

Adoption News

A Newsletter from:

Adoptions From The Heart

The Unheard Voices of Birth Mothers

AFTHtv Special Helped Break the Silence and Give Voices to Women Who are Choosing Adoption



With the incredible response we have received since our launch of Adoptions From The Heart TV in November, we knew we needed to utilize the platform as a megaphone for the often unheard voices of adoption.

The most common narratives shared on social media and in the news focus on the adoptive parents and their journey to become a family through adoption. The quantity of stories only sharing this side of the process can often drown out the other voices that are just as important.

Many people, especially those outside of the adoption community, don't have the opportunity to hear the voices of birth parents. To begin breaking down that barrier, we took AFTHtv on the road and sat in on one of our Delaware Office's monthly birth mother support groups.

"You helped us all realize that we had a voice and that we should be proud to use it." - Se'Ayra

Sitting around a table, the women shared their experiences as well as advice for others giving viewers a peek into their world as birth mothers.

AFTH's Special: [The Unheard Voices of Birth Mothers](#), aired in four parts throughout the month of February.

Here are just a few reactions from viewers on social media:

"Very powerful words spoken from the heart. [The women] amaze me!"

"They sure are super women."

"Thank you for such an informative message."

"I wish all expecting mothers and fathers could watch this video!"

"Such a great discussion to have and so empowering."

March 2019



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Locations

Allentown

610.432.2384

Central PA

717.399.7766

Connecticut

860.657.2626

Delaware

302.658.8883

New Jersey

856.665.5655

732.335.8883

New York

800.355.5500

Philadelphia

610.642.7200

Pittsburgh

724.853.6533

Virginia

757.361.0008

804.218.2569

Toll Free: 800.355.5500

Website: www.afth.org

AFTH counselor Amanda Aliberti explains why the birth parent support group is so important:

I started the Birth Mother Support Group here in Delaware in 2017 to bring my clients together, to not only talk about their stories, but to really lean on one another and become mentors in their community. My goal was to give women a safe place to share their experiences of placing a child. A space for women to come together to talk, cry, laugh and create positive tools for improving their lives. The filming of AFTHtv's Special is giving a voice to an unspoken topic of women's strength, courage and determination to fight for the life they want to give to their children. It has been my privilege and honor to counsel and support these women. They are my biggest motivation and inspiration."

Lots of people who have had the pleasure of hearing these incredible women have asked what they can do to help! The birth mothers featured in the Special have already given so much, yet they want to do even more. They want to reach other women who are considering adoption or have placed who need extra support. We are now accepting donations specifically for the monthly support group to help with transportation and other costs such as refreshments, and childcare for children during group.

If you were inspired by these amazing women and their stories, please consider making a donation at www.tinyurl.com/BirthMotherSupportGroup

Did you miss the Special or any episode of AFTHtv for that matter? Don't worry! You can catch up on AFTH's [Facebook](#) or [YouTube](#) pages.

Plans are already in the works for future AFTHtv episodes focusing on birthfathers, adoptees, transracial adoption and more.

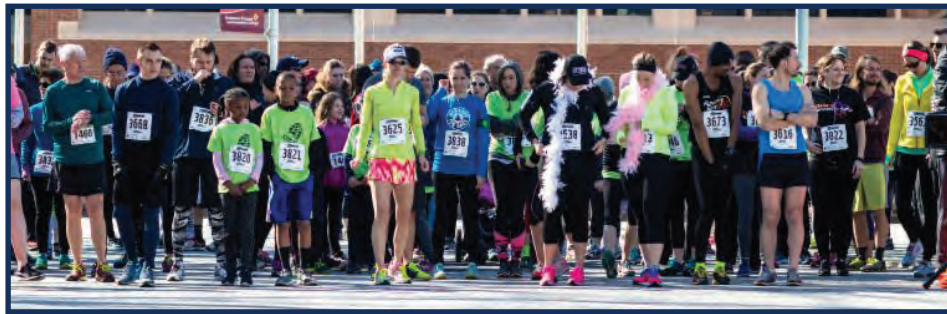
KRISTEN

Having this [support group] has greatly helped! Having you guys has given me that place where I can talk and I know I'm NOT going to get judged."

On Your Mark, Get Set, Go Register...

New Location - Find Her Footing 5K Walk, Run & Kids Dash

Registration is open and we have less than a month before we join together to step up in support of expecting and birth parents! We are excited to host our 7th annual Find Her Footing 5K in a new location this year.



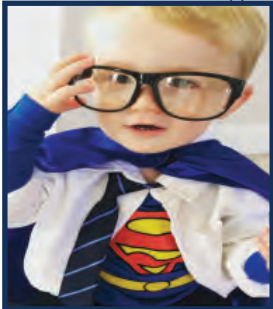
Sunday, April 28 - West Laurel Hill in Bala Cynwyd, PA

8:30 Registration - 9:30 Kids Dash (ages 3-10) - 10:00 5K Walk/Run

Combining fun, fitness & fundraising for our Expecting and Birth Parent Support Fund

Run or walk the 3.1 mile stroller-friendly course designed for participants of all abilities. West Laurel Hill Cemetery is a certified arboretum and sculpture garden popular among joggers, bicyclists and dog walkers. The 5K winds through the beautiful scenery. Get your friends and family involved, teams of 4 or more save on registration!

Throughout the day, participants will enjoy a lively atmosphere amongst family and friends. This year we are proud to announce our partnerships with The Law Offices of Debbie Spivack in PA, NJ & DE, Orangetheory Fitness in Ardmore, Penn Medicine in Bala Cynwyd, and Republic Bank in Wynnewood and as our event sponsors. 96.5 FM will provide entertainment and local food vendors such as The Original Bagel bakery, Edible Arrangements, Trader Joe's, KIND Snacks and Nothing Bundt Cakes will provide refreshments and water bottles. Participants will have the chance to bid on raffle baskets featuring items from the Philadelphia-metro and Main Line region.



Did you know that Superman was adopted? You can be a HERO too!

Join us in your favorite super hero costume while enjoying music, refreshments, raffles and activities for the children.

We will kick off the day at 9:30am beginning with the Kid's Dash. The race itself will begin at 10am sharp with the help from Bryn Mawr Racing Company. The top finisher in each age bracket (male and female) will receive a prize, along with the overall male and female winners and the top individual fundraiser.

Proceeds from the race will benefit the Expecting and Birth Parent Support Fund, which provides financial assistance to expecting and birth parents both during and after pregnancy. The fund is most often used to help with doctor appointment transportation and costs, rent and utilities, grocery bills, and more.

Every dollar raised directly impacts the lives of birth parents. There will be amazing raffles again this year, and **for every \$25 a participant raises for the funds through donations, they will receive a raffle ticket.** This is a great way to get friends, family and co-workers involved and **together we can help change lives!**

Even if you cannot attend, please consider making a No Sweat donation to support our cause.

Register or Make a NO SWEAT Donation Online: www.tiny.cc/FindHerFooting

Presenting Spring 2019 Birth Parent Scholarship Winner

Our Spring 2019 Birth Parent Scholarship winner, Hannah Myers is taking her talents to West Coast University. Hannah is pursuing a Bachelor of Science degree in Nursing with the hopes of working as a Labor and Delivery Nurse.

Adoptions From The Heart receives numerous essays every semester from birth parents who want to pursue a higher education. Birth parents tell us more about themselves, their adoption experience and their future goals.

It is an honor to present Hannah with the \$5,000 Birth Parent Scholarship. Hannah's story deeply inspired the scholarship committee. She is a hard-working individual who is determined to succeed in life and help other women along the way.

Hannah's adoption story began in a unexpected way. She was a full time, dual-campus student finishing a pre-nursing program at California State University – San Marcos and Palomar Community College. She never imagined facing an unplanned pregnancy; especially under these circumstances.

“I found out I was pregnant two weeks before my 23rd birthday. The news was heavy, that’s the best way I can describe it.”

Although she had a very supportive family adoption was not initially her first choice. She took time to gather information about all of her options. She did not feel ready to raise her son and knew she couldn't offer him everything she felt he deserved. After contemplating her options, she decided on adoption.

Hannah chose to place her son in an open adoption. Hannah was able to speak with a prospective adoptive couple and knew after their phone call that they were the right family.

Henry was born on August 16th and was placed with his adoptive parents on August 20th.



“Adoption was the absolute best and hardest decision I have ever made in my entire life.”

She received support from her parents and brother throughout the whole process; that support is something she'll always be

grateful for. They stood beside her during the most difficult period of her life. Although this was a hard process, it shed a light on her goals and allowed her to focus on the future.

Hannah started her Bachelor of Science in Nursing at the West Coast University in January for the 2019 Spring Semester. She is not only a student, but she also tutors anatomy classes, interns at a hospital and works part-time at the Boys and Girls Club in her town. Being a birth mother has humbled her and deepened her respect for women and life. Henry inspired her to specialize as a Labor and Delivery Nurse once she's done with her nursing program.

“I want to thank my son for giving me this experience. I don't think I would be where I am today if it wasn't for him. Adoption was my saving grace. My son got a beautiful life with loving parents and I can focus on my goals for the future.”

We are so proud of Hannah and all she is doing to pursue her dreams. Your drive and motivation are inspiring to others. We wish you nothing but happiness and success!

If you would like to make a donation in support of AFTH's Birth Parent Scholarship Fund, please visit: www.afth.org/donate

Book Review: All You Can Ever Know

In her 2018 memoir “All You Can Ever Know”, Asian transracial adoptee Nicole Chung digs into issues of race, identity, and motherhood through the lens of adoption. Nicole was adopted through a closed, domestic adoption. She was always told “your birth parents were very sad they couldn’t keep you, but they thought adoption was the best thing for you”. Her adoptive family shared this positive narrative about her birth parents, but had no interest in an open adoption relationship with them. They had some insecurities about the birth parents’ roles in Nicole’s adoption story, making it uncomfortable for Nicole to ask in-depth questions later in life.

Almost all adoptees have some curiosity about their biological roots; transracial adoptees without mirrors in their communities may feel this even more strongly. Having a secure attachment in their adoptive families does not reduce this curiosity. Seeing their adoptive parents’ insecurity about their birth parents can cause some adoptees to choose not to search, or to search in secrecy.

Nicole describes curiosity about her biological family during her childhood and adolescence. Her racial difference and lack of mirrors in her community makes her especially interested in learning about her Korean heritage through a connection with her biological family and their culture. Nicole understands that she must tread lightly with her parents on the topic, and when she does address it, realizes they don’t know much, and don’t want to discuss it.

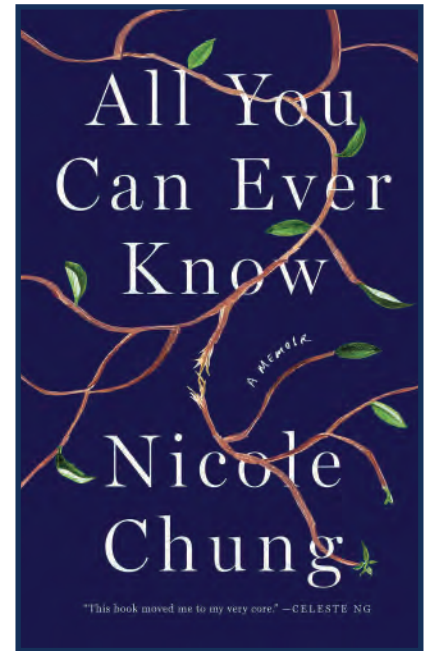
It isn’t until she is pregnant with her first child that Nicole realizes how important it really feels to her to have more information about her biological family. It begins to hit her that she has little information about her biological family’s history to share with her future child. She also begins to feel a different connection with her biological mother during pregnancy as she realizes the strong bonds built during that time:

All of these realizations pushed Nicole to actively search for her birth family. Due to the laws in her state, she must do so through an intermediary who will help mediate the communication between the parties. The discoveries Nicole makes through this process are beautiful and challenging, enlightening and difficult. She navigates the unknown territory of building relationships with biological relatives and shares thoughtful insights along the way.

Nicole is generous in sharing her journey and its impact on her relationship with her adoptive family, her own motherhood, and her identity. She shares this passage near the end of the book:

“Reunion has done more than restore relationships that had once been beyond my ability to fully imagine; it has enabled a shift in existing ones. It has forced my adoptive parents to think about my birth parents not as poor, pitiable immigrants or people who might steal me away, but real people with their own feelings, fears, and failings. It’s forced them to think about how I must have felt when I lost not only my first family, but all knowledge of my roots.”

This book is a must-read for prospective adoptive parents, especially those considering transracial adoption and openness. A lot can be learned from seeing what others have done well as well as ways they could have improved. There are always benefits from listening to the voices of adult adoptees.



A Moment in Time that I'll Remember Forever

March was National Social Work Month. We are so honored to have such amazing and caring social workers and counselors as a part of AFTH. Thank you to all the personal stories our social media followers shared about how special their social workers are to them.

We asked our social workers what's one of the most memorable moments they have had through their work in the field of adoption, the top answer typically relates to being able to call families and say "this is the call you have been waiting for, you have been selected!"

One social worker recalled when she called a family to tell them they have been matched and they broke a lamp when they jumped up and ran to grab their phone once they saw it was the agency calling.

Another social worker said that her wonderful moment is when the prospective adoptive parents are in the hospital and it's like a switch turns on and they finally "get it". There have been a few moments when she has had families just look at her and in that moment, when things became real, they fully understood why open adoption is important.

You can see how they instantly love their child's birth parents even though they really don't know who they are. They just met! At that point, I feel like I can really take a deep breath and know the birth parents will be taken care of and respected. I don't think outsiders understand how much stress a social worker carries regarding the connection between expecting and adoptive parents. It's the connection that will help carry the openness throughout the child's life.

That first connection between families is so important and incredible for our staff to witness. It's often the very beginning of a lifelong journey.

Another social worker recalls one moment that really stands out to her that highlights the special bond of love and support created through adoption:

I had a very sweet birth mother, totally on her own in making this plan. She was so strong but I could see on the inside she was terrified. She also had no support so I knew she may be questioning her decision.

Her heart and her head were at war. She wrestled with doing what she felt was right for herself and the baby OR caving in to her family's will and parenting instead. She knew she would struggle to parent, however the choice was tempting in order to win back her family's support.

We went out to lunch to meet the prospective adoptive parents she had chosen for the first time and she asked the question that in my experience almost everyone asks, "so what are you planning on naming the baby?"

The prospective adoptive parents replied, "well we aren't really sure. We have a short list that we are considering but we haven't decided." They then surprisingly asked, "Do you have any names you were hoping for or liked? We can't promise it would be the final name, but we would promise to consider it." The expecting mother answered, "I always kind of liked Oliver."

The prospective adoptive fathers immediately responded "Wow. Yes we really like that name too, we also really like Julien." The expecting mother got teary eyed and said "that is also one of my favorites too!"

The prospective dad opened the notes app on his iPhone and showed the expecting mother that Julien and Oliver were not only on the short list, but at the top of their list...everyone was in tears. At that moment the expecting mother had absolutely no doubt that this was the right decision and that she picked the perfect family.

As a social worker, I knew they had made a genuine connection and would all be ok. You can't ask for anything more than that!

Annual Summer Picnics

**RAIN or
SHINE!**

31st Annual Picnic - Fort Washington, PA



**Sunday, June 2nd
11am - 2pm**

Thank you for allowing us to be a part of your journey to becoming a family. Join AFTH staff and families (both domestic and international) as we celebrate family.

Bring a blanket and picnic lunch. AFTH will provide some drinks, snacks and entertainment. You will not want to miss out on the raffles. All the proceeds raised from the raffles benefit AFTH's Expecting and Birth Parent Support Fund.

Families with **OPEN ADOPTIONS**, we encourage you to invite your child's birth parent(s) to the picnic. It's a great place for a visit surrounded by others who are also touched by adoption! **Send a letter of invitation for AFTH to pass along.** Please include a separate confidential note to our staff with your full name and birth parent's names. Be sure to send it in enough time for us to forward and receive a response. AFTH will not invite birth parents without a family's consent.

Arts & Crafts,
Live Music, Snacks
Face Painting, and Ice Cream
for each child!

**Free Family
Portraits!**

What To Know Before You Go:

- If you are meeting others, be sure to designate a specific area to meet (*balloons are great to help connect*)
 - Mark all valuables with your name
 - Please supervise children at all times

****DO NOT PARK ON GRASS UNLESS DIRECTED BY A PARK RANGER**

Fort Washington State Park - Flourtown Picnic Area

44 W. Mill Rd., Flourtown, PA 19031

Use the above address in your GPS.

You will arrive directly across the street from the park.



Virginia Annual Picnic

Sunday, June 23rd
11am - 2pm

Chesapeake City Park
"Fun Forest" is the
ultimate playground.

Check out the...

- Shaky Bridge • Dolphin Tunnel
- Whisper Dishes • Plant Walk
- Underground Telephone
- Fossil Dig-a-dinosaur



• Fun & Activities
for Kids of All Ages!
• Playgrounds

Come and enjoy our annual adoption celebration!

Bring a picnic lunch (grills available for families to use)

Come celebrate another year of open adoption with AFTH at our annual picnic. Please bring a lunch for your group. Drinks, ice, and paper products will be provided. There are also charcoal grills available for use at the park.

Families with **OPEN ADOPTIONS**, if you are inviting your child's birth family please send an invitation to them with enough time for coordination. If sending your invitation to AFTH to pass along please include your full names and birth parent names on a separate confidential note for our staff.

We are looking forward to seeing you there!

RSVP by June 17th

Email KimberlyR@afth.org or call 757-361-0008

Connecticut Annual Picnic



*Sunday, June 23rd 2019
Noon - 3pm*

*Beardsley Zoo
in Bridgeport, CT*

We hope you will join us!

A Fun Day at the Zoo

- See Over 300 Different Animals
- Stroller Rentals Available
- Parking is Free

Bring your own lunch or order at the Peacock Cafe. We encourage families in **OPEN ADOPTIONS** to invite their child's birth parents. It's a great place for a visit.

Tickets Must Be Purchased in Advance:

Deadline: May 31st

\$8/person and Children under 3 Free

Send checks payable to
Adoptions From The Heart
703 Hebron Avenue
Glastonbury, CT 06033

Please note the number of
adults & children.

Contact:

SusanM@afth.org

860-657-2626





NEW LOCATION

Pittsburgh Annual Picnic



Date & Location to Be Announced

This year we will be breaking from tradition and moving our picnic location to another location. Details are to come as plans are finalized. We are looking forward to gathering with both domestic and international families and welcoming reunions

with birth parents as well. To be sure you get all the details about the Pittsburgh Summer Picnic, make sure you are signed up for our email blasts or contact JoanS@afth.org.

Now Accepting Photos for the 2020 AFTH Calendar



Submit your photos by July 1st, 2019

Email photos to KristyG@afth.org

Include: parents name & address, child's name, age, & birth country

If sending multiple emails due to file size, be sure to number the emails
(for example: 1 of 4, 2 of 4 etc.)

Or **Mail** Photos to: Marketing Team Calendar Search/AFTH
30-31 Hampstead Circle Wynnewood, PA 19096

Tips for Submitting Your Photos:

- *horizontal layout preferred
- *send a variety of photos (seasonal photos a plus)
- *No adults in photos please
- *Use highest pixel setting on camera/phone
- *Siblings (adopted or not) can be included in some photos as well

Classes Designed for Adoptive Parents

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

AFTH wants families to make informed decisions when completing their profile keys. This is an opportunity to listen to Dr. Erin Meyer, an Internal Medicine and Pediatric Hospitalist as well as an adoptive mother weigh in on prenatal exposure to drugs and alcohol. Each family has to decide what situations are right for them. Many families come away from this class feeling comfortable opening their key.

April 11th from 6:30-8:00pm

AFTH New Jersey Office in Cherry Hill, NJ

April 22nd from 6:30-8:00pm

Stauffer Mansion 1241 Lititz Pike in Lancaster, PA

Register at least 2 weeks prior to date.

Classes fill up quickly!

Online Webinar - \$35/family

Hosted by Dr. Erin Meyer

June 18th from 7:00-8:30pm

Upon registering, a link to webinar will be emailed.

Infant and Child Care - \$25/person, \$35/couple

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

Location: Giant Community Center in Harrisburg, PA

Time: 6:30-8:30pm

Upcoming Dates: April 29th, June 17th, September 16th, November 18th

Register at least 1 week prior to class.

Post Adoption Contact: Do's & Don't's - \$15/person, \$20/couple

This class we will be discussing the importance of pre-adoption and post-adoption contact. There will be examples of written updates, showcasing the variety of options. Additionally, we will provide answers to any questions in regard to birth families not wishing for contact, changes in contact, and what to expect at the first visit after placement.

June 13th from 6:00-8:00pm

Residence Inn - Crayola Room in Bethlehem, PA

Register at least 1 week prior to class.

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

Agency News

AFTH Office Update

In 2019, the agency is moving towards a more virtual model, removing some brick and mortar offices in favor of smaller shared office spaces, and mobile social workers. Though our services won't change, the way we work will be evolving.

In February, our Pittsburgh Office moved to a smaller location across from the Westmoreland County courthouse. The office will be used by appointment only and all mail should be sent to PO Box 1472, New Castle, PA 16103.

In March, our Central Pennsylvania Office moved to a smaller office. This office will be used by appointment only and all mail should be sent to 5630 Linglestown Road, Unit #3012, Harrisburg, PA 17112.

Phone numbers for these offices remain the same, and you can continue to reach your social worker by phone or email to set up visits, ask questions, and receive support.

For placed families, these changes affect the logistics of where you will send your birth parents' correspondence but does not affect the relationship you have with the agency or your social worker. If your birth parent worked with the Pittsburgh or Central PA office, we ask that you begin sending your correspondence to YOUR local office instead of the birth parents' office. If both you and your birth parent worked with the Pittsburgh or Central PA office, you can continue to send your correspondence to that office.

Domestic Program Update

As of March 1, AFTH will only be accepting applications from prospective adoptive parents who are minimally open to children of African-American heritage.

All applicants will be assessed through the home study process to determine if this is an appropriate

fit. If it is determined that transracial adoption would not be appropriate for a family during their home study process, they can choose to be added to our wait list and provided with their home study to take to other agencies to pursue adoption.

Families not open to adopting an African-American child may join our waiting list. When the program is opened to all applicants, families on the wait list will have first priority. If you have any questions, please contact your social worker.

Reminder about Continuing Education

AFTH requires waiting families to have 5 continuing education hours each year to be completed at the time of the home study update or yearly home visit. The Hospital Expectations Refresher Webinar is a yearly requirement for all families.

There are different ways, online and in-person, to meet this requirement. AFTH Education Series Classes and support groups count towards hours. Social workers can provide a list of additional opportunities to gain continuing education hours outside of AFTH classes.

Summer Picnics

Warmer weather is here and we have started planning for our summer picnics ([details on pages 7-10](#)). We are looking forward to seeing many returning as well as new and waiting families at our summer events.

The picnics are a great time to visit with your child's birth parents. **If you are in an open adoption and want to extend a letter of invitation to your child's birth parents,** please be sure to send a letter to your office soon to pass along to your child's birth parents to allow time for a response.



AFTHtv

We are thrilled at the positive response we've had since launching Adoptions From The Heart TV last November. We were honored to have Birth Mothers sharing their stories and offering advice to expecting parents for our [Special: The Unheard Voices of Birth Mothers](#) in February (*details on front page*).

On March 5th, we kicked off Season 2 of AFTHtv starting with an introduction to AFTH's Associate Director Heidi Gonzalez. On March 12th we hosted Dr. Meyer to talk about the effects of prenatal drug and alcohol exposure followed by an episode aimed at helping ease the fear of making the first call to an agency by expecting parents. Our last episode in March was for prospective adoptive parents about parenting during the revocation period.

Upcoming AFTHtv April episodes include:

Telling My Story as a Birth Mother, Prospective Adoptive Parents and Expecting Parents Meeting for the First Time, My Son Decided to Search for His Birth Mother, Moving from Infertility to Adoption, and Birth Mother Perspective: What Open Adoption looks Like for Me.

Seeking Families for Filming

AFTH requires families adopting a child of a different race to attend a Transracial Adoption Education Course. Many families who have attended have expressed an interest in hearing from seasoned transracial families at this course. We are looking for families who adopted transracially who are willing to share their experience on video. Families will need to be willing to travel to the Wynnewood, Delaware, Allentown or Cherry Hill Offices to film.

In addition we are looking for school-age adoptees (ages 7 and up) who would be willing to talk about their adoption experience. We plan to set up June filming opportunities in our Wynnewood Office. Footage may be used for either education courses and/or AFTHtv.

If you are interested in participating in either opportunity, please email KristyG@afth.org.



Agency Waiting Statistics

As of March 1st, 75% of AFTH's waiting families have been waiting for 18 months or less and 59% a year or less.

For families with keys open to African-American children, as of March 1st, 85% of families were waiting 1 year or less, and 67% have been waiting for 6 months or less.

Support Groups

Support is a key element in the adoption process whether you are an expecting parents considering adoption or a prospective adoptive parent waiting to be matched.

AFTH offices host support groups for waiting families as well as expecting and birth parents who have placed who would benefit from being with other people who have walked in their shoes. To learn more about the support groups being held in your local office, contact your social worker. AFTH also has an online Facebook Birth Parent Support Group. Birth mothers and fathers who want to join can email BrittanyB@afth.org.

Topics YOU Want to More Info About

Whether it's an AFTHtv episode, a post on social media or a blog topic, we do our best to cover a variety of topics from all aspects of the adoption triad. We appreciate feedback from our audience to know if there are additional topics they would like us to provide more information about. If you have a topic idea, please contact KristyG@afth.org.



International Adoption News

AFTH prides itself on keeping abreast of news regarding inter-country adoption. We collaborate with agencies across the U.S. that provide inter-country adoption placement services. AFTH is able to provide Home Studies, Education, Post-Adoption/Placement Reports and Services, and other assistance in support of international adoptions. Email us at adoption@afth.org to see how we can help you, including referring you to one of these partner agencies.

International Adoption Statistics & Legislation

Recently released numbers from the U.S. State Department show international adoptions continue to decrease. In the 2018 FY, there were 4,059 international adoptions, 655 less than in 2017.

These numbers are down 84% from 2004, the peak of international adoption, which saw 22,989 international adoptions finalized. There was, however, a rise in international adoptions from Colombia and India in 2018.

While there are many different factors causing the drop in international adoptions (Hague Convention, countries changing regulations or shutting down adoption entirely), there are constant attempts to introduce legislature aimed at reforming the international adoption process.

In February, a new bill, The Intercountry Adoption Advisory Committee Act, S. 363, was introduced by Sen. Roy Blunt. If passed, it would call for the U.S. Secretary of State to establish the Intercountry Adoption Advisory Committee. The committee's purpose would be to coordinate policies and programs regarding intercountry adoptions while also making recommendations to improve the process.



Several similar bills introduced over the past few years have all stalled in committee. S. 363 is currently under review of the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee for consideration.

International Adoption Challenges

Over the past few years, there have been reports of more and more people who were adopted internationally as children now discovering that they are not U.S. citizens. Congress passed a law in 2000, giving automatic citizenship to international adoptees. However, it only offered protection for those under 18 years of age leaving anyone born before 1983 at risk. The proposed Adoptee Citizenship Act, introduced in 2015 and again in 2018, would have closed this loophole, however, the act never made it out of committee.

The Adoptee Rights Campaign estimates that between 24,551 and 49,102 adult adoptees are currently living without citizenship. In many cases, they might not even know and typically find out accidentally for example when applying for a passport or having a background check for work.

Adoption advocacy organization have not stopped fighting for citizenship for those who legally came into the U.S. as adoptees. The challenge they face is that it's been seen as an immigration issue and not an adoption one.

Chinese Adoptees Connected By DNA Test

Stefanie Beard of the Philadelphia area was adopted as a baby from China through AFTH. For Christmas last year she and her family took DNA tests. She never thought she'd find biological connections here in the U.S., let alone in a college not too far from her own. Jeff Gammage of the Philadelphia Inquirer highlighted this incredible story about their surprising connection, "[DNA Helps Chinese Adoptees Do What Was Once Impossible: Locate Blood Relatives in This Country.](#)"

Child Tax Credit

Important News for Recently Placed Families

As a result of changes made in the 2017 tax reform law, the IRS now requires families to have Social Security Numbers for their children in order to claim the Child Tax Credit for them as a dependent.



In the past, families were able to use an Adoption Taxpayer Identification Number (ATIN) for this purpose. However, as indicated in the tax reform in order to claim the Child Tax Credit for the 2018-2025 tax

years, an ATIN number is no longer sufficient and your child's Social Security Number is required.

PLEASE NOTE - this is about the yearly Child Tax Credit for dependents and not the larger one time Adoption Tax Credit which is up to \$13,800 per child for qualifying families.

The Academy of Adoption and Assisted Reproduction Attorneys (AAAA) is working with their lobbyists to address this issue. It appears that the changes in the tax reform were aimed at eliminating the use of Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) but that excluding ATIN numbers was an oversight.

Unfortunately it takes time to correct policy however AAAA is looking for real-life experiences from adoptive parents who run into this issue. By sharing your story with AAAA, it bolsters their case and helps bring awareness of the issue in Washington. To share how the tax reform impacted your family, contact Info@adoptionART.org.

We encourage recently placed and finalized families, to reach out to your representative to encourage them to push for a solution to this problem. You can find contact information for your representatives at www.usa.gov/elected-officials.

Congratulations to AFTH's Newest Families..

Sons

Charles & Suzanne
Jeffrey & Ali
Joshua & Abigail
Jeffrey & Beth
Nathan & Amber
Leanne & Alex
Eric & Amanda
Sylvia & Jin
Britney & Trisha
Michael & Emily
Thomas & Michelle (*twins*)
Kenneth & Rukmini (*twins*)
Christopher & Connie
Christine
Nils & Leteiri
Travis & Kathleen
Thomas & Emily
Jean Pierre & Laurence
Christopher & Amy
Sean & Jennifer
Anjali & Frederica
Alan & Caren
Brent & Sayra



Daughters

Jeremy & Linh
Matthew & Eric
Steven & Christina
Mark & Morgan
Justin & Avichai
Michael & Becky
David & Danielle
William & Amy
Mark & Emily



30-31 Hampstead Circle
Wynnewood, PA 19096

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

Don't Miss Out



AFTHtv was launched last November and since then we have aired over 20 episodes including our 4-part Special: The Unheard Voices of Birth Mothers featured in February.

We are now into our second Season of AFTHtv covering a wide variety of adoption related topics. We are hosting more and more birth parents and adoptive parents to share their own experiences as well as AFTH staff. We welcome your topic suggestions, email them to KristyG@afth.org.

Missed an episode and want to catch up? See all the AFTHtv episodes on our Facebook and Youtube pages. New videos are added every Tuesday. Season 2 runs through May 28th.



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