

Adoption News



A Newsletter from:

Adoptions From The Heart

AFTH's Non-Newborn Adoptions

Adoptions From The Heart has continued to see a rise in non-newborn inquiries. There are many different reasons why someone who is parenting or taking care of a child might consider exploring a permanent option like adoption. There can often be shame or embarrassment felt for needing or even considering a permanent option like adoption. However, Adoptions From The Heart wants to eliminate the stigma of asking for help. AFTH is presenting a new course on non-newborn adoption to better educate our families. The objective of the course is to educate prospective adoptive parents on the unique issues related to non-infant adoption. The issues of loss, separation, and trauma are discussed. The course also includes childhood development characteristics for toddlers, preschool, and school-aged children.



The focus is on adjustment and attachment issues, and information is presented on ways to help a child transition into the family. Common behaviors and the underlying causes of these coping mechanisms are reviewed. Non-traditional "attachment-focused" parenting skills, the use of emotional intelligence to connect with the child, and strategies for discipline will be presented.

AFTH's social workers are continuing their education to provide exceptional counseling and resources for mothers and caregivers considering placing a non-newborn child for adoption. Their dedication to learning and growth empowers them to facilitate informed decisions, create supportive adoption plans, and connect families with the necessary resources for a smooth and positive adoption experience.

Upcoming Non-Newborn Adoption Education Courses

- September 9th & 10th
- October 23rd & 24th

These courses are offered to Adoptions From The Heart families working with any of our offices.

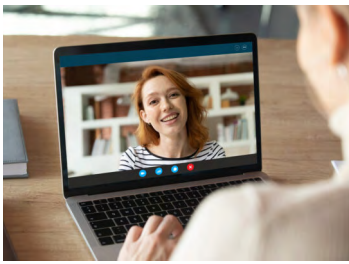
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August 2024

Adoption Therapy: Navigating the Complexities of Adoption



Adoption is a lifelong journey and profoundly impacts all members of the adoption triad in unique ways.

Our therapeutic services are designed to support all members of the adoptive triad. Whether you are an adoptive parent, birth parent, or adoptee, we provide a safe space to explore your feelings, address challenges, and promote healing.

What Exactly Is Adoption Therapy?

Adoption-competent therapy is a specialized form of therapy tailored to the specific needs of individuals and families impacted by adoption. The goal is to provide a supportive and understanding environment to explore and process unique experiences, develop coping strategies, strengthen relationships, and ultimately thrive. Various challenges can arise at different phases of life for members of the adoption triad, and adoption therapy can help ease the journey. Identity exploration, attachment, grief and loss, relationship dynamics, search and reunion, and navigating open-adoption relationships are some of the common focal points of therapy.

While other therapists may be able to help in some ways, *adoption-competent therapists are mental health professionals who have specific training and expertise on the nuances of adoption-related issues.* They understand the unique dynamics and challenges that adoption triad members may face throughout life.

Benefits of Adoption-Competent Therapy

Just as with other therapies, the benefits can vary from person to person. However, by addressing areas of challenge created by the complexities of adoption, adoption-competent therapy can help promote healing, understanding, and enhanced emotional well-being for individuals and families.

Meeting with an adoption-competent therapist when I was older was the first time my feelings were validated. Finally, I had someone who could imagine what I was going through. I finally felt like I had a voice.

- Christian, International Adoptee

About Our Services

Adoptions From The Heart is now offering adoption-competent therapeutic services. Our adoption-competent therapists are available to provide telehealth (remote) individual and family therapy.

Currently, we are only accepting clients residing in the state of CT; however, we plan to expand our services to other states in the future. We are currently accepting new clients of all ages impacted by adoption. Our services are self-pay as we are not accepting insurance at this time; however, we are in the process of being approved for Husky.

Meet Our Therapist



Julia is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker based in CT. She has been providing therapeutic services for all ages for over six years. She earned her master's degree in social work from New York University and achieved her Clinical level licensure in Connecticut. Her

professional experience includes providing individual and family treatment using evidence-based practices for various mental health and behavioral health issues.

Julia is also a certified adoption-competent therapist and has completed accredited training at the C.A.S.E. Institute. As such, she has the education, skills, and experience to provide effective therapeutic treatment to those impacted by adoption. As a Colombian American transracial and international adoptee, Julia also understands what it's like to be adopted and how difficult it can be to find professional support that honors the complexities and nuances of adoption.

Interested In Adoption-Competent Therapy Services?

- Schedule a 15min Consultation with [Julia](#)
 - Email Us for more information
 - Call (347) 997 - 0847



Adoptions From The Heart

Dear Supporter,

Adoptions From The Heart is deeply grateful for the overwhelming love and support we have received from our community. **Your support is not just a donation, but a crucial part of our mission.** Our clients rely on us to empower them through our education and services, and by partnering with AFTH and choosing action by donating, **YOU help us to do so.** Your generosity is a beacon of hope for the individuals directly impacted by your donation, and it does not go unnoticed by us.

Donors have shown support throughout the year by participating in virtual fundraisers and in-person events. Adoptions From The Heart's fundraisers and events bring together our community with one goal: **to make a difference by supporting AFTH programs and services to ALL our clients.** Your participation in these events and your donations are a testament to our shared commitment and belief in the importance of our mission.

Services Supported by Your Donations This Past and Coming Year:

- Increase services to answer inflation in calls for help with non-newborn placements.
- Provide support groups for all triad members, including two new ones for adoptees and single parents.
- Integrate a new program for adoption therapy for all members of the triad.
- Access to education opportunities for the whole community through a growing list of OnDemand webinars.
- Provide expecting and birth parents in need with monetary assistance both before and after placing.
- Offer free virtual training opportunities for nurses and social workers to assist them in serving their community.

AFTH's unique approach to adoption is shaped by centering the experiences of adoptees, in addition to understanding the perspectives of birth and adoptive parents. Founded by an adoptee, Maxine Chalker integrated her personal experience into her vision for the agency. Today, we remain true to Maxine's original vision. We are unwavering in our commitment to advocacy, ensuring every individual's voice is heard and respected and that our services remain a **beacon of support and empowerment for all members of the adoption triad.**

Our work is not possible without your support. Your tax-deductible donation can make a significant difference in the lives of our clients. **Please consider making a tax-deductible donation.** You can make your donation online at www.afth.org/donate or by scanning the QR code. You can also return your gift by mail in the enclosed envelope. You may even consider joining our Year-round Supporter (YRS) Donor Circle by committing to a monthly reoccurring donation of your choosing to lend support year-round.

Please don't miss this opportunity to help make a difference!

Sincerely,

Heidi Gonzalez, MS
Executive Director

Scan the QR code to
make a donation!



"We are a community that strives to look beyond the placement of a child. Our wrap-around services help all members of the adoption triad and donations give expecting and birth parents the comfort of knowing that there are people out there who have their backs."

- Amanda Aliberti, AFTH Birth Parent Services Manager

AFTH's Fall 2024 Scholarship Recipient

Every semester, Adoptions From The Heart awards a scholarship to birth parents who are pursuing a degree in higher education. Since the fund started in 2014, AFTH has awarded over 27 scholarships. This semester, AFTH selected birth father, Keyur, to receive the scholarship for a second semester. This award will help him build on last semester and further his degree in mortuary science.

When Keyur and his girlfriend found out they were pregnant and unable to parent, they knew that adoption would be the best option for them. This decision, however, was hard and emotionally taxing for Keyur.



This experience pushed him to begin pursuing a career that gave him more fulfillment and pride. He wanted to provide for his family and make his birth son

proud. Keyur is always emphasizing that he wants to be someone his birth son looks up to, and he wants him to understand that making an adoption plan was the best option. Keyur was carrying the financial burden of school on his own until he was informed about AFTH's Birth Parent Scholarship. The scholarship allowed him to focus on his education.

"[The scholarship] is lifting a huge burden off," said Keyur. "Eventually, I'll have to pay the money I borrow back, but this money, I don't have to."

Recipients can be selected up to eight times, though it's not a guarantee that once selected for the scholarship that it will continue for the rest of their schooling. Keyur decided to try his luck at applying a second time. When he was selected, it gave him the confidence he was doing the right thing.

"I feel extremely grateful," said Keyur. "It gives me a lot of confidence that you guys keep awarding me money and that's a lot of motivation for me to keep going, and pushing for my degree."

Keyur has experienced many changes since receiving the scholarship last year. He is about to enter his second and final year of school before he begins applying to mortician school. This past year, Keyur had an unofficial internship as a mortician assistant. While at the funeral home, he was able to work alongside morticians and help organize funeral services. His upcoming plans are to work at a local hospital in the surgery and trauma unit to gain more clinical experience. He hopes to use this experience to guide his future endeavors. Currently, he is considering pathology or research routes.

Adoptions From The Heart provides the Birth Parent Scholarship as part of its many services to support birth parents beyond their placement. Helping birth parents succeed is important to AFTH, and that's why it prioritizes continuing to raise funds for the scholarship.

"It's really nice to work with AFTH because they're not just a one-and-done," said Keyur. "They keep in contact."

To donate to the Birth Parent Scholarship Fund and help more people like Keyur realize their potential, you can donate to the fund on our [website here](#).

APPLY FOR SPRING 2025

If you are an AFTH birth parent currently attending a university, college, community college, or trade school, you can apply to the Adoptions From The Heart Scholarship Fund. Applications are open and close on December 31st, 2024.

HELP BIRTH PARENTS ATTEND SCHOOL

We are looking for donors to help us support our scholarship fund. To support other birth parents like Keyur, [visit our website](#) and donate to the AFTH Scholarship Fund.



IN LOVING MEMORY OF Marilyn Rich

We are forever grateful for the impact she had on our agency and in all of our lives.



Recognizing Marilyn's Impact

Marilyn was more than just a coworker; she was a cherished member of our work family. Her dedication, kindness, and unwavering support touched all of our lives in profound ways. We will never forget her passion for helping others and the genuine compassion she showed to everyone around her. When you look up the meaning of social worker, it says “a person whose job is to help people,” and that was simply who Marilyn was: someone who helped people in both her professional and personal life. All those who had the honor of knowing her were blessed by her presence and the positive impact she made in their lives. Our deepest sympathies go out to Marilyn’s loved ones. While she will be deeply missed, her memory will live on in our hearts and impact our lives forever.

“It is with a broken heart we share that Marilyn Rich, one of our longest employees, passed away last Friday morning surrounded by family. Marilyn was knowledgeable and passionate about her work with adoptive and birth parents. She was a huge advocate for her clients, and for open adoption, she helped many adoptees do searches and was able to reunite many adoptees with their birth families. She leaves a big hole in the AFTH family as she has touched many of our lives.”

- Heidi Gonzalez, AFTH's Executive Director

Marilyn's Celebration of Life was held on Sunday, July 28th, at 2 pm at the Summersale Centennial Park in Summerdale, PA.

Highlighting Luli Dhimitri



Luli, our esteemed Financial Director at Adoptions From The Heart, has been an invaluable asset to our team for the past 20 years.

In 2023, Luli took a well-deserved break, and her absence was deeply felt throughout the agency. We are overjoyed to announce that she returned at the beginning of this year, seamlessly reintegrating as if she had never left.

We wholeheartedly welcome Luli back with open arms, celebrating her return and the incredible work she

continues to do. Though often unnoticed, Luli's efforts behind the scenes are crucial to our success.

We applaud her unwavering dedication and tireless hard work, which significantly contribute to the agency's mission. Welcome back, Luli – we're thrilled to have you with us again!

"Luli has been such a great support during my time at Adoptions From The Heart. She is an great team player and is always there to help the agency."

- Mayra Herrera, AFTH Marketing Manager

Classes Designed for Adoptive Parents

AFTH's Fall Ed Series are held on Zoom to welcome families from all over our service area to attend.

Registration Closes 1 Week Before Classes - Classes Fill Up Quickly

Ed Series classes fulfill AFTH's CEU requirements



Adoptive Parent Panel: Long Waiting Families

Join us as we hear from families who were placed with AFTH after 1.5 - 6 years of waiting to be chosen. They will share what they "wish they knew then" and their experiences with waiting, placing, and beyond.

Monday, September 16th | 6:00-7:30 PM

Registration deadline: September 9th, 2024

NAS Babies: What to Expect in The Hospital and Long Term

Talk with Adoptive Parents who have had NAS babies in the NICU and how they navigated that time. Adoptive families will share their experiences about the withdrawal process and spending time in a NICU day to day. They will also discuss what to expect when returning home and navigating the long-term experiences with their children.

Thursday, October 3rd | 7:00-8:30 PM

Registration deadline: September 26th, 2024

Navigating Open Adoption Through Pictures, Letters and Visits

This educational seminar will provide information and insight on selecting photographs and an outline for writing the letter for the initial picture and letter updates during the first six months and annually after that. The social work staff, along with input from adoptive parents, will provide guidelines, suggestions, and strategies for in-person visits between birth and adoptive parents, as well as tips and techniques on how to build open adoption relationships.

Thursday, October 10th | 7:00-8:30 PM

Registration deadline: October 3rd, 2024

Tips for Preparing for Transracial Adoption

Hear from a panel of transracial adoptive parents and take away preparedness tips from social workers.

Wednesday, October 16th | 6:00-7:30 PM

Registration deadline: October 9th, 2024



Be Sure To Contact Your Adoption Social Worker with any questions.

All Classes are **\$25/family** unless otherwise noted.

AFTH Families Can Receive Required CE Credits for Attending!
Click [HERE](#) to Register.



Prenatal Drug & Alcohol Exposure \$50/family

[Click for a Video Message About the Class](#)

AFTH wants families to make informed decisions when completing their profile keys. Dr. Erin Meyer is an Internal Medicine and Pediatric Hospitalist who worked in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit. She is also an adoptive mom and can speak from both professional and personal angles. She will be discussing the effects of drug and alcohol use on the newborn during pregnancy, withdrawal symptoms, and short and long-term effects of exposure. There will be a time for questions. Each family has to decide what situations are right for them. Many families came away from this class feeling comfortable opening their key.

Online Webinar Dates:

Link is emailed 1-2 business days after registering

- Thursday, October 12th at 7:00pm

Registration DEADLINE is Noon the day prior

AFTH's Sponsorship Opportunities

Adoptions From The Heart is a private, 501C3 nonprofit infant and young child-placing adoption agency. Education and support are the heart of what we do to foster life-long learning and empathy within the adoption community. We have opened a corporate giving program to allow us to continue our work in supporting expecting parents, birth parents, adoptive parents, and adoptees.

Ways you can participate in corporate giving:

- Sponsor an event
- Partner with AFTH for year-long sponsorships
- Donate products or services to a raffle for an event
- Make an individual donation

If you are interested in year-long sponsorships or donating products or services for event raffles, please email our Event and Public Relations Coordinator, Julie Tran, at JulieT@afth.org.

Childcare Classes ON-DEMAND WEBINAR



4 hours on-demand access - \$197/family

In collaboration with AFTH, New Parents Academy created a 4-hour course covering Baby Gear, Newborn Care, Soothing, Newborn Sleep, Bonding, and more. It includes five printable/checklists—access for two years so that videos can be re-watched anytime.

Access from On-Demand Webinar Section of Client Portal

A Word From One of Our Past Sponsors:



I have enormous respect for the services and resources Adoptions From The Heart offers to birth parents post-placement, and I wanted to support that effort.

*- Debbie Spivack,
Quad A Adoption Attorney*

We are currently looking for sponsors not only for our events but also to partner with Adoptions From The Heart throughout the year. If you own a business or work for a company you think would be interested in partnering with us, you can contact Julie Tran.



AFTH Support Groups

Support Groups allow birth parents, waiting, and adoptive families to connect about their shared experiences. Come with others who truly "get it" and can understand your questions and concerns and celebrate the joys with you.

Waiting Family Support Group (Zoom)

Free bi-monthly event

Join AFTH's waiting families as we share the highs and lows of the adoption process. 1 CE hour is provided for attending. [Click to register.](#)

Waiting Family Support Group (Facebook)

Facebook support group moderated by AFTH social workers to help waiting families come together in support. [Click to join.](#)

Transracial Adoption Support Group (Zoom)

Free bi-monthly event

This support group is to connect adoptive parents who have also adopted transracially. It is a safe space to discuss thoughts and concerns. [Click to register.](#)

Placed Family Support Group (Zoom)

Join AFTH social work staff and families in post placement. Parenting itself is a challenge, when adding adoption issues, support and guidance may be required to assist in navigating these struggles. [Click to register.](#)

Single Parent Support Group (Zoom)

Join AFTH social work staff and other single waiting and placed families for a time to connect and process the different aspects of your adoption journey as single adoptive parents. One credit hour will be given to waiting families for attendance. More Details [Click to register.](#)

Older Adoptee Support Group (Zoom)

Free monthly event | 15yrs old and up.

Join AFTH social workers and adoptees for an adoptee support group, where adoptees can hear the stories of others and share their own in a safe environment that promotes adoptees finding their voice.

This support group is not limited to AFTH adoptees. More Details [Here.](#)

Locations

Allentown

610.432.2384

Central PA

717.399.7766

Connecticut

860.657.2626

Delaware

302.658.8883

New Jersey

856.665.5655

New York

888.535.8833

Philadelphia

610.642.7200

Pittsburgh

724.853.6533

Virginia

757.361.0008

Toll Free: 800.355.5500

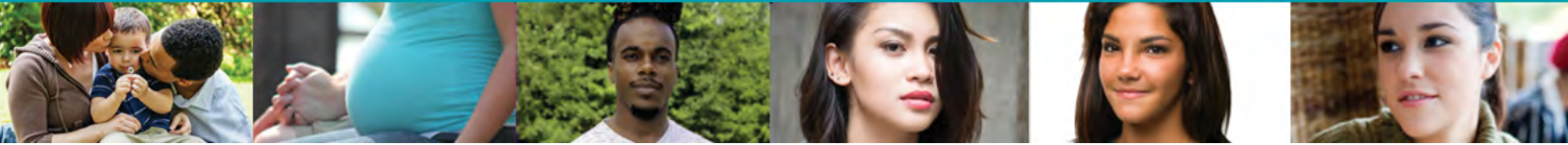
Website: www.afth.org

Services for Expecting and Birth Parents

In addition to providing support through pregnancy and placement process, AFTH provides many other wrap-around services free to expecting and birth parents to provide support and foster long-term development.



Connecting with Other Expecting and Birth Parents Who “Get It”



Birth Parent Mentoring Program

The birth parent mentoring program is a resource to connect expecting and birth parents and provide support by sharing their personal experiences.

Birth Parent Advocacy Projects

A program designed to provide a platform for birth parents who want to volunteer time to share their experiences to help spread awareness about adoption and open adoption through a variety of different ways, including but not limited to the following:

- Social media
- AFTHtv or AFTH Podcast
- Speaking at AFTH events
- Being featured in blog or article
- Helping with outreach to local referral sources

Free Workshops via Zoom

We offer free workshops for expecting and birth parents focusing on a wide range of topics geared toward personal and professional development. This past year we had the following topics:

Understanding Cycles of change

- Goals: How to Set Yourself Up for Success
- 411 On Delaware Resources
- Speaking Success Over Your Life
- Befriending Your Inner Critic

To learn more, email Amanda Aliberti at AmandaA@afth.org

Birth Parent Support Groups

Online Support Group (Zoom)

Free monthly meetings

An opportunity to come together, lean on other birth parents and share your thoughts, feelings, and concerns with others with similar experiences. Reach out to Amanda Aliberti at AmandaA@afth.org for more information.

Facebook Support Group

AFTH has a Facebook group created for Expecting and Birth Parents to come together in support. [Click to join.](#)

In Person Support Group (Virginia)

In-person with a special event for Birth Mother’s Day in May Email NicoleF@afth.org to learn more.

"At first, I didn't want to come to the support group- I was nervous and didn't want to be judged... After coming a few times, I learned we all have different situations, but they are all the same. I felt understood."

- Ayanna, Birth Mother.



AFTH Celebrates Open Adoption at Annual Family Picnics

Adoptions From The Heart staff and families enjoyed a day at the park this past June 9th to celebrate open adoption. AFTH hosted the 34th annual Family Picnic for Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware families. Some staff and family traveled over state lines to attend the event. Overall, 225 people participated in the day's event.

Despite the morning showers, the day turned out to be perfect for a park outing. From newborns to seniors, everyone found something to enjoy at the Picnic hosted at Lukens Park in Horsham, PA. The event featured a diverse range of activities, including playing on the playground, visiting the arts and crafts tent, dancing to DJ Rambo's tunes, and indulging in some delicious ice cream from the ice cream truck.

Embracing the Adoption Triad: Fostering Bonds Through Open Adoption

One of the unique aspects of the Family Picnic is that it allows opportunities for reunions. Adoptive parents can invite their child's birth parents to attend the picnic as well. This allows all points of the adoption triad to enjoy the day. Opportunities for reunions are one of the many benefits of open adoption and the bonds it can create.



For birth parents, the picnic is a bittersweet experience that brings feelings of both joy and melancholy. Birth mom Kelli shared how it took her five years to attend her first picnic, and once she did, she struggled in the weeks after it. Now, she sees it as a day of celebration.

"I had the greatest picnic of my life, and then a week later I couldn't get out of bed for a week," Kelli shared. "But it was my first picnic. Now I'm going down slides like a crazy person. I would have never done that four years ago."

Reflecting on Journeys: Stories of Hope and Resilience from Adoptive Families

The picnic not only served as a day of fun, but also as a moment for families to pause and reflect on their unique adoption stories. While the process can be unpredictable and frustrating at times, it leads to beautiful moments that wouldn't be possible without that process. Alex and Theo

traveled from Washington, D.C. with their baby Olli and reflected on their journey with AFTH.

"We didn't know all the ins and outs until we met [our social worker] and the agency, who all collectively helped us through the 2.5-year wait, which had its ups and downs," Alex explained. "It all happens for a reason. We're super happy to be where we're at, but it was a journey for us."

It was truly a beautiful day celebrating the bonds open adoption can create, and AFTH thanks everyone who was able to attend. Thank you for sharing the day with us and our beautiful families.

Giving Back: Supporting AFTH's Expecting and Birth Parent Support Fund

The day also provided opportunities to give back, with attendees generously participating in raffle baskets curated by AFTH's marketing team. All proceeds were donated to AFTH's programs and services. In total, \$1,400. This raised the highest amount since 2017, so thank you to all who donated.

AFTH Picnics in Pittsburgh, CT & Virginia!



AFTH families and staff spent time outdoors this June celebrating adoptions. The Pittsburgh, Connecticut and Virginia offices hosted their annual Family Picnics, where families could spend some quality time together enjoying snacks and games. Seven families were reunited between the three events, one of which included birth mom, grandmother, grandfather, three siblings, and aunt and uncle. Thank you to everyone who spent their weekend with us to celebrate the bonds that open adoption can create!

Upcoming Picnic:

New York Annual Family Picnic
Billy Johnson Playground in Central Park
E 67th Street, New York NY 10022
11AM - 2PM
RSVP to CieraM@afth.org

The Importance of Professional Training and Resource Sharing

Our CPA social workers, Emily and Stephanie, recently gave in-person training and shared why they believe providing training to professionals is so important.



In the adoption world, the importance of professional training and resource sharing cannot be overstated. The intricate process of adoption requires a deep understanding and seamless communication among all parties involved to ensure that every aspect is handled with the utmost care and expertise. Here are a few critical ways that professional training and resource sharing play a pivotal role in the success of adoption services.

Understanding the Adoption Process

First and foremost, being well-informed about the adoption process is crucial for the successful transfer of information. Without thorough training, many professionals may lack the necessary knowledge about the steps that adoptive parents (APs) go through, the extent of counseling provided to expectant parents (EPs) and birth parents (BPs), and the nuances of what open adoption entails. These elements are essential for professionals to effectively communicate with their clients and guide them through their unique situations.

The Value of In-Person Training

When we visited a pregnancy center last month to conduct a training session, we had the opportunity to directly convey our dedication to the adoption triad. This triad consists of the adoptive parents, the birth parents, and the child, and it is crucial that each party is fully satisfied with the level of openness and the overall adoption process. Face-to-face interactions during such trainings not only allow us to explain the process in detail

but also help us establish a personal connection with the attendees. This personal touch often positions our agency as the go-to contact when adoption-related situations arise, keeping our foot in the door and potentially making us the number one agency for referrals.

Building Trust and Long-Term Relationships

The benefits of these in-person trainings extend beyond just the immediate transfer of knowledge. They foster the development of long-term relationships and trust between organizations. Over the years, many of the connections formed during these training sessions have endured, creating a network of trusted professionals who can collaborate to support shared clients. This network is invaluable, as it allows for the exchange of resources and information, ultimately benefiting the clients who rely on our collective expertise.

Encouraging Collaboration and Support

Emily and I both agree on the importance of learning from other agencies about their processes and services. This collaborative approach ensures that expectant and birth parents have access to a comprehensive support system, rather than relying on a single agency. During these trainings, we encourage attendees to reach out with any questions about adoption, even if it involves a private adoption where something seems amiss. By positioning ourselves as a resource, we demonstrate our commitment to providing help and information to those in need.

Professional training and resource sharing are vital components of effective adoption services. They enable us to convey the complexities of the adoption process, establish personal connections, build long-term relationships, and encourage collaboration. Together, these elements create a positive path forward for our clients, ensuring they receive the support and guidance they need during the adoption journey. By continuing to invest in training and resource sharing, we can enhance our ability to serve our clients and uphold the integrity of the adoption process.

ADOPTIONS FROM THE HEART New Merch



AFTH has launched some amazing merchandise for the whole family to enjoy. We have shirts, sweatshirts, onesies, mugs, candles, notebooks, and more. You can order our new merch [here](#).

All funds raised from the Adoptions From The Heart merch will support AFTH's programs and services in support of our clients.

Keep an eye out for new designs coming out every season! If you have suggestions on future designs or types of merch you are interested in, email our Events Coordinator at JulieT@afh.org.

Christmas In July Gift Card Fundraiser to Help Birth Families in Need

Adoptions From The Heart is collecting gift card donations for its Christmas in July event. The gift card drive, which typically starts in November, was created to assist birth parents who have previously placed for adoption but still have children at home during the holiday season. This year, AFTH wants to help families more than ever by getting a head start on collecting donations.

Every holiday season, AFTH social workers nominate birth parents in need of financial assistance. Those birth parents selected will receive an assortment of gift cards to help purchase groceries, clothes, and new toys—all the essentials to give their kids the best holiday possible. AFTH is asking its clients and community to donate to the fund. Donations can be made by contributing gift cards to stores like Walmart and Target or by donating cash. AFTH staff will use the cash donations to purchase the necessary gift cards.

Last year, we provided more than \$10,000 in gift cards to help birth families in need. These funds can turn the season around for any family in need.

“I just want to say thank you so much. I was starting to lose hope in Christmas because I kept getting hit with more and more obstacles. I checked my email from you guys, and I started crying happy tears. I appreciate this organization so much. You guys go above and beyond for us, when you guys don't have to.”

– Birth Mother, Cait

Online donations can be made at the [link here](#). Physical gift cards can be mailed to Adoptions From The Heart's Wynnewood office located at 30-31 Hampstead Circle, Wynnewood, PA 19096. ATTN: Gift Card Drive.

All donations are tax deductible using the 501(c)3 Tax ID (23-2372152).



Agency News

Domestic Program Update

AFTH has had a busy first half of the year and have a full schedule for the rest of 2024 with educational and connection opportunities, picnics, fundraising events, on top of our “regular” days of completing home studies, options counseling, dictations, education courses, support groups, educational series, and placements.

AFTH has pride in our values of providing multiple areas of support groups and Heart-to-Heart events with topics such as Transracial adoption and LGBTQIA+ families in the adoption triad. In addition to our “Monthly Match Reports” that are released to waiting families, Christopher Peszka of our New Jersey office completed statistics from these reports.

Some important things to note for January-June 2024 include:

- 62% of potential placements have been emergency placements
- 36% of parents requested to view families open to 3 or 4 visits per year
- 21% of parents requested to view families open to cell phone contact
- 21% of parents requested to view families open to a specific first and/or middle name for the child

We have continued to see an increase in intakes for non-newborns, especially those ages 3, 6, and 9 months. If you are interested in learning more about non-newborn adoptions, please reach out to your social worker to discuss this further.

We are requiring all waiting families to sign a new profile key contract with information that was relayed at the beginning of your adoption process. We know there is so much information relayed through paperwork, policies, and procedures on top of the emotions that come along with waiting to be chosen to grow your family through adoption. We want to refresh families on the process and encourage families to reach out to their Social Workers with questions and clarifications. We know you will likely experience mixed emotions when we give you "the call," but we want to ensure you would still be happy and excited if the circumstances included most/everything you have checked off on your key. Please keep this in mind

when reviewing/updating your profile keys.

Continued preparation for open adoption during your wait is crucial to your future growing family. Important topics to be continually educated on include openness agreements, the ICPC process, all things “adoption triad,” parenting through all levels of development, the identity of an adopted child, extended family education, positive adoption language, and many more subjects. We look forward to hopefully connecting with every one of you soon.

Reminder To Our Waiting Families

We understand that the adoption journey thus far has included so much information, many updates, paperwork. Each phase of the process and stage of the wait can bring about new thoughts/questions. Below are some points you may have forgotten that are really important to remember.

Here are some things to remember:

- Adoptive parents must be willing to go to the state/area where a child was born for any visits promised when shown to parents.
- Should a change of circumstance happen before adoption finalization, even if it was not known at the time of the matching/placement, and it aligns with your key, you are still committed to those circumstances on your key. The only exceptions are in cases of "consider questions" on the key that were not known at the time of match/placement.
- The level of openness you are stating on your profile key is your minimum commitment to future contact regardless of any other circumstances (# of visits, cell phone, email, exchange of identifying information).
- If your profile is not "on hold," you and your partner, if applicable, will need to be prepared to travel to another location in any of our licensed states (CT, PA, NY, NJ, DE, or VA) and be there within 24 hours.
- AFTH needs to be made aware immediately of any “grants” or “financial aid” that you are awarded so we can assure to complete your escrow agreements correctly at time of being chosen.

If questions or concerns arise as you are navigating the wait your social workers welcome your call or email. ***They want to support you through the whole process and beyond.***

Upcoming Adoptions Form The Heart Events

New York Annual Family Picnic



Thank you for allowing us to be a part of your journey to becoming a family. Join AFTH Lehigh Valley staff and other NY families as we celebrate Adoption.

Attention: If you are inviting your child's birth family, please send a letter of invitation for us to pass along. Include a separate confidential note to our staff with you full name and birth parent's name. Be sure to send it in enough time for us to forward to your child's birth parent & receive a response. NOTE: Birth parents will not be invited without adoptive parent initiation. An invitation to birth families is kept in your child's record.

Saturday, August 24 | 11:00-2:00 AM

Billy Johnson Playground in Central Park

E 67th Street, New York, NY 10022

RSVP to CieraM@afth.org

Back To School Turning Point Fundraiser

Join AFTH at the Turning Point in Bryn Mawr for our back to school fundraiser!



Come dine and support AFTH by bringing the flyer in or mention AFTH at the restaurant. A portion of your meal will support AFTH

programs and services.

Friday, September 6 | 7:30am-3:00 PM

Turning Point of Bryn Mawr

925 Lancaster Avenue, Bryn Mawr, PA 19010

3rd Annual Rob Nash Gold Classic

The 3rd Annual Rob Nash Gold Classic is coming back this year. Join for a day of golf and charity. This event is put in place by AFTH's adoptive parents in the Virginia area.

The proceeds from this fundraising event go to AFTH's programs and services in support of all of our clients.

Friday, October 25 | Starts at 8:00 AM

Sleepy Hole Golf Course

4700 Sleepy Hole Rd, Suffolk, VA 23435

You can [Sign Up Here](#).

AFTH's Fall Festival

Stay up to date for an upcoming fall festival coming in October. We will share more information once we have more details.

To stay up to date with AFTH events go to our [calendar of events](#).

Heart-to-Heart With LGBTQIA+ Families



The Heart-to-Heart with LGBTQIA+ was a successful event with four adoptive parent couples and a birth mother sharing their experience about adopting as an LGBTQIA+ couple and placing their child with a LGBTQIA+ couple. They shared the highs and lows of parenting as a same sex couple, support they received from AFTH and their families through the waiting process and much more.

Mark your calendar to join our next Heart-to-Heart event with Adoptees and Therapists on **November 7th, 2024**.

Recent Legislation



New York Rethinks Adoption Policies After Reversal

New York’s adoption policies are under review following backlash over a recent policy change. The Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) reversed a memo that limited financial support adoptive parents can provide to birth mothers. This reversal came after criticism from prospective parents and adoption advocates. To read more about this policy go [here](#).

Mental Health Support For Birth Mothers Act

Change.org has a petition to try to take to Congress for Allotment of Mental Health Support For Birth Mothers. The purpose of this act is ensure that women who place their children for adoption have access to comprehensive mental health services for life, thereby promoting their long-term mental and emotional well-being. The act is also looking to recognize and support the unique emotional experiences of birth mothers, providing them with the necessary resources to cope with their feelings and lead fulfilling lives. To learn more or sign the form you can go [here](#).

Quebec law makes it easier for adopted children to find their birth parents

Quebec is introducing changes to make it easier for adopted children to find their birth parents. After June 9th, 2024, any adult adopted in this province will have access to the names of their biological parents even if the parents want to conceal their identities. To learn more you can go [here](#).

ICWA Faces Another Constitutional Challenge in Minnesota

A case now before the Minnesota Court of Appeals revives debate over the nation’s 1978 Indian Child Welfare Act and a local version of the law — alleging that the legal statutes protecting Indigenous children, families and tribes racially discriminate against white foster parents. Legal scholars familiar with the case describe it as the most significant challenge to ICWA since it was upheld last summer by a 7-2 majority of the U.S. Supreme Court. But the broad outlines are not unfamiliar to the countless defenders of the 45-year-old law ensuring that tribal children receive every opportunity to remain close to kin.

Congratulations To AFTH's Newest Families

Congratulations to all the newly formed families. Your journey together is just beginning, filled with love, laughter, and countless precious moments. Wishing you all joyful days and endless happiness as you embark on this beautiful adventure together.

- Amy
- Todd & Nicole
- Ronald & Jessica
- Jacob & Alyssa
- Matthew & Jennifer
- Charles & Karen
- Patrick & Jennifer
- Robert & Brooke
- Ryan & Jennifer
- Alexander & Theodore
- Frank & Audra
- Allison
- Everton & Crystal
- Scott & Josue
- Scott & Meghan
- Dana
- Ryan & Erin
- Drew & Danielle
- Mark & Danielle
- Jacob & Emily
- Jakub & Rick
- Andy & Danielle
- Peter & Laura
- Emily & Laura
- Vincent & Jamie
- Jared & Terry
- Elijah & Daniel
- Lisa
- Noah & Brandon





30-31 Hampstead Circle
Wynnewood, PA 19096

Adoption News is a publication of Adoptions From The Heart, a private, non-profit, licensed agency.

Become a Year Round Supporter

All year round, Adoptions From The Heart works hard to provide free programs and services to Expecting and Birth Parents. We can provide all these services thanks to our great supporters. You can become a YRS (year-round supporter) today and help us provide support and education to Expecting and Birth Parents.

"With the gift card we were able to get food and a few other household items that we needed. We can't thank you enough for your generosity! It made my day and took stress away from us."

Donate today by going to: www.afth.org/donate. Any amount is appreciated, and it changes the life of an Expecting or Birth Parent.



HEART-TO-HEART EVENT SERIES: MENTAL HEALTH & ADOPTees

**REGISTRATION FOR THIS EVENT WILL
GO LIVE IN SEPTEMBER.**

*For more information
email JulieT@afth.org*