

Adoption News



A Newsletter from:

Adoptions From The Heart

Birth Fathers Are Important Too!

Closing the Information Gap for Expecting Fathers



"Adoption isn't what I thought it would be. I didn't understand about open adoption and how involved I could be. I thought the social workers would only care about the mother but they cared about me too. I have yearly visits with my son and love getting pictures."

- Derrick

Adoptions From The Heart believes in the importance of biological fathers. It's important for expecting father's to know their rights in relation to parenting and adoption. All too often, we find there is an information gap that creates misunderstanding in regards to what adoption IS and ISN'T. This same lack of knowledge can lead fathers to make decisions against adoption because they don't fully understand their rights and ability to be involved. On the reverse side, it's important for a father to also know his rights and responsibilities when it comes to the decision of parenting.

AFTH has a section on our website with information specifically geared to fathers however we wanted to continue closing the information gap by creating even more material.

Our new FAQs flyer tackles the common questions we hear from expecting fathers including:

"What if I'm not sure I'm the father?"

"I want to parent. She wants adoption. What can I do?"

"I want contact with the adoptive family but the mother doesn't?"

"Can I change my mind?"

AFTH social workers can provide separate but equal services in situations where the mothers and fathers are unable to meet together.

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Summer 2019

Locations

Allentown

610.432.2384

Central PA

717.399.7766

Connecticut

860.657.2626

Delaware

302.658.8883

New Jersey

856.665.5655

732.335.8883

New York

800.355.5500

Philadelphia

610.642.7200

Pittsburgh

724.853.6533

Virginia

757.361.0008

804.218.2569

Toll Free: 800.355.5500

Website: www.afth.org

Our new **Know Your Rights About Parenting and Adoption** brochure lays out general as well as state specific rights important for fathers to know including information about the Putative Father Registry.

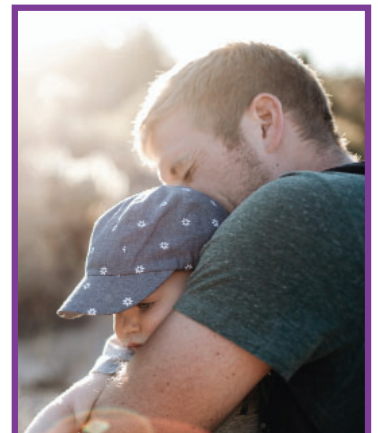
For expecting fathers wanting to learn more about adoption, our **Open Adoption** brochure helps to better explain open adoption and what the process can look like. There are times when we are contacted by men who are upset that the baby's mother is considering adoption but, after learning more about open adoption and his ability to be involved, he changes his mind and is open to the idea of adoption.

We don't want fathers to feel forgotten in the process. There is a lot of information out there for women who are facing unplanned pregnancies but not a lot of resources for men in the same situation. We hope that by offering this material, we can help to close the gap of information about adoption geared to fathers. When facing an unplanned pregnancy, it's important to know about all the options in order to make an informed decision.

Gathering More Information

Whether expecting fathers are just curious to learn about adoption or are already sure it's the right decision, we have staff available for support, to answer questions and to help explore all the options.

"She told me she was pregnant and wanted adoption. At first I was against it. I didn't know much about adoption then I learned open adoption is different. I can get updates and have visits. I'm sad I couldn't be the one to raise him but I'm glad he has a good life and still knows who I am." — Malcolm



Breaking a Sweat for Birth Parents - Over \$1,000 Raised

Adoptions From The Heart's 3rd Annual Zumba®-Thon was nothing short of a success. Over fifty people joined us at the Greater York Dance to partake in the two-hour Zumba® event. Participants danced to Rock, Tango, and Merengue while supporting the Expecting and Birth Parent Support Fund.

AFTH's Expecting and Birth Parent Support Fund aids birth parents who could use some financial assistance for basic needs such as food, clothing, and a safe place to stay. Within the past two years, the Fund has provided help to over 85 birth parents.



While participants were shimmying, shaking and sweating in the dance studio, our Facebook audience had the opportunity to partake in our first ever Zumba®-Thon Live Event from the comfort of their home. The audience was able to hear interviews with an AFTH birth mother, Miss Pennsylvania, Zumba® instructors, and AFTH staff.

The Zumba® class was led by six certified instructors: Jennifer Miller, Bridgette Blenker Seaman, Theresa Price, Santana Elia, Casan Galvez, and Amanda Klotz. Miss Pennsylvania 2019, Tiffany Seitz, Miss Keystone OT, Avia Weber and Miss Liberty Bell, Jenna Mortorana, were among our special guests.

We had three great raffles at the event with prizes including tickets to Dorney Park, DreamWright theaters, Chipotle and more. In White and Kling & Deibler, LLP were our two amazing sponsors this year. AFTH raised over \$1,000 from the event's registration fees, raffle sales and generous donations. Adoptions From The Heart would like to thank everyone who was part of our 3rd Annual Zumba®-Thon. We hope to see you all again next year!





Adoptions From The Heart

adoption@afth.org | www.afth.org | Maxine Chalker, MSW/LSW, Executive Director

Greetings,

Adoptions From The Heart is proud to have the support of donors who are **passionate about impacting their community**. By making a donation, you are helping **change lives through the services we provide to women, men, children and families**. Below is a glimpse into how donors are creating life-long effects by giving to AFTH.

Impacting Lives Through Financial Assistance

We are honored to be trusted by expecting parents who turn to AFTH during one of the most challenging and often unsupported times in their lives. AFTH social workers and counselors discuss all their options and **empower them to choose what they decide is best for them and their baby**. There are times when **circumstances may leave expecting parents without housing, food, clothing or transportation**. In those situations, our donor-funded **Expecting and Birth Parent Support Fund** is able to assist to get them back on their feet whether or not they ultimately choose adoption.

After placement, many birth parents are motivated to break the cycle which led them to a place where they needed AFTH. They have already made one of the most difficult decisions they could to place their child for adoption and now they want to change their life by creating **stability through education**. **Their hearts are leading them towards a higher education but their situations often make it extremely difficult to cover the costs associated with it**. AFTH created the **Birth Parent Scholarship Fund** for exactly this reason. Twice a year, we provide scholarships to birth parents enrolled in education programs who could use financial help along the way to finish.



Impacting Lives Through Support

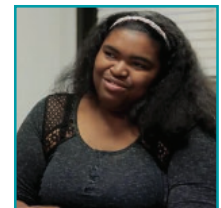
In addition to financial help, the greatest need is continued emotional support long after placement. Through our **Birth Parent Support Groups**, we are seeing long-lasting connections built between not only AFTH staff but also between the women and men who are attending. The bonds created with others who truly “get” the birth parent experience are deeply treasured. This post-placement support and the **relationships built through support groups aid in healing after placement**.

Impacting Lives Through AFTHtv

By launching AFTHtv last November combined with our special “Unheard Voices of Birth Mothers” in February, we have created a platform to **amplify voices that often go unheard both inside and outside the adoption community**. It has given many women the **courage to speak up and share their personal experiences**.

The result has not only been empowering for those sharing their stories but also inspirational for those listening to them.

“Very powerful words spoken from the heart. [These women] amaze me! They sure are super women.” AFTHtv viewer



“We have a voice and we should be proud to use it!” Se'Ayra

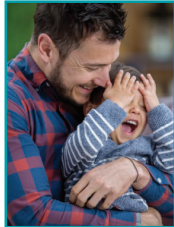
The AFTHtv video series has certainly heightened awareness about adoption and how unique each experience is. We have tackled tough topics and shed a light on some commonly unknown facets of adoption for both expecting and adoptive parents. Adoptive parents, birth parents, and adoptees don't live in a bubble so the more awareness created about adoption the better.



Mary is a birth mother who placed through AFTH's Delaware Office. She has been a part of our support group and has found a deeper value in her journey since sharing her story on AFTHtv.

"Opening up is not always easy, but it's important. It makes me feel valued to know sharing my story is helping others. It gives me a new purpose!" - Mary

Impacting Lives Through Inclusion



We are not anywhere near done, in upcoming episodes of AFTHtv we are highlighting even more birth parents including birth fathers and adoptees as well as adoptive parents and professionals. We believe every member of the triad's story is important to hear and that no voice should be left out.

AFTH also believes that expecting birth fathers should not be left out of the equation. We have rolled out new material specifically geared to fathers talking openly about their rights and involvement.

Last and certainly not least, **AFTH has been named an Innovator for LGBTQ Inclusion by the Human Rights Campaign.** We are proud to be recognized for our services in the LGBTQ community.



Partner with Adoptions From The Heart and Make a Lasting Impact

At AFTH, we know that family goes so much beyond biological ties. Consider joining our family with a donation in support. Whether it's a one-time donation or a reoccurring monthly give, **it will directly benefit the women and men who turn to AFTH in difficult times.** Choose the purpose you would like to see your donation used for or earmark it for AFTH to use for its greatest need.

Visit www.afth.org/donate to make an online tax-deductible donation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Maxine Chalker".

Maxine Chalker
Founder & Executive Director

P.S. Consider committing to a monthly give and partner with AFTH year-round.

Adoptive Parent Meet Up

Thank you to Malka G. for coordinating an adoptive parent meet-up in Brooklyn on July 13th. It was a great turn out with about 10-12 families in attendance. The group hopes to meet again in September. Check AFTH's Calendar of Events for more details.

Photo Credit: Ann Marie N.



AFTH Support Groups

Birth Parent Support Groups - One of biggest tips many birth parents have given to those just beginning their adoption process is to connect to others who have gone through similar circumstances. Contact your local office to learn more about support groups in your area.

Many of the women who have met in the support groups have become close friends. Call your local office for details.

Waiting Family Support Groups - The waiting can be difficult and AFTH's local support groups bring waiting families together to connect. Groups are led by AFTH staff and cover a variety of topics designed for waiting families. Contact your office or visit our events calendar at www.afth.org.

Get Involved with AFTH's 2019 Paper Heart Project

Become a Heart Holder

Be an adoption advocate by getting involved in the Paper Heart project.

What is the Paper Heart Project?

November is National Adoption Month. To celebrate, AFTH created the Paper Heart Project to engage the community in supporting adoption. For \$1, businesses can offer their customers the opportunity to purchase a paper heart which will be displayed all month long. **100% of the donations support the AFTH Expecting & Birth Parent Support Fund**, which provides financial support to the men and women AFTH is assisting. Every heart purchased can help make big impacts on someone's life!

Getting Others Involved

- Schools & Preschools
- Dance Studios
- Karate Studios
- Friends & Family
- Community Organizations
- Small Business
- Coworkers
- Churches

Sign up to be a Paper Heart Holder at www.afth.org/events/nam or email MayraH@afth.org.

Starting November 1st, hearts will be available for purchase in AFTH's branch office and in our online store www.afth.org/store in addition to participating businesses.



Fall Festivals

Central Pennsylvania Office

Join AFTH staff at the Giant Community Center in Harrisburg for a holiday open house. All families waiting and placed who worked through the Central PA Office are welcome. We encourage families with open adoptions to invite their children's birth parents to this event to get together.

Giant Community Center in Harrisburg, PA
November 19th from 6:00-8:00pm

RSVP by November 14th to MarilynR@afth.org

Allentown Office

Enjoy a day with AFTH at Grim's Orchard & Family Farms in Breinigsville, PA. Open adoption reunions welcome. AFTH will have a tent with sweets along with tables and chairs for families. Additional food and drinks can be purchased at the farm. Attendees can purchase full, unlimited one-day access to all 21 attractions for a flat fee of \$15.95/person. Tickets for one time individual attractions also available at \$1.00 per ticket. Access passes and ticket purchased can be made at the farm on the day of the event. Signs for the AFTH tent will be at the entrance.

Grim's Orchards located in Breinigsville, PA
October 5th from 11:00am-1:00pm

RSVP by September 21st to JennaS@afth.org

Virginia Office

Join AFTH staff and families for a fun-filled, fall day at our office. We will be providing a main food dish, a bounce house, and activities for the kids. Please bring a side dish or dessert to share!

Virginia Office Located in Chesapeake, VA
November 2nd from Noon-2:00pm

RSVP by October 25th to KimberlyR@afth.org

Cherry Hill Office

Please join Adoptions From The Heart's New Jersey office for our Fall Festival to celebrate National Adoption Month at Johnson's Corner Farm! Adoptive Families can purchase tickets to go on a hay ride, pick popcorn and sweet potatoes and tour the Animal Farm! Light snack will be provided but families can bring food as well as purchase fall treats at the farm!

Johnson's Corner Farm in Medford, NJ
November 2nd from 10:00am-1:00pm

Cost: Hayrides \$4.50/person, other activities similar cost

RSVP by October 28th to ChristopherP@afth.org

Wynnewood Office

Join us for a Fall Family Fun Event at Colonial Gardens in Phoenixville! Wear your Halloween costume and enjoy all that Colonial Gardens has to offer. All in process, waiting, and placed families are invited to join the Wynnewood office staff for snacks, and other fall fun! This is a great opportunity to get together with birth parents for a visit and spend time having fall fun with other AFTH adoptive families.

Colonial Gardens in Phoenixville, PA
October 12th from 10:00am-Noon

Cost: Hayrides \$5/person, other activities similar cost

RSVP by October 4th to NeelyJ@afth.org



Classes Designed for Adoptive Parents

Prenatal Drug & Alcohol Exposure - \$25/person, \$40/couple

AFTH wants families to make informed decisions when completing their profile keys. This is a great opportunity to listen to medical professionals weigh in on prenatal exposure to drugs and alcohol. Each family has to decide what situations are right for them. Many families came away from this class feeling comfortable opening their key.

“After the class, we felt ready to modify our key. We submitted it two days after the class and less than three weeks later, we were matched with our daughter BECAUSE of our changes!” - Kim

“Don’t change your key just to get placed faster. Do it because you gained knowledge that now makes you comfortable for different situations.” - AFTH Social Worker

Online Webinar

Presenter Dr. Erin Meyer is an Internal Medicine and Pediatric Hospitalist who works in the NICU (Neonatal Intensive Care Unit) at Christiana Hospital. She is also an adoptive mom through AFTH, and can speak from both professional and personal angles. She will be discussing the effects of drug and alcohol use during pregnancy on the newborn as well as withdrawal symptoms and short and long term effects of exposure. This class is suitable for all prospective and current adoptive parents. There will be plenty of time for your questions.

Online Webinar - \$35/family

Hosted by Dr. Erin Meyer

November 2nd at 10:00am

Link will be emailed in 1-2 business days after registering.



Hosting Class in Pittsburgh Area

Lisa M. Pietrusza, RN, DNP-FNP, is a graduate from the University of Pittsburgh with a concentration in family practice. She is currently finishing an additional certification in psychiatric practice and completed a rotation in a specialized perinatal mental health clinic. Her manuscript has been accepted into the Journal of Addictions Nursing. she is currently a nurse practitioner at Central Outreach Wellness Center, an infectious disease and LGBTQ clinic. Lisa has over ten years as a registered nurse with experience in community health, mental health and holistic nursing. Presenter will discuss effects of prenatal drug/alcohol exposure on the newborn, as well as mental health conditions and infectious diseases in the birth parents. This class is suitable for prospective adoptive parents and those already parenting. Question/answer period follows lecture.

October 19th from 11:00am-12:30pm

Monroeville Public Library

Register at least 1 week prior. Families are encouraged to register early as classes fill quickly.

**Register Online at
www.afth.org/calendar**

Infant and Child Care (Central PA) - \$25/person, \$35/couple

This infant care class especially for adoptive families will cover the basics of infant and child care including: newborn appearance, newborn behaviors, diapering and dressing, feeding, umbilical cord care, newborn health and safety basics, when to call your pediatrician as well as other changes that may come with new parenthood. This class is exclusively for prospective adoptive parents and allows them to learn in a non-medical environment without a focus on pregnancy and childbirth. There will be plenty of time for questions and for AFTH families, this class will count toward the agency's childcare requirement.

Location: Giant Community Center in Harrisburg, PA
Time: 6:30-8:30pm

Upcoming Dates:
September 16th and November 18th
Register at least 1 week prior to class.

Adoptive Parent Panel (Virginia) - \$15/person, \$20/couple

Come hear the voices of those who have experienced parenting through varying adoption circumstances at our "Adoption Experiences Panel". We will have adoptive parents who have experienced transracial adoption, varying medical circumstances, and openness in adoption at different levels. Please join us to learn and ask questions! Immediately following the panel will be a waiting family support group. Please email Nicole at NicoleF@afth.org if you would like to attend the support group.

September 28th from 10:00am-11:30pm
AFTH Chesapeake Office
Register at least 1 week prior to class.

Connected Parenting (New York) - \$10/person, \$15/couple

This course will be presented by an international adoptive mother, and licensed social worker, Rebekah McGee, LMSW. Rebekah will be sharing her personal experiences and knowledge based on Dr. Karyn Purvis at TCU - Trust-Based Relational Intervention. This class is great for both prospective adoptive parents as well as individuals whom are already parenting.

August 29th from 6:00-7:30pm Brooklyn Public Library - Pacific Branch *Register at least 1 week prior to class.*

Birth Parent Panel: What Adoptive Parents Should Know (New Jersey) - \$10/person, \$15/couple

A panel of birth parents who have made an adoption plan will discuss their experiences and answer questions from waiting adoptive parents. Topics to be covered include: qualities that are important to birth parents when they choose an adoptive family, the pre-placement meeting, hospital expectations, and openness in adoption, including picture and letter updates and visits.

October 17th from 6:30-8:00pm AFTH Cherry Hill Office
Register at least 1 week prior to class.

AFTH Waiting Adoptive Families Will Receive Required Continuing Education Credits for Attending These Classes!

Summer Picnic Recap

Connecticut



On Sunday June 23, over 70 people gathered together at the Beardsley Zoo in Bridgeport to celebrate adoption. It was a picture-perfect day! People came out to enjoy the zoo which had plenty of space for the children to run and play. We had 7 open adoption reunions between birth and adoptive families. It was wonderful to have so many multi-generational groups present.

Agency Ft Washington Picnic

AFTH returned to Flourtown, PA for our 31st Annual Picnic on June 2nd. Hundreds of people joined us for a day of celebrating families built through adoption. In addition to donated snacks and fruit, AFTH Board Member Thom Rossi grilled hot dogs for attendees. Hailez Cometz provided the live music and children enjoyed the face painting and craft stations. Families were able to capture this year's picnic with a free family portrait. Our raffles raise more than \$1,100 for the Expecting and Birth Parent Support Fund. A very special thank you to our incredible sponsors: Cofsky & Ziedman, LLC, University of Penn Hospital, Key Business Solutions, Kling & Diebler, LLP, Bob's Red trucks, and Gold Fish Swim School for their donations.

Virginia

On Sunday June 23, families connected through domestic infant adoption came together for a day of fun at Chesapeake City Park Fun Forest. The weather was perfect and we had over 80 attendees including adoptive parents, adoptees, birth parents and extended family members too. While many of our Virginia families have continued to have visits with their children's birth parents outside of AFTH events, we were pleased to have 10 open adoption reunions at this year's picnic. Adoptees, adoptive parents and birth parents from the Greater Chesapeake area and beyond came together for a day of family fun and catching up.



Pittsburgh

Our picnic in the Greater Pittsburgh area was held later in the summer so look for the recap in the next newsletter.



AFTH's New Domestic Program Manager: Jenna Smith

We recently said goodbye to Ashley Kodet after 8 years at AFTH. While we will miss her, we are excited for her new position as Administrator for Montgomery County's Orphans' Court. Taking over her role as Domestic Program Manager is Jenna Smith of our Allentown Office.



Jenna, we are excited for you to take on this new role. What drives your passion for social work.

My parents have connections to foster care and adoption, so bringing families together to serve the child best is so incredibly important to me.

I stepped into social work because I really believe in what we do. I cannot imagine doing anything else!

One of the highlights of my job is the variety of people I meet. As a social worker, I have the unique and privileged opportunity to assist people and to help improve their circumstances. As a social worker, there are times when we are asked to manage stressful and heavy situations as we walk alongside our clients through their ups and downs. I enjoy working closely with clients and my days are rarely predictable, which I like!

You have been at AFTH for 4 1/2 years. How has your role grown and changed over the years. What do you hope to bring in this new position building on your experience at AFTH so far?

I was hired in January 2015, as an Adoption Social Worker. A little over two years later, I was promoted to District Supervisor and New York Program Coordinator. This new role certainly had more administrative and supervisory duties, but I continued to manage a caseload of about 30 families. I also kept myself on the on-call schedule and continued to work with expecting and birth parents. My front-line experience in the field of adoption has helped to prepare me for my new role as Domestic Program Manager.

While this new position does not afford me the same ability to maintain such a heavy caseload, I will be sure to keep my feet wet by helping with emergency placements and maintaining several clients at a time. Continuing to be an active front-line social worker will benefit my new role. I have fond memories of my one-on-one time with clients. I still laugh at the thought of all the times I walk into a home and saw fresh vacuum lines on the carpet or families frantic cleaning and being treated to the fanciest of cakes and the finest coffee during home visits.

I am most excited about being involved in the development of the agency. I enjoy brainstorming, adjusting, and coordinating programs. I like to think I am a strong advocate for our clients and look forward to taking their feedback into policy and procedure decision making.

I have had the pleasure to have Ashley mentor me for a bit prior to taking on my new role. Ashley was a great leader and incredible social worker. She has left big shoes to fill but I'm up for the task.

Your work can be really stressful. Tell us how you like to spend your personal time.

Because our roles as social workers can be really stressful, it's essential to establish good self-care habits as well so you can recharge. Since weekdays tend to be very busy and highly emotionally tiring, I try to make sure the weekends are my own. Getting out for a run inevitably leaves me feeling better, mentally, and physically. I also enjoy live music, cooking, and gardening.

Ashley what can you tell us about Jenna?

Jenna and I began working together on the Transracial Adoption Education Course and quickly realized our work and supervision styles were quite similar! Jenna is a tireless advocate for her clients, and her experience as a social worker always informs her policy and procedure work. Jenna has many great ideas for continuing to move the agency forward, and I have no doubt the role of Domestic Program Manager is in excellent hands with her!

Agency News

AFTH Events

Thank you to everyone who was able to join us for one of our annual **summer picnics**. It is such a delight to see so many reunions taking place and to have so many people coming together in celebration of adoption. *See page 10 for recaps.*

Several AFTH locations are hosting **Fall Festivals** for their families to come together with staff for seasonal fun! Families are always encouraged to use AFTH events as an opportunity to have a visit with their child's birth parents. *See page 7 for details.*

Fall Ed Series

Class topics for the fall include: Prenatal Drug/Alcohol Exposure (both in-person classes and an online webinar), Infant and Childcare, Birth Parent and Adoptive Parent Panels & Connected Parenting. The classes are designed to provide resources and create discussions to better equip families to raise children who join their families through adoption. Classes count towards waiting families' yearly education requirements. *See page 8-9 for class details.*

Domestic Program Update

We are happy to welcome Jenna Smith of our Allentown Office in her new role as AFTH Domestic Program Manager. *See page 11.*

Bi-Annual Contracts and Policies: Turning towards a more virtual model, we are looking to make more forms available for signature through Panda Docs. AFTH is currently accepting e-signature through Panda Docs for the bi-annual policies and contracts. Policy and Contracts are sent out twice a year, In May and in November. These contracts and policies have any updates or changes in the agency. Our hope is to limit the amount of physical paperwork required and more towards an e-file approach.

Applications: AFTH is currently only accepting applications from couples and singles who are open to adopting a child of African-American/Black backgrounds. Applicants can be open to other races in addition to African-American/Black. This change is due to the need to have more families in our books to show to expecting parents of African American children. African-American/Black placements have increased over the years to make up nearly 50% of our overall placements. As of March of 2019 only 22% of the agency's waiting families were open to being matches for them. On the flip side, this means that 78% of AFTH's prospective adoptive parents are only open being show for 50% of our overall placements, and less than that when the profile key choices are taken into account. By limiting the incoming applications, we are hoping to create a better balance for both our current waiting families as well as offering more choices for expecting parents.

Continuing Education Hours: Prospective adoptive families are required to completed 5 hours of continuing education per person per year. Prior to placement, families are able to decide when and how they complete this requirement aside from the required Hospital Expectation Refresher webinar and Prenatal Drug and Alcohol webinar which must be taken. AFTH offers an array of waiting family support groups and education classes which can count towards hours. In addition, there are other great online resources such as PACT, NACAC, Adoption Learning Partners and Creating a Family to fulfill this requirement. Watching an entire season of AFTHtv counts as well. Please talk to your social worker about recommended courses.

When Sending Open Adoption Updates

When families send updates to their child's birth parents to AFTH, **please include a note for internal use only that has your last name.** This speeds up the process for staff to correctly identify birth parents and pass along your update.

Client Portal Site: AFTH has revamped our client only site. You may access the site by clicking on the “Client/Staff Portal Login” on the top right corner of www.afth.org. After creating a user name and password, you can download paperwork from various stages of the adoption process. The sections listed in the portal include: PreAdopt, Education 1 Course, Transracial Education Course, Profile Meeting, Home Study, Profile Meeting and Home Study Update. AFTH encourages families to utilize this site to download required paperwork.

Post Adoption Contact Agreement: The State of Virginia joined Pennsylvania and New York in offering legally binding future contact agreements! Birth parents have the option to enter into a legal binding future contact agreement regarding the agreed upon visit, letters and pictures.

Online Picture Exchanging: AFTH is encouraging birth parents and adoptive parents to exchange pictures through a private online sharing account. While families may choose any photo sharing program, AFTH recommends 23snaps. This private and secure site is available only to parties invited to the site. You may invite a party by an email address. On 23snaps you can maintain confidentiality by using first names only. It is very user friendly and allows you to upload photos, videos and letters. Please talk to your social worker more about transitioning to online photo sharing.

Personalize Your ParentFinder Profile: Our partnership with ParentFinder has been a great tool in increasing our families’ exposure on the internet. More and more women are contacting us asking about families they have found online. Did you know that you can write letters, make journal entries, and add albums of photos? If you just returned from a vacation to one of your favorite destinations, share that in an album! Another way for you to stay active is to upload home videos in addition to your agency video. Use these videos to show your personality and give a sense of what it would really be like for a child to live in your home. If you are not yet one of our ParentFinder families, talk with your social worker

to learn how to begin. Whether you are starting from scratch with creating a brand-new profile or just needing online exposure and marketing on a profile you have already created, ParentFinder can help.

Agency Waiting Statistics

As of August 1st, 74% of AFTH’s waiting families have been waiting for 18 months or less and 58% a year or less. For families with keys open to African-American children, 75% of families were waiting one year or less and 51% for 6 months or less.

The wait can be one of the hardest parts of the adoption process for families. We recommend surrounding yourself with support and one way that can be helpful is to attend AFTH waiting family support groups. The support groups are a time for families to come together in support and for social workers to touch base about recent statistics and situations as well as answer any questions families may have.



AFTHtv was launched in November 2019 and since then we have aired close to 40 episodes. We are now into our third Season of AFTHtv. We welcome your topic suggestions, email them to KristyG@afth.org.

We are hosting birth and adoptive parents to share their own experiences as well as AFTH staff. We are currently looking for older adoptees who would be willing to share their story too.

Missed an episode and want to catch up?

See all the AFTHtv episodes on our Facebook and Youtube pages. New videos are added every Tuesday. Season 3 runs through September 24th.

International Adoption



While AFTH no longer provides international adoption programs, we do collaborate with agencies across the U.S. that provide inter-country adoption placement services. AFTH is able to provide Home Studies, Education, Post-Adoption/Placement Reports and Services, and other assistance in support of international adoptions. Email adoption@afth.org to see how we can help you, including referring you to one of these partner agencies.

Seeking International Adoptees Adopted Through AFTH to Share Their Stories

We are hoping to hear from AFTH international adoptees who were adopted through AFTH. We are hoping to highlight their stories in our blogs, newsletters and potentially on AFTHtv.

We want to elevate the voice of adoptees and their unique perspectives:

What was it like growing up?

What would you want younger children to know about navigating the world as an adoptee?

We welcome your unique story and all the joys and challenges along the way.

Are you wanting to connect with other adoptees?

We can do that too. Reach out to us so we can help make those connections.

We are eagerly waiting to hear from you. To share your story, email KristyG@afth.org.

Recent Legislation

Federal Law Protecting Indian Children Welfare Act (ICWA) Will Stand

On August 9, 2019 a federal court revalidated ICWA by reversing a lower court's October 2018 ruling that ICWA was race-base, discriminatory and unconstitutional.

ICWA was made into law in October of 1978. It gave tribes the power to stand in and act as parents for their children just as states do with non-Native children when biological parents are unable or unwilling to parent. ICWA gave preference to tribal communities over non-Native adoptive parents as a way to preserve tribal sovereignty. At that point in time, research showed that 3 in 10 Native children were removed from their homes and 90% of those children were being raise by non-Native parents.

“This ruling is a strong affirmation of the constitutionality of ICWA and the inherent tribal authority to make decisions about the well-being of member children,” said Sarah Kastelic, executive director of the National Indian Child Welfare Association, in a press release. “ICWA remains the gold standard of child welfare policy and practice; it is in the best interest of Native children.”

Adoptee Rights Victory in New York

NY Senate Bill S3419 was passed on June 20th establishing the right of New York born adoptees to have access to their birth certificate after turning 18.

Awaiting Gov. Andrew Cuomo signature, the law will take effect on January 15, 2020 and will overturn 80 years of sealed records.

There are still more than 30 states remaining in which original birth certificates are sealed and adoptees are unable to gain access.

Better Together: United Way Giving

United Way improves lives every day by mobilizing the caring power of communities around the world.

AFTH is honored to be one of the non-profits eligible to receive contributions through the United Way Workplace Donor Program. Below are the steps to make a donation through your United Way Workplace giving.

All donations are tax deductible and directly assist men and women who reach out to AFTH for help. Together we can make a bigger impact in the lives of those who need it.

How to Contribute Through United Way:

- 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. Just print ADOPTIONS FROM THE HEART and the local branch office's address (see page 2) in the designated box for the donor area.
- 3) Enter the amount of your pledge and your payment method (check, payroll deduction, etc.)



Congratulations to AFTH's Newest Families..

Daughters

- Aaron & Katie
- Matthew & Susan
- Nathan & Maria
- Kenneth & Paul
- Benjamin & Christopher
- Justin & Wenonah
- Riley & Austin
- Demitrios & Lauren
- Nathan & Elizabeth
- James & Deborah
- Erin & Sandra
- Stephen & Ashley
- Ryan & Lynne
- Michael & Christine
- Keith & Kimberly
- Timothy & Jacquelyn
- Andrea & Michael
- Brad & Carey



Sons

- Shane & Michele
- Christopher & Michelle
- Ronald & Gina
- Daniel & Bonnie
- Samantha & Corrine
- Daniel & Samantha
- John & Megan
- Gregory & Thanawa
- David & Shannon
- Amy & Michael
- Frank & Colleen
- Sean & Lee
- Kerry & Kristina
- Christopher & Jenna
- Timothy & Jonathan
- Andrew & Amy
- Devon & Mark
- James & Rachael
- Gregory & Ilana

- Tina
- Andrew & Sheila
- Michael & Lisa
- Joseph & Sara
- Derek & Britny
- Kelly
- Joseph & Joanna
- Ryan & Leanne
- Kenneth & Michelle



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OCTOBER 1ST AT 7PM

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www.afth.org