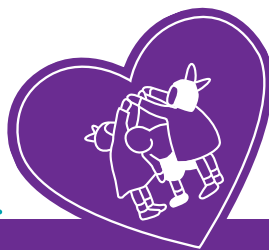


Adoption News



A Quarterly Newsletter from

Adoptions From The Heart

Winter 2014

AFTH Holiday Donation Aides 67 Children and 34 Mothers

AFTH Donated Over \$10,000 in Gift Cards this December

Just before the holiday season, AFTH identifies birthparents who are parenting children at home and are in need of a little financial assistance during the holiday season. This year, AFTH's gift card donations totaling more than \$10,000 helped 67 children and 34 mothers. 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 aided this project by making donations of gift cards. The gifts cards that were collected during the drive went directly into the hands of women and children in need.

After mailing out the gift cards, we heard back from many of the birthparents we have been able to help with the donations. Here are some of the thank yous the agency received showing how a little bit of financial help to mothers during the holiday season can make all the difference.

"Dear Donors: There are no words that could ever express my gratitude and gratefulness I felt when I received this most generous gift! My kids are able to have the kind of Christmas I never could have given them on my own. In honor of your generosity, my girls will choose several gifts and donate them to children who weren't as fortunate as they were. My wish to you, whoever you may be, is that God blesses you in everything that you do in every way that's possible. In honor of my beautiful son and his extraordinary parents, you will never be forgotten. My cup runneth over." Heather, a NJ birthmother

Melyssa of New Jersey writes "I just wanted to say thank you for the gift card. It really came in handy around this season. Now my daughter will have a better Christmas and it's all because of an angel in disguise like yourself."

Chelsey in our Allentown Office said that Brittany, one of the gift card recipients is a mother parenting three boys and will benefit greatly from the gift card donations. Brittany texted Chelsey "I wanted to thank you and AFTH for everything! Being a part of AFTH has been an amazing experience ...it [the gift card] is very much appreciated and I cannot thank you enough!"

Carrie, a birthmother from our Central PA office, emailed "Thank you so much for the gift card. I am using my mom's internet right now. Our internet is not working. It was a huge help!! Thank you very much"

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Insert:

Holiday Party Recaps
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Recent Legislation
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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

Tiffany, a birthmother from NJ sent in a hand written card thanking AFTH and all those who donated money to help provide the gift cards. "I thank you guys for everything you do for my family and I. And my son is in good hands because of your help. You guys really do an amazing job to help and please everyone and it really means a lot to my family and I. You guys are awesome and you rock! Thank you for your help with Christmas...I can't explain how grateful I am. Thank you. God bless you and your families! Muahh."

Chelsey in Allentown also received a thank you from Stephanie who said she was extremely excited about the gift cards from AFTH. She is so very grateful for the generosity of AFTH and those who made donations to help.



These women are not only thanking AFTH, **but they are also thanking all the families and adoption supporters who have made donations.** Thanking 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 end because the holiday season has passed and AFTH's Birthmother Fund needs replenishing so we are able to offer help to ALL those who need it 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 (form on page 6). Additionally, gift card donations (Visa, Target, Walmart, Acme, etc) are accepted year round and are passed directly to women in need.

1st Birthday Party Honors Adoption

It was a very special day of fun activities for Marin who was celebrating her first birthday. There was cake, flowers, paper hearts and calendars to go around. Wait, what? In honor of Marin's 1st birthday, her parents wanted to also celebrate by incorporating an adoption theme into the party. The family purchased an AFTH Paper Heart for each of their 40 guests and handed out the Building Beautiful Families Calendar to each family as well, both of which benefit the AFTH Birthmother Fund.

AFTH thanks Marin's family for their continued support and hopes that Marin had a fabulous 1st birthday!



On Your Mark, Get Set, Go Register

Registration Now Open for the AFTH Find Her Footing

The 2nd Annual Find Her Footing 5K Run, Walk and Kid's Dash hosted by AFTH will be here soon!

Sunday, April 6, 2014

Delaware County Community College in Media, PA

Proceeds raised from the Find Her Footing 5K will benefit AFTH's Birthmother Fund. The Birthmother Fund is used to help a woman working with the agency "Find Her Footing" before, during and after pregnancy. Many of these women are in need of extra financial assistance for food, housing, transportation, and medical care and for raising other children at home.

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. It's our hope that the Find Her Footing 5K will raise awareness and allow us to continue to help more and more women.

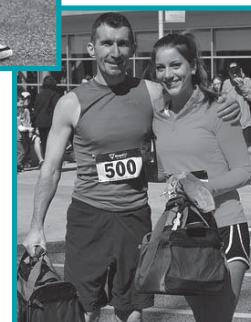
We hope to see even more participants join this year's event. The morning will begin at 9am with a 100 meter kid's dash (ages 2-10) sponsored by Boing! Bounce Rentals. The 5K walk/run will kick off at 9:30 and will include music, food, giveaways prizes and more.

Supporters already lined up for the AFTH 5K Include:
Bryn Mawr Running Club, Main Line Today, Delaware County Community College, Modell's Sporting Goods, PFIT Inc., and Boing! Bounce Rental, Tees With a Purpose

Those who in addition to participating also collect donations for the Birthmother Fund will be entered into a ***raffle to win a Samsung Galaxy Tablet*** donated by PFIT, Inc. for every \$25 raised.

To register, visit www.tiny.cc/FindHerFooting5K

For sponsorship opportunities or other questions, please contact JessicaA@afth.org.



National Adoption Month Paper Heart Project

National Adoption Month was a great success for Adoptions From The Heart! In addition to our branch offices, local businesses participated in our Paper Heart Project to raise money for our Birthmother Fund. A special thank you to Cedar Crest College (Allentown PA), Penncrest High School (Media PA), Friedman's Service Center (Fountain Hill PA), LevLane (Philadelphia PA), Sweet & Sassy Lehigh Valley (Center Valley PA), The Ice Cream Lab (Walnutport PA), Marias Salon (Vineland NJ), and Animal Haven Veterinary Center (Bear DE). We were thrilled with the support our Paper Heart Project recieved which raised over \$650 for our Birthmother Fund.

November was an extremely busy month on our social media with close to 600 new Facebook fans as well as a ton of interaction on the AFTH Twitter account with Retweets and Favorites from Celebrities! AFTH was proud to have another a very successful National Adoption Month Campaign and we thank all those who got involved in support of raising adoption awareness.

A Letter from Executive Director Maxine Chalker



Dear Friends:

Another year has begun for Adoptions From The Heart and we are proud to be beginning our 29th year of service. I began the agency in the basement of my home and it is incredible to see what “The Adoption Agency” now Adoptions From The Heart has developed into over time. AFTH strives to cultivate innovative strategies as a leader in the field of adoption in this changing world.

Overcoming challenges as they come is an integral part of our success. Our biggest challenge of 2013 was seeing our placement rate deviate slightly from our 5 year average of about 155-160 placements. Despite pregnancy rates dropping to their lowest since 1990 according to National Center for Health Statistics, AFTH continues to have hundreds of pregnant women reaching out to us to learn about adoption each year. With that said, AFTH is seeing signs of placements picking up as we begin the new year.

Counter to the slight decrease in placements, AFTH continues to see exciting statistics about family wait times. AFTH does not give an average wait time because no two client profile keys are alike. Every placement we see is unique and we cannot predict the types of situations we may have prior to them happening. Comparing one family’s wait time to another is comparing apples to oranges. So instead of averaging wait times, we can proudly state that as of January 2nd, of those families in our books awaiting placement **more than 3/4 of them (80% to be exact) have been waiting 1 year or less and the majority (58%) of the families in the books have actually been waiting 6 months or less!**

2013 was a year filled with exciting events. We kicked off our first Find Her Footing 5K in April with more than 100 participants raising over \$2,000 for our Birthmother Fund. In June, we celebrated our 25th annual picnic in Ft. Washington and had over 1,300 people attend. Our social media campaign for National Adoption month reached more than 500,000 Facebook users to help raise adoption awareness and in one day alone AFTH gained almost 1000 new followers. Additionally, we added a unique class to our education series line up in direct response to feedback we received from prospective adoptive families asking for more education on the effects of drugs and alcohol during the pregnancy. AFTH also hosted a very successful adoption conference “Adoption in the Changing World: Tools for Professionals and Families” in Connecticut back in October keynoted by Adam Pertman of the Adoption Institute.

At our above mentioned conference, Pertman spoke about the Institute’s study on how the internet is changing and impacting adoption. There are many benefits the internet has on adoption such as aiding in searches, allowing immediate and easy access to resources and education opportunities and as well as a providing a voice to adoption stories that might have otherwise be unheard. The internet has also opened up non-traditional opportunities for families pursuing adoption such as using facilitators and matching organizations as well as Facebook and craigslist to find expecting mothers. Pertman warns that these non-traditional avenues pose greater risks for families as well as expecting parents due to the lack of licensing and regulation as well as the high levels of internet scams. AFTH has seen an increase in feedback from attorneys and hospital social workers concerned about the extreme lack of counseling offered to expecting mothers as well as education for prospective adoptive parents. It is alarming and is more of a disservice to those involved. Professionals, expecting parents, and prospective adoptive parents turn to AFTH for our outstanding reputation for offering ethical and high quality personalized services to all those involved in the adoption process. AFTH understands the importance of counseling and in-person services as well as educating those pursuing adoption. Our social workers are there to support expecting mothers and fathers no matter what their final decision may be. Our services do not end after placement. Adoption is a lifelong journey and AFTH is dedicated for the duration.

To all those who made a donation to AFTH over the past year, we thank you for your generosity and for partnering with AFTH so we can continue our mission to help expecting parents, children and those looking to adopt. Congratulations to all the new families created in 2013 and a warm welcome to all those who have just begun their journey with AFTH.

Sincerely,

Maxine Chalker

Welcome to 2014: What's New at AFTH?

Adoptimist Premium Professional-Grade Advertising Package for Each Family Includes:

Home Page
About Page
Photo Album (Unlimited photos)
Video Album (Unlimited entries)
Diary (Unlimited entries)
Personal 800 Phone Number (will connect to AFTH)
Placement on Adoptimist's Social Networking sites
Featured Family Placement
Priority Placement on the first Our Families page
Highly Targeted Google Banner Ad Campaign

New Opportunity for Increasing Exposure of Families Featured on AFTH Website

AFTH is excited to announce to current and future clients that we are significantly increasing the exposure levels their online profiles will be receiving. In the past year and a half, we have had more and more women who have selected families directly from our website and because we know online exposure is working, we wanted to find a way to expand that opportunity to our clients. AFTH has teamed up with Adoptimist to help families get more exposure to pregnant women who may be considering adoption.

We will be offering a free premium membership on Adoptimist (a \$150/month value) FREE to all clients who currently have their profiles on our website. AFTH will create the profile on the Adoptimist site and then give families access to update their photos, add blog posts, and videos. Adoptimist will then take care of their promotion (*see side bar for premium package inclusions*).

New & Improved AFTH Website

At the very end of 2013, AFTH unveiled our new website design. If you haven't yet had a moment to check it out, take some time this week and visit www.afth.org. The website is more visual and has an easier flow to be more user-friendly and allow for more direct interaction. We will soon be adding video testimonials as well.

Allentown Office

Many families in the Allentown area have probably noticed a For Sale sign in our front lawn. We were trying to find an office to rent in the Bethlehem area but have not had any luck finding a place specific to our needs. Instead, we have decided to take our building off the market and make renovations to update our current space. So the good news is that we are staying right where we are!



New Jersey Office

AFTH is now certified to offer Continuing Education Hours to Social Workers in the State of New Jersey. Our training, "Infant Adoption Awareness," will enable the social work and/or health professionals to assist their clients who are considering an adoption plan and ensure that they feel safe, respected, and empowered throughout the process. AFTH's ability to offer CEU credits to hospitals and clinics has opened up doors for trainings, will increase the number of sources referring to our agency, and we hope to see more placements as a direct result of this service. If you or someone you know might be interested in this training, contact Kathryn Johnston at (856) 665-5655.

Call for Adoptive Parents to Join the AFTH Table at Conferences

As you may know, AFTH actively participates in conferences and expos by hosting tables as a way to promote our services to those interested in learning more about adoption. Due to the positive feedback we receive when adoptive families speak with prospective clients at our info meetings, we would also like to extend an opportunity for prospective clients at these events to speak with some AFTH families who have completed their adoption journey. Prospective clients really enjoy hearing directly from those who have walked the path before and so we are putting a call out to any adoptive parents who adopted through our domestic program who would be interested in joining us at the AFTH table at an upcoming conference or expo. We are looking for families who are willing to speak with prospective clients about their experience throughout the entire process. If you are interested in learning more about this opportunity, please email your social worker or you can also email KristyG@afth.org.



The Tori Jones Family

As you may recall, Tori Jones was adopted through the AFTH domestic program back in 2007. At 8 months of age, Tori was diagnosed with a rare and aggressive brain tumor. “Tori the Tank” as the CHOP nurses called her, defied all odds as she fought the tumor for almost 6 years. Unfortunately, Tori lost her battle in January of 2013. It has been a year since the Jones family’s tremendous loss, but because of the light that Tori brought into their lives, they are ready to begin the adoption process and become parents for a second time. It goes without saying that the Jones family is facing insurmountable medical bills. Over the years AFTH and supporters have donated to the Tori Fund that AFTH created to help offset those medical costs. AFTH would now like to welcome donations to the **Tori Family Fund** to help the Jones family grow. **AFTH will match any donations we received for the Tori Family Fund in addition to adding money to the total amount raised to help offset the adoption expense for the family.**

Donations may be made online at www.afth.org or by mailing checks to (please add Tori Family Fund in memo):

The Tori Family Fund

C/O Adoptions From The Heart

30-31 Hampstead Circle

Wynnewood, Pa 19096

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

Also Accepting
Online Donations:
www.afth.org

How would you like your donation to be used?

- ☐ **TORI FAMILY FUND (AFTH will match you donation amount)**
- ☐ 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.

AFTH Fall/Winter Event Recaps



ALLENTOWN

Allentown held its first annual Fall Festival at Seiple's Farm on October 26. Thank you to all of the families who came out to enjoy the festivities.

The afternoon included a hayride, pumpkin picking, corn maze and petting zoo. It was so nice to spend time and catch up with all our families. We look forward to seeing you again next fall.

CENTRAL PA

Lancaster Open House

Our Christmas gathering was held at the Central PA office on Thursday, December 12. It was a smaller crowd than last year but by no means did that mean less entertaining. Between the parents and the child there was not a moment of silence! Everyone left the party with plenty of energy from the sugary snacks provided. Families brought in donations to be taken to Water Street Rescue Mission.

Harrisburg Area Holiday Party

On December 10 a large crowd of children, birth parents, adoptive parents, prospective adoptive parents, and AFTH staff gathered at the Giant Community Center on Linglestown Road to celebrate the holiday season. We came together as a group and socialized for two hours while enjoying light refreshments. Some families came as part of an annual tradition, some did their annual visit, others came to talk to the social workers, and some came to speak to other families about their experience. Whatever the reason was for coming that night, everyone had a great time which could be seen by smiles, laughter, and chatter that filled the air. Families who came generously brought items such as baby wipes, diapers, and toys, which were donated to the Neighborhood Center in Harrisburg.

CHERRY HILL

The New Jersey office held a Mommy & Me play date on October 29 at Jellybean Jungle, a toddler activity center in Mt. Laurel, NJ. We are looking to expand this playgroup and hold quarterly play dates. If you live in the NJ/Eastern PA area and are interested in becoming a part of this play group, please call the Cherry Hill office for more information (856) 665-5655. We are hoping to hold a similar event this Spring.

CONNECTICUT

A fun time was had by all at the CT Holiday Party! We had over 50 people in attendance including Santa Claus who paid the children a visit. The Hilton Garden Inn, as always, provided us with a sumptuous lunch. The children enjoyed getting their faces painted, dancing and playing games. It was a wonderful time of making new friends and renewing old friendships.

VIRGINIA

The Virginia office celebrated the holiday season with their annual party at St. Martin's in Williamsburg. Present were birth, adoptive and waiting families. Santa visited the children and a pot luck buffet was enjoyed by all.

DELAWARE

Delaware's holiday party was a wonderful success! We had so many RSVPs that we quickly outgrew our office space and needed move the party from our office to the Kirkwood Library in Wilmington. We had 8 families show up which included 14 adults and 11 children. The children were able to color and do a word search (holiday themed) while the adults mingled and enjoyed the food, drinks and children running around!

WYNNEWOOD

The Wynnewood office had our 2nd annual holiday party on December 11th at the Haverford Library. Thank you to everyone that came out for an evening of holiday fun. We had over 30 families attend this year with more than 40 children. Time was spent meeting new families, creating arts and crafts, eating lots of goodies and finally being able to catch up on the past year. Our social workers really enjoyed being able to spend time with all the past and present families and we hope that everyone was able to connect with a new family and learn about their adoption story. We look forward to continuing this exciting tradition and adding more people to the AFTH family in 2014!



Spring 2014 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.

♥ Allentown, PA

Infant Care Class

Learn the basics of infant care in a comfortable setting with other prospective adoptive parents. This class will include everything you need to know about your newborn in those first few days and weeks at home. Nurse Educator Michelle Harvilla, RN will be teaching us everything about giving the first bath to perfecting the art of swaddling. Please join us for a morning of fun and learning. A light breakfast will be provided.

Saturday, April 19, 2014

10:00am-Noon

\$20/person or \$35/couple

Call (610) 432-2384 with questions.

♥ Cherry Hill, NJ

Surviving the Wait

The class is intended for couples and singles going through the domestic home study process or are currently waiting for placement. Adoption social workers will provide extensive tools and tips for prospective adoptive parents to utilize during the wait to help ease anxiety and stress. Staff will also discuss how to handle questions from family members and friends. Adoptive parents who have gone through the waiting process will be there to share their experience and offer advice and support.

Tuesday, April 8, 2014

7:00-8:30pm

\$10/person or \$15/couple

Call (856) 665-5655 with questions.

♥ Chesapeake, VA

Drugs, Alcohol and Mental Health During Pregnancy

Cleriece Whitehall, M.S.Ed., LPC, CCDP, QMHCM, QSACM, and Project LINK Supervisor will be providing crucial and helpful information on the effects of substance abuse and mental health conditions during pregnancy. The information will be helpful for prospective adoptive parents in making educated decisions when completing their profile key as well as providing insight for those families who have already received placements. Come and join us. Bring your questions.

Saturday, April 12, 2014

11:00am-12:30pm

\$15/person or \$25/couple

Call (757) 361-0008 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. April Stambaugh is a Certified Childbirth Educator and topics will include newborn care, feeding, and sleeping adjustment, to parenthood and more.

Monday, April 14, 2014

6:30-8:00 PM

\$25/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

**Prices Vary for Classes, Prices
Located Under Date & Time of Class**

| # Attending | Cost | Topic/Location |
|----------------|------|---|
| | | <u>Infant Care Class</u> Allentown, PA |
| | | <u>Surviving the Wait</u> Cherry Hill, NJ |
| | | <u>Drugs, Alcohol & Mental Health</u> Chesapeake, VA |
| | | <u>Caring for Infants & Older Babies</u> Harrisburg, PA |
| | | <u>Effects of Drugs & Alcohol</u> Hockessin, DE |
| | | <u>Estate Planning 101</u> Lancaster, PA |

Total Amount Enclosed: _____

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

Phone: () _____ - _____

Email: _____

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

♥ Hockessin, DE

Effects 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.

TENTATIVELY - Saturday, April 12, 2014

(date will be finalized soon, contact office for details)

11:00am-1:00pm

\$25/person or \$40/couple

Call (302) 658-8883 with questions.

♥ Lancaster, PA

Estate Planning 101 for Adoptive Families

Every parent must have a plan in place to protect their children if something were to happen to them. We are not cookie cutter families and often a one-size-fits-all estate plan will not serve us well. Our guest speaker Rachel Thiessen is an adoptee, adoptive parent, and local attorney and she will help us to navigate through this area of the law. This is a very important topic for all adoptive families and one not to be missed!

Monday, May 19, 2014

6:30-8:00 PM

\$10/person or \$15/couple

Call (717) 399-7766 with questions.

If you have any ideas for topics that you would like to see covered in a future education series, contact your social worker or email KristyG@afth.org.





Recent Legislation



RE-HOMING - HR3423 was introduced on Oct. 30. The legislation would:

- 1) add to Title IV-B, the purpose to “promote efforts to prevent children from entering the foster care system through the provision of pre- and post-adoptive support services;”
- 2) expand the definition of adoption support services in Title IV-B to support adoptions from other countries, in addition to domestic adoptions;
- 3) require states to spend at least 20 percent of savings from the Title IV-E/AFDC delink on pre- and post-adoptive support services;

- 4) provide grants for post-adoption mental health service programs for all adopted children;
- 5) require states to collect and report disruption and dissolution data; and
- 6) require GAO to report on “how children are advertised online for adoption,” how home studies and pre-adoptive training of prospective parents vary, the availability of quality post-adoption support; and “the reasons for adoption disruptions and dissolutions, and for the sending of adopted children to live with new families without notice to the appropriate authorities.”

The legislation, which does not call for increased funding, has six cosponsors and was referred to the Committees on Ways and Means and Energy and Commerce.

ACCURACY FOR ADOPTED ACT: S.1614 - This bill is currently awaiting a signature from President Obama. It has already passed the House and the Senate. This act will help families who have adopted children from overseas whose birthdates were changed by their country of origin in order to help them get placed.

AFTH Support Groups

ALLENTOWN

Waiting families are encouraged to attend this support group and join together in support. Staff will have topics planned for discussion and time set aside to answer any questions or concerns you might have. Light refreshments will be served.

Monday, March, 10th at 6:30pm

Call (610) 432-2384 or Email TammyC@afth.org

CENTRAL PA

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

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

Call (717) 399-7766 or Email AmandaK@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 the Wednesday prior to the meeting for time slots between 6:30-8:30pm.

Tuesday, February 18th

Tuesday, March 18th

Call (856) 665-5655 or Email TerryP@afth.org

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 for details.

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

DELAWARE

Birthparent support groups are designed for birth parents to come together in support and to share their adoption story with others who have or who are considering adoption.

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

Waiting family support group is being held in February to bring Delaware waiting families together to share experiences and advice on coping with the wait.

Thursday, February, 13th at 6pm

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

VIRGINIA

Adoptive parent support groups bring AFTH waiting families together for extra emotional support during “the wait.”

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

WYNNEWOOD

Support groups for waiting families. The topic will be extended family questions and reactions to adoption. All prospective families are encouraged to invite extended families to attend the group as well.

Tuesday, February, 11th at 6:30pm

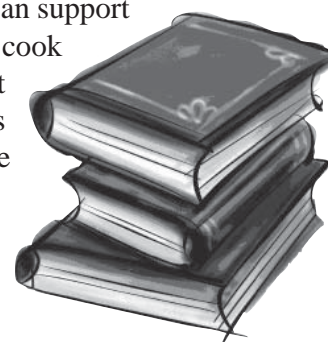
Email AshleyK@afth.org or Call 610-642-7200

Adoption Related Books at Unbeatable Prices

Not only can you snag up some great adoption related books at fabulous prices, you can support AFTH in the process. We have books on international adoption, domestic adoption, cook books, country specific books, children's books, books about birthparent, books about transracial adoption, books that every prospective adoptive parent should read, books for adoptees and so much more. Start your search here and take advantage of these amazing prices before our inventory runs out:

AFTH's Amazon Storefront: <http://tiny.cc/AFTH-Amazon-Sales>

AFTH Blog Recommends: <http://tiny.cc/AFTH-Book-Store>



Book Reviews



I Love My Hair! by Natasha Anastasia Tarpley

- Written for ages 4-8yrs. A young African-American girl describes the familiar mother-daughter nightly ritual of combing the tangles out of her hair. When she cries because it hurts, her sympathetic mother tells her how lucky she is to have such beautiful hair. Imaginatively, the woman goes on to say that she can spin it into a fine, soft bun or "plant rows of braids" along her scalp, prompting her daughter to think of other wonderful things she likes about her hair. A great book that celebrates the beauty of African-American hair.

Amazon \$6.88

In Search of a Family: A Story of an International Adoption by Kevin & Ginger Carlisle

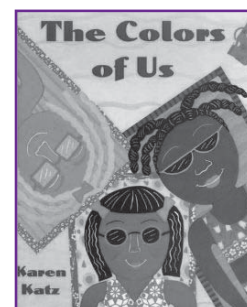


- This was a great book about Ukraine adoption. It really showed the beauty of the country and all the ups and downs of international adoption. This easy to read this book takes you on a journey with this family as they go through the adoption process to adopt siblings from Ukraine. It was uplifting to read about how

this family adapted to the changing situations, the sometimes less than hospitable living conditions, the strangeness of the food, and just roll with the punches, making their time in Ukraine a positive adventure filled with humor. Amazon \$15.01 Kindle \$8.97

The Colors of Us by Karen Katz

- A mother and daughter take a walk through their neighborhood noticing all the varying shades of brown. This is a great book to explore the unique variations in everyone's skin tone. It doesn't talk about race, or adoption just about the beauty in all the different colors people come in. Paperback \$7.19 Hardcover \$13.35



Hypothetical Future Baby: An Unsentimental Adoption Memoir by Claudia Chapman

- Great read! Chapman has some big questions like "will the social worker notice if I only vacuum the middle of the rooms" and "what would people think if they find out I sometimes

pretend my cat is a baby?" This book captures the many emotions and challenges surrounding adoption, becoming a trans-racial family and the loss experienced with infertility. From England to Ethiopia and back again, this memoir is the story of what happens next. It's a story about doing something different from what everybody else is doing. It's a story about getting the house really, really clean. It's a story about paperwork, pregnancy announcements, wrestling with God, falling down, getting up, coming to terms, and - eventually - it's a story about becoming a mother. This book will have you crying and laughing out loud. Amazon \$10.79 Kindle \$4.99

AFTH Program Updates



DOMESTIC PROGRAMS - As we look back at 2013, Adoptions From The Heart is very proud of all our accomplishments over the past year. We had another year of successful placements and we want to congratulate all the new families created this year and welcome all our new clients who are awaiting placement. We thank you for choosing AFTH as your agency to guide your adoption journey this coming year.

Check out what's new in 2014 for AFTH on page 5 and the wonderful statistics about wait times included in the year-end letter from AFTH Executive Director Maxine Chalker on page 4.

IMPORTANT REMINDER TO OPEN ADOPTION CLIENTS...please remember to include your first AND last names for internal use when sending photo and letter updates as well as gifts. We have received quite a few updates and packages from families for AFTH to pass along to birthparents however without enclosing a note including last names, it is difficult for us to know who the clients are based on first names alone. We understand some families desire to withhold last names in the letters themselves and so a note not to be forwarded along with the update listing them would be extremely helpful for our internal use.

AFTH continues to grow and connect with new organizations, clinics and hospitals. Our staff has been busy over the past few months attending many different adoption conferences across our service area which has helped to raise awareness about AFTH within the community. Some of the conferences we have recently attended were: two Women's Expos and Feria de la Familia in Connecticut, Let's Talk Adoption Conference (CPFA) in New Brunswick, NJ, Adoption Information Fair in Delaware, Delco Health Fair, Philly Family Pride, Philadelphia Women's conference, 7th Annual Orphan Care Expo in PA, RESOLVE conference in Massachusetts, and the APC Conference in New York.

We were excited to hold our very own conference "Adoption in the Changing World" geared towards professionals as well as prospective and adoptive

families on October 22nd in Middletown, CT at Wesleyan University. It was an exciting event with over 120 people in attendance. Adam Pertman of the Adoption Institute was our keynote and spoke about the internet's transformative impact on adoption. We received extremely positive feedback on the various workshops we held including: Attachment in Adoption, Understanding Adoption & Tools to Educate Others, LGBT Adoption, Medical Issues in Adoption, Legal Issues, Open Adoption Discussion, The Hospital Experience, Exploring Special Needs Adoption as well as various panels throughout the day. It was a wonderful networking event filled with adoption education.

AFTH social workers continued to answer the requests to provide personalized hospital trainings to their social workers on counseling women who are considering adoption in the hospital. This has been a great way for our agency to further educate hospital employees on adoption policies and practices as well as to connect with new hospitals.

AFTH offices were quite busy at the end of the year with special events including National Adoption Month events and holiday parties (see recaps in newsletter insert). The events are a great opportunity for local families, adoptees, and prospective adoptive parents to connect with others in the adoption community.

AFTH's 2013 Fall Education Series was very well received with lots of families in attendance. Topics included: Infant Child Care, Understanding the Effects of Drugs and Alcohol Use During Pregnancy, Explaining about Birth Siblings, Estate Planning, and Hair and Skin Care for Families Adopting Transracially. We listened to your feedback asking for more education on the effects of drugs and alcohol during pregnancy to aid families in filling out the profile key. Those classes were some of the highest attended classes we have ever seen and so we will continue offering similar topics to meet your request for additional education. Our Spring Ed Series line up can be found on the newsletter insert. Registration for the classes is now open. Be sure to register for the classes you are interested in right away as seats have been filling up quickly.

The Wynnewood office has decided to discontinue the Adoption Connections parent and child group due to lack of interest. However, we will gladly restart the group if interest arises. If you are interested in a parent and child activity groups to connect with other adoptive families in the Wynnewood area, please contact SamW@afth.org.

For those just beginning their adoption journey, AFTH offices hold regular information meetings and webinars for those interested in learning more about domestic infant adoption. The meetings and webinars are led by an AFTH social worker who is able to answer any questions you might have about the agency or the adoption process. The online webinars are similar to our in-office meetings however they focus on the domestic program specific to out-of-area families interested in working through AFTH as our services are available nationwide. For information or to register for upcoming webinars and meeting, visit our online calendar of events at www.afth.org.



CHINA - Former AFTH China Program families with a log in date (LID) of November 16, 2006, received referrals in November 2013. We were expecting assignments for only two families and instead received a total of seven assignments. Five of the families had already dropped out but somehow the CCCWA never removed them from their rolls. In fact, one family had already adopted a child with special needs from China. Even though we do not understand why the families who had already dropped out received assignments, we anticipate it may happen again. Of the five unexpected assignments, two families have accepted in addition to the two families who were expecting assignments. We applaud the families for hanging in there since 2006 and congratulate them on their expanded families!



HEARTBEATS - Families continue to show interest in AFTH's *Embryo Support Services*, with several having recently participated in agency-sponsored webinars. The program is 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 average approximately 1-2 months.

A free webinar is offered to those wishing more details and can be scheduled at your convenience. The webinar is a great way to learn about the program and to ask any questions you may have regarding the process.

The next Embryo Education Series will be offered in May and June. The webinars in this series address talking with children about embryo placement, potential contact with genetic relatives, and many other related topics. Please visit AFTH's online calendar at www.afth.org to register for the Embryo Education Series.

To schedule your free informational webinar, or to ask any questions you may have regarding the agency's Embryo Support Services, please contact Sam Wojnilower at SamW@afth.org or 610-642-7200.

Social Media Adoption Discussions are in Full Bloom!

Our social media has been exploding with content and thought-provoking adoption discussions over the past few months. Whether you are a prospective adoptive parent, birthparent, adoptee, or adoptive parent already, we want you to join in the discussion.

You can find us on:

**Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest,
Google+, WordPress & Tumblr**

AND...AFTH has just begun an online adoption book club. The first book we discussed was *Secret Thoughts of an Adoptive Mother*. Our next book will be announced in February so stay tuned.

Let's Get Talking!



International Adoption News

AFTH prides itself on keeping abreast of news and legislation regarding intercountry adoption. The agency continues to provide Home Studies, Education, Post-Adoption/Placement Reports and Services, and other assistance in support of international adoptions, despite no longer having placement programs in foreign countries. AFTH collaborates with many agencies across the United States that do provide intercountry adoption placement services. Please contact your local AFTH office to see how we can help you with your adoption process, including referring you to one of these partner agencies. For details on AFTH's intercountry adoption services, contact Sam Wojnilower at 610-642-7200 or SamW@afth.org.

Cambodia: In December, Cambodian Deputy Social Affairs Minister Nim Thoth announced that foreigners interested in adopting Cambodian orphans would be able to make application to Cambodia in the next year. However as it relates to American citizens, the U.S. Department of State (USDOS) will not allow such adoptions to process until Cambodia has "fully functional" adoption processes in place. As background, there have been no adoptions from Cambodia to the U.S. since 2007.

China: AFTH offers its warm congratulations to 2 families who recently brought their daughters home from China. These families had filed dossiers with the China Center for Adoption Affairs more than 7 years ago, in October of 2006. Paradoxically, after completing its own investigation, CNN has issued a sobering report that the number of children residing in Chinese orphanages has doubled since 2004.

Democratic Republic of the Congo: In September, the Congolese Ministry of Interior and Security, General Direction of Migration (DGM), informed the U.S. Embassy in Kinshasa that the DGM had suspended the issuance of exit permits for Congolese children seeking to depart the country with their adoptive parents. The suspension applies to all intercountry adoptions not only those involving U.S. prospective adoptive parents.

Guatemala: USDOS and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) issued an update regarding the status of pending adoption cases remaining since prior to the closure of adoptions from Guatemala to the U.S. back in 2008. There remain a total of 68 such "pipeline" cases, including:

- 20 pending conclusion under the CNA Acuerdo Process
- 5 post-adoptability pending referral under the CNA Acuerdo Process

- 8 post-adoptability pending court notification of adoptability to the CNA
- 9 pending conclusion under the PGN Notarial Process
- 26 pending "other" action

Haiti: Haiti has published the final version of its new adoption law. Two notable changes from the previous version are: Post-Placement Reports will be required by law for 8 years following placement of a child an only prospective adoptive parents that have "never been convicted for any crime" will be allowed to adopt Haitian orphans.

India: The Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA) has requested for USDOS, Adoption Service Providers, and adoptive families to inform CARA when a child adopted from India acquires U.S. citizenship. CARA is concerned about the citizenship status of children who entered the U.S. with IR-4 or IH-4 immigrant visas, based upon a guardianship order issued by an Indian court, with the intent to complete an adoption in the prospective adoptive parents' state of residence. USDOS cautions that non-U.S. citizens may face difficulty obtaining educational scholarships, qualifying for certain jobs, and enjoying other rights and privileges of citizenship. A lawful permanent resident might also be subject to removal from the U.S. if convicted of certain crimes or if other grounds for removal apply.

On a related note, adoptive families are reminded that acquisition of an adopted child's U.S. citizenship under the Child Citizenship Act might affect the child's Indian citizenship rights. Under Indian law, the child might be required to surrender his or her Indian passport and could be subject to penalties for failure to do so. Under Indian law, prior to obtaining any Indian consular services (such as an Indian visa), the child might also be required to renounce his or her Indian

International Adoption News Cont'd

citizenship. Those potentially impacted are encouraged to contact their local Indian embassy or consulate for further information.

Kazakhstan: The Kazakh delegation that recently visited the U.S. stated its strong desire to receive updates from adoptive families that have not fully complied with their commitment to complete post adoption reports and annual self-reports regarding the child(ren) adopted from Kazakhstan. These officials indicated that even receiving brief reports would be preferable to getting no reports at all. Adoptions from Kazakhstan to the U.S. stopped in 2011, and it is hoped that if enough reports are submitted, that this might provide support toward Kazakhstan resuming the processing of such adoptions.

Self-reports can be just one to two paragraphs in length, including a few photographs and an update on the child's current status. They do not need to be notarized or Apostilled. Kate Feedback of Nightlight Christian Adoptions has graciously offered to electronically accept these reports at kate@nightlight.org for forwarding to Kazakh authorities.

Vietnam: Per the 2008 citizenship law of Vietnam, children adopted from Vietnam must register with the Government of Vietnam by July 1, 2014 in order to retain their Vietnamese citizenship. After this date, those who do not register for retention will lose their Vietnamese citizenship. In order to reclaim their Vietnamese nationality, they would have to apply for restoration of Vietnamese citizenship, proving that they meet the conditions of the citizenship law of Vietnam and following a rigorous process that requires the approval of the President of Vietnam. Instructions on how to apply to retain Vietnamese citizenship can be found on the website of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.

Upcoming Conferences

Visit the AFTH booth at the below events.
Go to www.afth.org for event details.

March 23rd

AMETZ 20th Annual Conference -
"Adoption & the Family" held in
Manhattan, New York



Congratulations to Families Who Have Recently Adopted!

Sons

Natalie
Chester & Monica
Justin & Kelly
James & Cecilia
Andrea (twins)
Shane & Gina
Greg & Ellen
Noah & Kim
Mark & Alanna
Carlos & Joseph
Frederick & Yolanda
Michael & Julie
Jeffrey & Samantha
Brian & Marissa
Matthew & Carri
Geoff & Susan
Christopher & Kelly
Robert & Jennifer
Michael & Cynthia
Edward & Eileen (twins)

Daughters

Travis & Sarah
William & Lisa
Charles & Christine
Chao & Jennifer
Matthew & Elizabeth
Mark & Dylan
Martin & Dorothy
William & Annmarie
Mark & Joan
John
Melissa & Lora
Matthew & Kelly
Steven & Kimberly
Patrick & Janel





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Wynnewood, PA 19096

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or current resident

Is Our Mailing List Current?

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
FEBRUARY 4TH AT 7PM
MARCH 4TH AT 7PM

Registration Required
Calendar of Events at www.afth.org

Get SOCIAL Find AFTH On...

Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest,
Google+, WordPress & Tumblr

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