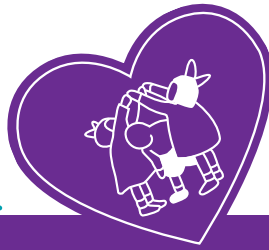


Adoption News



A Quarterly Newsletter from

Adoptions From The Heart

Winter 2015

AFTH Holiday Donation Aides 75 Children and 45 Mothers

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

Adoptions From The Heart works with hundreds of expecting mothers each year who are choosing to make adoption plans for their babies. Many of these women are facing extreme financial hardships that continue even after placement. AFTH social workers are dedicated to helping them find resources and obtain assistance to help with their needs.

Roughly one-third of women working with AFTH are also parenting other children. For a parent who is struggling to making ends meet, on top of living paycheck-to-paycheck the holidays can feel crippling. Every fall, AFTH social workers provide lists of birthparents who are parenting children who could really use a leg up during the holidays. The agency, in turn, purchases gift cards for food, clothing and toys to send those families.

Through our social worker's eyes, the agency has seen how much of an impact those gift cards can have for our families. We would like to share that heartwarming joy with all of our supporters and donors who make this holiday giving possible.

Chelsey, a social worker in our Allentown, hand delivered gift cards to two of her birthmothers this year.

Natasha was so very grateful. She said she did not know how to thank AFTH for such a wonderful gift. And Elba, another one of my birthmothers, was extremely overjoyed. I hand delivered hers and she could not believe the gift card. She explained that she was unsure how she was going to pull off Christmas gifts for her children but now she doesn't have to worry thanks to AFTH. She just could not stop thanking me.

Both of these women are very selfless and give everything they have to their children. It was an honor to be a part of them receiving the gift cards as it truly shows how a little can go a long way. The look and feel of relief

Cont'd on page 2...

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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

WYNNWOOD OFFICE

30-31 Hampstead Circle
Wynnewood, PA 19096
610.642.7200

TOLL FREE NUMBER

1.800.355.5500

VISIT OUR WEBSITE:

www.afth.org

when they opened the gift card was priceless and they were so very thankful. It feels good to be a part of an organization and greater community that are so giving to women and children who are so deserving of a happy holiday.

AFTH presented a total of \$10,950 in gift cards to 45 birthmothers and 75 children for the holidays. Natasha and Elba weren't the only women who shared the difference the gift cards made. Thank you notes and texts poured in to our social workers from their clients. Here are some more personal thank yous:



Thanks for the gift card, it really helped me out a lot. Thanks again and Happy Holidays. Me and the kids really appreciate what you have done since you came into our lives. - Jamika

I truly would like to thank you very much. I can't thank you enough. This means a lot to me after all that I have been going through from losing my home and also employment and by that you really gave me hope. Again thank you, thank you, thank you sooo much Kim. -Kiersten

Just wanted to say thank you for the gift card also for helping me with the adoption and for being a friend. Someone I needed at the time. I will never forget how kind and caring you truly are. Thank you - Lisa

Thank you so much. I got a gift card from AFTH today, that's so amazing. Y'all answered my prayers! - a birthmother in Virginia

I was having a "pooish" day and then I opened a Christmas Card from AFTH. Spread my gratitude please. Thank you all so much for every single thing. Big and small." - Central Pa

A special thank you to every person who donated to AFTH in 2014. Because of your generosity, AFTH has been able to pay it forward to many in need. We were especially blown away by the end-of-year giving this year. The donations that poured in for the Birthmother Fund and Birthmother Scholarship Fund during the last few weeks in December alone nearly doubled AFTH's annual appeal campaign contributions. We cannot thank you enough. Please know it is because of your support that our impact on people's lives is so great!

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

Rest assured, the need of gift cards doesn't end with the holiday season. AFTH offers gift cards (Visa, Target, Walmart & Acme) all year long to help meet the needs of our clients. Donations earmarked for the Birthmother Fund and Birthmother Scholarship Fund are appreciated online at www.afth.org. Donations and gift cards can also be mailed to AFTH at 30-31 Hampstead Circle, Wynnewood, PA 19096 and will be passed directly to women in need.

On Your Mark, Get Set, Go Register

Registration Open for the Find Her Footing 5K

The 3rd Annual AFTH Find Her Footing 5K Run, Walk and Kid's Dash is just around the corner...

Sunday, April 12, 2015
Delaware County Community College in Media, PA

Last year AFTH had over 180 participants and raised over \$4,500 in support of the Birthmother Fund. We welcome all runners and walkers to join in the fun. The morning will kick off at 9am with a Kid's Dash sponsored by Boing! Bounce Rentals immediately followed by the 5K run/walk.



Chris, an AFTH adoptive father, announced his plan to take it a step further - well, thousands of steps more actually. He will be completing a 50K.

That's not a typo. Chris will begin running in Delaware and will wrap up the last 5K with all the other participants.

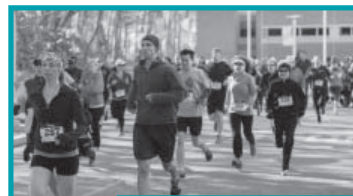
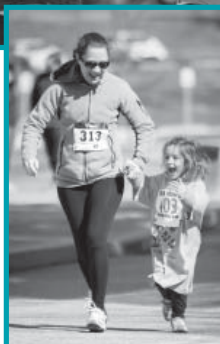
Proceeds raised from the 5K will benefit AFTH's Birthmother Fund. Every dollar raised directly impacts the life of a woman working with AFTH. Participants who collect donations for the Fund will be entered into a *raffle for every \$25 raised to win a Samsung Galaxy Tablet* donated by PFIT, Inc.

Register at www.afth.org/events using code [RUN4AFTH](#) before the end of February for a special rate.

Contact DennaA@afth.org with questions. For information on sponsorship or raffle donations contact DaniS@afth.org.



Run, Walk and Kid's Dash



Stuff the Bus Toy Drive

Adoptions From The Heart was thrilled to be one of the 2014 sponsors of Z104's Stuff the Bus toy drive. Each year, the station's goal is to collect toys for children in Hampton Roads.

The drive was held from December 1-5th with a goal to fill 15 buses top to bottom with toys. AFTH sponsored bus #6. At noon on their second to last day of the drive, they were closing in on filling bus #12 leaving them 3 buses to fill the last day of the event. We are excited to say that Z104 actually exceeded their goal of 15 buses and in the mad dash of donations in the last day they were able to fill 18 buses of toys for children. What a wonderful holiday it was for so many families in need because of the wonderful donors who made the drive a huge success.

A Letter from Executive Director Maxine Chalker



Dear Friends:

I can hardly believe this year will be Adoptions From The Heart's 30th year offering adoption services to the community. We have had a lot of amazing milestones along the way. We are most proud of the thousands of pregnant women who have turned to us for help, as well as the 6,423 and counting families who have been created through AFTH. 2014 has proven to be a very busy year for AFTH and below are just some of our highlights as we look back.

We closed the year with 156 placements, 15 placements more than in 2013. Statistically, the number of unplanned pregnancies is decreasing each year which means that an even higher percentage of women finding themselves in need of adoption assistance are trusting AFTH to help.

More and more pregnant women are turning to the internet to begin their own research about adoption before first contacting agencies. AFTH saw a great need for unbiased resources and information for women facing unplanned pregnancies and in response has developed and continues to sponsor a new website focused on pregnancy options for women facing unplanned pregnancies. The site www.pregnancyadoptionoptions.com covers a wide array of information including adoption, abortion and parenting. The site also has detailed information about pregnancy symptoms, week by week stages of a pregnancy, birth plans, how to tell family members, and details about labor and delivery. The site even has resources for family members of those facing unplanned pregnancies.

Adoption is a lifelong process that certainly does not end with placement. Rest assured, AFTH is here for the duration of the journey. In 2014, AFTH established a Birthparent Scholarship Fund. Twice a year, the AFTH board will review applicant and awards scholarships. We are excited to be announcing our first scholarship winner very soon.

AFTH is happy to share exciting waiting statistics for hopeful adoptive parents. Comparing one family's wait to another is like comparing apples to oranges because there are so many variables. However we *can* say that as of the first week in January of 2015, of those families in our books awaiting placement **the overwhelming majority (89%) are waiting less than 18 months. 66% are waiting less than 1 year and 42% of our families currently in the book are waiting 6 months or less. Families open to an African American child are seeing shorter wait times with 92% waiting less than 1 year and more than half only waiting 6 months or less.**

2014 was quite a busy year for AFTH. We hosted our 2nd Find Her Footing 5K in April which was incredibly successful with almost twice as many participants and raising more than double the previous year in donations for the Birthmother Fund. Our summer picnics had a lot of new families attend and many more reunions occurring. AFTH's social media presence continues to expand and a huge milestone was reached when our Facebook page hit 10,000 followers. AFTH offices have significantly increased the frequency of their childcare classes as well as ed series classes discussing prenatal drug and alcohol use which had become a staple for families completing their profile keys. Stories and news coverage highlighting AFTH's services have increased tremendously over the past six months which has in turn increased our awareness in the community. AFTH branch offices have hosted additional smaller fundraisers for the Birthmother Fund and the agency's Paper Heart Project which runs all November in honor of National Adoption month was able to raise a record breaking \$2,300 for the Birthmother Fund through the sale of purple hearts in business and schools who participated.

Congratulations to all the new families created in 2014 and a warm welcome to all those who have just begun their journey with AFTH. Special thanks to all those who generously donated this year in support of AFTH.

Sincerely,

Maxine Chalker

Mark Your Calendars: Upcoming AFTH Events

AFTH has a lot of exciting events planned for 2015 including the 3rd Annual Find Her Footing 5K, agency summer picnics, a 30th year anniversary event in the Philadelphia area, an adoption conference in Connecticut as well as other smaller office events and fundraisers. Watch for more details in the next newsletter. Updates will also be announced on social media and through email blasts so be sure to connect with AFTH on social media.

**APRIL
12**

3rd Annual Find Her Footing 5K

Each year the 5K gain more and more supporters and we are looking forward to a large crowd joining us on April 12th at the Delaware County Community College in Media, PA.

Not a runner, that's okay too. It is also a walk and it kicks off with a Kid's Dash too. See page 3 for details. Register before the end of February and use the code [Run4AFTH](#) for a special rate.

**Fall
2015**

AFTH 30th Year Celebration

In honor of our 30th year anniversary, AFTH will be hosting a special event to celebrate in Philadelphia. It will be a fabulous night of fun and we invite all our AFTH family members to join in the celebration!

More details to come in future newsletters.

**Summer
2015**

Ft. Washington Summer Picnic

The agency's annual picnic will be held on Sunday, June 7th from 11am-2pm at Fort Washington State Park - Flourtown Picnic Area. No RSVP needed.

Virginia Summer Picnic

The summer picnic will be held in Chesapeake City Park Fun Forest on Saturday, June 13th from Noon to 3pm. RSVP to VA Office by June 10th.

Connecticut Summer Picnic

Instead of hosting it's annual summer picnic at the amusement park again this year, it will instead be at a park location more suited for gathering together to visit with other families. The picnic will be held Sunday, June 29th with the location still TBD.

Idlewild Summer Picnic

AFTH's Pittsburgh Office will again be hosting their picnic at Idlewild Park in early August. More details will be included in the Spring newsletter.

Reunions with birthparents are welcome for all AFTH picnics. **Adoptive parents should send a letter of invitation to their child's birthparents (AFTH will not invite birthparents unless adoptive parents do).**

Be sure to send invite early enough so there is time to make plans for the day of the picnic.

Adoption Conference in CT

The agency's first Connecticut adoption conference in 2013 was quite a success and so AFTH is hosting another one later this fall at Wesleyan University in Middletown. We will be welcoming social workers, prospective adoptive parents and other community professionals to join us for a day of adoption education. More information will be available as details are planned. To have your email be added to a list to be updated with more information about the conference, contact DaniS@afth.org.



RAFFLES...

One of the most popular ways AFTH raises money for the Birthmother Fund is through raffles at our events. Who doesn't love a good raffle? We have had many generous donations from AFTH families as well as local business and organizations in the past that have helped to make the raffles so successful. During last summer's picnic, families asked how they could donate items for the raffles. From sporting event tickets to passes to children's museums, we welcome all donations for raffles to help bring in funds to help women working with AFTH. Please contact Dani at DaniS@afth.org.

The Importance of Birthmother Support

“ As soon as I was able to tell my story with women who understand me, I felt great! ”

As an agency that is dedicated to everyone involved in the adoption before, during and after placement, our Virginia office has been holding a quarterly birth mother support group. Gathered around pizza, women open up and share their stories with one another in a space where they feel safe. Sometimes the stories are repeated, but the focus shifts to highlight something significant that had not touched them before. Being able to decompress after events or visits and being able to share after the annual picnic or the holiday party has really brought the group of women together.

One birth mom explained, “I was really nervous about coming to the first meeting, it took everything I had to not back out. As soon as I was able to tell my story with women who understand me, I felt great. Everyone is so supportive and it’s nice to be able to be there for others too. This is something that I look forward to now, being with people who know how I feel.”

The group continues to expand with new attendees joining every meeting, encouraging and supporting from the moment they sit down. With Birth Mother’s Day on the horizon, the group is hoping to plan a fun event to celebrate. They may even go roller skating! Adoption is lifelong. There are ups and there are downs and it has been so very helpful for these women to have others who understand and can share both of those with.

If you are pregnant and want to learn more about your adoption options or to learn more about this Virginia support group, contact NicoleF@afth.org. If you are a birthparent who worked with another AFTH and would be interested in local support with other birthmoms, contact your social worker for more information.

Childcare Classes for Waiting Adoptive Parents

With AFTH’s new requirement for prospective adoptive parents to receive a childcare class before entering the profile book, the agency has made a focused effort to increase the frequency of its offices hosting this type of class. Families are welcome to take classes outside of AFTH however many hopeful adoptive parents appreciate the convenient and comfortable setting of being surrounded by other adoptive parents instead of a room full of expecting parents. Several of our offices will be holding the classes each month and families are welcome to any of the office’s classes. Classes will be added to the online calendar of events at www.afth.org/calendar-of-events as they are scheduled. Fees for all AFTH childcare classes are \$25/person and \$35/couple. Online registration is available for each individual class (please note class size is limited so register early). Here is a list of the upcoming classes with more dates to be announced: Feb 26th in Wynnewood, PA, March 14th in Williamsburg, VA and March 23rd in Harrisburg, PA. Check online calendar events for times and locations.

Credit Cards Accepted Online:
www.afth.org

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

Please use my donation: ___ AFTH Birthmother Fund ___ Scholarship Fund ___ Where It’s Needed Most

I’d like to generously donate: \$50 \$100 \$250 \$500 \$1,000 Other: \$ _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

E-mail: _____

***JOIN THE AFTH PLEDGE PROGRAM:**
___ I authorize Adoptions From The Heart to invoice me in September, December, and March for 3 additional quarterly payments of \$ ____ .

Adoptions From The Heart is a registered, charitable organization. In accordance with PA law, a copy of our official registration and financial information may be obtained from either the PA Department of State by calling toll-free (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 Holiday Party Event Recaps

CENTRAL PA

Harrisburg Area Holiday Party

On December 4th, the Central PA Regional Office celebrated the holiday season with a party at the Giant Community Center in Harrisburg. The room was full of children, birth parents, adoptive parents, and agency staff. Many families came as a part of an annual tradition and others came for the very first time. It was so

great to see and hear from all the different families. What a joy to see such beautiful families who live open adoption every day. Families generously donated needed items for the local shelters again this year. We look forward to more family reunions at next year's holiday party.

Lancaster Open House

On December 9th, we celebrated even more holiday fun with an open house in the Lancaster Office. Many children, birth parents, and adoptive parents were in attendance to enjoy the holiday fun with the agency staff. We appreciate the generosity of the families who brought in needed donations for the local shelter. Each year, new families use this time to have a reunion with their child's birthparents and celebrate the season. It was great to have the office filled with fun and laughter from the children.



WYNNEWOOD

The Wynnewood holiday party was well attended by many current and former clients! Several families who are actively in the adoption process, as well as many families who have previously been placed joined in the fun. We enjoyed making some crafts and catching up with one another over dinner. We look forward to seeing everyone again at the summer picnic.



VIRGINIA

We had a great time at this year's holiday party. We had a total of 72 people in attendance that included 6 adoptive parent/birth parent visits! Santa was a big hit and he was delighted to see all of the children and to see so many who are growing up so fast! Thank you to all who attended for your canned goods/non-perishables for the church's food pantry. We hope everyone has a great 2015 and can't wait for the summer picnic to see you all again!

Spring 2015 Adoption Education Series



Adoption is a Unique Journey

AFTH Offers Classes Designed Especially for the Needs of Adoptive Parents

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. The AFTH Education Series is designed to offer support through educational opportunities and discussions.

"I cannot recommend the Drug and Alcohol Exposure During Pregnancy class enough. We did our preliminary research and still had many questions before filling out our key. It was great to get a chance to hear from a medical professional who could answer our questions and put the situations into real terms. We were able to better define what we were really open too. Who knows, the information may have helped us to open our key in a way which could be the reason we get picked." - John & Elaine

"It was so nice to be able to go to a childcare class with other hopeful parents. Sometimes it is hard to do things to prepare for a baby that may be more comfortable for expecting women such as attending a childcare class or making a baby registry or getting help picking out a carseat. It was nice to be surrounded by others who are in a similar stage that I'm in." - Cameron

PLEASE NOTE:

Since the agency requires prospective adoptive parents without children to take childcare classes prior to entering the profile book, AFTH offices will now be hosting classes in-house to offer families a more comfortable and convenient setting. See a full list of upcoming childcare classes on page 6. Upcoming classes will be added regularly to the online calendar at www.afth.org.

♥ Allentown, PA

Substance Abuse During Pregnancy: Understanding Short & Long Term Effects

Join the Allentown Office in learning about the effects of substance abuse during pregnancy. Time will be spent reviewing the profile key and guest presenter Patricia Bates, RNC, MSN, CNM, NNPbc will be discussing the short term and long term effects on the fetus. This is a great opportunity to educate yourself and spend time with a professional working in the field of maternal health. Light refreshments will be served.

Saturday, May 2nd

11:00am-1:00pm

\$20/person or \$35/couple

Call (610) 432-2384 with questions.

♥ Cherry Hill, NJ

Effects of Drugs and Alcohol Use During Pregnancy

Jacqueline Papa or Southern New Jersey Perinatal will be joining us to talk in depth about the short and long term effects of drug and alcohol use during pregnancy. All prospective adoptive families are encouraged to attend as it will provide a wealth of information useful for when they complete their profile key.

Wednesday, May 6th

6:30-8:00 PM

\$25/person or \$35/family

Call (856) 665-5655 with questions.

CLASS REGISTRATION

Please fill out the form & return with payment to:

Adoptions From The Heart
30-31 Hampstead Circle
Wynnewood, PA 19096

OR REGISTER ONLINE AT
www.afth.org/community/courses.html

Classes also listed on the Online
Calendar of Events at www.afth.org

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

<i># Attending</i>	<i>Cost</i>	<i>Topic/Location</i>
		<u>Substance Abuse During Pregnancy</u> Allentown, PA
		<u>Substance Abuse During Pregnancy</u> Cherry Hill, NJ
		<u>Birthparent Panel</u> Chesapeake, VA
		<u>Substance Abuse During Pregnancy</u> Glastonbury, CT
		<u>Birthparent Discussion Panel</u> Hockessin, DE

Total Amount Enclosed: _____

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

Phone: () _____ - _____

Email: _____

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

♥ Chesapeake, VA

Birth Parent Panel

A panel of AFTH birthmothers with varying levels of openness will come together to speak about their experiences. They will share how they decided on their child's adoptive families as well as how they manage their future contact relationship. This is a great opportunity for waiting adoptive parents as well as all adoptive parents with open adoptions to gain some insight into navigating their relationship with their own child's birth family.

Saturday, April 18th

11:00am-1:00pm

\$15/person or \$25/couple

Call (757) 361-0008 with questions.

♥ Glastonbury, CT

Effects of Substance Abuse During Pregnancy

It is important for prospective adoptive parents to make educated decisions when selecting options on their profile key. We welcome Sharon Lavigne, MS, a geneticist from UConn Health Center, who will speak about the short and long term effects of drug and alcohol exposure during pregnancy. This class will provide families with helpful information in completing their profile key. We encourage all CT prospective adoptive families to join us. Please come with your questions.

Wednesday, March 18th

7:00-9:00 PM

\$25/person or \$35/family

Call (860) 657-2626 with questions.

♥ Hockessin, DE

A Birthparent Panel Discussion

We encourage all waiting families and families recently placed with young children to join us for a presentation of birthparents sharing their experiences. It will provide incredible insight. Birthparents will be sharing why they chose adoption and how they selected their child's adoptive parents. You will also have the opportunity to hear both positive and negative situations surrounding future contact and how it has impacted these women.

Saturday, April 4th

10:00am-Noon

\$15/person or \$25/couple

Call (302) 658-8883 with questions.

Recent Legislation



NEW YORK - A NY judge ruled that because of NY legalizing gay marriage that a married lesbian couple having a biological child should not need for the non-biological parent to adopt the child. Her opinion states that granting an adoption would mean that “true marriage equality remains yet to be attained” and that “a same-sex marriage remains somehow insufficient to establish a parent-child relationship.” Unfortunately due to the different laws in different states and countries this may not give same sex couples sufficient legal standing since many states and countries do not recognize same sex marriage leaving some children in a legal limbo.

UTAH - A group of men are suing the state of Utah, claiming it violates biological fathers’ rights to due process and equal protection because it allows a child aged six months or younger to be adopted without the consent of the unmarried biological father, unless he has initiated a paternity petition. According to the lawsuit, the state’s actions are equivalent to the “unconstitutional removal of children from their biological families and placed into adoptive homes without the knowledge or consent of their biological fathers.”

RUSSIA - Russia’s Investigative Committee is examining whether the cases of the 26 Russian children, adopted by Americans who posted them on Yahoo for “rehoming,” violated that country’s laws, including against human trafficking. It is unclear whether Russia has legal authority over activities that took place in the United States.

AFTH Support Groups

ALLENTOWN - Educating the Village: support group for waiting families and their family and friends. Each attendee is encouraged to bring a family member or friend to learn about the process, ways to offer support, use of appropriate adoption language and preparing for the baby’s arrival. Light refreshments will be served.

Saturday, March 13th from 11am-1pm

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

BROOKLYN, NY - Join us for “Coping With The Wait” where we will discuss ways to work through the emotions of actively waiting in the and go over some recent birth parent situations/profile key.

Saturday, February 28th from 11am-1pm

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

CENTRAL PA - Both waiting adoptive parent and birthparent support groups are being held for AFTH clients. Come together in support. Contact our office for more details.

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

Cherry Hill - One-on-one meetings with social workers to provide support, review profiles and discuss any concerns. Visit the online calendar of events for dates. Time slots are between 6:30-8:30pm. **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 - Support groups for waiting families will be offered throughout the year for families to come together and share their experiences. Contact office for upcoming dates.

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 groups will also be held throughout the year to bring families together to share experiences to help cope with the wait. Contact the office for details.

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

VIRGINIA - Birthparent support groups are held quarterly and are designed as a time of support and encouragement for birth parents who have placed children through AFTH. We eagerly welcome new members and hope to see YOU at the next meeting.

Call (757) 361-0008-2384 or Email NicoleF@afth.org for upcoming support group dates.

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 - During the waiting process it is important for hopeful adoptive parents to find support in others who understand. Support groups are led by AFTH social workers and cover a wide variety of topics. All prospective families are encouraged to invite extended families to attend the group as well.

Tuesday, February, 10th at 6:30pm

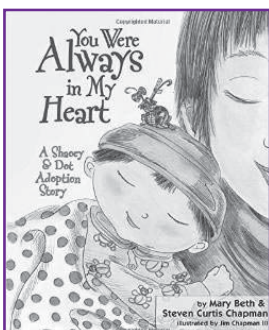
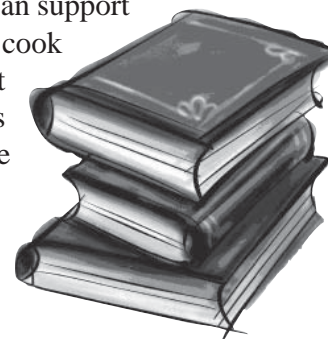
Email AshleyK@afth.org or Call 610-642-7200

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

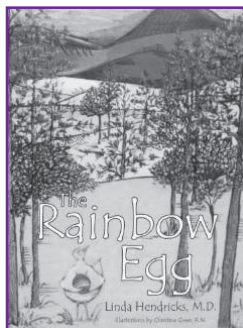
You Were Always in My Heart by Mary Beth & Steven Curtis Chapman

- This is the reworked story of Shaoey and Dot Bug Meets Bundle. Same beautiful sweet story but with a new name. Dot finds Shaoey abandoned and travels with her as she goes to the orphanage and then to her forever family.

adoption relationship seriously, working through jealousy etc. There is some good information in this little snippet of a book. A great way to start exploring the world of open adoption and really diving into the different feelings that it can invoke

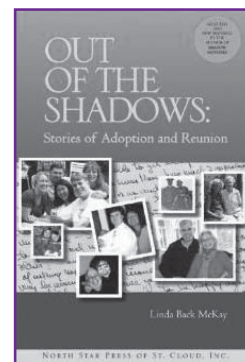
The Rainbow Egg by Linda Hendricks - A

beautifully story about a momma chicken who has an egg but doesn't have a nest. Without a place to rest the egg, she goes in search of help. A red bird leads her to a chicken family that has a nest but no egg. A sweet story that explains adoption from a birth mothers point of view. A great way to keep the adoption discussion started in young children.

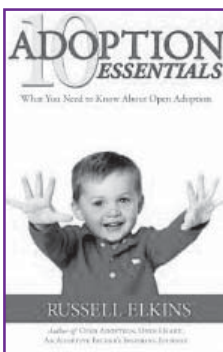


Out of the Shadows: Stories of Adoption and Reunion by Linda Back McKay

- McKay has put together 11 stories of women who placed their children for adoption and have since been reunited with them. These stories, told in their own voices, are powerful, sad, joyful and real. There aren't many books out there that tell the stories of the woman who placed their children for adoption, the loss and emptiness they felt and the joy of reuniting. Not all the stories ended happily, some didn't remain in contact with their children, while some created wonderful and supportive relationships. None of them would have traded that reunion no matter what the outcome for anything in the world. Just seeing their children again was positive for all the women in these stories.



10 Adoption Essentials: What You Need to Know About Open Adoption



(Guide to a Healthy Adoptive Family, Adoption Parenting, and Relationships) by Russell Elkins

- This book is a good starting point for families exploring open adoption. It is very short and gives a great overview of some very important elements to open adoption, sharing information, taking the open

While most of these stories were from women who place their children in a time when out of wedlock pregnancy was forbidden and hidden and open adoption was unheard of, the stories are still important. By learning about these women's stories, open adoption becomes that much more understandable. To be able to keep that connection open helps both the birth parents and the children feel whole.

AFTH Program Updates



DOMESTIC PROGRAMS - As we begin our journey into 2015, we want to wish you and your families a happy new year.

AFTH ended 2014 with a bang. In December alone, we had 19 families selected, 6 of those were for emergency placements. Many of our social workers worked over the holidays to help with placements. Hospital social workers and nurses know they can count on AFTH to always be available even over holidays which is why the agency often sees several emergency placements during the holiday break.

As we look back at 2014, AFTH had a very busy year. In the last three months of the year, AFTH placed 38 children bringing the total placements for 2014 to 156 which is 15 placements higher than we saw in 2013.

The placements haven't slowed since we rang in the new year. Our offices have continued to remain quite busy throughout January as well. One of our smaller offices saw 50% of their projected placements for the fiscal year reached in just one month and another office had 4 placements in the first two weeks in January, three of which were emergency placements. Many other offices were also busy with emergency as well as planned placements throughout the month of January.

Social workers are continuing their extensive outreach to spread awareness about AFTH's free services to women considering making an adoption plan. Offices hold adoption trainings for hospital and clinic staff who want to learn more about adoption and how it has changed as well as what the hospital process looks like.

In addition to offering trainings for professionals, AFTH offers specially designed classes for adoptive parents. Our Fall Ed series was extremely successful and we are excited for our upcoming Spring Series (*see insert*). We are bringing back our most popular and asked about classes again this season: Birthparent Panels to Discuss Open Adoption and Prenatal Alcohol and Drug Exposure Short and Long Term Effects to assist families when making profile key decisions.

In addition to classes, offices offer support groups for

both birth and adoptive parents. It is important to have support from others who are also going through the process. We encourage all our clients to attend support groups being held in your area to connect with others.

For hopeful adoptive parents who are just beginning their journey, we welcome you to attend one of our many free online webinars or information meetings being held each month in our local offices. The meetings are led by AFTH social workers who will explain the adoption process in detail as well as answer any questions you might have. It is a great way to learn more about AFTH and see if we are the right agency for you. For information or to register for upcoming webinars and meeting, visit our online calendar of events at www.afth.org or call your local office.

CHINA - As of January 1, 2015, China post placement requirements have changed. One month, six month and one year post placement supervision must continue to be done by a social worker but two, three and five year reports can be completed by the adopting family in accordance with a template provided to them by their placing agency.



HEARTBEATS - What is Embryo Adoption? Where do the donated embryos come from? Is there openness in embryo adoption? When couples first learn about Embryo Adoption as an option, there are many questions that come to mind. A common reaction is "I didn't even know there was such an option." We welcome anyone wanting to learn more about AFTH's *Embryo Support Services*. 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.

Our free online webinar is a great way to learn the details of the program and can be scheduled with our Program Coordinator at a time convenient for you.

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

Almost 8 months Pregnant or Not at All

“Never doubt, not for a second, that you are loved. There's no one else in the world for whom I'd break my own heart. Only you.”

- Jill, birthmother & blogger of
The Happiest Sad: A
Birthmother's Story



Written by hopeful adoptive parent and author of blog Living With Open Arms. She and her husband have two children, age 3 and 2, and they are completing their family through open adoption. Follow her journey into adoptive parenthood at livinglifewithopenarms.blogspot.com

Based on where we are in the adoption process it could be like we are already almost 8 months pregnant and expecting in early March or as though we have not even conceived yet. Now THAT is a big difference.

There is a 50% chance that when we DO receive the call from our social worker we could be just 24 hours away from meeting our new addition. That is called an emergency placement - when a woman decides upon the birth of her child that she wants to make an adoption plan. “brrrrring brrrrring (*pick up phone*) hey you have been selected and need to be at the hospital tomorrow!” Totally different with my boys who both required an eviction notice and came two weeks later than their due date. Now on the other hand, we could be selected by a woman who is 6 months or so along in her pregnancy. She would get a chance to meet us and get to know us before the birth of her child. Of course there are benefits and challenges with both of the above scenarios.

What's important to remember is that this is not my pregnancy. This journey is not our journey alone. Our third child will never only be ours. Our child's birthmother, his or her other mother, will be loving this child as much as we do. Now that, my friends, is a hard thing to grasp but simple at the same time. I believe David and I both love our boys equally...even more than to the moon and back. If I can accept that he can love our children as much as I do, I certainly can comprehend that our child will also have the love, an equal love, from another mother as well. A parent who understands that their wants and desires are second to their child's. A parent who will give all they have for the love of their child. A parent who wants to see their child grow and know they have given them all that they can. A parent who will break their own heart for the sake of their child.

Not for one minute is it lost on me that in the moment we receive “the call,” as our hearts are growing with love for a child, his other mother's heart is breaking. When I'm crying tears of joy, she will be crying tears of sorrow. When I'm holding him in our arms, her heart may ache as her arms will be empty. It will not be lost on me that I was picked, chosen, entrusted to be his mother by his mother. My child will always know the sacrifice she made for him. I hope and pray that the beginning of our journey together, those days in the hospital, will not be the end. That we will be able to form a relationship through open adoption that will allow our child to not only hear from my mouth how much love she has for him but from her lips as well.

My child, her child...our child. Together in love, giving all we have to give. Love will not be divided by multiplied by all his parents love.

Social Media Adoption Discussions are in Full BLOOM!



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

Let's Get Talking!

Find AFTH on:

[Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [Pinterest](#),
[Google+](#), [WordPress](#) & [Tumblr](#)



International Adoption News

AFTH prides itself on keeping abreast of news regarding inter-country 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 inter-country adoption placement services. 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 Roberta Evantash at 610-642-7200 or RobertaE@afth.org.

International Adoption News:

Certificates of Citizenship seem, in many cases, to be taking longer than the usual 50 days for families who have adopted internationally to receive. No information for the delay has been given by USCIS but please be aware it is taking 90 days or longer.

Form I-864W & Parent Observation Requirements

As a result of member request and NCFA (National Committee for Adoption) advocacy, USCIS is in the process of reviewing and revising form I-864W to reflect the change in law requiring only one parent in a married couple to personally see and observe a child before or after adoption proceedings in order for the adoption abroad to be considered full and final (and to receive the IR-3/IH-3 visa). USCIS says they will not require the form when one parent has seen and observed the child. However, Department of State may still require it for the DS-260 as part of the visa process. We'll share more details when the form review and revisions are complete.

Chinese Adoptions:

Referrals continue to arrive at a snail's pace. In September 2014 the CCCWA had assigned matches to families with log in dates up to 12/12/06. Here we are in January 2015 and referrals have been made to families with log in dates up to 12/18/06. We expect our previous clients, who are now being processed through Carolina Adoption Services, to receive their assignments in the next batch which, we are hopeful, will be this month or February. There are two families waiting.

Adoptions From Kenya:

The Government of Kenya confirmed to U.S. Embassy Nairobi that it will enact a temporary moratorium on

intercountry adoptions for six months to a year in order to review its adoption laws. A public announcement from the Government of Kenya providing details of the temporary moratorium remains pending. The Government of Kenya stated it will allow ongoing cases to continue through the adoption process. U.S. Embassy Nairobi is awaiting details from the Kenyan National Adoption Committee on which stages of adoptions will be permitted to continue.

Nepal Adoptions:

Representatives from the Department of State and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) concluded a four-day visit to Nepal on November 19. In August 2010, the Department of State and USCIS suspended processing of new adoption cases from Nepal involving children claimed to have been found abandoned because of concerns regarding the reliability of supporting documents, and because circumstances of alleged abandonments could not be verified by the U.S. government due to obstacles in the investigation of individual cases.

The U.S. hosted some round table discussions during the November visit. In these meetings, the delegation learned more about proposals to reform Nepal's child welfare system, the circumstances under which children enter children's homes and may become eligible for both domestic and intercountry adoption, and modifications to the country's procedures for intercountry adoptions. Attendees at the public town hall meeting provided valuable ideas for improving Nepal's child protection systems, including those related to adoption.

Adoptions from Nepal have not reopened, however, and the problems indicative here seem to be those most members (adoption agencies and adoptive parents) of the international adoption community are facing because of the bureaucratic nightmare the Hague

Paper Heart Project

National Adoption Month Fundraiser

We're pleased to announce that the 2014 Paper Heart Project brought in over \$2,300! We had amazing participants who got extremely involved to raise a lot of money for the AFTH Birthmother Fund.



The Alpha Phi Omega chapter of Dickinson University in Carlisle PA raised \$380, the largest amount raised in the project's history!

Piscataway High School's Class of 2018 raised a close second with \$350 for the Paper Heart Project!



Raising over \$200 each were Old Dominion University's Human Services class in Norfolk VA, the Startoni family of Hershey PA, LevLane Advertising in Philadelphia PA, and Admark360 in Glenside PA. *Others who joined in the project included:* Friedman's Service Center of Fountain Hill PA, Jumping Jungle of Brunswick NJ, GIFT Family Services in Palm City FL, Easton Hospital's Orthopedic Unit in Allentown PA, LexaLu.com in Murrysville PA, Noah Wallace School in Farmington CT, Ice Cream Lab in Walnutport PA, The Lutz Center at Cedar Crest College in Allentown PA, Bounce Town in Windsor CT, University of New Haven's Psychology Club and the Multicultural Greek Council in East Haven CT, and Mathnasium of Washington Township NJ. We also had individual families purchase hearts online or send in money to their local offices to support the Paper Heart Project.

Thank everyone who participated. We look forward to making an even bigger impact next November!

International Adoption News Cont'd

Convention Treaty has become. Adoptions from Nepal have not reopened, however, and the problems indicative here seem to be those most members (adoption agencies and adoptive parents) of the international adoption community are facing because of the bureaucratic nightmare the Hague Convention Treaty has become.



Congratulations to Families Who Have Recently Adopted!

Sons

Daniel & Lori
 William & Charles
 Jeffrey & Shannon
 George & Laura
 Douglas & Lauren
 Kelly & Lisa
 Maria
 Bret & Michelle
 Ryan & Laura
 Eric & Heidi
 Edward & Diego
 Richard & Brigid
 Michael & Michelle
 Andres & Kate
 Corey & Sarah
 John & Laura
 James & Anne
 Cassandra
 Keith & Donna

Daughters

Christopher & Ericka
 Edward & Teresa
 Martina
 Kipp & Mark
 Ganesh & Vishnu
 Daniel & Jackie
 Chris & Matt
 Scott & Laura
 Tammi & Jami
 Thomas & Donna
 Brian & Samantha
 Robert & Jodi
 Ian & Crystal
 Sean & Jennifer
 David & Angelina
 Dilip & Jill
 Aleron & Melissa
 Timothy & Jennifer





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FREE ONLINE WEBINARS

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

DOMESTIC INFANT ADOPTION

MARCH 3RD AT 7PM

APRIL 7TH AT 7PM

Registration Required

Calendar of Events at www.afth.org

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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