

Adoption News



A Quarterly Newsletter from

Adoptions From The Heart

Summer 2015

AFTH Celebrating 30 Years!

Exciting Event Being Held in October

Not many people know that AFTH was founded by an adoptee, Maxine Chalker, and first began in the basement of her home. Maxine likes to joke that her first family had to walk by her washing machine for their meetings. What a long way The Adoption Agency, now Adoptions From The Heart has come. Starting the first year with 16 placements and fast forward 30 years, 8 offices and 6 states to now more than 6,500 families created by AFTH.

Maxine's adoption was closed. As searched for her birthparents, it became much more than a search for biological ties but a discovery as to how things should be done better in the field of adoption. A seed was planted and the adoption agency was born, founded on the belief that open adoption was not only beneficial but necessary for all members of the adoption triad. Maxine became a pioneer for open adoption on the East Coast and was honored by the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute as an Angel in Adoption in 2003 for her dedication to the field.

You may not have been around for the days of Maxine's basement but you are a part of the AFTH family now! In honor of this exciting milestone, AFTH is hosting a celebration. This event is not only to honor the past 30 years, but to jumpstart the next 30. A very special thank you to our corporate sponsors: Entrust Financial, Horizon Services, Hayden Printing Admark360, and the Law Offices of Deborah E. Spivack (PA/DE/NJ). All proceeds raised from the event will go toward the newly established Birthparent Scholarship Fund.

Building Beautiful Futures

Friday, October 16 from 7-11pm
at the Racquet Club of Philadelphia

\$45/ticket - \$40/ticket for 4 or more

**tickets include 2 drink tickets*



Purchase Tickets: <http://tinyurl.com/BuildingBeautifulFutures>

Celebrating Adoption ♥ Entertainment ♥ Hors D'oeuvres
Exciting Raffles ♥ Casino Games ♥ Photo Booth ♥ Swag Bags

Contact DennaA@afth.org with any questions.

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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



Coming Together in Support for Birthmother's Day

AFTH's Virginia Office hosted a birth parent social event at a local bowling alley on Saturday, May 9th - Birthmother's Day.

The ladies got together with AFTH staff and had a great time together.

The women in the group have really become friends. They discussed their upcoming visits, shared stories, and caught up with each other on things that have happened since they last met. Birthmother support groups are held quarterly in Virginia and so their next get together will be held later in August.

Adoptee from China Hopes to Use Her Talent to Spread Love



Fifteen years ago, Toni was adopted from China through AFTH. When her grandmother began to teach her the ins and outs of sewing five years ago on a tiny machine in their home, she never thought she would be capable of creating the quilt she sent to the Delaware Office this spring. But, with a note attached requesting the quilt be given to a newborn baby, she completed her first major sewing project and dropped it off at our door. *"I wanted the child who receives my quilt to always know that a lot of people love them and that their birthparents love them and placed them for adoption because they wanted what was best for them,"* Toni explained. With plans to make more quilts for the Delaware State Fair and to sew gifts for friends, Toni hopes to share her love of adoption and passion to create with even more people. *"Adoption is a great way for kids to have a loving family. I don't know the circumstances surrounding my*

adoption, but I like to think my birth parents made an adoption plan so that I could have a better life."

We couldn't have said it better ourselves. Thank you to Toni for reminding us of the goodness in the world! For two additional stories and follow ups with adoptees from China and their forever families, see page 11.

Dear Friends of Adoptions From The Heart

Over 60% of Americans are touched by adoption in some way, shape or form. That percentage includes the 1 in 10 Americans who are adoptees, adoptive parents or birth parents. Adoptions From The Heart seeks to continue emotional and financial support after placement in conjunction with community adoption awareness efforts. Thanks to passionate supporters and donors like you, AFTH is able to create and aid in established programming that benefit all members of the adoption triad.

Adoption Education and Awareness

- Staff trainings for hospitals, women's centers, and infertility clinics
- National Adoption Month awareness campaign
- Speaking engagements at conferences and support groups
- Diversity workshops at local middle and high schools
- Partnerships with local businesses and organizations
- Low cost educational workshops for adoptive parents
- Education through social media (Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Wordpress)
- LGBT community support (HRC recognized)

Birthmother Support and Financial Assistance



- Birthmother Support Groups
 - Birthmother Fund (medical, housing, food, and transportation assistance)
 - Holiday Gift Cards for Birthmothers Parenting Other Children
 - Financial Sponsorship of Birthmother Retreat
 - Find Her Footing 5K Run, Walk and Kid's Dash
 - Scholarship Fund - education scholarship awarded to a birthmother each year.
- Visit www.afth.org/support-our-mission/scholarshipfund to learn more.

"I actually find myself looking forward to the support groups very much, to the point that I wish they were more often. I have come to realize that nothing helps more than telling my story start to finish, and it makes me feel good to know that new birthmothers might pull some strength or hope from my story." - AFTH Birthmother Stephanie

AFTH's commitment to the adoption community shines through our passion for our work 365 days a year. **We want to continue to be the #1 resource for the community, families, children, and women in need.**

We thank you for graciously **extending your hand to partner with AFTH** as we continue to advocate for the needs of the adoption community in this changing world. All donations made to AFTH are tax- deductible and may also be made online at www.afth.org. *Donations may be made in honor or in memory of specific individuals. Enclose a note with your donation along with the honoree's address so we can notify them that a donation was made in their name.*

Sincerely,

Maxine Chalker, Founder & Executive Director

P.S. Consider partnering with AFTH year-round by joining our Pledge Program. (see below for details).

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, 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, and for the state of NJ may be obtained from the Attorney General of the State of New Jersey 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 VA Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Division of Consumer Protection, P.O. Box 1163, Richmond, VA 23218, phone number (804) 786-1343, and for the State of Connecticut upon a written request from the State of Connecticut Department of Consumer Protection, 165 Capital Avenue, Hartford, CT 06106, phone number (800) 842-2649

FMLA & Adoption Leave: Knowing Your Rights



Adoptive parents often find they are faced with questions that other new parents might not even have to contemplate such as “Am I eligible for leave to care for my child?” It is important for adoptive parents to be aware of

their rights so they can consider all their options when deciding to take leave. The Federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) extends its coverage to all new families including adoptive and foster parents. However, it is important to note that new employees and those of smaller companies might not be protected under the act and others who are eligible for FMLA might not be able to make “leave without pay” work for their family.

What is the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)?

FMLA was created to help employees’ balance work and family life, by protecting employees’ ability to take a reasonable amount of unpaid leave for certain family and medical reasons. Falling under this category is adoption maternity/paternity leave of adoptive and foster parents. According to the United States Department of Labor, FMLA “provides certain employees with up to 12 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave per year. The FMLA also requires that the employee’s health benefits be maintained during the leave.” FMLA applies to private sector businesses with at least 50 employees, to all state and local governments, and to all public and private school employees.

FMLA Eligibility Requirements

The U.S. Department of Labor states “Employees are eligible for leave if they have worked for their employer at least 12 months, at least 1,250 hours over the past 12 months, and work at a location where the company employs 50 or more employees within 75 miles.”

Employees not eligible for FMLA may still be able to work with their specific employer to come to an agreement about leave. It is important to note that

depending upon where you live, your state laws may be more beneficial than FMLA (such as requiring employers to offer a certain amount of paid leave).

How does FMLA apply to adoptive families?

Becoming an adoptive family takes a lot of planning. In regards to the FMLA, many families will need time off from work because they may need to plan to stay in the state where their child was born, which is on average 7 to 10 business days to comply with the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC). For all types of adoption, eligible employees may begin their leave before a child comes home as long as the absence is necessary to the adoption process. An employer may ask for proof that a requested leave qualifies under FMLA and in that case a letter from your agency or attorney should be all they need.

Are Foster Parents Eligible?

Yes, foster parents are covered regardless of the age of the child, however the state or court must be involved for the placement to count under FMLA, so kinship adoptions do not count.

Can father’s qualify for leave as well?

Yes, unlike maternity leave FMLA applies equally to all parents.

When Can FMLA be Used?

The 12 weeks of unpaid leave may be taken at any point in time during the 12 months following the birth or placement of a child. This means that if both parents are eligible for FMLA, they could stagger their leave to have a total of 24 weeks back to back. Employers are able, but not required to allow employers to take the 12 weeks intermittently (for example taking half days for 24 weeks).

What if We Both Work for the Same Company?

If both parents work for the same employer, the employer is able to limit the leave to a combined 12 weeks unless the child has a serious medical condition, in which case then each parent is entitled to 12 weeks. Meaning an employer, in the case of a healthy child, could grant both parents leave however the time off combined can be limited to 12 weeks total instead of each parent being granted 12 weeks.)

Is My Job Protected While I'm on Leave?

FMLA makes it illegal for employees to be penalized for taking leave and requires that employees return to work at the same level of pay and benefits as when they left. Additionally, if an employee participates in the company's group health insurance plan, the employee will remain covered during their FMLA leave.

Can I Stack My Accrued Time Off and FMLA?

FMLA allows employees to substitute accrued (sick/vacation/personal) paid time off for a corresponding portion of their leave. Employers do have the option of requiring employees to use their accrued time as part of their FMLA leave to prevent employees from using FMLA's 12 weeks in addition to their accrued time off.

Don't Think You Qualify for FMLA, Double Check!

You may be surprised to know that depending where you live, you may have access to even better benefits that the FMLA offers. More and more states are now requiring smaller companies typically immune from FMLA to offer some level of family leave. Some states even expand on FMLA's minimum standards and offer a portion of paid time off or even more than 12 weeks. It is important to educate yourself on the laws so that you know what you are entitled to as an adoptive parent. For more on the state laws, visit the National Conference of State Legislatures website.

Upcoming Conferences

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

August 23rd

Pride in the Park
at Cedar Beach Park in Allentown PA

September 19th

DelMed Health and Women Services Fair
at Epworth United Methodist Church in
Rehoboth Beach, DE

October 17th

Family Matters Conference hosted by
Philadelphia Family Pride
at CHOP in Philadelphia, PA

November 15th

Let's Talk Adoption Conference hosted by
Concerned Persons for Adoption (CPFA)
at Rutgers University in Piscataway, NJ

November 19th

PA Conference for Women
at Philadelphia Convention Center

November 22nd

35th Annual Adoption Conference presented by
the Adoptive Parents Committee (APC)
at St. Francis College in Brooklyn, NY

Waiting Family and Birthparent Support Groups

Below is a List of Upcoming Groups in Local AFTH Offices. Contact your office for details.

ALLENTOWN - Contact our office for more details.
Call (610) 432-2384 or Email ChelseyP@afth.org

BROOKLYN, NY - AFTH's support groups in Brooklyn have been so well received that we will be continuing to host them there several times a year.

Next Group TBD (end of Aug beginning of Sept)
Call (610) 432-2384 or Email ChelseyP@afth.org

CENTRAL PA - Contact our office for more details.
Call (717) 399-7766 or Email AmandaK@afth.org

CHERRY HILL - Contact our office for more details.
Call (856) 665-5655 or Email ChrisotpherP@afth.org

CONNECTICUT - Contact our office for more details.
Call (860) 657-2626 or Email SusanM@afth.org.

DELAWARE - Contact our office for more details.
Call 302-658-8883 or Email DanielleG@afth.org

VIRGINIA - Contact our office for more details.
Call (757) 361-0008 or Email NicoleF@afth.org

WYNNEWOOD - It is important for hopeful adoptive parents to find support in others who understand during the wait. The support group will be led by an AFTH social worker and the placement stats will be discussed as well as a specific topic planned for the group. Families will also have time to share their experiences and any joys or frustrations they may be having at that time.

Tuesday, Sept. 8th at 6:30pm
Email AshleyK@afth.org or Call 610-642-7200

Preparing for a Disruption During the Revocation Period

“ I do not want to feel as though I’m just running down the clock during those 30 days. I’d like to know that I was chosen to be our child’s parents...” ”

We are just days away from going “in the books.” What an exciting step! It also marks the last part of the adoption process over which we have control. Now the real wait begins.

Throughout our ed classes and home study process, the topic of disruptions has

been discussed to help prepare us for the possibility. A disruption is the term used to describe when a birth parent changes his or her mind about placing during their revocation period, after the child has been placed in the adoptive parents’ home. Our agency cites a low disruption percentage rate, but, however rare, I doubt that statistic matters to those experiencing it.

Knowing we will be matched with an expectant mother from Pennsylvania, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Delaware, or Virginia, our agency thoroughly educated us on these states’ adoption laws. Of these states, Pennsylvania has the longest revocation period, 30 days, and New Jersey doesn’t have any revocation period once the relinquishment paperwork is signed.

When speaking about the revocation period as an adoption professional, I often find that people are surprised there is such a timeframe when birth parents are able to change their minds after placement. It is so important to remember this is one of the most difficult decisions anyone could ever make.

I once read a letter a mother wrote to the prospective adoptive parents who faced a disruption after she’d decided to parent. She explained that nothing they did or said caused her to change her mind and, most importantly, she didn’t change her mind to cause them pain. Just as any parent would, she was doing her best to make the choice for her baby.

The revocation period will make certain of one of two things: 1) That she feels an adoption plan is the right choice, even through the grief, sadness, and heartbreak she will be feeling. Jill, a birth mother blogger of The Happiest Sad wrote: “Never doubt, not for a second, that you are loved. There is no one else in the world for

whom I’d break my own heart. Only you.” Or 2) That she decides that placing her baby for adoption was a mistake and that she will parent.

Because of the magnitude of this life-long decision, I believe there needs to be a revocation period. A woman who has just had a baby and signed the legal adoption papers needs and deserves time to deeply contemplate the decision she had made, and to change her mind, if she feels that’s right. Others may not agree, and some adoption professionals and parents talking about it being “easier” on the adopting parents when there is a very short revocation period, or no revocation period at all. But as an adoptive parent, especially one seeking an open adoption, I do not want to feel as though I’m just running down the clock during those 30 days. I’d like to know that I was chosen to be our child’s parents, and that his or her birth mother didn’t decide she had made the wrong choice on day 31.

No matter what decision is made, there will be heartbreak, because adoption is not one-sided. If we experience a disruption, whether after two hours or 29 days, I know I will feel heartbreak. And if they decide their decision to place was right, the birth parents will nevertheless surely feel heartbreak.

I can honestly say that, when we are lucky enough to get “the call,” knowing there is a revocation period will not cause me to hold back the love I know I will feel for the child placed in our arms. However, I will remind myself that we have been asked to be the temporary caretakers of a child who may indeed come into our family while his or her parents are ensuring they are making the best and final decision, and we will think of them with compassion and respect. And if the 30 days pass and they don’t revoke their consent, we will rejoice in our own family’s togetherness while remembering that there is a loss not only for our child’s birth parents, but for our child. We will remember that adoption causes a ripple effect and that our experience is only one side.

Written by Kristy, AFTH Director of Marketing, new adoptive mother and author of Adoptive Families Circle blog Adoption: Not Just My Profession, My Life. To see more of her posts visit www.adoptivefamiliescircle.com/blogs/blog/adoption-not-just-my-profession/

AFTH Picnic Recaps: A Celebration of Adoption



27th Annual Family Picnic

The AFTH picnic is all about family fun and celebrating reunions. We had a beautiful day and the sun shone down on adoptive and birth families. Donning matching face paint, a birthmother and daughter pair who had reunited after ten years couldn't wait to talk about what it's like to be together again. "I got a

call one day from my social worker who said your daughter wants to meet you and within a month we met for the first time in ten years," the birthmother explained. "The picnic is the perfect way to reconnect without feeling pressured," she continued. "There is a lot to do, it is much different than the first time we attended ten years ago, and I really feel like I can be myself."

Adding to the atmosphere was Egalitarian, the new band this year, with their African Reggae sounds which could be heard throughout the park. Children enjoyed dancing and singing with the West African musician whose music is now available on Amazon (search Egali).

Doc Brestler's Cavity Busters returned again this year and they were joined by three new sponsors: Horizon Services, Soccer Shots and Admark360. The children enjoyed face painting, crafts and of course the ice cream. Thank you to board member Thom and his family for grilling hotdogs for everyone to enjoy along with all the snacks generously provided by Whole Foods, Wawa, Trader Joes, Giant, Herr's, Hershey, BJs and JJ Snack Foods.



The raffles were a huge hit again this year bringing in over \$1,500 for the AFTH Birthmother Fund. Congrats to all the winners and a special thank you to all the companies that donated to the raffles: *Mesa Mexican Grill, Champps, Sangkee Asian Bistro, Iron Hill Brewery, Sabrina Café, Bahama Breeze, Mad Mex, Twenty9, MaGerks, Corner Bakery Café, Field House, Target, Just Born, Rolling Thunder, Sweat Fitness, Focus Fitness Mainline, Wilmington Blue Rocks, Phillies, Grand Slam, Philadelphia Rock Gym, Get Air, Oasis Family Fun Center, Sesame Place, Hershey Park, Dutch Wonderland, Adventure Aquarium, Eastern State Penitentiary, and Valley Forge Casino*

It was another wonderful picnic celebrating adoption. Thank you to everyone who was a part of it. We hope to see you again next year.



Virginia Picnic

The picnic held at the Chesapeake City Park Fun Forrest on June 13th was attended by 106

people in addition to AFTH staff. The weather was great and everyone had lots of fun. 14 birthparent visits were also a part of the special day. The children ran around and filled the park with giggles and smiles. For the first time, AFTH held a raffle at the picnic which brought in \$88 for the Birthmother Fund.



Connecticut Picnic

Although it was a drizzly, damp and cool summer day, about 75 people braved the weather and

gathered at beautiful Wickham Park in CT for the annual AFTH picnic on June 28. There were numerous arranged birth and adoptive family visits, with some families traveling from as far away as Pittsburgh! We raised money for the Birthmother Fund by raffling off a Kid's Activity basket and the lucky winner was Iliana from New Jersey. AFTH staff were happy to greet so many beautiful families and our birth parents were very grateful that all the families attended despite the weather!



IMPORTANT...Mark Your Calendars! The park will be closed for a portion of June in 2016. So the Fort Washington Picnic has had to be moved to a new day and date for next year. The picnic will be on SATURDAY, June 18, 2016.

Fall 2015 Adoption Education Series



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

The adoption journey is lifelong. Regardless of what stage of the adoption process families are in, AFTH's goal is to strengthen families by empowerment through knowledge. The Education Series is designed to offer support through educational opportunities and discussions.

"We went to the class on the Effects of Drugs and Alcohol. With the information we gained, we were able to open our key to situations that we initially didn't think we would accept but after the class we had information to help us make better educated decisions on our profile key. I would highly recommend this class." - Kim

"I had been a part of classes on transracial adoption before and had soaked up as much information as possible however, now that our daughter is in our arms, we ARE a transracial family. It is real and the information I receive in these specially designed classes take on a whole new meaning!" - Kristy and Dave

♥ Lancaster, PA

Legally Enforceable Open Adoption in PA

On October 27, 2010 Governor Ed Rendell signed into law Act 101 of 2010 which went into effect on April 25, 2011. Part of the law provides adoptive and biological parents a way to make legally enforceable agreements about continuing contact after the adoption is finalized. The Central PA office was one of the first agencies to submit an agreement to the Lancaster County Court House in April of 2011. Join us as we hear from birth and adoptive families who have been living their agreements for several years. Bring your questions and concerns about this process.

Tuesday, November 17th from 6:30-8:30 PM

\$10/person or \$15/couple

Call (717) 399-7766 with questions.

♥ Glastonbury, CT

Talking to Children about Adoption

The workshop will explore children's understanding of adoption at different developmental levels and give parents tools to effectively communicate about birth parents, differences in how families are made, sharing information with friends and peers at school, and handling "the hard stuff" when talking about adoption.

DATE TBD

\$10/person or \$15/couple

Call (860) 657-2626 for details.

♥ Cherry Hill, NJ

The Effects of Parental Behavioral Health Disorders in Children

The class will explore the characteristics of behavior health diagnoses in birth parents, including Anxiety, Depression, Schizophrenia and BiPolar disorder. The series will also examine what the current research shows about the possible hereditary and genetic effects on children whose birth parents have a behavioral health disorder. Dr. Julia Weinberg is a Licensed Psychologist who practices in Clinical and Forensic Psychology, and specializes in adoption issues.

Tuesday, October 6th from 6:30-8:30 PM

\$25/person or \$35/couple

Call (856) 665-5655 with questions.

♥ Henrico, VA

Birthparent Panel

Courageous women will share their stories from choosing adoption, selecting a family, their experience in the hospital and in post-delivery. They will also share their experiences with open adoption, how it started and what it looks like today. Come gain invaluable adoption insight from the birth parent perspective which will help better prepare you for creating and maintains your open adoption.

Saturday, October 3rd from 11:00am-1:00pm

\$10/person or \$15/couple

Call (757) 361-0008 with questions.

♥ Wynnewood, PA

Being a Transracial Family in Today's World: From Strangers' Comments to Having Discussions with your Children about Race

Dr. Krista Malott, Ph.D., LPC, Associate Professor of Counselor Education at Villanova University and adoptive mom of two children, will present an interactive workshop addressing topics relevant to those who are a part of or plan to form a family that is transracial through the process of adoption. Topics addressed include ways to respond to common comments from others, increasing skills in broaching topics of race and racism with our children of color, and the exchange of wisdom and resources to promote the healthy development of our families. Meet other families and build relationships of support in an exchange of ideas and reflection.

Saturday, September 12th from 9:00am-Noon

\$10/person or \$15/couple

Call (610) 642-7200 with questions.

♥ Greensburg, PA

Effects of Pre-Natal Drug Exposure

Dr. Scott Curry, Clinical Assistant Professor of Medicine at UPMC Presbyterian Division of Infectious Diseases, will speak about the effects of drug and alcohol exposure during pregnancy. Dr. Curry brings many years experience as both a research doctor and clinician. He is also the adoptive father of two children through AFTH. Discussion of short and long-term effects of substance use and abuse. Class will provide families with helpful information in completing their profile key. Dr. Curry welcomes your questions!

DATE TBD

\$25/person or \$35/couple

Call (724) 853-6533 for details.

We have brought back some of our most popular classes this fall. Due to high demand of these topics, the classes fill up very quickly. Pre-registration is required.

For ONLINE Registration:

www.afth.org/community-education/educational-series-seminars/

To Register by Mail - fill out the below form & return with payment to:

Adoptions From The Heart

30-31 Hampstead Circle, Wynnewood, PA 19096

Name(s): _____ Phone: () _____ - _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Number of Attendees: _____

Total Amount Enclosed: _____

\$25/person and \$35/couple

Effects of Pre-Natal Drug Exposure (Greensburg, PA)

Effects of Parental Behavioral Health Disorders (Cherry Hill, NJ)

\$10/person and \$15/couple

Transracial Families (Wynnewood, PA)

Legally Enforcable Open Adotions in PA (Lancaster, PA)

Birthparent Panel (Henrico, VA)

Talking to Children About Adoption (Glastonbury, CT)

United Way



Live United!

United Way improves lives by mobilizing the caring power of communities around the world to advance the common good and thousands of companies participate in the United Way Workplace Campaign each year.

Adoptions From The Heart is honored to be one of the non-profits eligible to receive contributions through the United Way Donor Program. United Way contributions continue AFTH's mission to provide safe and loving homes for children and offer quality, comprehensive services to adoptive families, birth parents and children as well as our vision to be a leader in the field of adoption and family building

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

- 1) Request a Donor Option Card from your company's United Way representative.
- 2) The agency's donor number is different in each area. The AFTH donor number for your area can be found in your United Way booklet. *You can do this even if it is not listed in your particular United Way booklet:*
PRINT: ADOPTIONS FROM THE HEART and the local branch office's address (see page 2 for addresses)
- 3) Enter the amount of your pledge and your payment method (e.g. check, payroll deduction, etc.)

AFTH is Looking for YOUR Help to Reach our Goals for the 2015 Paper Heart Project

Fundraiser Runs November 1st – 30th

What is the AFTH Paper Hearts Project?

In honor of National Adoption Month, each November AFTH networks with local businesses to spread awareness about adoption through the Paper Hearts Project. Local businesses offer their customers the chance to purchase a paper heart for \$1 and write their name on it in support of adoption. The local business then displays the hearts all month long to show their support of AFTH and National Adoption Month. The donations collected benefit the AFTH Birthmother Fund which goes directly to help women working with AFTH who are struggling to provide for their basic needs.

Reasons to Join the Paper Heart Project?

- 1: Spread Adoption Awareness in Your Community
- 2: Support Pregnant Women in Need
- 3: Celebrate Beautiful Families Created Through Adoption

So How Can You Help?

Ask your local businesses to join in the fun or your child's karate or dance studio to participate. Invite your child's school or preschool to participate all month long as a special project honoring National Adoption Month. We even have AFTH families who take hearts to work or to church to get their friends and family and coworkers involved in the project.

If you want to be a Heart Holder for our 2015 Paper Heart Project, you can register at www.afth.org/events/nam/ through our National Adoption Month page OR contact Dani Schwartz at DaniS@afth.org for details.

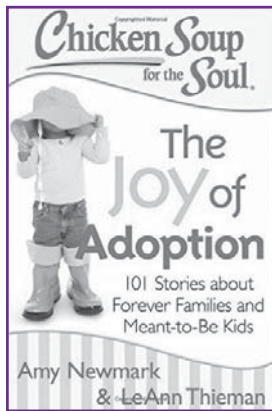
Hearts will be available for purchase in AFTH's online store and in AFTH offices in addition to participating businesses starting November 1st.



AFTH's Goal is to Involve TWICE as Many Businesses

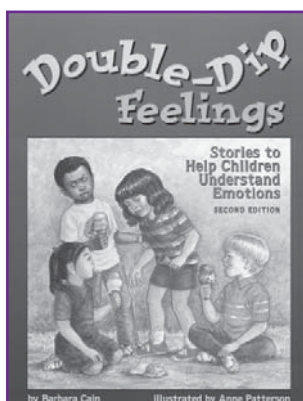
& DOUBLE the Funds Raised to Help Birthmothers!

Book Reviews



Chicken Soup for the Soul: The Joy of Adoption: 101 Stories about Forever Families and Meant-to-Be Kids by Amy Newmark & LeAnn Thieman - This updated version is an uplifting compilation of short stories

written about adoption that celebrate the joys and special bond of forever families with a religious focus. Like all of the books in the Chicken Soup franchise, this collection succeeds at tugging heart-strings. Because this book focuses only on the positive and joyful experiences related to adoption, its attempt was not to paint a complete picture of adoption but to focus on beautiful moments that adoption can have.



Double-Dip Feeling: Stories to Help Children Understand Emotions by Barbara Cain - This book helps children understand that it is possible to feel two emotions at once. Feelings are complex things and when children have conflicting feeling such as when they are

dealing with moving to a foster home or to a new adoptive home from their biological home, there can be excitement and sadness. This book can help facilitate the conversation on having these conflicting feelings and that being perfectly normal. There are nice illustrations and easy to understand text.



Hi My Name is Hanna and I'm Adopted by Angie Barton - This is a cute book with adorable illustrations that tell the story of Hannah who was adopted from Ethiopia. The book discusses birth parents, foods, and other differences from Ethiopia to America. In the book you will also see Hannah's struggles: her sadness when she thinks of her birthparents and her frustrations when she doesn't like some of the food in the U.S.

The book can be a powerful to help children feel comfortable with their roller coaster of feelings about adoption and their new home. It is important to allow children the opportunity to express their feelings, positive and negative, in a healthy way to help work through their feelings. The book also comes with an audio version which is nice for children who aren't yet reading on their own.

Adoption Related Books on Amazon

Get these and many other great adoption related books for adults and children at amazing prices on Amazon.

Use the below Amazon link and a portion will be donated back to AFTH with each order.

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



Central PA Fall Festival

Calling all local AFTH Families. Join us for a day of fun at Cherry Crest Adventure Farm in Ronks, PA. Come over to the Barn Yard and enjoy the signing chickens show, race down a giant slide, sling tennis balls at a target, show off your sports skills at Corny's ball-cade, and check out the special play area for younger kids. *corn maize is extra

October 3rd from 10am-2pm
Tickets: \$18/person (over the age of 3)

Contact StephanieC@afth.org for details. Order tickets by September 11.



AFTH Program Updates

DOMESTIC PROGRAMS - We hope your family was able to attend one of the AFTH annual picnics! The picnics are always a wonderful time for families to come together. It is nice to see new families who are just starting the adoption process, families who just received placements as well as families who have been coming for years. Our staff was so happy to be joined by so many other families to celebrate adoption. *See picnic recaps in the newsletter insert.* The Fort Washington Picnic had to be moved to a new day and date for next year due to park closures. The picnic will be on **SATURDAY, June 18, 2016.**

In the 2014-2015 fiscal year, Adoptions From The Heart has placed a total of 135 infants in adoptive homes. Not counted in these statistics were 3 special needs placements, 2 sets of twins (counted as 1 placement for stat purposes), and 5 identified placements. Our placement rate remains high compared to number of waiting families. The majority of families currently in the books (67%) are waiting less than 1 year. Families open to children of African-American heritage are seeing significantly shorter wait times with the majority of families (59%) currently waiting 6 months or less and 41% waiting less than 3 months. With an average of 25-30 waiting families open to African-American children and the fact that we have already placed 26 children in the past 6 months, the agency is seeing these families having relatively short waits. Additionally, 43% of our birthmothers report no drug or alcohol use and our emergency placements have increased over the past year as the fiscal year ended with a 58% emergency placement rate.

AFTH is proud to be celebrating its 30th anniversary this year and we are hosting a special celebration in honor of our exciting milestone and we want you to be a part of it. *See event details on the front page.*

To All Placed Families: AFTH continues to see an increase in the need for financial assistance to aid the pregnant women we are counseling. This year's Annual Appeal (*page 3*) calls to AFTH placed families, friends, and adoption supporters to consider making a donation to either the Birthmother Fund or Birthparent Scholarship Fund. Every penny donated to the Birthmother Fund aids pregnant women working

with AFTH who are struggling to provide for their basic needs such as food, clothing, and shelter. And the newly established Scholarship Fund, which has already awarded two scholarships, was created to offer financial support to birthparents who are focusing on continuing their education to make better lives for themselves. All donations, no matter what amount, are graciously accepted and are tax deductible.

NEW MINIMUM OPENNESS POLICY - AFTH has added a new minimum requirement that all prospective adoptive families will need to be open to in our program. In addition to sending pictures and letters once a month for the first six months and then once a year after that, AFTH is now requiring all families who applied to the program after June 15, 2015 to be open to a minimum of 1 visit a year as well. This new policy reflects the agency's focus on the benefits of open adoption for all those in the adoption triad.

AFTH has many great classes lined up for our Fall Ed Series beginning in September and running through the end of fall. Classes include: Effects of Prenatal Exposure to Drugs/Alcohol, Birthparent Panel, Effects of Parental Behavior Health Disorders and Talking to Your Child about Adoption. Our classes tend to fill up fast so if you see a class you want to attend, don't wait until the fall to book your seats. *See class details in the newsletter insert.*

In addition to the Ed Series, AFTH offices continue to hold regular childcare classes for prospective adoptive parents. An August class is being held in Wynnewood, September classes in Delaware and Central PA, and October classes in Cherry Hill and Allentown. To sign up for the classes, visit the online calendar of events.

Local AFTH Offices host support groups for waiting families as well as birthparents and we hope that you will consider joining us. It is a great time to connect with other families and to receive updates from your social worker regarding the Program. You can also stay connected with AFTH by following us on our different social media sites: Facebook, Twitter, Etc.

AFTH offers professional training on adoption and options counseling to our local hospitals, clinics, and

AFTH Program Update Cont'd

agencies that work with women and families. AFTH has been focusing on building better awareness around adoption and the options women have when faced with an unplanned pregnancy. Additionally there are a number of conferences that AFTH staff will be participating in this fall (see page 5) and we look forward to meeting all the new prospective adoptive parents who will be attending.



HEARTBEATS - 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. For more details on the program or to schedule a webinar to learn more, contact HannahB@afth.org or call 610-642-7200.



Recent Legislation



ADOPTION TAX CREDIT: Senators Casey (D-PA) and Blunt (R-MO) introduced the Adoption Tax Credit Refundability Act of 2015 (S950) on April 15 which would make the current adoption tax credit (ATC) fully refundable. Nearly one-half of families adopting from foster care are at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level and many have tax burdens so low that they cannot benefit unless the ATC is refundable.

AMENDMENT TO CHILD CITIZENSHIP ACT OF 2000: In response to the proposed deportation of Adam Crasper, Korean adoptee whose American adoptive parents never applied for citizenship for him, Senator Jeff Merkley (D-OR) and Senator Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) have agreed to co-sponsor an amendment to the Child Citizenship Act of 2000. The amendment would grant automatic U.S. citizenship to international adoptees, including retroactive citizenship to those who were already 18 when the Act first went into effect. "For the U.S. to deport adoptees to a country they likely do not speak the language, do not understand the culture, and do not have any connections or resources is a reprehensible and shameful act," said March. "If members of Congress do not support this amendment, it is equivalent to objecting to the fundamental purpose and values of adoption."

PROTECTING ADOPTED CHILDREN ACT: On April 28, Rep. Langevin (D-RI) introduced the Protecting Adopted Children Act (HR2068) "to ensure the safety and well-being of adopted children." Rep. Langevin said it is "a response to the many problems and potential dangers associated with the term 'rehoming' adoptive children. Families involved in this underground practice are connecting online and making dubious or outright illegal arrangements to give away their children to strangers, often with forged or fake documentation." The bill would "provide for pre- and post-adoptive counseling and help to fund treatments specialized for adopted children, including psychiatric residential services, outpatient mental health services, social skills training, intensive in-home supervision services, recreational therapy, suicide prevention and substance abuse treatment." Services such as peer-to-peer mentoring, support groups, and a 24-hour hotline would be available for adoptive parents. The act would add addressing illegal child transfers to the Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force training. The bill was referred to the Committee on Ways and Means and Committees on Energy and Commerce and the Judiciary. It has six Democratic and one Republican cosponsors and currently no companion bill in the Senate.

OHIO: On March 20th, 2015, Ohio became the ninth state to open birth certificates to adopted adults from a previously closed period. Adults adopted between 1964 and 1996 may now gain access to their original birth certificates. Adults whose adoptions were finalized in Ohio before 1964 already had access. Those adopted on or after Sept. 18, 1996, can receive their files unless their birthparent asks to be excluded.



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.

CHINA

As of this writing Chinese adoptions continue to be extremely slow. In late May, the CCCWA had officially completed three Log In Dates in late December since January. They were 12/26, 27 and 28 of 2006. Two of our transferred families to Carolina Adoption Services received referrals. One has just returned home and the other will travel in September.

BRAZIL

Brazil's Central Adoption Authority has authorized a limited number of Hague accredited adoption service providers to provide adoption services in Brazil. The following agencies have been approved to work in the country: Lutheran Social Services of Minnesota, Lifeline Children's Services, Hand in Hand International Adoptions, and Across the World Adoptions.

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

The judicial advisor at DRC's interior ministry announced that 71 of nearly 1,000 ongoing individual adoptions will be completed with families across 5 countries including the USA and Belgium. Adoptions there were suspended in 2013. The Department of State strongly recommends against adopting from the DRC.

GHANA

On May 21, 2015 in Geneva Ghana's Cabinet has approved the ratification of the 1993 Hague Convention on Protection of Children in Respect of Inter-Country Adoption. The new procedures for adoption are being finalized by their Attorney General's Department.

KATHMANDU

In order to curb child trafficking in the aftermath of the April 25th earthquake, the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare has banned child adoption. The ban applies to both international and local child adoption. "Children are at high risk of becoming

trafficking victims during disaster as they can be lured by traffickers with the prospect of comfortable life and better education. So we have banned child adoption for now," said the joint secretary at the ministry.

SOUTH KOREA

At the peak of South Korea's international adoption placements in the 1980s, 24 babies left their birth country every day to be adopted by foreigners, three quarters of whom were Americans. Today, however, the numbers of unwanted South Korean infants continues to rise but the ability to place them for adoption has fallen drastically. Revisions to South Korea's adoption law in 2012 has limited even more the already low numbers of available infants to be adopted internationally. Some South Korean-born adoptees' lobby groups have encouraged Korean domestic adoption even though members of the group were raised by families abroad. They campaign against international adoptions from South Korea and for the right of adoptees to find their birth parents. An unintended consequence of the new restrictions has made it more difficult for domestic in-country families to adopt too. Taboos against adoption remain stubborn in South Korea.

**With 11,000 Facebook Followers,
AFTH's Social Media Adoption
Discussions are Booming.**

Our social media has been exploding with specialized content, questions and answers 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](#)

China Forever Families



We had the pleasure of sitting down at our picnic to speak with AFTH adoptive father Carl who wasn't shy in sharing his love for AFTH. *"This is our thirteenth time at the AFTH picnic,"* he explained while pointing around to the people surrounding him. Many years ago, *"we traveled all together as a group to China in April and in June we were here, that was really the start of this family."* The family he is referring to is his adoption travel group of seven families that has remained tight knit even after the passage of time. Their group sees each other several times a year including the picnic and a huge reunion they hold in August. *"We have been honest with our girls about adoption from the beginning, even taking them back to visit China three years ago and we are so lucky because our daughters are like sisters to each other. They always have someone to talk to and technology really connects them when they are further apart,"* Carl continued. *"We come to this picnic every year to support Adoptions From The Heart, because we honestly see each other all the time. AFTH gave us an opportunity. I am a father and an uncle to these girls, it is so special. We want to support AFTH because of what they gave to us."*



Catie is also an adoptee from China. She was adopted as a young child through AFTH's China Program back in 1996:

"I was four years old when I was adopted. My parents had taught me a lot about being an American but also continue to learn about my country. I played many sports

including soccer, dance, gymnastic, field hockey & lacrosse when I was younger. I am now 23 years old and I work in a hair salon. I am also a mother to my beautiful daughter and I am happily married to a wonderful man. My life has been the absolute best because of my parents. They chose to take me in and provide a home for me and give me the love and attention any child deserves. If it wasn't for my parents I would not be the person I am today."



Congratulations to Families Who Have Recently Adopted!

Sons

Brett & Jennifer
 Adam & Rachael
 Kevin & Laura
 (twin boy & girl)
 Aleksandr & Minh
 Jason & Linus
 Susanna
 Ryan & Erin
 Robert & Wendy
 Mark & Scott
 Pete & Nicole
 Brian & Melissa
 Sean & Jessica
 Andrew & Sara
 John & Jennifer
 Edward & Kristi
 Michael & Leslie
 David & Jennifer
 Volodymyr & Jennifer

Daughters

Kevin & Laura
 (twin boy & girl)
 Gary & Kathleen
 David & Kristy
 John & William
 Eric & Jacqueline
 Michael & Thelma
 Bill & Niki





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FREE ONLINE WEBINARS

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

DOMESTIC INFANT ADOPTION

SEPTEMBER 8TH AT 7PM

OCTOBER 6TH AT 7PM

Registration Required

Calendar of Events at www.afth.org



Let the 30th Year Celebration Begin!

Tickets are now on sale for Adoptions From The Heart's 30th year celebration Building Beautiful Futures and YOU are invited to join in all the fun. See [front page for details](#) and be sure to order your tickets soon to reserve your spot at the celebration.

OCT
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2015

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Philadelphia, PA

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until
11PM

Order Your Tickets Before
the End of August!

Only \$45 (includes 2 drink tickets)