

Adoption News

A Newsletter from:

Adoptions From The Heart



A Sit Down with ChristianaCare Hospital

Centering Care Around Expecting Parent's Individual Needs

Adoptions From The Heart has the honor of working alongside incredible medical professionals to provide information and support to expecting parents wanting to explore their options. In our October Heart-to-Heart with Adoptions From The Heart podcast, we sat down with Leya, Senior Social Worker at ChristianaCare, who shared more about her role with the hospital and how she advocates for

patients' needs and provides support and resources as they navigate their pregnancies. Leya talked about being proactive in connecting pregnant women with community resources, an action that helps ease some of the burden and makes patients feel supported in their decision-making. Leya and the ChristianaCare staff want patients to have access to all their options without bias, therefore they prioritize making expecting parents feel educated and in control of their decision, so they make choices that are best for them. Leya and staff check in with patients in terms of communication, mental and physical health, and personal boundaries.



"If they want to work with an adoption agency, we go at their pace... It's really making sure that they feel comfortable and they're the ones in control of how things unfold."

Leya, ChristianaCare

AFTH Supervisor, Amanda Aliberti, discusses the importance of developing relationships and trust between AFTH and hospital staff to be able to provide seamless care to expecting parents. Advocating for clients' needs is always the priority whether or not they choose to move forward with an adoption plan. Both ChristianaCare and AFTH agree that adoption is just another option, and we want to actively work together to make sure expecting parents are aware of all options to help them make the most educated decision they can based on their own needs and desires. AFTH wants our clients to feel heard, and we are proud to work with hospitals, such as ChristianaCare, that allow our mutual clients to feel respected and understood, as opposed to feeling judged.

To learn more about the relationship AFTH has built with ChristianaCare, listen to the Heart-to-Heart with Adoptions From The Heart's October podcast.

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Adoptions From The Heart



Dear Supporter,

Adoptions From The Heart is proud of the overwhelming sense of love and support we have received from our community in favor of AFTH's mission. Our clients rely on us to empower them through our education and services, and by partnering with AFTH and choosing action by making a donation, **YOU help us to do so**. Your generosity does not go unnoticed by us or the individuals directly impacted by your donation.

Donors have shown their support throughout the year by attending virtual fundraisers like the Heart-to-Heart series and the Find Their Footing 5k. Our online events bring together our community with one goal: **to make a difference by supporting AFTH programs and services to ALL our clients**.

Services Supported by Your Donations This Past Year:

- Access to education opportunities for the whole community through a growing list of OnDemand webinars.
- Provide birth parents in need with assistance for food, clothing, toiletry, and hygiene needs pre and post birth.
- Offer free virtual training opportunities for nurses and social workers, to assist them in serving their community.
- Help expecting and birth parents combat homelessness by supplying money for rent and utility bills.
- Continue supporting our clients by providing support groups for all members of the adoption triad.
- Continued support for expecting and birth parents who have no one else to turn to in difficult situations.

Adoptions From The Heart is committed to upholding high ethical standards and empowering our clients through education. Professionals know and trust us to provide quality services to the local community. In light of the Supreme Court's ruling on Roe v. Wade, it's important that **we ensure our clients know our focus is to provide options** and education about adoption laws in their state and the choices they alone can make.

We are asking for your support. Please consider making a tax-deductible donation. You can make your donation online at www.afth.org/donate or by scanning the QR code in the top right corner. 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

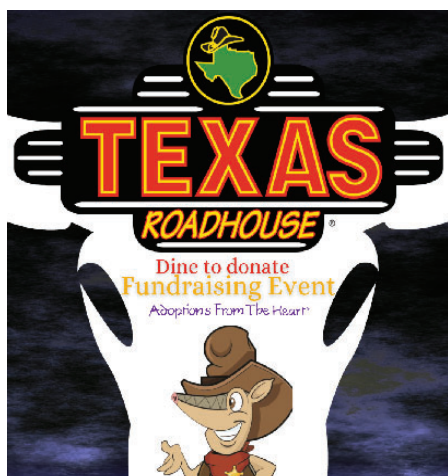
"I am proud to work for Adoptions From The Heart because our team truly cares. We are a community that strives to look beyond the placement of a child. Our wrap-around services help all members of the adoption triad and these donation funds give expecting and birth parents the comfort of knowing that there are people out there who have their backs."

- Amanda Aliberti
AFTH Birth Parent Services Manager



AdoptionsFromTheHeart

National Adoption Awareness Month Fundraising Events



Texas Roadhouse Fundraising Event

On November 16, our Chesapeake, VA office was invited to partake in a Texas Roadhouse fundraiser event in support of Adoptions From The Heart. The event was attended by AFTH staff, family and friends, all coming out to support a cause and enjoy delicious food.

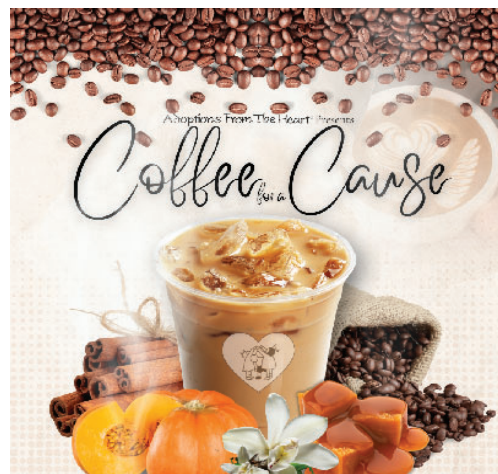
Thank you to the Texas Roadhouse team for a wonderful evening of fun, food, and community spirit.



Kendra Scott Fundraising Event

On November 11, 2023, Kendra Scott held a fundraising event in honor of AFTH, where they generously donated 20% of the sales to support the agency's services. It was a heartwarming event, perfect for holiday shopping, that brought together the community and supporters of the agency. The store was busy with lots of people who were excited to shop for a cause.

A very special thank you to the Kendra Scott team, as they ensured that every customer was attended to and that their shopping experience was exceptional. The donated funds will go a long way in supporting the agency's services, and we are grateful to Kendra Scott for their generosity.



Coffee For A Cause Fundraising Event

Community members, staff, and clients joined Adoptions From The Heart on October 26, 2023, for dessert before dinner at House Cup Cafe in Havertown, Pa. Supporters stop by to enjoy drinks and pastries while learning about our agency & supporting a local favorite. It was the perfect blend of coffee and excitement!

Continuing to Build New Partnerships



If you know of a company or organization interested in partnering with Adoptions From The Heart, we would love to hear from you! AFTH is dedicated to our clients and our mission of building Beautiful families. With your help, we can do just That!

Please don't hesitate to reach out to us via email at KristyG@afth.org. We would be happy to provide you with more information about our work and discuss potential partnership opportunities.

Coffee For A Cause Sponsored By:



Thank you to Your Adoption Finance Coach for supporting AFTH's mission through your sponsorship.

Your sponsorship of the Coffee For A Cause Event helped to make it a success.

Thank you for partnering with us not only for this event but also in working with AFTH families navigating the cost of the adoption process.

Thank You to Your Adoption Finance Coach for Your Support

Thank you, Kelly Ellison, CEO and founder of Your Adoption Finance Coach, for sponsoring our Coffee For a Cause fundraising event! Because of your support, we can help our families!

Kelly Ellison is on a mission to help families overcome the financial challenges of adoption. With over 25 years of non-profit, fund development experience, Kelly has combined her passion for adoption with her professional expertise to create a comprehensive financial plan for adoptive families. Her personal experience with international adoption has given her a unique perspective on the financial hurdles that families face.



Kelly's journey with international adoptions personally cost over \$30,000 and took 29 months. But it was all worth it when she got to experience that life-changing moment of holding her daughter for the first time.

Your Adoption Finance Coach offers a unique program that helps families create a comprehensive financial plan customized just for them. Their plans include an on-demand video library, live monthly webinars, downloadable templates, and personalized coaching to guide families to create the best path for raising the money they need to bring their families together forever.

Since 2008, Your Adoptions Finance Coach has had the honor and privilege of serving over 100 adoption professionals and working one-on-one with more than 7,000 families, assisting them in bringing their families together forever. On average, combined efforts have resulted in YAFC families raising more than \$20,000 each from grants, loans, fundraising, and more — that's a total of more than \$13 million raised!

The partnership with Adoptions From The Heart, located in Pennsylvania, Delaware, New Jersey, Connecticut, Virginia, and New York, is designed to assist families in the adoption process, providing them with remote services. Video topics include Budgeting for Your Adoption, Grants and Loans, Adoption Tax Credit, Fundraising, and Special Events. Monthly webinar topics include The Adoption Tax Credit, Foundation Executive Panel, Adoption Lenders, Fundraising Best Practices, and more. Prospective adoptive parents adopting through AFTH have the opportunity to work with Your Adoption Finance Coach at no additional cost! Our continued partnership offers our families financial assistance and support as they navigate the adoption process.

Thank you again to Kelly Ellison for your support!



**Your Adoption
Finance Coach**

Resources & Coaching for Adoptive Families

www.youradoptionfinancecoach.com

Give Yourself Grace | Renita's Story: Single Parent, Older Child

Over the last few years, Adoptions From The Heart has seen an increase in older child placements. There is a wide variety of reasons that parents and caretakers of older children contact AFTH to explore the option of making an adoption plan. Each situation is unique and requires social workers and prospective adoptive parents to be flexible and adapt to the needs specific to each situation. For prospective adoptive parents who are considering making themselves available for older child placements, it can be helpful to hear from someone who has walked a similar path. Renita Russel's story is a journey of open adoption as a single mother with an older child placement through AFTH.



"So, I am forty years old, which is still very young, and I decided as a single woman to pursue adoption. It was a huge lifestyle change to welcome a child into my world by myself."

Renita shared with us that adoption had always been a part of her life and she felt that one day, had always been something that was in the cards for her. She has watched

her grandmother, as a widow who already had children, essentially save three lives from being a part of a broken childcare system. And so that was something that was near and dear to her heart. She had other family members and friends who were a part of the adoption triad as well.

"I got different perspectives from friends and people in my life who did adopt. Just hearing their different perspectives never swayed me from wanting to do it, but it opened my eyes to how different those experiences can be."

We asked Renita if she felt she had to navigate the adoption world differently, and her response was "100%. Yeah."

"There are agencies that flat out would not take me because I was single. They were like, well, you know, birth parents really tend to lean towards couples so we only take maybe one or a handful. That was a little disheartening because it puts a bad taste in your mouth. You begin to question whether you're making the right choice. I make a great living. I have such a supportive family and a great community. However, there are stereotypes out there, and you sometimes feel that there's a judgment as a single person of a certain age. You feel there's a stigma placed on you. When you go through a

process like this, having to find agencies that are okay with you being a single adoptive parent and welcome you and they don't bother you and make you feel a way, you know, that was eye-opening for sure."

We asked Renita if she felt like being a single person adopting impacted how she prepared for the experience.

"At first, you get in your head. You feel like, okay, I need to expect to wait. I prepared and allowed myself to get comfortable with the idea of the waiting game, and you almost begin to double and triple that. Talking to other agencies with such a negative tone, you get in your head and feel like you need to offer and be open to everything to make yourself more appealing."

Then when Renita began working with AFTH staff in our Delaware Office she felt a difference.

"Amanda's approach made me feel very comfortable, and I never felt like I was less than or so different from the couples in the room. The way she spoke helped me think about things as I was filling out my key and profile. I explored and thought about what I was comfortable with and was honest with myself instead of making selections from a fearful place. But at the same time, I was afraid that I'd check a box that would prevent me from experiencing that. I encourage anybody about to go through this process, to be honest with yourself because it is a lot different when you finally have that child. Sit with that for a second. You can always change it, but don't make selections from a fearful place."

Once her profile was ready to be shown to expecting and birth parents Renita explained, "You must check yourself because you eventually get to a place where everything's approved. My profile is complete. Everything is live. People are viewing me. I'm being shown. And there is this balance that you have to deal with. You'll want to go out and buy everything, set up, and have a registry, but you don't know when it will happen or what age they will be. There are just so many unknowns. The people in your life are anxious too. They're eager, and so it's kind of like trying to respectfully tell them, I will let you know when I know because you're essentially going on with daily life like nothing has changed because it hasn't other than your profile is live, you've made a decision, and at any moment your life could change."

Renita shares what it was like when she did get the call.

Renita's Story Continued

"I didn't expect the phone call so soon. I went live in May of 2021. I got the call in September of 2021. So mine was a matter of months. It was entirely unexpected, and because I was out of state, there was an added layer of 'Do I get the house ready, or do I get everything ready to travel?' You're just caught again, like trying to make game-time decisions."

"So my son was four months old, and it was interesting. I got the call on a Thursday, and at this point, you know, you're just getting email updates. There's no like phone call that comes through when you're in that stage. So the fact that they were calling me, I was like, huh?"

In Renita's situation, everything happened quickly. She was first going to meet the birth mother on Monday and the placement was planned for Tuesday.

"When we met, things were a little awkward at first. You're in your head, mainly, because although it's exciting for you, you're also putting yourself in the shoes of the birth parent. You automatically want to temper that. What I did not anticipate was going back to the hotel that day with the baby."

In Renita's situation, after the first meeting the child's birth mother felt comfortable moving the placement forward. In the early stages of the adoption placement process, there is often a revocation period which allows birth parents time to consider their decision and make sure it's what they want to do. While AFTH families are educated about this risk and the empathy needed to also understand the birth parents experience, it is very stressful and painful when plans change. Renita expressed the importance of having a support system regardless of whether or not you are adopting as a single parent or a couple. Having a village, whether it's big or small, is important to have somebody there to support you, especially during placement, because you don't know what's going to happen. It turned out that in Renita's case the birth parents chose to initially disrupt the adoption.

"I remained in Delaware for two weeks and remained in contact with the birth mom because she was struggling, and if they were deciding to step up, then I wanted to help. Yes, you're devastated and might be sad, but don't turn your empathy off. Don't get angry and get so focused on yourself that you put blinders on what might be happening with the other individuals involved. Eventually, things ended with my son being placed with me, officially, in November.

But, I believe it worked out because of my ability to see past my feelings and my own hurt and try to understand the perspective of both the birth mom and the birth father, which allowed for lines of communication."

In discussing lasting advice, Renita expressed how essential it is to prepare your mind and heart for things not going as planned. Knowing everything that she knows now, she would one hundred percent do it again.

"I would just encourage people not to let the fear of loss keep you from love and loving. I had to tell myself if I was only meant to love this child for that one night. And to hold him that one night, then I will cherish that one night for the rest of my life. And I will keep him in my heart, and I will continue on this journey. I had to make peace with that."

Renita made mention that because of that emotional aspect of her placement, she feels, in some ways, it made her and her child's birth mom closer in the sense that they chose to remain in contact and understand that it wasn't just about wanting a child but rather showing care and support also.

"As much as our journeys are connected, they were also separate. And that was something I was wrestling with and trying to figure out. I remain in contact and send pictures and updates, but I know she's still on a healing journey. However, I left that door open. I always want to do my part to keep the lines of communication open, especially for my son's sake, so he always has an opportunity to know where he came from, to know his siblings, and if there's an opportunity to meet."

Renita shared what's it's been after being placed with her son.

"It's okay to be overwhelmed. It's okay to feel like I'm failing at work. I'm failing at home. My house used to be organized, but now it's a mess. The laundry's piled. It's okay because it's a transition, and you're trying to figure it out. You may know how to operate in one season, but if you've never been in another, you don't know what to do. Extend yourself some grace and know that your feelings and emotions don't make you a horrible parent. You might miss a happy hour, but I have other things now that bring me joy, but I can still miss that too. And, I think as adoptive parents, we carry that guilt of those feelings a lot harder because we made this choice and went through so much to become a parent that we almost feel like we don't have a right to feel those things. I would say you 100% do. Extend yourself grace."

Classes Designed for Adoptive Parents



You can participate from your own home!

Classed will be held on Zoom to allow families from all over our service area to attend.

Registration Close 1 Week Before Classes

classes fill up quickly so we recommend registering at least 2 weeks in advance

The first few classes listed (ones without dates listed) have either been held already or have passed the registration date but you can watch for them to become a part of our on-demand webinar offerings in early 2024.

Adoption Contact and Openness: Do's and Dont's

Join us to talk about the Do's and Dont's with openness and contact with birth families in adoption. We will explore contact from the "profile key", through meeting the expectant parent, placement, and after placement contact.

Navigating Open Adoption Relationships with Birth Families - Adoptive Parent Panel

Several adoptive families join together to talk about their relationships with birth families, how their connections have developed over the years, methods for initiating and maintaining contact, as well as setting healthy boundaries. Questions to panel members are welcome! Join us for an informative evening and earn credit hours towards your annual education requirements!

Control: How To Cope When The Adoption Process Does Not Feel Like It's Working In Your Favor

Join AFTH and a panel of adoptive families, as they openly share their life experiences regarding emotional changes throughout the adoption journey and tools to help to respond when you feel the process is out of your control.

Adoption Placement Document Review

Waiting AP's will have the chance to review a checklist of documents needed to be signed at placement, with a detailed explanation of each. That is to ensure waiting AP's feel prepared. A Q&A session will follow the review of documents.

Impact of Adoptive Parents Not Keeping Open Adoption Promises

\$25/Family

What happens when AP's make promises that they choose not to keep? What happens when a birth parent takes a step back from open adoption and then is told years later that "openness would be too hard on the child at this time." Our goal for this event is to share the do's and dont's of setting future expectations and the consequences for not keeping the door open for open adoption. This is not only for adoptive parents.

Tuesday, January 16th | 6:00-7:30 PM

Registration deadline: January 9th, 2024

Adoptive Parent Panel: Challenging Circumstances

\$25/Family

The panel is for current families struggling with the wait. Join us as we hear AFTH AP's who had difficult waits; from waiting 3+ years, to experiencing disruptions, and everything in between before being placed with their child(ren).

Wednesday, January 31st | 6:00-7:30 PM

Registration deadline: January 24th, 2024



Feel free to contact your social worker with any questions.



Conversations With Your Child About Adoption Throughout Different Ages & Stages

\$25/Family

Talking with your child about their adoption story is not always going to be an easy time. From toddler years throughout their teenage years, there are many different routes to take when having these conversations with your child. Join our NY/LV office as we discuss how to communicate with your child throughout different ages and stages of their life about their adoption story.

Monday, February 26th | 7:00-8:30 PM

Registration deadline: February 19th, 2024

Parenting an Adoptee

\$25/Family

What role does the parent play for an adoptee? What expectations should be set for the AP? What resources should you be seeking to ensure you are providing a well-rounded life for your child? This class will cover ways that AP's can connect with their child, resources to use in explaining the adoption triad to adoptees and some general do's and don't's of parenting a child who was placed for adoption.

Thursday, February 29th | 6:30-8:00 PM

Registration deadline: February 22nd, 2024



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 as well as 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

- **Saturday, January 27th, 2024 | 10:30 AM - 12 PM**
- **Tuesday, April 16th, 2024 | 7- 8:30 PM**
- **Saturday, July 27th, 2024 | 10:30 AM - 12 PM**
- **Tuesday, October 22nd 2024 | 7 - 8:30 PM**

Registration DEADLINE is Noon the day prior



ON-DEMAND WEBINAR

**6 hours on-demand access - \$247/family
(with Discount Code)**

In collaboration with AFTH, New Parents Academy created a 6-hour course covering Baby Gear, Newborn Care, Soothing, Newborn Sleep, Bonding and more. Includes 5 printable/checklists. Access for 2 years so videos can be re-watched at any time.

Access from On-Demand Webinar Section of Client Portal

AFTH Families Can Receive Required CEU Credits for Attending!

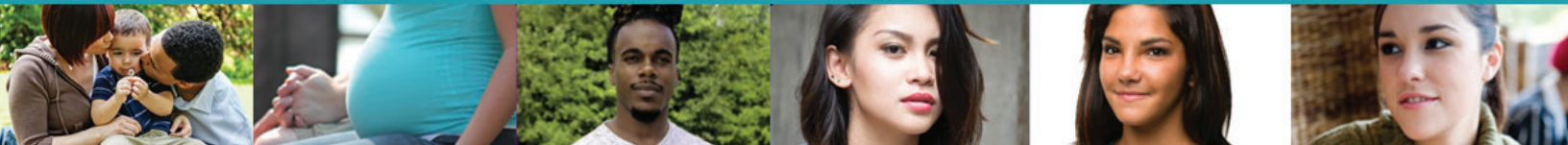
Click [HERE](#) to Register

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 adoption content
- Sharing your story
- 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 or to share topics you would to suggest for future workshops, 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. Beginning in 2024, the Support Groups will be switching to evenings to welcome even more expecting and birthparents to the conversation. 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 holiday event in December. Email NicoleF@afth.org to learn more.

“
Being able to know that there are other people out there; That you are not alone, is one of the biggest things for me.”

- Dominique, Birth Mother



A Heart-to-Heart with Complete Adoption Triads



On November 2, 2023, Adoptions From The Heart was joined by three full adoption triads for a panel discussion on what it has been like to grow together in an open adoption.

It was an incredible night getting to hear from all our panelists. With over 40 attendees, this event was nothing short of amazing as we discussed what life has been for each trio from placement until now.

The following panelists shared their stories at the event:

- **Triad #1 : Caitlin (Adoptee), Cathy (Adoptive Mom), and Michelle (Birth Mom)**

Caitlin was placed for adoption in 1988, just 3 years after Adoptions From The heart opened. Caitlin's middle name is Michelle after her birth mom and was raised knowing she was adopted, and proud of it. Caitlin met Michelle for the first time in 1st grade at the Annual AFTH Picnic. After this meeting, Michelle became very involved in Caitlin's life (attending gymnastic competitions, summers together in Lancaster where she lives, etc.). Michelle and Cathy walked each other down the aisle at Caitlin's wedding this year and even read a poem that they wrote together for her. Michelle and Cathy now spend time together without Caitlin, and they all have a very close-knit relationship.

- **Triad #2 : Lila (Adoptee), Jacki (Adoptive Mom), and Meredith (Birth Mom)**

Lila was adopted in 2008. Jacki and her husband went into their open adoption naturally a little guarded, however, Lila was raised knowing she was adopted and her parents really wanted to allow her the opportunity to share her story, as it is her story to tell. Jacki and Meredith met up at the Annual Family Picnic when Lila was 3 months old. Jacki and her husband made the intentional decision to work to lower their walls and felt immediate peace and tranquility as they began forming a stronger relationship with Lila's birth

mother. Lila has a biological sister and brother who she has a very strong relationship. This triad spends holidays together and regularly gets together for quality time.

- **Triad #3 : Hailey (Adoptee), Becca & Dave (Adoptive Parents), and Rain & Erin (Half Siblings)**

Hailey was placed for adoption in 2009, with very little reciprocal relationship with her birth parents. Hailey's birth half-sister, Rain, has known about Hailey for a long time, but struggled to make the connection with her, although she had wanted to meet her for a while. Rain often tried unsuccessfully to convince her dad, Hailey's birth father, to help make the connection with Hailey. Rain was finally able to make a connection herself and on August 6, 2023, Rain, Hailey, Erin, and Junior all met for the first time along with Becca and David, Hailey's adoptive parents. Shortly after additional extended family members joined the entire group for another get together. While the adoption is not open between Hailey and her birth parents, Hailey now knows all of her birth siblings, two great grandparents, and an uncle. They plan to continue growing their relationships with one another indefinitely.

The November Heart to Heart was filled with touching stories of navigating relationships as a triad and celebrating the incredible bonds they have formed. All in all, the event was a success as attendees were moved by hearing all the personal open adoption experiences and close to \$350 was raised in support of AFTH's programs and services.

Upcoming Heart-to-Heart Events

We are excited to announce the upcoming topics for the 2024 Heart To Hearts. We have carefully chosen these topics to provide meaningful and insightful discussions for our audience. We look forward to seeing you all there. Stay tuned for more information on exact dates and locations!

Upcoming Topics:

February 2024 | Navigating Transracial Adoption

June 2024 | LGBTQIA Community & Adoption

November 2024 | Adoption and Mental Health

Agency News

Domestic Program Update

New contracts, policies, and updated profile keys have already gone out. Profiles not returned by December 15, 2023, will go on hold. We want as many families to be active as possible over the holiday so please be sure to get those back to your social worker right away.

Speaking of holidays, we recognize that this may be a particularly difficult time for those in the “waiting” part of their adoption journey. AFTH offers many different types of support groups (see page 12) or one-on-one meetings. There is also a Facebook AFTH Waiting Family Support Group for families to connect and share. Please reach out to your social worker for more information. Events and classes are another way to find support and connect with other families.

Over the past three months, 68% of placements have been emergencies. Please have a plan ready for children in the home, pets, car/travel, and your home in case you get “the call” and need to travel within 24 hours! If you would like a refresher preparedness flyer with ideas from adoptive parents who have been there before, please contact your social worker.

AFTH plans to debut “older” child education courses in early 2024. We also plan to continue updating our education courses (Preparing for Open Adoption, Transracial Adoption Education, & Intersectionality) to include relevant and current topics as they relate to the adoption triad. We had appreciated the feedback received from client evaluations regarding our courses.

While AFTH is continuing to see placements and calls from hospitals for emergency placements, we recognize the lower number of placements over the past few years is in congruence with the decreasing birth rates in the U.S. provided by the CDC from 2019-2023. Historically, around 1% of parents chose voluntary adoption plans for their children, and with a lower birth rate, that rate has decreased as well. We support parent’s rights to exercise all their options.

AFTH's outreach and marketing efforts continue

to create awareness about our services and all the options available to expecting and birth parents as well as to other professionals who may work with them. We want any family/parent considering making an adoption plan to have access to AFTH's open adoption services, as we believe in our mission, values, and families that we present to expectant parents.

Although AFTH offices will be closed 12/23/23-1/2/2024, each office will have a social worker on call for emergencies and placements. We wish you families a healthy end of 2023 and a hopeful and happy beginning to 2024.

What to Do For 2023 Taxes

Some families who adopted this past year may have yet to be finalized; this means some children will not officially be issued a Social Security Number in time for tax season. Families unable to finalize their adoption before the end of the calendar year of their placement should file for an ATIN for tax purposes.

Here is what those families need to know come tax time:

The IRS can issue families an Adoption Taxpayer Identification Number (ATIN), a temporary nine-digit number for a child who does not yet have a social security number. The form can be obtained at an IRS walk-in office, by calling 1-800-829-3676, or by visiting the IRS website at www.irs.gov.

Documentation describing your child’s placement will need to accompany the form. You may require a letter from an AFTH office confirming your placement, so please reach out to obtain this letter.

It can take up to eight weeks to receive an ATIN, so families may want to start the process now. ATINs are valid for two years and can be used to claim dependency on tax documents.



AFTH Adoptive Parent 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.](#)



Get involved with AFTH Program and Services

Getting more involved with the agency can provide more education about adoption and help keep busy during the wait. If you aren't already signed up for AFTH email blasts, reach out to your social worker to register. We want families to take advantage of all of our fantastic learning opportunities.

Ways You Can Get Involved

- OnDemand classes available with of plethora a adoption topics
- Four Educational Series are offered throughout the year to learn about different adoption topics
- Three Heart-to-Heart event series are offered each year to hear from the experiences of members of the triad
- Three support groups are available for adoptive parents to meet others with similar experiences
- Watch AFTHtv episodes! We have 14 Seasons full of stories from all members of the triad
- Heart-to-Heart Podcast has over 40 episodes with adoption professionals, members of the triad, and more.



Reach out to your social worker about how you can get involved at AFTH.

Recent Legislation



ADOPT (Adoption Deserves Oversight, Protection and Transparency) Act

Bipartisan bill H.R. 6220 was introduced to the U.S. Congress on November 3, 2023, as legislation to increase protections for expecting parents, adoptive families, and children to prevent exploitation by unlicensed adoption intermediaries. The bill would only allow adoption providers and attorneys to operate in the states they are licensed to do so. The bill also has the support of the National Council For Adoption (NCFCA) as well as The Academy of Adoption and Assisted Reproduction Attorneys (AAAA). More details [here](#).

In Good Standing Adoption Agencies Act of 2023

Bipartisan bill H.R. 5540 was introduced to the U.S. Congress on September 18, 2023. If passed, it would require the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to publish and maintain a list of licensed adoption agencies in good standing. And to provide even more transparency, the HHS would be required to conduct reports anytime a state is taking action against an adoption agency. The bill has the support of the National Council For Adoption (NCFCA). More details [here](#).

Pennsylvania

Bipartisan bill SB736 would amend a law enacted in 2018 to allow Pennsylvania-born adult adopted people access to a copy of their original birth certificate, not a summary document, without any discriminatory provision or redactions. Among other things, SB736 would eliminate the requirement of having graduated high school or equivalent in order to request your own birth certificate. It would also repeal the ability for a birth parent to redact information on the original birth record however retains the ability to file a contact preference form. On October 24th, the bill was favorably voted out of committee and will be put to the larger vote.

New York

Senator Scarcella-Spanton introduced S7303 which would require insurance coverage for medical genetic testing for adoptees and persons placed in foster care. Bill is currently in committee.

International Adoption

While AFTH no longer provides international adoption programs, we 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.

Seeking International Adoptees Adopted Through AFTH to Share Their Stories

We would love to hear from AFTH international adoptees. We hope to highlight their stories in our blogs, newsletters, or on AFTHtv, welcoming your unique story and all the joys and challenges. Please email JadaM@afth.org with question or entries.

See page 15 for Christian's story of self-discovery and acceptance as an international adoptee.

International Adoption: How One Trip Changed Four Lives

Max , Ally, Logan and Ava are all international adoptees. Their families all worked with AFTH and traveled together to Vietnam to adopt.



The adoptive families of these four adoptees bonded together during that time and it became evident that they would share this bond forever.



Since traveling abroad on a quest to build their beautiful families, the adoptive parents of Max, Ally, Logan and Ava have gotten the four children together for yearly reunions and have inevitably created a circle of extended support and bonds that will last a lifetime. The pictures above are from 2004 and 2023.

Congratulations to AFTH's Newest Families...

AFTH Newsletter is back from a hiatus, so we are catching up on all the placements that have occurred since our last edition. Congratulations to all the newly formed families.

December 2022

Lauren & Jeffrey
Michael & Heather
Jeffrey & Robert
Joseph & Sara
William & Rebecca
Mark & Maire
David & Carrie
Daniel & Victoria
Andrew & Kyle
Patrick & Theresa
Ryan & Anna

January 2023

Joel & Rebekah - siblings
Dustin & Elizabeth
David & Abby
Jeffrey & Scott
Amanda & April
Doug & Stephanie
Antwain & Kristle
Robert & Kristy
Christopher & Susannah
Timothy & Caitlyn
Gregory & Jennifer
Raymond
Jason & Jaclyn
Bradley & Sara
Christopher & Vikrant

February 2023

Derek & Sarah
Geoffrey & Evan
Jacqueline
Eric & Jenna
Barbara
Matthew
Josue & Elvin
Evelyne

March 2023

James & Chelsea
Dustin & Andrew
Philip & Jennifer

April 2023

Sam & August
Nathan & Paul
Christopher & Amanda
Brian & Lesley

May 2023

Brian & Eric
Scott & William
Timothy & Brianna
Benjamin & Meghan
Kevin & Heather
Abby
Baxter & Mathieu

June 2023

Gregory & Sairah
Victor & Michael
Dennis & Kathleen
Matthew & Gregory
Daniel & Louise

July 2023

Robert & Emily
Michelle
SoYoung & Carl
Theodore & Emily
John & Kyler
Robert & Brooke
Kevin & Dana
Jared & Glen

August 2023

Eric & Jennifer
Matthew & James
Joseph & Joseph
Nathaniel & Matthew
Alexander & Karen
Yasmin

September 2023

Davin & Eric
Thomas & Karen
Paul & Whitney
Eric & Lillian
Kevin & Angela
Ryan & Cari

October 2023

Solangel & Carlos
Joseph & Shana
Jodi & Tanya
Amy
Joshua & Michael

Congratulations



My Journey Of Self-Discovery and Acceptance as An International Adoptee



In August of this year, Christian joined Adoptions From The Heart's Wynnewood Office as an Adoption Counselor. Christian is also an international adoptee who was adopted more than 25 years ago. He welcomed sharing his journey with our readers.

Christian's adoption sent him on a journey of discovery, acceptance, and healing that has shaped his identity in profound ways. Growing up, Christian grappled with feelings of guilt and shame related to his adoption. He faced challenges related to identity, education, and mental health. He hid these emotions from friends and family but later came to accept their validity.

Finding acceptance of his feelings surrounding his adoption was a milestone, marking the validation of his experiences, shared by many adoptees. It's an ongoing process, but today, Christian found a greater ease in embracing his adoption and discovering himself along the way.

While he initially had mixed feelings and resentment towards his birth parents, a significant healing moment came when he reunited with his birth family. He has been in reunion with his birth family for about five years, experiencing ups and downs along the way.

A pivotal moment in his journey toward emotional healing was an experience with his older brother Miguel. "A large healing moment that got the ball rolling, came when I was 21 and my birth brother pushed me on a swing. That unlocked all the memories I had of longing for an older brother to play outside with."

The road isn't without its challenges. Cultural disconnection compounded his struggles. "Being a 'white-passing' Latino really left me with a large identity crisis. Now in my late 20's I have really been doing my best to reclaim my culture."

Mental health battles were another facet intricately tied to his adoption journey. Unaddressed depression, coupled with the revelation of its prevalence in his birth family, highlighted the importance of mental health awareness within the adoption narrative.

Therapy became a guiding light in navigating this complex

terrain. Finding an adoption-competent therapist and witnessing his parents' efforts in understanding and supporting him were essential in establishing a secure foundation for healing and relationship-building.

Christian ends with this advice, "My advice to someone wanting to adopt would be to educate themselves. It would be weird for any parent if they weren't a little worried about raising a child. We now have so much information, tools, resources, etc., that using them and putting what they learned into action will save them so much energy in the long run."

Christian's story is one that illustrates and honors the complex emotions and challenges that can arise from adoption. Adoption is a journey that evolves over time, filled with self-discovery and healing. It also highlights the importance of understanding and support from family and friends, as well as the need for education. Adoption is not just about the past; it shapes an adoptee's present and future, ultimately leading to a journey of self-acceptance.



Photographed is Christian and his older brother Miguel. Christian and his parents were invited to Chile for Miguel's wedding where they also meet Christian's extended family.



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.



SUMMER PICNIC NEWS

The AFTH summer picnic typically held in Ft. Washington changed locations this past summer to Lukens Park. We received such wonderful feedback about the new location, we plan to host it again at Lukens Park in June 2024.

**Look out for emails with details about
AFTH summer picnics in the New Year.**

***For more information
email KristyG@afth.org***