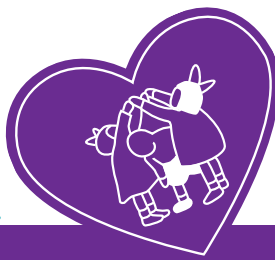


# Adoption News



A Quarterly Newsletter from

Adoptions From The Heart

Fall 2015

## Cheers to 30 Years AFTH!

Building Beautiful Futures Anniversary Event Raised Several Thousand Dollars for the AFTH Birthparent Scholarship Fund

On Friday, October 16th, friends and supporters of Adoptions From The Heart came together to celebrate the agency's 30th anniversary, for the Building Beautiful Futures event at The Racquet Club of Philadelphia. Guests walked the red carpet, pausing in front of the step-and-repeat sponsored by College Funding PA to have their photo taken alongside the night's master of ceremonies, Cory Wade.

Cory Wade is a model, musician, television personality, and LGBT spokesperson who is internationally famous as the second runner up and fan favorite on the first ever co-ed cycle of America's Next Top Model. Cory kept the energy level high from beginning to end and shared with

*" Please give whatever it is you can to the Birth Parent Scholarship Fund, it will provide us with the very thing we try to instill in our children. Show us that you support us in everything we...set our to accomplish. We want you to be proud of us too.*

*- Heather  
an AFTH Birthmother*

guests the story of his personal connection to adoption. Cory's mother, who was adopted, was in the audience and received a well deserved round of applause. She wasn't the only woman who was honored at the Building Beautiful Futures event. Maxine Chalker, the Executive Director and Founder of Adoptions From The Heart, was celebrated for reaching the amazing thirty year milestone. Maxine founded The Adoption Agency in 1985 based on the premise of open adoption, she wanted clients to know more about each other and have a stronger bond. The Agency started in the basement of Maxine's home and grew from there into what it is today – an agency by the name of Adoptions From The Heart, with four offices in Pennsylvania, and one in Delaware, New Jersey, Virginia, Connecticut, and New York. Roberta Evantash, a social worker who has been by Maxine's side since the very beginning, presented her with flowers and beautiful award for her achievement.

*Story Continued on Page 2 & 3*



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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., 2nd 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](http://www.afth.org)





## 30th Anniversary Event Continued...

The night was not only a celebration of Maxine's accomplishments, but also to raise awareness for the **Birth Parent Scholarship Fund**. The fund was recently established by AFTH to help birth parents who have dreams of continuing their education after placement. Birthparents are eligible to apply for the scholarship whether or not they worked with AFTH. Since January, Five scholarships have already been awarded and with the money raised from the event, AFTH is excited to be awarding even more scholarships this January.

Our newest recipients shared what it meant to them to be awarded the financial aid to further their education:



Chelsea explained, *"I needed the scholarship to finish my last three semesters. As an environmental soil major, I want to work internationally to help farmers create more sustainable practices for agriculture, to help small villages and those who are struggling. I am now one step closer to achieving that dream and it would have been so much harder for me without the scholarship from Adoptions From The Heart."*

Courtney echoed a similar sentiment, *"I am sociology major with a minor in Spanish and I hope to further my education to become a minister. Being awarded this scholarship obviously helps financially, but it is more than that. Completing my Bachelor's degree is a symbolism for success and I am happy to finally reach this accomplishment."*



All night long guests were entertained by one of AFTH's favorite bands, Egaitarian and Cory performed at the end of the night as well! The casino section, sponsored by Adoptimist was hustling and bustling all night long and so was the photo booth sponsored by Horizon Services. The event had both raffles and a silent auction. Some guests went home with great prizes such as a flat screen television, signed Philadelphia sports memorabilia, week long vacations, Keurig machine with over \$250 in K-cups, and much more!

Before the night was through, an Adoptions From The Heart birthmother, Heather spoke to the crowd. She shared her personal adoption story, the struggles and the successes. She left guests with a call to action: *"we, as birthmothers, also want to prove to you that we can make it, that we're good and kind and smart. Remind us of that; help us heal by helping ourselves. Please give whatever it is you can to the Birth Parent Scholarship Fund, it will provide us with the very thing we try to instill in our children. Show us that you support us in everything we do and set out to accomplish. We want you to be proud of us too."*



Thank you, from the bottom of our hearts, for helping the agency to take one step closer to our goal of continued birth parent support. And a very special thank you to our event sponsors: College Funding PA, Ag Conexus, Pfit, Admark 360, Entrust Financial, Horizon Services, Adoptimist, Hayden Printing, The Law Offices of Deborah E. Spivack, Don Cofsky, and Innovation Printing.

Credit Cards Accepted Online:  
[www.afth.org](http://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

# Building Beautiful Families 2016 Calendar



With 100% of the purchase price going directly into the hands of the women in need, **you KNOW you are supporting a great cause!**

### 3 Ways to Purchase:

**Order Online...**  
[tiny.cc/AFTHCalendar](http://tiny.cc/AFTHCalendar)

**Or Complete this form ----->**

**Or visit any of our branch offices.**

The Birthmother Fund assists expecting mothers working with AFTH and considering making an adoption plan for their baby. Many of the pregnant women we work with are struggling to provide for their basic needs during pregnancy - food, shelter, clothing, heat, etc. The financial hardships that many of the expecting parents whom we work with face, don't stop after placement. Because of this, the AFTH Birthmother Fund is there to offer assistance after placement as well.

### CALENDARS PRICES:

Purchase at an AFTH office - \$13.00  
Online & Those Being Mailed - \$14.50

## Building Beautiful Families 2016 Calendar

**COMPLETE FORM AND RETURN WITH PAYMENT**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

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

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ # of Calendars x \$14.50 (includes shipping)

= \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Total Enclosed

**Make Checks Payable to:**  
Adoptions From The Heart

**Mail Payment and Form To:**  
Adoptions From The Heart  
30-31 Hampstead Circle  
Wynnewood, PA 19096

**Or Visit AFTH Store to Order Online!**

## After Seeing Thousands of Adoption Profiles, How Hard Could It Be to Create Our Own?

*Psst....Over Here...Pick Us....*



*Written by Kristy Hartley-Galbraith, AFTH Director of Marketing & Communications, new adoptive mother and author of Adoptive Families Circle blog. To see more of her posts visit [AdoptiveFamiliesCircle.com](http://AdoptiveFamiliesCircle.com), "Adoption: Not Just My Profession, My Life."*

Going into the adoption process, we knew it was paperwork heavy and that, by the end, we could probably go pro if "avoiding paper cuts" were an Olympic sport. We also knew that there would be parts of the process that would flow more easily than others, such as gathering all the home study requirements (which took more effort and time than I expected).

From the moment my husband and I submitted our application, I was excited about working on our adoption profile and I thought this would be one of the easier parts. I have seen thousands of families' profiles in the 11 years I've worked at the agency. That exposure, coupled with my graphic design background, made me confident in my ability to easily produce a winning profile, if there is such a thing. That is, until I started actually working on it. I had a blast creating the backgrounds and planning the layout, and then my creative juices came to a screeching halt when my husband and I began to add the real content. You would think, being a blogger, that the words would come easily; I mean we *are* experts on ourselves. I can easily talk about how great a dad and husband David is all day long, or what it is like to live in our neighborhood. The truth is, seeing so many profiles before creating our own was a hindrance. Because I had seen so many examples and ideas, it severely clouded my vision of how I wanted *our* profile to look and more importantly how I wanted it to *feel* to those reading it.

I tried to jumpstart my efforts by brainstorming different themes to pull through our profile, to show who we really are as a family. I was so excited about the list I made, which included: being a lighthearted and fun couple, the importance of both immediate and extended family in our lives, what a great team we are as parents, and the creativity and laughter that fill our home every day. As it turns out, those are the exact same points every other hopeful adoptive couple or parent is trying to highlight in their own profile. My excitement faded and I found myself stuck and without direction, again.

So, how did I get on the right track? Well, to be honest, attending the agency's profile meeting was very helpful. I had been too eager to get started to wait for the meeting; shame on me. Social workers displayed examples of what to do and not to do. The social workers also shared feedback from expectant mothers, which was invaluable. All of the things they went over in that meeting were things I knew, but just couldn't seem to apply. It felt like I was wearing blinders when it came to creating our own profile.

The truth of the matter is that expectant parents choose families for so many different reasons. It could be because of the connection they see between the couple, the neighborhood the family lives in, the parent's love of Halloween, the activities they participate in, or even because they play Scrabble on the weekends with their neighbors (true story). A woman considering adoption may be looking for a family with children or a family where her baby will be their first. She may want a family who is less than a few hours away to make open adoption visits easier, or she may choose a family in a different state because that is where she visited her grandparents as a child. She may choose an older couple because of their life experience or a single parent because she was raised by her father. She may have no other explanation than "I just *knew* they were the ones."

Ultimately, it is the unique qualities of our family that will aid in us being selected. Not that we are more unique than any other family, but something about who we are will foster a connection with her. Instead of trying to create the "perfect" profile, I shifted my focus to creating a profile that most accurately showcases who



## No SSN For Child... What To Do For Taxes?

Some families who have adopted domestically in 2015 will not finalize before the end of the year which means their child has not officially been issued a Social Security number. How do those families file their taxes?

The IRS can issue families in these situations an Adoption Taxpayer Identification Number (ATIN) which is a temporary nine-digit number for a child who does not have a SSN in time to file taxes. ATIN numbers can be requested through the form W-7A which can be downloaded online at [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov). Documentation describing how your child was placed with your family will need to accompany the form. It can take up to eight weeks to receive an ATIN and it is valid for two years and can be used to claim dependency on tax documents.

Consult with your tax preparer if you have additional questions about requesting an ATIN for your child or about the tax credit.

## Profiles Continued...

we are, what it's like to be a member of our family. We are not a "Leave It to Beaver" type of family. We make mistakes and stumble, just as all parents and people do. We may lose our patience after a hard day at work, or forget that the play date was rescheduled and arrive on the wrong day. To be clear, I'm not going to have a page dedicated to our faults; however, I am going to highlight our humanness. It will be clear that there is always room on our laps and in our arms, and love in our hearts. We want to show that laughter and smiles occur much more frequently than tears, and that kisses and hugs are more numerous than time outs. Most importantly, I want to show that our commitment to our child's birth parents will not fade. We will keep our promises. We are extending our faith that we will be chosen and she is extending her faith that we will raise her child, our child, in the best way we know how.

So, we threw away our preconceived standards of what our profile should be, and focused our attention on creating it from our hearts. We are who we are, and that will be what makes our profile shine to the right person.

## Tips For Hopeful Adoptive Parents Beginning the Process

### 1) Arm Yourself with Information.

You can never ask enough questions. Make sure you feel comfortable with the agency you choose.

### 2) Find Support in Others Walking the Same Path.

It can be hard to find other people who truly "get it" unless they have traveled a similar path. Get to know other waiting families, join support groups, connect with others adoptive parents online, and lean on your social worker.

### 3) Make an Effort to Learn About The Other Sides of Adoption.

Read birthparents' and adoptees' adoption experiences. If you are adopting transracially, read not only articles written by adoptive parents in transracial adoptions but also from adoptees brought up in that environment. It's important to understand what other members

of the triad may be experiencing.

### 4) Keep Your Promises.

Be genuine in your profile and in your promises. Do not agree to something if you are not ready to back it up with action. It not only will hurt your child's birthparent but in the end it hurts your child as well.

### 5) Don't Hold Back Love.

The pre-placement education touches on the importance of protecting yourself emotionally for the possibility of the placement falling through. It isn't about holding back love. It's about a way of thinking that reminds adoptive families they have been asked to be the temporary caretakers of a child who may indeed come into their family while his or her parents are ensuring they are making the best and final decision. If a disappointment or

disruption happens, allow yourself to grieve but do not turn it into anger towards the child's parents. They are making a tremendously difficult decision and it is important to respect their wishes.

### 6) Let Frozen's Theme Song Be Your Mantra...Let It Go.

Release all your expectations and embrace the unknowns in the process as a part of the journey. You will need to be flexible and remember that it isn't your journey alone.

### 7) Most Importantly, Remember Adoption is Bittersweet.

Adoption stems from a loss that cannot and should not be ignored. Fully respecting that aspect of the journey and the adoptee and birthparent experience as well is vital.

# AFTH Holiday Events & Activities



## CONNECTICUT OFFICE

### *Holiday Party*

Join us in celebrating the winter holidays and sharing food and fun. Bring a dish to share and a wrapped gift you want Santa's Elf to give your child. Contact the office for more details.

**Saturday, December 12th from 1:00-4:00pm**

**Location: First Church - Glastonbury**

RSVPs by December 5th by calling 860-657-2626 or emailing [ClaudiaM@afth.org](mailto:ClaudiaM@afth.org)

## CENTRAL PA OFFICE

### *Holiday Open House*

Join us for a holiday open house celebration with staff and other AFTH families. Stop in at your convenience during this time for fun and fellowship. In honor of the season of giving, please join us in making the holiday a little brighter for some of our birth parents. We welcome donations of gift cards of any denomination to be added to the agency birth parent holiday gift card drive if you are able to help. We look forward to seeing you.

**Thursday, December 10th from 3:00-5:00pm**

**Location: Central PA Office in Lancaster**

RSVPs by December 4th by calling 717-399-7766 or emailing [AmandaK@afth.org](mailto:AmandaK@afth.org)

## CHERRY HILL OFFICE

### *Holiday Open House*

Please join the New Jersey staff for cookies, cocoa and good cheer as we celebrate the holiday season. There will be crafts and small presents for the children as well as delicious goodies for all.

**Wednesday, December 16th from 4:00-7:00pm**

**Location: Cherry Hill Office**

RSVP by December 16th by calling 856-665-5655 or emailing [ChristopherP@afth.org](mailto:ChristopherP@afth.org)



## DELAWARE OFFICE

### *Holiday Open House*

Come and mingle with the Delaware AFTH staff and other local adoptive families for an afternoon of holiday celebration. Light refreshments will be provided as well as gift bags for all the children.

**Tuesday, December 1st from 3:00-6:00pm**

**Location: Delaware Office**

RSVPs by November 23rd by calling 302-658-8883 or emailing [DanielleG@afth.org](mailto:DanielleG@afth.org)

## VIRGINIA OFFICE

### *Annual Holiday Party*

Join us for a fun afternoon and bring a dish to share "potluck style" and a non-perishable item for the church food pantry. AFTH will provide the drinks, cups, plates, napkins and flatware. Santa will be stopping by. Adoptive parents are encouraged to write a letter of invitation to their child's birthparents for an annual visit.

**Saturday, December 5th from Noon - 2pm**

**NEW Location: Walnut Hill Baptist Church**

*\*the church the event is usually hosted at is under renovations and so we needed to move locations for this year*

RSVP by December 2nd by calling 757-361-0008 or emailing [KimberlyR@afth.org](mailto:KimberlyR@afth.org)

## Wynnewood

### *Holiday Gathering*

We welcome families at all stages of the adoption process, whether placed, waiting or in process, to join Wynnewood staff for a celebration of adoption and the holidays! A light dinner and dessert will be provided and there will be plenty of crafts and activities for kids and their families to enjoy.

**Tuesday, December 1st from 6:00-8:00pm**

**Location: Horsham Township Community Center**

RSVP by November 24th by calling 610-642-7200 or emailing [AshleyK@afth.org](mailto:AshleyK@afth.org)

# Ways to Give Directly To Those In Need

The shopping and gift giving season is nearly upon us! Because of your personal connection to adoption, AFTH would like to present you with some ways you can help men, women and children who have been impacted by adoption and who are in need.

**Each year, Adoptions From The Heart donates tens of thousands of dollars** in gift cards, groceries, and financial assistance to help expecting parents as well as birthparents who have placed children and are parenting other children provide for their basic needs: food, shelter, clothing and warmth during the winter.

With the generosity of donors, AFTH is able to offer help to many in need, but sadly, it isn't always enough. The need for help is growing and we want to be sure to aid as many people as we can **and with your partnership, we can make an even bigger difference this year!**

## Gift Card Drive: Helping Birthmothers and Their Children During the Holidays



While you're out running errands or snagging great deals on Black Friday, grab an extra gift card to help brighten up the holidays for AFTH birthparents and their children.

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.** Just before the holiday season each year, AFTH social workers identify birthparents who are parenting children at home and are in need of extra financial assistance to brighten up the holidays.

Without our annual gift card donations, many of these birthparents would not be able to provide a special meal, warm clothes, and a few presents for their children during the holiday season.

**AFTH will be accepting Target, Walmart, Wawa, Visa, and grocery store or gas gift cards ranging from \$25-\$200 to be passed directly into the hands of those in need.** Gift cards can be mailed to the Wynnewood Office at 30-31 Hampstead Circle, Wynnewood, PA 19096 by December 4th.

*When one of AFTH's social workers hand delivered the gift card to Elba she was extremely overjoyed and moved to tears. She said that she was unsure how she was going to get through the holidays and make Christmas special for her children but now thanks to AFTH and our wonderful donors, she didn't have to worry.*

## Gifts That Keep on Giving

AFTH has partnered with Five Below and Yankee Candles for two separate fundraisers.



### Five Below

Shop at Five Below between now and November 30th and they will donate 10% of your purchases to AFTH's Birthmother Fund! All you have to do is print out the appropriate flyer and start shopping for a cause!

What is better than a store with tons to offer? EVERYTHING in the store is \$5 or under!

### FIND FLYER & LIST OF PARTICIPATING STORES

[www.tiny.cc/AFTH-Five-Below](http://www.tiny.cc/AFTH-Five-Below)



### Yankee Candle

Yankee Candle is donating 40% of purchases made online to the Birthparent Scholarship Fund!

No matter what your nose desires, you can now purchase Yankee Candles for your own home or to use as gifts for family and friends this holiday season and 40% of your purchase will benefit AFTH's Birthparent Scholarship Fund! Use the below link before January 13th.

[www.tiny.cc/AFTH-Yankee-Candle](http://www.tiny.cc/AFTH-Yankee-Candle)

Happy Shopping!



# Online Shopping Benefits AFTH

Did you know that companies will donate a percentage of your online purchases to AFTH? Before you start your holiday shopping and especially before you grab great deals online for Cyber Monday, be sure to take a look at these two ways your purchases can benefit AFTH.



Who doesn't love to shop on Amazon? Great deals & fast delivery. There is one more reason to LOVE shopping on Amazon and that's Amazon Smile.

AFTH is listed as an Amazon Smile charity and anytime you shop on Amazon, AFTH can receive a donation.

Amazon Smile is the same Amazon you know. Same products, same prices, same service. But by designating AFTH as your Amazon Smile charity of choice, Amazon will donate .5% of the your eligible Amazon Smile purchases to Adoptions From The Heart.

**Set AFTH As Your Charity of Choice Here and ALL of your future Amazon shopping will turn into donations for AFTH.**

[www.smile.amazon.com](http://www.smile.amazon.com)

For all your NON-AMAZON holiday shopping, remember to always begin at [GiveBackAmerica.org](http://GiveBackAmerica.org).

AFTH is listed in the Give Back America Mall and every time you shop, AFTH can receive a generous commission at no cost to you! With over 375 participating stores, it is as easy as a click of the mouse and even your routine online shopping can help benefit AFTH.

- 1) Visit [www.GiveBackAmerica.org](http://www.GiveBackAmerica.org)
- 2) Designate AFTH in the "Search for a Cause" box
- 3) Shop Shop Shop!

Even easier... download the GiveBackAmerica toolbar [www.givebackamerica.ourtoolbar.com](http://www.givebackamerica.ourtoolbar.com) and AFTH will receive donations anytime you are shopping on a site affiliated with Give Back America.

## After Black Friday & Cyber Monday There is #GivingTuesday

#GivingTuesday is on Tuesday, December 1st this year and is a global day dedicated to giving back. Charities, families, businesses, community centers, and students around the world will come together for one common purpose: to celebrate generosity and to give back! All donations are tax deductible.

We would like you to consider our Birthmother Fund and our Birthparent Scholarship Fund on #GivingTuesday. Both of these funds have changed lives! Here are two women who received the help they needed from the funds.



*"When I found out that I was pregnant, I felt as though my dreams of becoming a nurse were out of the question. After placing my child through Adoptions From The Heart, I realized just how important it is to get an education. AFTH helped me get there. I am now an*

*RN, at a children's hospital, doing what I love"*  
- Courtney, AFTH Birthmother

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

# Surviving the Wait During the Holidays

The holidays are a time for celebration, happy moments, and spending time with loved ones. But for those who are waiting to adopt, the holidays may become a source of stress or a reminder of what is missing, and friends and family may not be able to understand. Waiting to adopt can be hard at any time during the year, but it is particularly difficult during the holiday season. Here are some helpful tips for navigating the holidays while you wait.

## Avoid Things That Are Triggering

If you know that being around pregnant women and small children makes you upset, limit your time around them. The holidays are filled with social events, but you don't have to show up to every one of them. Yes, you should attend your office party at work. But, it's okay to skip the party hosted by your friend with a newborn baby if you don't feel up to it.

## Prepare Yourself for Uncomfortable Conversation

Holiday parties are filled with small talk. So don't be surprised if you find yourself engaged in a conversation with someone you've never met before and are met with questions such as "how many children do you have?" Don't let these conversations catch you off guard. Understand that these questions are bound to come up and prepare your responses ahead of time.

## Be Honest

Sharing your feelings regarding your adoption process with family and friends can help to take some of the weight of your shoulders. If you haven't shared with your friends and family that you are struggling to start a family or that you are trying to adopt, now is a good time to do so. Letting them know now will help them to be more sensitive towards your feelings and to avoid making remarks that may make you upset.

## Get Support from Other Waiting Parents

Being surrounded by children and families during the holiday season may make you feel alone. Reaching out to other parents who are also waiting to adopt can help you to realize that you are not the only one experiencing these feelings. Your family and friends may not be able to understand your emotions, but other parents who are waiting to adopt will. Look into joining a waiting parent support group through your agency or connecting via online forums.



## Do Something Special for Yourself

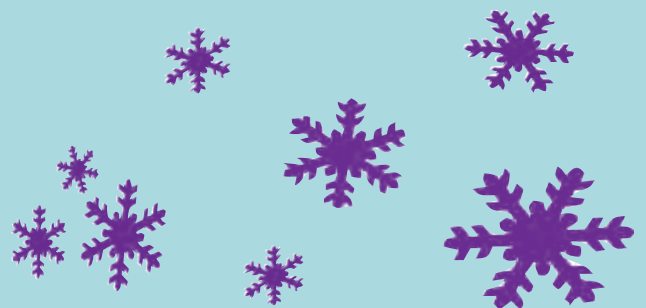
Some waiting parents may blame themselves for their inability to start a family. Remember that it is not your fault! Instead of beating yourself up about it, channel your energy into doing something nice for yourself. Have an extra glass of wine, buy yourself a gift, or take yourself out for a spa day.

## Take a Breather

You have worked hard all year; you deserve to take a break. Taking a step back to think about things other than your adoption process can give you some time to relax and recharge. Hang out with friends, read a book, go to a family gathering. Remind yourself that you are not running away from the issue, but instead are giving yourself time to breath, and when you are ready to think about adoption again you will come back with a renewed perspective.

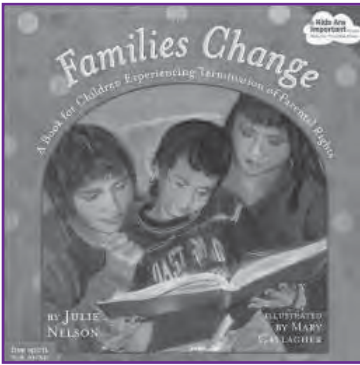
## Remember That the Holidays Don't Last Forever

Although it may feel like a foreboding time, remember that the holidays are really short and only come around once a year. Enjoy yourself and the time you get to spend with your loved ones because, before you know it, they will be over!



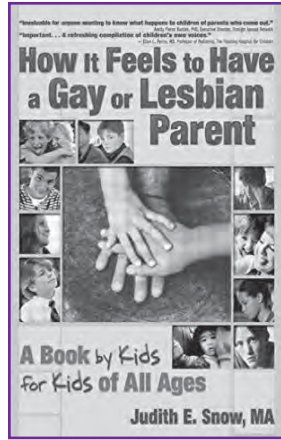
# Book Reviews

## Families Changes: A Book for Children Experiencing Termination of Parental Rights (Kids Are Important Series) by Julie Nelson



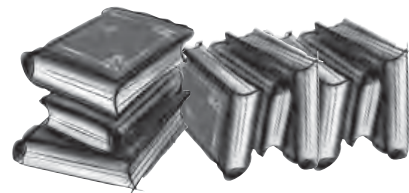
*Julie Nelson* - This picture book deals with the difficult topic of termination of parental rights for children who are in foster care or who have been removed from their home due to safety issues in a easy-to-understand way. It helps children through the transition explaining it's okay to remember the good times and the bad times, and helps children know that all families change in some ways. The end of the book offers a serious message to foster parents, social workers, teachers, and caregivers, with information about how to support and encourage young children amidst the terrifying crossroad of the termination of parental rights, as well as a list of resources and organizations created to help such children and those who look after them.

## How It Feels to Have a Gay or Lesbian Parent: A Book by Kids for Kids of All Ages by Judith E. Snow



*Judith E. Snow* - The kids interviewed for this book range in age from seven to thirty-one. It is interesting to see the differences and similarities in all of their situations. It seems that most children were okay

with their parents being gay but when they were in elementary school or middle school they were scared their friends would make fun of them. Once the teens hit high school, they didn't care as much but many were selective about who they told. This book could be very valuable to children whose parents are just coming out or those who are having a hard time adjusting to their parents being gay. It's also helpful to gay parents to know what may be going on in your child's mind, whether you raised them since birth in a same sex relationship or if this is a new situation. All children go through periods of being embarrassed by their parents for one reason or another but it helps to know what other families went through and that these feelings are normal. It also helps to show the children that there are other kids who have walked in their shoes and they made it through and survived, it isn't the end of the world and they aren't alone.

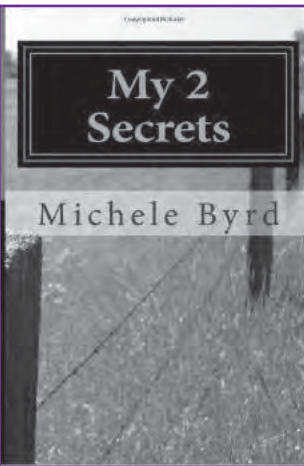


## Adoption Related Books on Amazon

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>



## My 2 Secrets: An Adoption Story by Michele Byrd

*Michele Byrd* - Most adoption books focus on the story of adoptive parents, their struggle through infertility, the hoop jumping and red tape of adoption and ultimately the joy of a successful adoption. My 2 Secrets tells the adoption story from the perspective of

a birth mother. This is a short but powerful story of a woman who places not one but two children for adoption and her struggle to keep this a secret and then ultimately come to terms with it. This is an essential read for prospective adoptive parents to help create a better level of understanding of the experience of a pregnant woman trying to come to terms with one of the hardest decisions of her life.



## AFTH Program Updates



**DOMESTIC PROGRAMS** - The holiday season is almost here and we hope that many of our placed as well as waiting AFTH families will consider joining our staff at our local holiday parties for some holiday cheer. For details on our local office events, see the newsletter insert.

**A Few Important Reminders to all AFTH Families:**  
**AFTH Offices will be closed for the holiday starting at 1pm on December 24th and will re-open on Monday, January 4th. Not to worry, social workers will still be handling placements and taking calls from hospitals for emergencies during this break.**

Many families and birthparents send gifts to our AFTH Offices to then forward along to the other party. In order to ensure that your holiday gift will reach our offices before our holiday closing, please be sure to send your gift by December 4th. Please do not mail your gift to the office if it will arrive after December 24th because it will sit outside the office until we return on January 4th and we do not want any gifts getting lost or stolen during that time.

When sending in photos for regular updates here are two important things to keep in mind. Be sure to include your full name and address on the envelope or on a note inside the envelope so we are able to identify who the photos are coming from. This is for internal use only and your contact information will not be passed along with the photos. It is always great to see notes and captions written on the back of photos sent in for updates. Please be sure to use a pen instead of a marker as markers bleed onto other photos ruining them when they are stacked on top of each other and mailed to your branch office.

We would like to invite all of our AFTH waiting families to join us in our local offices for support groups. Waiting can be especially hard during the holidays and the support groups are a great way to connect with other waiting families. Upcoming support groups are listed on page 11 and can also be found on our online calendar of events at [www.afth.org](http://www.afth.org).

With close to 13,000 Facebook followers and over 10,000 tweets as well as weekly blog posts, AFTH's

social media is booming with adoption discussions and content and we don't want you to miss out. Join us on Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest, and Tumblr as well as our WordPress and website blogs.

The AFTH Connecticut Office has moved! Not to be alarmed, they did not go far, just up one flight of steps. The Glastonbury Office is now located on the second floor at 703 Hebron Ave. in Glastonbury. If you are local, you are welcome to come see our new space.

AFTH's fiscal year runs from July-June. We concluded our 2014-2015 fiscal year with a total of 139 placements including 2 sets of twins and 3 special needs placements. AFTH also facilitated 5 identified placements.

During the first quarter of our 2015-2016 fiscal year, we have placed 26 infants and young children through our Domestic Program in addition to assisting with 1 designated adoption in VA and 1 identified and 1 intermediary adoption in CT.

Of the families currently in our program, 95% of have been waiting 24 months or less, 84% 18 months or less and 65% 1 year or less. For families open to African-American children, 73% of families currently in the books have been waiting less than 1 year and 48% less than 6 months. We are seeing our emergency placements increasing. In 2014, 45% of all our placements were emergency placements and so far for 2015, 59% of our placements have been emergencies.

Each month, AFTH social workers take outreach materials to over 130 locations to maintain our networking relationships with our referral sources as well as establishing new ones. AFTH also participates in lots of conferences and expos to help raise awareness about the agency's services.



## Idlewild Picnic Recap

AFTH's Pittsburgh Office's annual picnic was held on August 7th, 2015, at Idlewild Park in Ligonier. The weather was absolutely perfect to enjoy the amusement park and the Soak Zone. Approximately 100 people attended and families brought a picnic lunch to eat together in the pavilion. It is wonderful to watch the children grow and see our families again year after year. Local businesses donated items to be raffled off to raise money for the AFTH Birthmother Fund. It was a great day to come together and we are already looking forward to next year.

## Seiple Farms Recap

The Allentown office hosted their 3rd Annual Fall Festival on October 10, 2015 at Seiple Farms in Bath, PA. Thank you to everyone who attend! The weather was beautiful and we had a great time with the families and children. Keep a look out for 2016's Fall Fest event which is anticipated to be held at the Lehigh Valley Zoo.



## Recent Legislation



**EVERY CHILD DESERVES A FAMILY ACT** - On May 19th, Senator Kirsten E. Gillibrand (D-NY) and Representative John Lewis (D-GA-5) introduced this Act (S1382/HR2449). The Act prohibits adoption or foster care placement service entities that receive federal assistance from practicing discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, or marital status. Discrimination includes denial of parenting or placement opportunities and the requirement of supplemental or alternate procedures to obtain approval.

**NEW YORK** - The state legislature is considering two bills related to tax deductions for foster care adoption. New York A6575 provides for a tax deduction for expenses incurred in the adoption of a child from foster care and S2688 would require the Office of Children and Family Services to complete an impact of a tax deduction for expenses attributed to the adoption of a child in foster care.

New York City's foster-care system allows children to languish for years in often dangerous conditions amid a long-standing pattern of government inaction, a federal civil-rights lawsuit filed last month alleges. The city's public advocate, Letitia James, and private attorneys representing children in foster care filed the class-action complaint against the city and the state. The lawsuit alleges widespread deficiencies and mismanagement at the Administration for Children's Services, the city agency with oversight of the foster-care system.

**PENNSYLVANIA** - The PA House of Representatives is considering an OBC access bill which would allow adopted persons, 18 years of age and over, to request a copy of their original birth certificate. Amendments recently filed to this bill would allow a six month time frame when a birth parent would be able to redact their name from the original birth certificate prior to its release. There is a mechanism for birth parents to reverse their request for name redaction, and it also allows adopted persons subject to receiving a birth certificate that is redacted to request the State Department of Health contact the birth parent to see if their position has changed. Certain circumstances, such as death of birth parent, mandate that the redaction be removed and the adopted person be provided his/her OBC without redaction.

**CONNECTICUT** - The new law, PA 14-133, allows people 18 years of age or older who were born and adopted in Connecticut and whose adoptions were finalized on or after October 1, 1983 to receive their original birth certificates as well as medical history and contact preference forms if either has been filed.



## 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

This past summer, two prior AFTH families now working through Carolina Adoption Services(CAS) traveled to China to pick up their daughters. Assignments continue at a snail's pace. The latter two families had an LID of 12/20/06. The next LID for our prior families is 1/16/07. I believe there may be two active families who are still waiting.

As of writing this message, the CCCWA has not updated their LIDs since 7/16/15 which was 12/31/06 at that time.

### HAITI

Haiti has advised that all inter-country adoptions completed after November 2013 must be completed as full (plenary) adoptions. Under Haiti's 2013 adoption law, simple adoptions may not terminate all of the birth parents' legal rights and might be subject to revocation at the request of the birth family at any point before the child turns 18. Pursuant to information from the Haitian Adoption Authority (IBESR), simple adoptions completed in Haiti may need to be converted to a full adoption through the Haitian conversion process in order to be sufficient for inter-country adoption.

### LIBERIA

On June 30, 2015, the Liberian President announced the lifting of the moratorium on inter country adoptions. The Office of Children's Issues and the U.S. Embassy in Monrovia will provide updates on adoption.state.gov as soon as more information becomes available.

### DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO(DRC)

On August 14, 2015, the U.S. Embassy in Kinshasa sent a message to U.S. citizens living or traveling to the DRC of an outbreak of measles in the provinces of Haut Katanga, Haut Lomami, Tanganika and Lualaba. The embassy said that adopted children of U.S. citizens who have been unable to leave the DRC due to the suspension on exit permits could be impacted if they had not been properly vaccinated. If you have an adopted child in the DRC that has not received an MMR vaccine, the embassy recommends such persons work with their agency representative to determine if a child is at risk. At this time we are unaware if said outbreak has been contained.

## With Heavy Hearts We Share the News of Der's Passing

We have very sad news to share with our many China families who adopted through AFTH. Our much loved facilitator Chang Gui De, better known as "Der" passed away in China on October 4. He was 62 and died after being ill a short time. Many of you knew his wife Helen who is doing well. Der was also the brother of Grace Chang who was our U.S. facilitator. Anyone wanting to send condolences to Helen should send them to Roberta Evantash at the Wynnewood AFTH office by December 20th to be sent to China. Please no packages or thick packs of photos.





## Transracial Adoptive Family Meet & Greet



This special event is open to all AFTH transracial families. It will provide an opportunity for families to meet one another and begin to build connections with other families similar to theirs. Families will be invited to share their contact information so they can continue to connect outside of formal AFTH events as well. A light breakfast will be served while families visit together. Children are welcome!

**Saturday, January 30th from 10:30am-Noon**

**Location: AFTH Wynnewood Office**

*RSVP to [AshleyK@afth.org](mailto:AshleyK@afth.org) by January 22nd.*

### Waiting Family Support Groups

*AFTH branch office's host local support groups for waiting adoptive families to connect with each other for support during the wait. Offices host support groups at different times throughout the year. Contact your social worker for more details.*

[Scheduled support group for December:](#)

#### **BROOKLYN, NY - Adoptive Parent Support Group: Preparing For The Holidays!**

Adoptive families are invited to bring a friend or family member with them to the support group. We will discuss ways to work through the stress of the holidays while waiting for a placement. We will review some of the most recent birth parent situations as well! Support Group will take place at the Leonard Branch of the Brooklyn Public Library.

**Saturday, December 5th from 11am-1pm**

**Call (610) 432-2384 or Email [ChelseyP@afth.org](mailto:ChelseyP@afth.org)**



## Congratulations to Families Who Have Recently Adopted!

### Daughters

Kirk & Kristen  
 Andrew & Katherine  
 Michael & Kristen  
 Miriam  
 Brian & Shelley  
 Gregory & Denise  
 Ken & Lisa  
 Andrew & Melissa  
 Garrett & Ellen  
 Jason & Elizabeth  
 James & Tracy  
 Joseph & Kristen  
 Fernando & Rhonda  
 Corey & Dana  
 Joseph & Michelle  
 Artemio & Christopher  
 Greg & Ellen  
 Eric & Sara

### Sons

John & Tami  
 William & Leslie  
 Ira & Andrea  
 Christopher & Eric  
 Richard & Jill  
 Timothy & Gregory  
 Glen & Regina  
 Stephen & Anita  
 Jaime & Christopher  
 Margaret & Dina





# Adoptions From The Heart®

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*or current resident*

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## FREE ONLINE WEBINARS

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

### DOMESTIC INFANT ADOPTION

DECEMBER 1ST AT 7PM

JANUARY 5TH AT 7PM

*Registration Required*

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

## Get SOCIAL Find AFTH On...

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

## Got E-mail?

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

### DOMESTIC LISTSERVE -

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

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

### DOMESTIC DISCUSSION GROUP

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