

# Adoption News

A Newsletter from:

## Adoptions From The Heart



### A Social Worker's Dilemma

*The following is a candid and transparent article from a social worker's perspective of seeing the pain one of their clients goes through when the adoptive parents refuse to follow through on their open adoption promises. To be clear, this is not our experience with the overwhelming majority of placements; however, we highlight this particular experience because while it's rare, it can serve as an important lesson for others as to why keeping open adoption commitments are so important.*

As adoption social workers, we can face ethical dilemmas in our line of work. Our role is such that we are put in the position to make tough decisions. While adoption can be a beautiful experience, it can sometimes be devastating. Even

**“Twice a year, I see my client be retraumatized over her decision to trust this couple with the placement of her baby. Pictures have been consistently late (or have yet to arrive) ”**

*Jenna Stocks,  
Director of Social Services*

writing this article posed some severe contemplation; however, I hope it emphasizes the importance of following through on future contact promises and minimizing the chances that something like this will happen again. The most important client is the child.

In 2010, the state of Pennsylvania passed ACT 101. This act serves many purposes, but for this situation, it allowed a birth mom to request a legally binding future contract agreement. This contract is entered voluntarily and provides details for ongoing contact and communication following an adoption. The term of the agreement is agreed upon by all parties, signed, and approved by the court before the finalization of the adoption.

Sounds good, right? Well, this is an article about what happens when the adoptive parents who entered the legally binding agreement voluntarily refuse to follow through on the promises they made to their

child's birth mother after placement.

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have yet to arrive) since the initial placement six years ago. The couple has also been late to almost every visit, and instead of extending the stay to make up for that time, they always have excuses as to why they must leave precisely when the visit was planned to end.

The calls from a social worker to have a discussion about these issues were met with excuses and accusations of the social worker being difficult and only taking the side of the birth mother and not understanding where they are coming from. I really want to say, "she trusted you with her baby's life partly because of the promises you made her, and you won't even trust her with your email address?"

The legal agreement states that if one party doesn't comply with the contract, everyone can return to court for mediation and a review of the PACA. The birth mother in this situation has spent the last six years debating whether to take legal action. At first, she was so fearful that things would worsen if she did anything so severe. However, after years of disappointments and a genuine lack of any effort on their part to build a relationship, she decided to write to the Judge and ask for help.

This decision was courageous; she wanted her daughter to know she did everything possible to see her and continue an open adoption. With the support and backing of the agency, she wrote to the Judge, who approved the PACA pleading for mediation. She shared details of how the PACA was being ignored and explained how traumatizing this situation has been for her and her concerns about how it might affect her daughter. The response was just as devastating: "Please be advised that the court cannot act on a letter. I suggest you consult with a lawyer to pursue this matter."

So here we stand: A birth mom who wants the pictures and visits agreed upon and promised. She wants to see her daughter once a year. She isn't asking for more than what was already agreed upon, yet she is now faced with the obstacle of locating and funding attorney expenses; meanwhile, time passes, and more due pictures are never received.

As an agency, we are devastated by this heartbreaking situation. Much of the education and counseling prospective adoptive parents have focused on not making promises that can't be kept and thinking about how this affects the child in the long run. Adoptions From The Heart has a minimum requirement for open adoption that all families agree upon before entering the program: sending letters and pictures for 18 years and at least one visit a year. However, this process is based mainly on honesty.

**"She trusted  
you; she trusted  
the agency.  
We trusted the  
adoptive family."**

*Jenna Stocks,  
Director of Social Services*

Sometimes prospective adoptive parents dive into the open adoption program with hesitation, which is okay. We understand that the idea of openness may be uncomfortable at first. Our social workers are trained to explore these feelings with families. If necessary, counsel them

to another avenue if open adoption doesn't seem to fit. However, to lie and make promises a family knows they won't keep, especially in a legally binding PACA agreement, is inexcusable.

The agency always attempts to remedy situations where promises might not be kept for whatever reason. We provide resources and counseling and act as a liaison, and most of the time, these interventions are successful at getting the open adoption back on track. However, there are rare and devastating circumstances like this when nothing works.

We urge each party in the adoption process, including prospective and adoptive parents, to empathize and have a deeper understanding of what the other people in the triad might be feeling and experiencing. The goal is to create forever families bridging parties together for a lifetime through open adoption.



## Adoptions From The Heart

Dear Supporter,

Adoptions From The Heart is proud of our community for coming together in support of AFTH's mission. Our clients rely on us to empower them through our education and services. By partnering with AFTH and choosing action by making a donation, **YOU have improved the lives of people in the adoption community.** Your generosity does not go unnoticed by us or the men and women directly impacted by your donation.

Donors have shown their support throughout the year by attending virtual fundraisers like the Heart-to-Heart series. 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:

- Provide education opportunities for the whole community through a growing list of OnDemand webinars
- Lift the unheard voices of Adoptees and Birth Parents and unique stories of open adoption through virtual events, Heart-to-Heart podcast and AFTHtv
- Offer virtual training opportunities for nurses and social workers, to assist them in serving their community
- Revamp and add additional education courses for Adoptive Parents
- Continue supporting our clients by providing support groups for all members of the triad

Adoptions From The Heart is committed to upholding high ethical standards and empowering our clients through education. Professional referral sources know and trust us to provide quality services to the community. In light of the Supreme Court's ruling on Roe v. Wade, we are concerned about unethical agencies preying on women, and manipulating and luring them with illegal promises. **We want to ensure our clients know our focus is to provide options and educating them about adoption laws in their state and the choices they alone can make.**

**We are asking for your support as expecting parents continue to turn to us for options.** Please consider making a tax-deductible donation online at [www.afth.org/donate](http://www.afth.org/donate) or text "CHOOSEIMPACT" to 44321. 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**  
Executive Director

Adoptions From The Heart does more than just support you with your adoption, they give you after support too. It's been so great to have the support from the agency, from donors and just to know that it's not just about placing this baby for adoption, like they care about what happens to me and other birthparents afterwards.

- Se'Ayra, AFTH Birth Mother



AdoptionsFromTheHeart



## Miss Delaware: Grace Otley | An Adoptee's Journey to Pageant Royalty

Adoptions From The Heart sat with Miss Delaware, Grace Otley, to discuss her journey as an international adoptee through Adoptions From The Heart. "I was adopted from an orphanage in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, and flew home on my first birthday," Otley said.

Being an international adoptee, Grace mentioned feeling different growing up in a majority-white community. "I felt different immediately growing up in the community of Delaware. I went to a mostly white elementary school, and to be honest, it was the same for middle school, high school, and even college," she said.

"When you're younger, children love to point out the differences between them and you. They made it a point to do that a lot in elementary school. Not just skin color and physical differences, but by being Asian American, they also would point out the differences between families. We would have bring-your-parents-to-school days or fairs, and they would say that's not your real family because you look different. That is what started to shape my realization that I was different."

Grace mentioned her experiences in school and the understanding that teachers also had little knowledge and understanding of the adoption world. She said it was not middle and high school, but that elementary school was where she found identity and the ignorance of others to be most challenging. "Showing children what adoption is and how it's not so different from a biological family was never discussed. That's a big reason why children wouldn't understand and would criticize. They didn't understand," Otley continued, "I feel like young kids are some of the most honest people you'll ever meet. So maybe that played a part in it, too, because kids are so real, and sometimes it comes across as rude. However, they weren't teaching about adoption and unconventional families."

Otley let us in on some of the issues she had experienced as a child adoptee, such as bullying, which quite a few adoptees sadly experience. "The bullying was mostly racial; kids said things like they don't look like you, they can't be your parents. That made me grow up quickly; my classmates being super honest," Otley said.

As an adoptee, especially an adoptee in transracial

adoptions, there are many challenges one could experience as one grows and begin discovering their identity and who they are amongst peers with outside opinions. Grace spoke to us about other challenges she'd faced in her adoption journey. Otley continues.

"The other thing is your challenges with identity. Specifically, I'm Asian-American. I was adopted from Vietnam. My dad is a mix, but I identify with my mom's Italian culture. I'm surrounded by a white family who doesn't understand Asian-American or Asian culture, but I come from Asian culture. So which one do I belong to? Which practices do I take on? It isn't easy," she admits. "That's a little bit of a struggle that I've had in life, but I have been able to face that challenge by becoming a part of my Asian culture a little bit more. Partaking in Viet-namese culture and activities makes me feel more accepted and find a little more of my identity."



As mentioned in the opening, Grace Otley is also Miss Delaware 2022. Grace spoke a little about her journey to Miss Delaware. "I began playing the violin when I was about three. I started classically, joined the orchestra, got a little funky, and joined a summer camp primarily for electric instruments. That was my introduction to my love of contemporary pop and R&B," she mentioned. "I even played the violin with a band called The Who growing up. Eventually, I found my musical voice and combined electric violin with singing, playing in small restaurants and political events. Then, I became Miss Delaware's outstanding teen." She continued, "With the Miss Delaware Scholarship Organization, I got to perform at different events across the state and national stages, like the Miss America stage in December."

"It's also one of the things I like the most about the Miss America organization—having someone who's an Asian-American musician is special. Representation as a title holder or as someone in the media is super



## Grace's Story Continued

important, most importantly for the younger children who look like me and are look-ing up to me." She said.



Grace mentioned struggling with identity growing up, something many adoptees struggle with. In speaking with Grace, she said that, as an adoptee, you sometimes have to create your own identity through evolution and find the senses of yourself that you make. Family will be family, whether through blood

or built, and while many adoptees question where they come from, Grace says she's happy with the family she has created.

"I have to be honest; the word that comes to the forefront is difficult. It hasn't been easy. Young girls and people of color see these white beauty standards, live in a predominantly white area as they do, and feel like they have to or need to be white to feel that sense of acceptance at one point in their life. And I had grown up with that feeling," she said. "I connected more with Vietnamese-American culture in college through the Viet Fest festival. I was about fifteen when I first participated in the Tysons Corner, Virginia, DC festival and won first place. I performed with my violin and sang, but it set the standard. To have won something and been supported by a whole organization that supports Vietnamese culture." Otley said.

Grace continued doing festivals until she was about eighteen years old, where she then competed and was named Miss Vietfest at that year's event, a pageant for Vietnamese women. Otley said she was highly honored because that was when she felt connected to and accepted by her culture. Grace began attending heritage celebrations and felt proud of being Asian for the first time, allowing herself to open up to the uniqueness and beautiful culture.

"In general, it's just crucial for you to be present," Otley advised. "Speak up about your story because many people can benefit from feeling heard and surrounded by similar entities. People don't perceive adoption positively because they don't understand. I did

a National Qualtrics survey that I administered to a random group of people to determine their perceptions of adoption. And one of the things I did in the survey was I showed a Valentine's Day card from 1997 that said, even if you were adopted, I'd still love you. Not that you are, of course. At least, I don't think so. But come to think of it; you don't look like Mom and Dad. You should get a DNA test. Or. Oh, well, don't even worry about it. We all love you, even if your "real" parents don't. Happy Valentine's," Grace read aloud. "It's one of those things like, oh, thank you for a little offen-sive, backhanded compliment, But maybe not so backhanded for the people who don't understand the hurt that comes from that."

Otley's research measured that most subjects said they would have purchased the hallmark card, proving her point that people can't defend what they do not understand. Agencies is where education starts.

When asked about support from family and friends, Grace has admitted to having incredible support from her friends and family. "I mean, my boyfriend is even learning Vietnamese right now! And he's doing a better job than me," she said jokingly.

"My advice to other adoptees is to acknowledge that developing confidence is a process and a journey. Embrace your differences and embrace your uniqueness because that, ultimately, that's going to be what makes you proud," she said. "Once I connected with my Vietnamese heritage, I felt the most confident. I am Asian, but I'm also an American and have all the different facets. I've grown up with my parents, who have shown me this lifestyle. But I also am proud of where I come from and my roots."

Grace goal is to promote talking about adoption and encourage adoptees to share their stories. Stories unite people, and create a stronger and a more prevalent community.



## Classes Designed for Adoptive Parents

**You can participate from your own home!**

*The Winter Ed Series, will be held on Zoom (except for the in-person Childcare Class) 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*



### ***Adoptive Parent Panel: Navigating Open Adoption Relationships with Birth Families***

***\$25/Family***

Adoptive Parent Panel discusses their relationships with Birth Families and how their connections have developed over the years. They will discuss methods for initiating and maintaining contact and setting healthy boundaries. Questions to panel members are welcome.

**Thursday, Jan 26th from 7:00-8:30pm**

**Registration deadline: Jan 19th, 2023**

Contact [JoanS@afth.org](mailto:JoanS@afth.org) with any questions

### ***Post-Partum Depression in Birth Mothers and Adoption Baby Blues for Adoptive Parents***

***\$25/Family***

This seminar will address postpartum depression in birth mothers who place their children for adoption and the ensuing grief and loss associated with placement. The class will also address the “Adoption Baby Blues” that adoptive parents sometimes experience after being placed with an infant and how these issues might impact the open adoption relationship.

**Tuesday, Feb 7th from 6:30-8:00pm**

**Registration deadline: Jan 31st, 2023**

Contact [ChristopherP@afth.org](mailto:ChristopherP@afth.org) with any questions

***Childcare & Drug/Alcohol Classes on Next Page...***

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



## 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](#)

### IN-PERSON

**Harrisburg, PA - \$35/family**

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

**Monday, April 17th from 6:30-8:30pm**

**Registration deadline: April 10th**

Contact [MarilynR@afth.org](mailto:MarilynR@afth.org) with any questions



## 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

- Tuesday, April 18th at 7:00 pm
- Saturday, July 15th at 10:30 am
- Thursday, October 12th at 7:00pm

**Registration DEADLINE is Noon the day prior**

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



## ***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.](#)

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### ***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.](#)

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### ***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.](#)





## 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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:NicoleF@afth.org) to learn more.

“

I felt loved when I walked in. I felt the support. When I walked out I felt a thousand times better than when I came in.”

- Mary, Birth Mother.



## A Heart-to-Heart with Adoption Influencers

On December November 17th, 2022, Adoptions From The Heart had its sixth Heart-to-Heart event series, this time with Adoption Influencers.

It was an incredible night getting to hear from all our panelists. AFTH broadcasted the event through Zoom and Facebook Live. We had 75 people attend the event and hear from our amazing guests.

We had six Adoption Influencers join the event to talk about their experiences in the social media world and how sharing their adoption story has changed their life.

The following were the panelist who shared their stories at the event:

- **Taylor Shennet** is an international adoptee born in China. She has over 120k followers on TikTok, where she focuses on sharing about transracial adoption and all the complexities that come with it.
- **Ashley Mitchel (BigToughGirl)** is a birth mom who placed her child for adoption 17 years ago. She is a fantastic advocate for Birth Mothers, has a nonprofit, does conferences, and holds support groups specifically for Birth Mothers.
- **Melissa Guida-Richards** is a late-discovered adoptee from Colombia. She became viral when she shared her story on the Huffington Post about her parents hiding her racial identity for 19 years.
- **Isaac Etter** is a transracial adoptee. Isaac has a company called identity, an educational platform for adoptive parents. Most employees at his company are Adoptees.
- **Courtney Tierra** is a birth mother who placed her child for adoption 22 years ago. She is a children's book author and runs an inspirational Instagram account where she talks about empowerment.
- **Grace Otley** is an Adoptions From The Heart international adoptee from Vietnam. She currently holds the title of Miss Delaware in the Miss America Pageant. Her platform is about debunking misconceptions about adoption and adoptees.

Combined, these amazing panelists have over 200k followers on their social media platforms. They are all doing amazing things for the adoption community.

They have books, education, support groups, nonprofits, podcasts, and more. We were so glad we could have them as part of our panel

### *Some of the topics discussed during the night were:*

- How has social media and sharing their stories publicly affected their adoption triad?
- Misconceptions about adoption and the negative side of social media.
- The impact of sharing their stories online on their identity.
- What can we do better as a community to support the Adoption triad?

We shared videos from AFTH staff about how we have used social media to bring awareness to adoption voices. The Tiktok videos AFTH birth mothers shared impacted those in attendance and helped them understand other perspectives of the adoption experience.

The panel concluded with questions from attendees. Our participants showed their support for the panelists, and it was a great moment getting to hear the feedback from the participants. We had all triad members join the call, and it was amazing seeing our community coming together to share about adoption.

We are bringing this series back in 2023, so keep an eye out for all the upcoming events and ways to register.

- March, 2023 | The relationship between Adoptions Social Workers and their clients
- July, 2023 | Extended families (AP & BP families)
- November, 2023 | The Adoption Triad

For more information, email Mayra Herrera at [MayraH@afth.org](mailto:MayraH@afth.org)

## Agency News

### **Domestic Program Update**

The agency continues to see a high number of emergency placements. From January to September 2022, 67% of agency placements were emergency placements. It is crucial adoptive parents are prepared for an emergency placement, as there can be only a few hours to a day's notice of discharge. We have created a flier to assist you in preparing for an emergency. Please get in touch with your social worker for more information on preparing for an emergency placement.

**Two visits have remained the most common request for a level of openness.** However, this year we have seen 12 instances of a request for three visits a year and six cases of four visits a year. We also continue to see requests for direct contact via phone and email. In four states, CT, NY, PA, and VA, legally binding future contact contracts are available to birth families. We created a flier of recently asked questions for our adoptive parents ([AP-312-AG](#)).

**In 2022, instances of substance use were reported at 60%, Mental health reported without medication at 37 %, and Mental health with medication during pregnancy occurs at about 22%.** As a reminder, there are many situations when expectant fathers are unknown, unavailable, or unwilling to participate. An expectant father not participating in the adoption plan may have a history of drug use or mental health issues that the agency is unaware of.

AFTH has increased its outreach opportunities and training we provide to professionals. We have added a new tab on our website for professionals, where organizations can make a referral, ask for AFTH materials, or request training. Please see ["Share Expecting Parent Outreach Material in Your Community"](#) on [page 12](#), which talks more about ways you can help connect with organizations in your community.

### **The National Council for Adoption**

The National Council for Adoption issued an adoption by the numbers report for 2019 and 2020. As expected, it shows decreased numbers in adoption placements. The report shows a 24% decline in private domestic adoptions, a 45% decline in international adoptions, and a 13% decline in foster care adoptions.

To read the report, you can go to the NCFA page and search "Adoption by the numbers" or [click here](#).

Some families who adopted this past year may have yet to be able to finalize; this means some children will not officially be issued a Social Security Number in time for tax season.

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. Families unable to finalize their adoption before the end of the calendar year of their placement should file for an ATIN for tax purposes. 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](http://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.





This year Adoptions From The Heart premiere three seasons of AFTHtv. In this video series, we bring members of the adoption triad to share their stories and experiences in adoption. You can watch all videos on our Youtube and Facebook pages, [checkout the list of episodes here.](#)

## *Share Expecting Parent Outreach Material in Your Community*

Prospective adoptive parents often ask what THEY can do to help spread the word about AFTH's free services to those facing an unplanned pregnancy who want to learn about their options. We invite you to request a packet of outreach material (tear-off posters and business cards) that we can send you to be hung up on bulletin boards in businesses that expecting parents might visit in your community. We will also include ideas of places our social workers have found to be good spots to hang the material.

We invite you to request a packet of outreach material we can mail you to help boost our social workers' efforts in your community.

### *Packets Include:*

- 1 AFTH car magnet for your personal use
- Several tear-off posters to hang in locations expecting parents commonly frequent
- Business cards for your local office
- Idea of places to share the material

To request Outreach packets, reach out to you social worker or [click this link.](#)

## *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 available for adoptive parents to meet others with similar experiences
- Watch AFTHtv episodes! We have 12 seasons full of stories from all members of the triad
- Heart-to-Heart Podcast has over 30 episodes with adoption professionals, members of the triad, and more.

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



## 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](mailto:adoption@afth.org) to see how we can help you.*

### **Seeking International Adoptees Adopted Through AFTH to Share Their Stories**

We would like to hear from AFTH international adoptees. We hope to highlight their stories in our blogs, newsletters, and 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. We are eagerly waiting to hear from you. To share your story, email [MayraH@afth.org](mailto:MayraH@afth.org).

### **Guatemala Launches New Program to Help Adoptees Access Record**

A new way to search is now available to adoptees adopted from Guatemalan and seeking information about their roots and identity.

In conjunction with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the National Council of Adoptions (CNA), the government of Guatemala has launched a program designed explicitly for adoptees. Adoptees submit an online form with the names of their birth parents, birthplace, and dates of their birth and adoption. The information is submitted to Guatemala's population registry for a match. The service is free of charge.

To access the form, you can go to [this link](#).

## Recent Legislation

### **MA Senate Passes Legislation Giving Adoptees Access to Birth Certificates**

On July 29, 2022, the Massachusetts State Senate passed legislation to ensure that all adoptees can access their original birth certificates.

Under current state law, an adopted person born between July 17, 1974, and January 1, 2008, cannot access their original birth certificate without obtaining a court order that unseals their record.

The legislation passed by the Senate would close this gap and allow adopted individuals over 18 or the adoptive parents of a child under 18 to access the adoptee's original birth certificate.

### **Louisiana Law Change Gives Adoptees Access to Original Birth Certificates**

House Bill 450, now Act No. 470, took effect in August 2022, allowing adoptees 24 years of age or older to obtain a copy of their original birth certificate.

Act No. 470 creates a simplified process, allowing an adopted person to request a copy of their original birth certificate from vital records without the costly burden of going to court. The law also allows the birth parents to file a contact preference form, included in an adoptee's request for their original birth certificate, specifying whether they want to be contacted.

Several bills mirroring House Bill 450 were brought before the Legislature in the past but failed to become law.



## Congratulations to AFTH's Newest Families..

*AFTH Newsletter is back from a COVID hiatus, so we are catching up on all the placements that have occurred since the summer of 2020. Congratulations to all the newly formed families.*

Suzanne  
Daniel & Travis

### July 2020

Nathan & Lindsey  
Penny & Karre  
Jonathan & Jennifer  
Kevin & Susan

### August 2020

Stephen & Megan  
Jason & Gisela  
Martin & Nicole  
Patrick & Margaretta  
Amy & Jessica  
Larry & Danielle

### September 2020

Alfredo & Wendy  
Christopher & Lauren  
Zac & Stephen  
Jodi & Tanya  
Jeff & Suzanne

### October 2020

Robert & Kate  
Andrew & Tina  
Robert & Lyndsey  
Gavin & Alexandra

### November 2020

Justin & Juliana  
Matthew & Gina

### December 2020

Heather  
Susan & Rachel  
Kathleen & Amanda  
Timothy & Joshua  
Darry & Davis  
Erick & Caitlin  
Michael & Sarah  
Brandon & Ashley  
Peter & Jaclyn

### January 2021

Kevin & Kayla  
Dara  
Thomas & Joanna  
Peter & Meg

### February 2021

John & Kacy  
Daniel & Samantha  
Gretchen  
Elizabeth  
Scott & Amy  
Chris & Bridget  
Craig & Gabriele

### March 2021

Christopher & Ashley  
Marcus & Helen  
Benham & Aubrie  
Michael and Shelly  
Brian & Jennifer (twins)  
David & Michael  
Eric & Dennis  
Brian & Jennifer (twins)

### April 2021

Travis & Sarah

### May 2021

Seth & Raffaele  
Andrew & Erika  
Adam & Stephen  
Brian & Kristin  
John & Katrina

### June 2021

Jason & Kathryn  
Jacob & Terra  
Ryan & Katelyn  
Matthew & Andrew  
Christopher & Jenna  
Dermot & Fiona  
Glenn & Rebecca  
Michael & Marie  
Christopher & Brooke  
Allan & Melissa

### July 2021

Mark & Robert  
Anthony & Jared

### August 2021

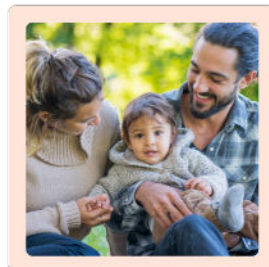
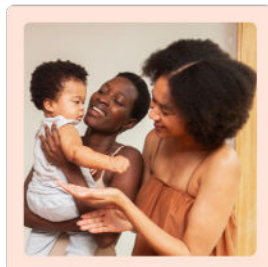
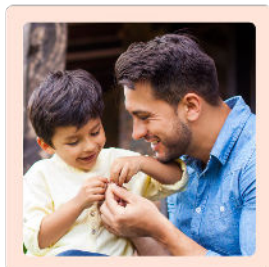
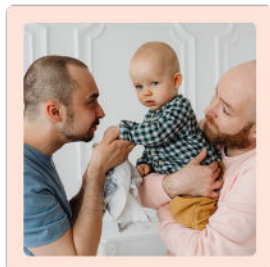
Matthew & Thomas  
Jason & Kira (twins)  
Heather & Jillian  
Christopher & Rachel

### September 2021

Timothy & Heather  
Walter & Katherine  
Celestia & Micha  
Ronald & Jessica  
Jabree & Laura  
Kyle & Rachel  
Kenneth & Elizabeth  
Daniel & Lori  
Beth & Jennifer  
Amy  
Rafael & Eric  
Jason & Danielle  
Raymond & Danielle  
Marco & Judith  
John & Jennifer  
Joel & Lisa

### October 2021

Nicolas & Madison  
Nathanael & Tabitha  
John & Megan  
David & Jennifer



### November 2021

Travis & Alison  
Michael & Lauren  
Ashley & Matthew  
Allison & Robert  
Renita  
Matthew & Jolene  
Derek & Alison  
Robert & Charissa  
Brian & Kaitlyn  
Jason & Gisela

### December 2021

Matthew & Melanie  
Ray & Erin  
Brian & Jordan  
Adam & Evelyn  
Shawn & Laura (twins)  
Louis & Victoria

### January 2022

Jacob & Joanne  
Cameron & Zaida  
Nathan & Angela  
Jamie  
Jason & Ashley  
Robert & Jessica  
Justan & Rebecca

### February 2022

Larry & Michael  
Nico & Michael  
Bruno & John  
Robert & Samantha  
Eric & Randy  
Jerry & Stephanie

### March 2022

Travis & Sarah  
Patrick & Jenna  
Kenneth & Paul  
Marco & Barbara  
William & Daniel  
Michael & Christopher  
Preston & Rebecca  
Joseph & Dale  
Christopher & Elizabeth  
James & Courtney

### April 2022

John & Michelle  
Craig & Kyle  
Taryn & Jesse  
William & Lynn (twins)  
Philip & Laura  
Mark & Margaret  
William & Lynn (twins)  
James & Chelsea

### May 2022

Mark & Kristy  
Edward & Andrea  
Ben & Brandy

### June 2022

Peter & Lindsay  
Stephen & Nicole  
Luke & Hadley  
Edward & Vito (twins)  
Robert & Kelly

### July 2022

Adam & Jesse  
Diallo & Majdah  
Joseph & Brandon  
Lee & Nicole  
Jay & Celeste

### August 2022

Von & Kaitlyn  
William & Heather  
Joseph & Anthony  
Robert & Cortney  
Ganesh & Matthew  
Joseph & Timothy  
Thomas & Jennifer  
David & Dori  
Adam & Brittany  
Brandon & Stephanie  
Neal & Emily

### September 2022

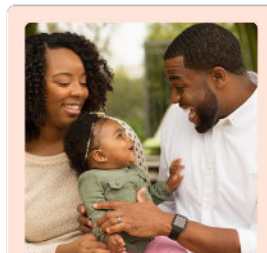
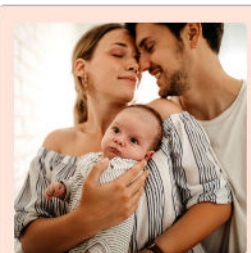
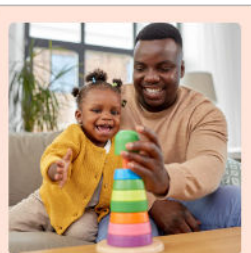
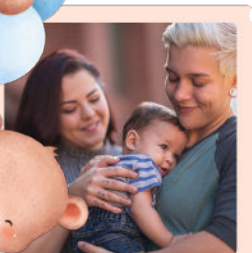
Jonathan & Michael  
Ylli & Christine  
Kenneth & Leslie  
Nicholas & Tamara  
Brian & Becky  
Murphy & Phillip

### October 2022

Stephen & Robert  
Michael & Bobbi  
Jeremy & Sarah  
Riley  
Murphy & Denny

### November 2022

Cristina & Joseph  
Allison & Jesse Danielle  
Megan & Daryl  
Troy & Noel







30-31 Hampstead Circle  
Wynnewood, PA 19096

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## ***Become a Year Round Supporter***

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*"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](http://www.afth.org/donate). Any amount is appreciated, and it changes the life of an Expecting or Birth Parent.



## **SUMMER PICNIC NEWS**

**OUR MAIN FAMILY SUMMER PICNIC  
MAY BE CHANGING LOCATIONS IN 2023.**

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**PLEASE LOOK OUT FOR EMAILS WITH MORE  
INFORMATION ABOUT THE CHANGES**

***For more information  
email [MayraH@afth.org](mailto:MayraH@afth.org)***