps toward finalization of the adoption of their children, establishment of their children's U.S. citizenship, and presentation of evidence of their children's U.S. citizenship to the Social Security Administration (SSA). The letter emphasized that lack of completing these steps could lead to affected children "encountering difficulties as they become old enough to seek drivers licenses, apply for jobs, file for college loans, enlist in the armed forces, or otherwise seek privileges that can be impacted by a person's familial and/or immigration status."

In response, AFTH received dozens of telephone calls and emails from families wishing to confirm whether there were any additional actions that needed to be taken to ensure their children's rights. From this communication, it was wonderful to confirm that, of the many families that contacted the agency, every one that needed to finalize the adoption of its child in court in the U.S. had already done so. There were, however, a number of families that had not yet attained evidence of their children's U.S. citizenship, and others that had attained such, but had not presented this to the SSA. The agency was glad to be able to remind families of how to complete necessary steps, taking comfort in the knowledge that impacted children would have all the legal protections for which they are eligible.

The many positive and thankful replies received from families are best reflected by one email which read, *"Thank you for your recent letter in regard to (my son's) Social Security status. I went to the Social Security office and updated his status immediately. We deeply love (our son). He will be ten years old later this year. He is such a gift. He is doing really well in school and has a good group of buddies. He is very quick witted and he makes us laugh all the time. He loves golf. He does eat too much mac and cheese, but we are working on that. He is also adored by his big brother. They are close and have a beautiful bond. Our life is full thanks to the efforts of your staff. We will forever appreciate."*

As stated in the letter sent to Guatemala Program clients, Adoptions From The Heart maintains an "ongoing commitment to, and concern for, our clients and their children." For any families who may have further questions, please feel free to contact AFTH's International Services Coordinator, Sam Wojnilower, at 610-642-7200 or SamW@afth.org.

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



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.

A Letter from Executive Director Maxine Chalker

Dear Friends:

As we begin another year and look forward to all that 2013 will bring, we look back in review of all the success and changes AFTH has seen in 2012.

We were excited to announce over the summer that we have expanded our services and opened our Domestic Adoption Program to couples and singles living anywhere in the United States. Former AFTH families have told us how happy they are to now be able to recommend AFTH's services to their friends and family living outside of our 6 state service area.

Our Domestic Program continues to thrive as we have seen our infant placements rising. In 2012, AFTH placed 187 infants into loving homes which is an increase of 33 placements from our 2011 stats and well above our 160 placement average! Social workers have been working day and night, weekends and holidays to maintain AFTH's reputation for the high quality services and support we offer those considering making an adoption plan as well as the services we offer to adoptive parents.

We are proud to be an agency that has a high percentage of waiting families placed each month. In 2012, AFTH averaged a 16% placement rate of all of the families in the book each month which is fantastic. Some months we have seen a placement rate as high as 22%! AFTH does not have average wait times because we see a variety of situations and placements often depend on the openness of a parent's key. However, as of January 1st only 17% of all of our families in the book ready to be placed have been waiting for more than 1 year. And for those open to children of African-American heritage, only 7 families in our books have been waiting for more than 6 months!

We are continuing to see a high level of emergency placements from hospitals. Hospitals have said they appreciate our social workers' fast response and willingness to be there any time they are needed to help counsel a patient. Additionally, we have seen an increase in hospitals and clinics that have invited us in for staff trainings to talk about the adoption process, what the hospital placement process is like, and to answer any questions from their staff. These trainings have been extremely helpful in opening up the lines of communication with hospital and clinic staffers as well as spread awareness about our agency's services to pregnant women and prospective adoptive parents.

The agency has redesigned our website and, in addition to the learning center for pregnant women and adoptive parents, our new website features sections with tools and resources specifically designed for expecting fathers and family members of those experiencing unplanned pregnancies. In moving to a more digital approach, AFTH has replaced DVD family videos with a Youtube channel which can be accessed to see individual videos. This has eased the process of showing profiles for emergency placements as social workers are now able to log directly into the AFTH network to access both the profile and the video instead of needing to stop at the office for physical hardcopies.

Our social media fan base continues to grow. We can be found on Google+, Facebook, Pinterest, Twitter, and our blog on Wordpress. With close to 1,500 fans, the AFTH Facebook page is a great place to find support as well as helpful resources about adoption. Be sure to join in the discussion and share your experiences with others.

This past holiday season, with the help of donors like yourself, we were able to gift \$11,450 in gift cards to 32 birthmothers and their 68 children. We thank each and every one who made a donation to AFTH this past year in order for us to continue serving those who need it the most, especially during the holidays.

Congratulations to all of the new families created this past year. We look forward to another successful year and thank all the friends who continue to support AFTH's mission.

Warm Regards,



Maxine Chalker, MSW/LSW
Founder & Executive Director

National Adoption Month Success

National Adoption Month began as a week-long celebration in Massachusetts in 1976. Since then it has evolved into a month-long event! Each year, the President of the United States makes a proclamation to announce that November is National Adoption Month. This year, National Adoption DAY was celebrated November 17, 2012. This was a special day because thousands of adoptions were finalized in court rooms all across the United States. Every year this celebration grows larger as more and more states and courtrooms become involved. National Adoption Month is always an opportune time to spread awareness, support, and education on adoption to communities at large.

This past November, Adoptions From The Heart hosted successful National Adoption Month Campaigns both online and in the local communities. Social media followers joined us for a month of sharing stories and photos, Q & A's, and contests galore. We were thrilled to see our Facebook photo go viral again this year by reaching over 145,000 people. Thank you to everyone who made the image their profile photo for the month and to those who shared our photo on their own pages.

We also held contests each week in November:

Week 1: Love It Or Hate It? Adoption is actually all over in the media, sometimes it's subtle or blatant, truthful or simply misguided. Where have you seen adoption in the media and what did you think about how it was presented?

Week 2: Picture This...How has adoption impacted your life? Don't just tell us...show us! Post a photo that captures what adoption means in your life.

Week 3: Silent Participants in Adoption...Men are often silent when it comes to adoption talk. Birth fathers, adoptive fathers, sons, or any other males, we want to hear from them! Ask them to share their most memorable adoption-related moment.

Week 4: Celebrities Touched by Adoption...Adoptees, birth parents, adoptive parents, or maybe they simply love children, message or Tweet a celebrity who has been touched by adoption asking them to show support for adoption throughout the month of November.

They "Like" Us!

AFTH welcomed over 200 new Facebook fans the last two months of 2012 and even Rosie O'Donnell retweeted our message in support of adoption. Be sure to "Like" us on Facebook to join the fun and get connected to other adoption supporters like you.

www.facebook.com/AdoptionsFromTheHeart



Winners of our contests received prizes like AFTH t-shirts, coolers, and mugs; a collection of adoption books, and our grand prize winner won tickets to see the hit talk show, Live With Kelly, in New York, NY.

We enjoyed hearing stories, questions, feedback and love for adoption. Be sure to connect with us online and join in the discussion. Follow us on Facebook and Twitter as we continue hosting fabulous contests and adoption-related dialogue all year long!

In addition to our online community of supporters, AFTH received lots of support from the community as well. AFTH's 2nd Annual "Paper Heart Project" was warmly received by the community. Clients, adoption supporters and local small businesses participated in this special project in November to show their support for adoption and AFTH. The Paper Heart Project successfully raised over \$350. For \$1 donation, paper hearts were displayed at AFTH offices and in participating stores to spread adoption awareness and raise money for the agency's Birthmother Fund as well as special needs adoptions. AFTH thanks everyone who supported the project this year!

And a very special thank you to our community sponsors this year:

Dakota Pizza, Wynnewood, PA

Kids Kutters Plus, Lemoyne, PA

LexaLu Essential Accessories, LexaLu.com

Mathnasium of Washington Township, Sewell, NJ



AFTH Clients Offer Advice about Open Adoption to Those Just Beginning the Adoption Process

We asked our Facebook fans to respond to the below question with their advice and suggestions to those at the very beginning of the adoption process. Don't miss out on our discussions, be sure to "like" us on Facebook.

Many of those beginning the adoption process, such as going to an info meeting, are often nervous about the idea of open adoption as it can be a scary idea at first. What is your advice to those just beginning the process? What would you tell them about open adoption or beginning the adoption process in general.

Zarah: As a birthmother, it is very difficult at first. You are very unsure the relationship and where you stand. But as time goes on and I got more comfortable, it is a wonderful blessing. Figure out the amount of openness you would like, and as time grows so does the relationship.

Joni: When my daughter decided to put my grandson up for adoption, I was devastated, but she chose Open Adoption. It's the best decision she ever made in her life. It wasn't the end like I thought. When you do your face to face meeting, make sure you get all your questions on the table and out so there are no questions in your mind when you leave.

Kevin: I would advise that people examine those fears and find common threads with birth families. Are you feeling you won't get picked or that you are being judged by strangers? Birth families might be struggling with those same issues. Are you worried that you will be picked by someone who, as the TV movie scripts go, changes their mind? Birth families have to put a tremendous amount of faith in you, too, and hope that you won't "change your mind" as well. You and your child's birthparents -- because you WILL get picked -- are always going to have one thing in common: All of you will always put your child's needs first. So you might as well find common ground from the get go.

Dina: As far as open adoption: There are so many varying degrees of open adoption. The openness of each situation is really a comfort level between birth family and the adoptive family. It will also change and develop as your child grows.

Mitzki: I would explain that open adoption can mean a LOT of things, from limited contact through an agency to complete openness, to the many places in between. As far as starting the process, educate yourself as best you can, ask questions, and make copies of everything!

Pamela: The cons of open adoption seem to be about the communication and social issues between adoptive and birth parents. While the pros all seem to point to possible benefits to the adoptee and to the overall best interest of the child. You can work through any "cons" if both sets of parents always put the child first.

Erin: We went into adoption with the mindset that we would have a closed adoption. From the first moment that we met our birthmother, we feel in love with her and all of our fears of "open adoption" were gone. It's an incredible feeling to know that when/if our daughter ever has a question about her birth family, we have access to get those questions answered for her by loving people that want nothing more in life than to see her prosper.

Sharon: Fear is a normal part of an open adoption, but the benefits completely outweigh any fears that you may have. Go with an open mind and not be afraid to ask questions, no matter how small or silly you may think it might be.

Cynthia: When my husband and I first heard of open adoption it scared us to death. Would someone come and just knock on our door to see our child? We learned through our info sessions and talking to other adoptive families how unique this journey could be. Two unique journeys and a very huge family now, we wouldn't have it any other way.

Melissa: We looked at "open" adoption as an amazing gift. We often thought about how the birth mother must feel about placing her baby and how scary it is for her... this way she would always know how her baby is doing and growing.

Stephane: My first bit of advice is to meet with couples who have been through the process. Listen to their stories; ask very open and honest questions about their process. The process can be very overwhelming and it's certainly educational. You learn a lot about yourself during this time. It is a very emotional journey but certainly one worth taking.

Barb: I think open adoption is like marriage, when you open your heart to your new child, you get new, bigger families - the good the bad and the truly awesome!

Ashley: The birthmother or birthfather that chooses you as the adoptive family will feel the same way. Wondering if they are choosing the right family. Talk to as many adoptive parents as you can and hear all of the fears and joy! The classes are amazing and the information and knowledge you receive is priceless.

AFTH Holiday Party Recaps

ALLENTOWN

The Allentown office of Adoptions From The Heart held their annual Holiday Cookie Exchange on December 1st. Thank you to everyone that came out for an afternoon of holiday fun. Time was spent making holiday crafts, eating lots of cookies and finally being able to catch up on the past year. We look forward to seeing everyone again in December 2013.



VIRGINIA

The AFTH Chesapeake staff were joined by 73 others in celebration of the holidays. Guests included adoptive families and their children, three birthparents who were visiting with their children, and even some families currently awaiting placement.

Some fabulous door prizes were awarded and Santa even found time in his busy schedule to stop by to visit with the children. We look forward to gathering together again next year.

WYNNEWOOD

The AFTH Wynnewood office had their 1st annual Holiday Party on December 3rd. Thank you to everyone who joined us for an evening of holiday fun. Time was spent meeting new families, creating arts and crafts, eating lots of goodies and cookies, and being able to catch up with each other. All the social workers really enjoyed spending time with past and present families. We hope that every family was able to connect with a new family and talk about their adoption journey. We look forward to seeing everyone at next year's holiday party.



CENTRAL PA

The Central PA Office had their annual holiday party on December 6, 2012. We had a great time with the entire office filled with wonderful families. Many were from PA but we had a few from New Jersey and even as far as Minnesota! It was great to catch up with birth and adoptive families. The children were busy with our life-size Snoopy and Charlie Brown. This year we asked that families make donations for the Water Street Mission and our families were more than generous. We took great pride in being able to assist those who need a helping hand this holiday season. A great time was had by all and we hope to see everyone again next year!

CHERRY HILL

Cherry Hill's Holiday Open House was very well attended. Adoptive parents had an opportunity to socialize with other parents and the children enjoyed making holiday ornaments to bring home with them. The group included several infants placed within the past few months and children up to age 11 adopted both domestically and internationally. It was wonderful for the staff to see all of the happy families and we appreciate everyone taking time out during the busy holiday season to spend a few hours with us.

CONNECTICUT

AFTH's Connecticut office enjoyed a wonderful afternoon at the Homewood Suites to kick off the holiday season! Tom Balga amazed us with his magic, Santa made a special appearance, and our wonderfully talented Office Manager, Brenda Schack, dazzled us with her face painting skills! As always, the Homewood Suites provided us with tasty and plentiful refreshment for all. We hope to see even more families next year.



Spring 2013 Adoption Education Series



Not Only Building Beautiful Families, but Helping to 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.

♥ Bethlehem, PA

Understanding the Affects of Drugs and Alcohol in Pregnancy

Understanding the Affects of Drugs and Alcohol in Pregnancy will focus on allowing adoptive parents to develop a deeper understanding of the short and long term affects of substances throughout pregnancy. Time will be spent on the profile key to allow an in depth discussion on the specific substances listed. Please bring any questions or concerns that you might have.

Saturday, May 19, 2013

1:00pm-3:00pm

\$10/person or \$15/couple

Call (610) 432-2384 with questions.

♥ Chesapeake, VA

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

Join Angela Rahn, RN from CHKD and an adoptive parent as she teaches the basics of infant and childcare in a relaxed and comfortable setting with other adoptive and pre-adoptive parents. The class includes newborn care, feeding, sleeping, adjustment to parenthood, swaddling techniques, and much more. This is an excellent class for all adoptive families.

Wednesday, March 13, 2013

6:00pm-7:30pm

\$10/person or \$15/couple

Call (757) 361-0008 with questions.

♥ Cherry Hill, NJ

Birth Parent Updates: A Guide for Adoptive Parents

For most birth parents, receiving their letter and picture updates is an eagerly anticipated event. The purpose of this class is to assist adoptive parents in preparing updates that the birth family will treasure and that will confirm that they selected the right family to parent their child.

Wednesday, April 10, 2013

7:00-8:30pm

\$10/person or \$15/couple

Call (856) 665-5655 with questions.

♥ Harrisburg, PA

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

Learn the basics of infant and childcare in a comfortable setting with other adoptive parents and pre-adoptive parents. This class includes newborn care, feeding, and sleeping adjustment, to parenthood and more.

Monday, April 22, 2013

6:30-8:00 PM

\$20/person or \$35/family

Call (717) 399-7766 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

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

Price is \$20/person and \$35/couple if noted with ♥

# Attending	Cost	Topic/Location
		<u>Drugs/Alcohol During Pregnancy</u> Bethlehem, PA
		<u>Birthparent Updates</u> Cherry Hill, NJ
		<u>Caring for Infants & Older Babies</u> Chesapeake, VA
	♥	<u>Caring for Infants & Older Babies</u> Harrisburg, PA
		<u>Affects of Drugs & Alcohol</u> Hockessin, DE
		<u>Profile Key Selections</u> Lancaster, PA
		<u>Talking to Child about Adoption</u> Wynnewood, PA

Total Amount Enclosed: _____

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

Phone: () _____ - _____

Email: _____

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

♥ Hockessin, DE

Affects of Drugs/Alcohol During Pregnancy

We will be having Dr. Amy Renwick, the co-director of the Adoption Consultation Service at Nemours/Alfred I. DuPont Hospital for Children provide families with some helpful information regarding drug and alcohol exposure during pregnancy. This information will assist waiting families in making educated decisions on the profile key as well as providing insight for those with children already placed. Please come and join us with your questions.

Saturday, April 13, 2013

11:00am-1:00pm

\$10/person or \$15/couple

Call (302) 658-8883 with questions.

♥ Lancaster, PA

Profile Key Selections-Hepatitis B & C and HIV+/Drug Exposure

Philip Goropoulos is the President/CEO of Alder Health Services. He will present helpful information regarding Hepatitis B & C and HIV+. As you complete or update the profile key you want to be educated about these options so you can make an informed decision. Philip has years of experience in the field and he will answer all your questions. Jean Young is an NICU nurse at York Hospital and she will speak about drug exposed infants. Join us to learn more about this important medical information.

Tuesday, May 21, 2013

6:30-8:00 PM

\$10/person or \$15/couple

Call (717) 399-7766 with questions.

♥ Wynnewood, PA

Talking to Your Child about Adoption

Dawn Connors from Main Line Adoption Counseling Service will conduct an open forum on talking to your child about adoption. Topics that will be discussed will include identity and racial issues, advocacy issues within the school, and grief and loss for the child.

Monday, April 8, 2013

6:30pm-8:30pm

\$10/person or \$15/couple

Call (610) 642-7200 with questions.



Recent Legislation



ADOPTION TAX CREDIT - On January 1, 2013, Congress passed the American Taxpayer Relief Act of 2012 which became law on January 2, 2013, when President Obama signed it into law. The Adoption Tax Credit was one of the provisions of the Economic Growth and Tax Relief Reconciliation Act of 2001 which has now been made permanent. The adoption community had been nervously awaiting the extension of the tax credit and was excited to learn that it was made permanent and not just extended temporarily as expected.

The basic ground rules for the tax credit have remained the same. The IRS has just announced the maximum credit as well as the income limits for eligibility which are adjusted each year in accordance with the cost of living. The maximum credit for 2013 is \$12,970 and the credit begins being phased out for taxpayers with a modified adjusted gross income of \$194,580 and phases out completely at \$234,580. The tax credit will remain flat for special needs adoptions, which means that people who adopt children who are determined to be special needs (or hard to place) by a state or county child welfare agency can claim the maximum credit regardless of their expenses.

The main change to the Adoption Tax Credit for 2013 is that it is no longer a “refundable credit” as it was in 2010 and 2011 which means that the adoptive parents’ tax liability will determine the amount of credit able to be applied that particular year. However any unused portion of the tax credit can be carried over for up to five years which will allow the credit to be used in its entirety for most adoptive families. Be sure to talk with your tax preparer about how the Adoption Tax Credit will benefit your family.

UTAH - Utah Supreme Court ruled in favor of a Florida birthfather whose rights were terminated before he was notified that he even had a child. The court found that there was no basis to conclude the father knew or reasonably could have known what occurred. The decision was made to return the child to her father.

MICHIGAN - There are bills before the Michigan House that would permit private adoption agencies with state contracts to reject prospective adoptive parents on any moral or religious basis. This could ultimately undermine a child’s best interest and may be a move to prevent LGBT families from adopting.

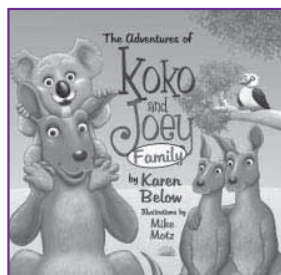
UN CHILDREN’S RIGHTS PANEL SEEKS TO BAN “BABY BOXES” IN EUROPE - Similar to the Safe Haven laws in the U.S., “Baby Boxes” facilitate anonymous infant abandonment and are available in about 11 European countries. Over the last decade, hundreds of babies have been abandoned this way although limited surveys suggest that it has not reduced the number of infant murders. Committee members note that the boxes undercut children and parent’s rights and do not address the causes of abandonment and discourage women from accessing medical care.

WASHINGTON STATE - Pursuant to a law passed this year, Washington State’s Department of Social and Health Services is asking 9,000 families who adopted children with special needs to voluntarily reduce the size of their monthly subsidies. The law also reduces the amount families can receive in adoption assistance to 80% of foster care maintenance payments for new contracts as of July 2013. Currently families are able to receive equal amounts.

Wells Fargo Honors Work in Community

AFTH was again nominated by Roy Detweiler, an adoptive parent who adopted his daughter from China through the Allentown Office. Wells Fargo presented AFTH with a \$1,000 donation in honor of being a non-profit who has played a positive role in the lives of women, children, and families in the Allentown and surrounding communities. AFTH is proud to be a Wells Fargo honoree and remains dedicated to providing quality service to all members of the adoption triad not only in the Allentown area but nation-wide.

Book Reviews

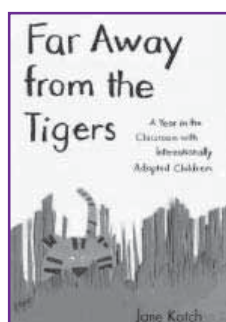
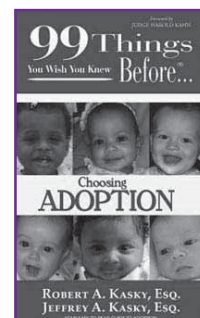


The Adventures of Koko and Joey: Family by *Karen Below* - When Mr. Kookaburra meets the Roos family, he learns about adoption and that family is where people love you. This give a good explanation along with fun characters to explain what adoption is and why some kids don't always look like the rest of their family.

Amazon.com price \$7.08

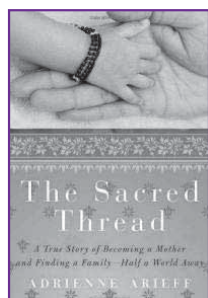
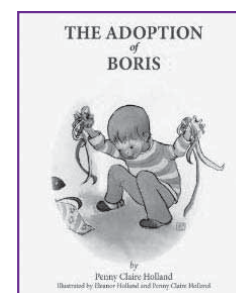
99 Things You Wish You Knew Before Choosing Adoption by *Robert & Jeffrey Kasky* - Although some of the legal aspects are more geared to adoption in Florida, it is a quick read with lots of great information and a good starting point for those considering adoption. The book is filled with information about risk, termination of parental rights, explanation of expenses adoptive parents can and cannot pay to potential birthmothers, birthparent rights, special needs adoptions, future contact agreements, and surrogacy.

Amazon.com price \$11.23 Kindle Edition \$2.99



Far Away from Tigers: A Year in the Classroom with Internationally Adopted Children by *Jane Katch* - There are plenty of books out there that help teachers work with adopted children but what makes this one special is that it tells a lot of the stories in the children's own voices. Through their stories and their parents stories you walk in their shoes and if you listen carefully you might learn the right questions to ask so that you can find the best answer to help these children learn. Beautifully written and easy to read this book is great for parents and teachers. Amazon.com price \$17.55 Kindle Edition \$9.99

The Adoption of Boris by *Penny Claire Holland* - Chris receives a stuffed dinosaur as a present which he decides to adopt. Chris's adoption of his dinosaur, Boris leads him on a journey of exploration over what adoption means. He creates an adoption book for his dinosaur just like his parents made one for him. This is an adorable story and a great way to explain adoption to a child. Amazon.com price \$9.15



The Sacred Thread: A True Story of Becoming a Mother and Finding a Family Half a World Away by *Adrienne Arieff* - A Beautifully written book about the struggle with infertility and a woman's gift half a world away. Adrienne, unable to conceive, turned to a clinic in a remote village in India to find a surrogate. The two women bonded during the pregnancy and although they spoke different languages, they learned how to communicate. Adrienne's journey is one of hope, love and culture. Amazon.com price \$15.99 Kindle Edition \$11.99

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

AFTH Program Updates



DOMESTIC PROGRAMS - As we look back at 2012, Adoptions From The Heart is very proud of all we have been able to accomplish this year. It has been another successful year of placements, and we have met some amazing families on this journey. We want to thank all of our adoptive families who have chosen AFTH and we feel blessed to have been a part of building your family.

AFTH had a terrific year of placements in 2012. For details see Letter from Maxine on page 4.

AFTH staff continued to work hard through the holiday season. Postcards were sent to all the local hospitals reminding them that social workers are available to help counsel their patients who are requesting information about adoption. We had several placements over the holidays and were able to provide our services to all of our clients during this busy time of year.

Thank you to all who participated in our special National Adoption Month Projects which benefitted the AFTH Birthmother Fund. Lots of people purchased hearts in our offices as well as the local business which participated as a part of our Paper Heart Project throughout the month of November.

Prior to the holidays, AFTH identifies birthmothers in need of financial assistance who are parenting other children at home. AFTH donates gift cards for groceries, clothing and toys for the holidays. For many, this is the only way they can do something special for their children. Many of you chose to donate gift cards this year to help AFTH support these families and we want to thank you for your generosity! *(See page 1-2 for details and thank yous from those who received the donations)*

Support groups are available at many of our local offices for our families awaiting placement *(see upcoming support groups on page 9)*. We hope that you will come out and join us for a time of coming together in support and sharing of experiences. This is a great time to connect with other families who are adopting and to receive updates from your AFTH social worker regarding the Domestic Program. You

can also stay connected with AFTH by following us on our different social media sites: Facebook, Twitter, Google+, Pinterest, and our blog on WordPress.

We also encourage families to stay in the loop with agency updates related to the domestic program by signing up for our domestic listserve. Waiting families can subscribe by sending a message with the word "SUBSCRIBE" in the subject line to:

AFTHDomesticUpdates-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

And AFTH also has an online domestic discussion group for families (waiting and placed) to connect, to support, and to share their experiences with others. To join the domestic discussion group on yahoo, send an email with "SUBSCRIBE" in the subject line to:

AFTHopenadoption-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

Please look for our upcoming Education Series starting in the spring. This is a great time for families to continue their learning on adoption. Spring classes include: Drug & Alcohol Affects During Pregnancy, Birthparent Updates, Infant Care, Profile Key Selections, and Talking to Your Child about Adoption.

Information and registration for our ed series classes as well as our monthly informational meeting and webinars can be found on the AFTH calendar of events at <http://www.afth.org/events/calendar.php>

CHINA - Assignments continue to be made slowly. The CCCWA has made referrals through October 10, 2006 which may change in a few days. The LID for AFTH families who transferred to Carolina Adoption Services is October 20, 2006. There are actually three families left out of an original group of 16 who have been waiting for seven long years. We are amazed by their tenacity and we hope their wait will be over soon.

Upcoming Conferences

Be sure to visit the AFTH booth. For details on the events, visit our calendar of events at www.afth.org.

March 9-10

The Original LGBT Expo in New York, NY



HEARTBEATS - AFTH is excited to announce that another family in our *Surrogacy in India Program* has just learned of their surrogate's pregnancy. The family is extremely excited and we wish them continued success throughout the rest of the surrogacy process.

To learn more about the *Surrogacy in India Program*, join us for a free online webinar. Webinars for this program are held every other month and the next one is scheduled for March 12th at 7pm. Visit the online calendar of events to register or contact Roberta Evantash at (610) 642-7200 or RobertaE@afth.org for additional information about the program.

AFTH continues to hold free online webinars every other month for those interested in learning more about the *Heartbeats Embryo Placement Assistance Program*.

Wait times for intended parents in the embryo placement program to be matched with donors are still only 1-2

months. And so the program remains an excellent option for families in which a woman is able to carry an embryo donated by another family.

The next free informational webinar for the Embryo Placement Assistance Program is scheduled for 6pm on March 14. This webinar is a great way to learn about the program and to ask the program coordinator any questions you may have regarding the process.

AFTH's Embryo Education Series is one of the only detailed educational curriculums of its kind. Through it, those creating their family via embryo placement will receive vital education regarding issues and concerns for before, during, and after the embryo placement process. These in-depth classes address talking with children about embryo placement, potential contact with genetic relatives, and many other related topics unique to embryo placement.

Please visit AFTH's online calendar at www.afth.org to register for the webinars. Any questions about AFTH's embryo placement services can be directed to Sam

AFTH Support Groups

CENTRAL PA

Small, informal gathering for birthparents to come together, get to know each other by sharing their stories. RSVP by April 25th.

Tuesday, April 30th from 6:30-8:00pm

Call (717) 399-7766 or email AmandaK@afth.org

Support group for recently placed and waiting families are also being held. Contact for more details.

Email AmandaK@afth.org for upcoming dates.

VIRGINIA

Adoptive parent support groups bring AFTH waiting families together. Contact for details.

Call (757) 361-0008 or email NicoleF@afth.org

Cherry Hill

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 by Wednesday, Feb 13th for time slots between 6:30-8:30pm.

Tuesday, February 19th from 6:30-8:30pm

Call (856) 665-5655 or email TheresaG@afth.org

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

Call 856-665-5655 or Email TheresaG@afth.org

DELAWARE

Birthparent support groups are designed for birth mothers and fathers who have placed children through AFTH since 2006 to come together in support. Those considering making an adoption plan are also welcome. Refreshments served. RSVP by Jan. 31st.

Saturday, February 9th from Noon-2:00pm

Call 302-658-8883 or Email DanielleG@afth.org

Support groups bring AFTH waiting families together in support.

Call 302-658-8883 or Email DanielleG@afth.org for Details.

WYNNEWOOD

Adoptive parent support groups bring AFTH families together in support during the "wait". RSVP by 2/28/2013

Monday, March 4 from 6:30-8:00pm

Email AshleyK@afth.org or Call 610-642-7200 to Register.

CONNECTICUT

Waiting family support groups will be offered throughout the year for families to come together and share their experiences. Contact office for details.

Call (860) 657-2626 or Email 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



In what can only be characterized as a tragedy, on December 28, 2012, Russian President Vladimir Putin signed legislation into Russian Federal Law prohibiting the adoption of Russian children by United States

citizens. This law went into effect on January 1, 2013. The sudden ban on intercountry adoption from Russia to the U.S. followed, by a matter of weeks, passage of a U.S. law critical of Russia's human rights record. Although the U.S. legislation was unrelated to issues of child welfare, the closure of adoption from Russia to the U.S. can only be viewed as a retaliatory political maneuver on Russia's part. At present, the U.S. Department of State (USDOS) is urging the Russian government to honor the bilateral adoption agreement between the two nations (which was signed in 2011 and just entered into force on November 1, 2012), at very least to the extent that it permit American families already in the process of adopting a child from Russia to complete their adoptions.

This development is heartbreaking for so many, and foremost for Russia's orphaned children, estimated to number more than 700,000. It clearly delivers the message that Russia's government places political brinkmanship ahead of their wellbeing. Intercountry adoption was never, nor was it ever designed to be, a primary solution for the needs of Russia's child welfare system. As I can professionally and personally attest, however, it did make every difference in the world for the approximately 60,000 children who found love and permanency via this process. Our hearts go out to those relegated to a childhood of institutional care, and to future prospects thereby so terribly compromised.

In news regarding other countries:

Cambodia: Cambodia's Secretary of State for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced on October 29, 2012, that Cambodia has agreed to resume adoptions with the United States as of January 1, 2013. The Secretary added that the annual number of such adoptions would not exceed 200. USDOS, however, issued notice on January 2, 2013 that it is unable to process adoptions from Cambodia at this time. Rather, the notice states that Cambodia would first need to further "strengthen its child welfare system and

improve the integrity of its domestic and intercountry adoption processes." As background, there has been a moratorium on adoptions from Cambodia to the U.S. since 2009, and no such adoptions have occurred since 2006.

Haiti: Haiti's new administrative adoption procedures went into effect prior to the end of 2012. At that time Haiti's adoption authority, l'Institut du Bien Etre Social et de Recherches (IBESR), indicated that it would continue to process adoption cases submitted through November of 2012 under pre-existing adoption procedures. The new adoption law centralizes the referral of children for intercountry adoption with IBESR. It further requires that IBESR interview such children's surviving biological parents to obtain their informed pre-consent prior to IBESR determining children's potential eligibility for intercountry adoption. The new procedures prohibit "independent" adoptions, and instead require that all future cases be processed by U.S. adoption service providers (ASP's) licensed by IBESR to perform adoption services in Haiti. The present expectation is that Haiti may license 4 or 5 U.S. ASP's, and that it may issue these licenses in January. Taking a broader view of the plight of Haitian orphans, current estimates are that 50,000 children are residing in Haitian orphanages. The care in many of these is poor, evidenced in the Haitian government's closing of 26 such institutions within the past year due to substandard conditions. And, beyond the aforementioned number of children, it is further estimated that between 250,000 to 500,000 Haitian children are being forced to work as domestic servants, or "restaveks" (Haitian Creole for "stay with"), according to the International Organization for Migration.

India: In order to clear a backlog of cases, as of December 1, 2012, India placed a temporary freeze on its acceptance of new applications from foreign ASP's. India's Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA) announced at that time that it would continue to process previously registered applications. It is hoped that CARA will resume allowing registration of additional prospective adoptive families as of February of 2013.

Kyrgyzstan: Of the original 65 North American families whose adoption processes were placed into limbo in

International Adoption News Cont'd

2009 when a moratorium on adoptions from Kyrgyzstan went into effect, 16 families continue to pursue the adoption of children referred to them. Of the balance of families, approximately 20 have since experienced the adoption of referred children by Kyrgyz families, 18 have abandoned their adoption process, 9 have brought adoptive children home to the U.S. and, tragically, 2 children have died of illness while remaining under Kyrgyz state care.

In the meantime, the government of Kyrgyzstan continues to experience frequent change, including having had 5 different Prime Ministers since 2009. Further, the Social Development Minister and Assistant Minister, whose office is in charge of accrediting international adoption agencies, were each arrested during the past summer for, allegedly, accepting bribes. And, as ever, children's homes (ie. orphanages) continue to be overcrowded by the 11,000 orphans (as estimated in 2011 by Radio Free Europe) living in them.

Ukraine: While the number of Ukrainian orphans annually adopted by American families has remained fairly steady over the past decade, the number of such children being domestically adopted by Ukrainian families has increased, including some 1,300 in the first 8 months of 2012. Under current Ukrainian legislation, foreigners are eligible only for the adoption of orphans over the age of 5 and/or those with health difficulties. According to Ukraine's Social Policy Minister, there are approximately 26,000 children waiting for adoption in the Ukrainian database, of which 24,000 are over the age of 5 and/or have special needs.

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

Anthony & Sharon
David & Julie
William & Jamie
Seth & Ilyssa (twins)
Toby & Mary
Marcus & Amanda
Marcia & Patricia
Joseph & Sherry
Keith & Karen
Scott & Nicole
Christopher & Caren
Karl & Samantha
Timothy & Lynn
Joel & Angela
Scott & Kristen
Tim & Carla
John & Cindy
Joseph & Nancy
James & Theresa
Jon Darren & Gina

Daughters

Laura & Barbara
Michael & Tania
Ira & Andrea
James & Kimberly
Jonathan & Melissa
Michael & Amy
Andrew & Deana
Shawn & Kerry
Jerrold & Sherri
James & Kari
Joshua & Lindsey
Charles & Michel
Sean & Danielle
Justin & Mindee
Taylor & Jessica
James & Monica
Eston & Marisa
James & Jill





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2013

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Are your name and address incorrect? Want to be removed from mailings? Are you receiving more than one copy? Let us know: adoption@afth.org

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FREE ONLINE WEBINARS

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

DOMESTIC INFANT ADOPTION

MARCH 5TH AT 7PM

SURROGACY IN INDIA

MARCH 12 AT 7PM

EMBRYO PLACEMENT PROGRAM

MARCH 14TH AT 6PM

Registration Required

Visit the Calendar of Events at 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

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