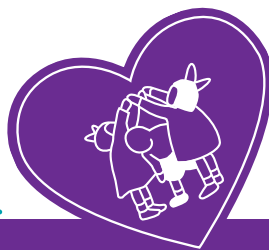


Adoption News



A Quarterly Newsletter from

Adoptions From The Heart

Summer 2014

AFTH Birthmothers Coming Together in Support

For many birthmothers, making connections with other women who have placed children can be extremely beneficial to the healing process. Adoption doesn't end after placement, it is a lifelong journey. Each woman's experience is unique, however finding support in other women who can

*Together
Birthmothers
Celebrate Their
Strength!*

honestly say 'I know exactly what you mean!' is validating. A deeper level of understanding can be found from someone who has actually walked in your shoes than from someone who is only listening to your journey.

AFTH strives to create opportunities for birthmothers to come together in non-judgemental forums to share their stories and connect with other women. When together, birthmothers feel more comfortable opening up and talking about things they might not typically discuss with those outside the adoption community. Together, birthmothers celebrate their strength, knowing they are not alone in whatever they are experiencing at that point of their adoption journey.

Birthmother's Day Brunch



Birthmother's Day, the day before Mother's Day every year, is a very special day at Adoptions From The Heart. We have the pleasure of working with amazing birthmoms who are beautiful on the inside and out. We had a special brunch at our Cherry Hill office to celebrate their adoption journeys.

Cherry Hill hosted their second annual Birthmother's Day Brunch this year on Saturday, May 10th. Women came and enjoyed light refreshments while fostering conversations about placement and what open adoption has meant to them. They also shared ways to help cope with sadness during special days of the year such as Mother's Day and birthdays.

At the brunch, each birthmom took time to release a balloon and tied to their balloon was a hope, dream or wish they had written for their child. It was wonderful to have so many women come together in support of each other. We look forward to hosting the brunch again next year!

Cont'd on page 2...

In This Issue



- 2 Birthmom Buds Retreat
- 2 Scholarship Fund
- 3 Friends of AFTH
- 4 Awkward Adoption ?s
- 5 AFTH Support Groups
- 6 Raffles Raising Funds to Help Birthmothers
- 7 Book Reviews
- 8 AFTH Program Updates
- 9 Recent Legislation
- 10 International News
- 11 Stress Free Vacations
- 11 New AFTH Families

Insert:

AFTH Summer Picnic Recaps
Fall Education Classes
United Way Contributions
Paper Heart Project Prep

OFFICE LOCATIONS

ALLENTOWN OFFICE

2212 Union Blvd
Allentown, PA 18109
610.432.2384

CENTRAL PA OFFICE

1525 Oregon Pike, Suite 402
Lancaster, PA 17601
717.399.7766

CONNECTICUT OFFICE

703 Hebron Ave., 1st floor
Glastonbury, CT 06033
860.657.2626

DELAWARE OFFICE

18-A Trolley Square
Wilmington, DE 19806
302.658.8883

NEW JERSEY OFFICE

451 Woodland Avenue
Cherry Hill, NJ 08002
856.665.5655

NEW YORK

1.800-355-5500

PITTSBURGH OFFICE

1225 South Main St., Suite 207
Greensburg, PA 15601
724.853.6533

VIRGINIA OFFICE

1407 Stephanie Way, Suite H
Chesapeake, VA 23320
757.361.0008

WYNNEWOOD OFFICE

30-31 Hampstead Circle
Wynnewood, PA 19096
610.642.7200

TOLL FREE NUMBER

1.800.355.5500

VISIT OUR WEBSITE:

www.afth.org

Three AFTH Birthmothers Journeyed to North Carolina for the Birthmom Buds Annual Retreat

Birthmom Buds held their 10th Annual Birthmom Retreat in Charlotte, NC in May and AFTH was thrilled to be able to send three birthmoms to this special event.

The weekend was full of activities that encourage women to meet, get to know, and bond with other birthmoms in a safe and friendly environment. An AFTH birthmother who attended said, "Birthmoms need a safe, unbiased place to come together and support each other."

The first day included a sightseeing scavenger hunt and a pajama party. The second day held a Birthmom Buds celebration and a group dinner with the third day hosting a farewell breakfast for the birthmoms. The three AFTH birthmothers who attended felt really welcomed and comfortable the entire weekend. "Being around women who openly carried around pictures of their children and spoke candidly about their own adoption stories humbled me," says an AFTH birthmom who told us she was in awe of all of the birthmoms who welcomed her with open arms.

The organizers did a wonderful job with breakout sessions including: Coping with Grief and Anxiety, Boundaries as a Birthmom, Navigating Relationships as a Birthmom, and How to Cope with an Adoption that Suddenly Changes. Their special guest speaker, Patti Hawn talked about her adoption path and her book *Good Girls Don't*. The women were able to ask questions and get to know Patti better, as well as get autographs and take pictures with her.

The retreat ended with a candlelight ceremony in which each woman lit the candle of the woman next to her and said a word in honor of their child. It was an emotionally moving ceremony for all. Birthmom Buds has been hosting this retreat for 10 years and each year it gets better than the previous. It is a great way for birthmoms to experience a new place, meet women they can relate to, and get to talk about their feelings and adoption plans in a comfortable environment. We are so glad that three of our birthmoms were able to attend this wonderful retreat!

*NEW - Birthmother Scholarship Fund

AFTH created an educational scholarship program as a way to help birthparents who are pursuing continued education. Twice a year, the AFTH board will meet to review the applications and will then award scholarships to several birthparents.

As this is a newly established fund, AFTH is thrilled to see so many early supporters. Donations for the Scholarship Fund can be made online at www.afth.org/donate or by mailing a check to: Adoptions From The Heart, 30-31 Hampstead Circle, Wynnewood, PA 19096. Please list "Scholarship Fund" in the memo of the check.



Dear Friends of Adoptions From The Heart

It is estimated that over 60% of Americans are touched by adoption in some way including 1 in 10 Americans who are adoptees, adoptive parents or birth parents. Adoption is a lifelong journey. It does not end with a placement. The need for emotional and financial assistance continues even after relinquishment has occurred. Thanks to passionate supporters and donors like you, AFTH is able to provide a vast array of vital services to expecting parents and birth parents that stretch beyond pregnancy and offer the ongoing support needed.

Birthmother Support and Financial Assistance



- Birthmother Support Groups
 - Birthmother Fund (medical, housing, food, and transportation assistance)
 - Holiday Gift Cards for Birthmothers Parenting Other Children
 - Financial Sponsorship of Birthmother Retreat
 - ***NEW*** Scholarship Fund - education scholarship awarded to birthparents each year.
- Visit <http://afth.org/support-our-mission/scholarshipfund> to learn more.

Adoption creates ripples that affect entire communities reaching into schools, workplaces, and extended families which is why AFTH devotes focused efforts to raise adoption awareness for the entire community, especially the 40% who do not yet have a personal connection to adoption. AFTH provides the community with reliable adoption education and awareness.

Adoption Education and Awareness

- Staff trainings for hospitals, women's centers, and infertility clinics
- National Adoption Month awareness campaign
- Speaking engagements at conferences and support groups
- Diversity workshops at local middle and high schools
- Partnerships with local businesses and organizations
- Low cost educational workshops for adoptive parents
- Education through social media (Facebook, Twitter, Wordpress)
- LGBT community support (HRC recognized)

AFTH's commitment to the adoption community shines through our passion for our work 365 days a year. We want to continue to be the #1 resource for the community, families, children, and women in need.

We thank you for graciously **extending your hand to partner with AFTH** as we continue to advocate for the needs of the adoption community in this changing world. All donations made to AFTH are tax- deductible and may also be made online at www.afth.org. *Donations may be made in honor or in memory of specific individuals. Enclose a note with your donation along with the honoree's address so we can notify them that a donation was made in their name.*

Sincerely,

Maxine Chalker

Founder & Executive Director

P.S. Consider partnering with AFTH year-round by joining our Pledge Program. (see below for details).

Please Make Your Checks Payable To: **Adoptions From The Heart**
and mail with form to: **30-31 Hampstead Circle, Wynnwood, PA 19096**

**Credit Cards
Accepted Online:**
www.afth.org

Please use my donation: ___ AFTH Birthmother Fund ___ Scholarship Fund ___ Where It's Needed Most

I'd like to generously donate: ☐ \$50 ☐ \$100 ☐ \$250 ☐ \$500 ☐ \$1,000 ☐ Other: \$ _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ **State:** _____ **Zip:** _____

E-mail: _____

***JOIN THE AFTH PLEDGE PROGRAM:**

___ I authorize Adoptions From The Heart to
invoice me in September, December, and March
for 3 additional quarterly payments of \$ ____ .

Adoptions From The Heart is a registered, charitable organization. In accordance with PA law, a copy of our official registration and financial information may be obtained from either the PA Department of State by calling toll-free (800) 732-0999, or the state of NJ by calling (973) 504-6215. A copy of our official registration and financial information may be obtained from the state of NY upon written request to the Office of the Attorney General, Department of Law, Charities Bureau, 120 Broadway, New York, NY 10271. A financial statement is available upon written request from the VA State of Office of Consumer Affairs, (800) 552-9963.

Answering Awkward Adoption Questions



If you are a birthparent, adoptive parent, or adoptee, you've most likely been asked some awkward or insensitive questions. Even if it is just out of pure curiosity, questions can still be inappropriate. It is always great to educate those curious about adoption however depending on your mood, the way the question is phrased, or the specific situation, your response can often be categorized in one of three ways: humorous, educational, or maintaining privacy. There is a great video on YouTube called "If You Wouldn't Say it About a Boob Job" which uses humor to demonstrate how awkward questions posed to adoptive parents really can be. Be sure to check out the video for a chuckle.

Below are commonly asked questions and suggestions on how to respond using the above three categories:

"Aren't you worried his birth parents will come and take him back?" The person asking this question most likely does not know much about adoption and adoption laws. One way to go about answering this question is to give the person a brief explanation of the laws, for example: "Well in New Jersey after birthparents terminate their rights the child is legally the adoptive parents. Every state has different laws and you can learn about other state's laws by searching on google."

"How much was she?" The person asking this probably has no connection to adoption. An educational way to answer questions using inappropriate language is to rephrase the question. For example, saying "I think you are referring to the fees associated with the adoption process" and then if you are comfortable you can choose to share about the fees. Most people find this question much too personal and can simply respond with: "Don't you think that's a personal question?" or "How much was your house?" or "How much was bonus?" to drive the its-too-personal point home. Or our personal favorite, "Priceless!"

"His birth mother was a teenager, right?" Unfortunately this is a myth that many assume to be true. You can share your child's birth mother's story if you feel comfortable, or you can let the person know that it is a

common myth and that a majority of birth parents are between the ages of 25 and 35. You could also let the person know that it is a private matter by saying "Our son's birthmother's background is his story to share if and when he wants when he is older."

"You're a birthmother/an adoptee/? Oh, I'm sorry.." This statement is usually not meant to be negative but can be very hurtful. Your response can be as simple as "Don't be sorry, I'm not."

"Who's her real mother?" This is time restating the question is a good idea by responding "Do you mean who is her birthmother?" You can also explain that she has more than one mother and each mother plays a different role in her life. Or go the humorous route and pinch yourself on the arm and say "Ouch, I'm right here and most definitely real."

"What is he?" or "Where did he come from" This is another question that can easily be handled by rephrasing the question such as "Do you mean what is his racial background or maybe what country he was adopted from?" Or simply put, you can say "He is our son and he came from our hearts."

"Why didn't her parents want her?" or for birthparents "Why didn't you want her?" Talk about a loaded question. Even the way the question is phrased has connotations of rejection. A simple and easy response to this question is, "Her birth parents very much wanted her but they decided that they were not ready or were unable to raise a child right now and choose to place her for adoption." For birthparents, this question can hit a deeper wound. Know that you don't always have to feel like you have to pour your heart out to strangers to help make them understand. You can share as much about your decision as you would like to or you can simply say "I love her very much and I decided that adoption was the right thing to do for my situation."

"Wow, he's so lucky to have parents like you." Most people asking this question don't realize that adoption stems from a loss. You can decide how to best answer this question however many parents quickly reply "WE are the lucky ones!"

Cont'd on Next Page...

...Awkward Questions Cont'd

“What do you know about her parents?” You could use any of the three categories of responses. Educate by sharing the type of information you have even if you don't share specifics. You can tell people it is a private matter and your child's story to share. Or you could take a humorous approach and reply with “Well I'm 5'6” and have blonde hair...”

“It's too bad you couldn't have a child of your own.”
A quick and easy response is “She is my own.”

“How did you do that? I could never give up my child”
Here is another question that most people asking don't understand their words can be hurtful. “I did not give my child up, I placed her for adoption” or “I had to make a very difficult decision that most people won't understand” are some ways birthparents can respond. Or if you want to dive deeper, you can explain how that question makes it sound like they are saying you didn't love your child as much as they love their child and you are sure that they can understand how hurtful that would be for any parent.

Most of the time people asking these questions are not trying to be hurtful or overstep the bounds. They often do not have a solid understanding of adoption and so their curiosity can create some very awkward questions. Keep in mind, that if your child is with you when you are asked these questions, your response should reflect that as well. If your child is old enough to understand, you could open the question up to them to answer, “Jamie do you want to answer that question about your birthmother?” or by responding to the person asking “It is my son's story to share so you can ask him if you would like.”

When in doubt, you can respond humourously using the video's rule of thumb “Would you say that about someone's boob job?” and we are pretty sure the person asking the question will get the point!

Do you have other awkward questions you have been asked over and over? How did you respond?

Join in the discussion on AFTH's Facebook Page at www.facebook.com/AdoptionsFromTheHeart

AFTH Support Groups

Adoptions From The Heart understands how important it is for ongoing support for those going through an adoption process. We also believe that coming together with others who have or who are going through the same process can be extremely helpful. Each AFTH office offer support groups throughout the year both for expecting/birth parents as well as waiting adoptive parents. We encourage everyone to get involved! Contact your local office for more details about upcoming support groups.

ALLENTOWN

Call (610) 432-2384 or Email TammyC@afth.org

CENTRAL PA

Adoptive Parent Support Group for Extended Family Members. This meeting will focus on the extended family members who will also be affected by the adoption process. Future grandparents, siblings, uncles, aunt, etc. any close relatives are all welcome to attend with their families.

Thursday, September 25th from 6:30-8:30pm (Lancaster)
Call (717) 399-7766 or Email AmandaK@afth.org

CHERRY HILL

One-on-one Support - Social workers available to meet with NJ waiting families to provide support, review profiles and discuss any concerns. Families register by the Wednesday prior to the meeting for time slots between 6:30-8:30pm.

Tuesday, September 16th
Call (856) 665-5655 or Email KathrynJ@afth.org

CONNECTICUT

Call (860) 657-2626 or Email PennyR@afth.org.

DELAWARE

Call 302-658-8883 or Email DanielleG@afth.org

PITTSBURGH

Call (724) 853-6533 or Email DebbieC@afth.org.

VIRGINIA

Call (757) 361-0008 or Email KimW@afth.org

WYNNEWOOD

Support Group for waiting families. Come together to share your experiences and to gain and offer support to other waiting families. AFTH social workers will lead the meeting.

Monday, September 8th from 6:30-8pm
Call 610-642-7200 or Email AshleyK@afth.org



Adoptive Mother Raises Money for Birthmother Fund

Raffle Baskets Bring in Donations to Help Women in Need

Last year was the first year Sharon, an AFTH adoptive mother, was able to go to her local office's annual picnic and she wanted to get involved. Sharon picked up the phone and called her social worker, Joan, to see if she could donate baskets to raffle off to raise money for the AFTH Birthmother Fund. Having never done anything like this before, Sharon helped raise almost \$400 for the Birthmother Fund at the picnic by raffling off her baskets.

With such wonderful success her very first time, Sharon was bit with the fundraising bug. This year, Sharon enlisted her friend Cindy who sells Thirty-One bags. Their goal was to host two parties, one in-person and one online, and have at least \$700 in sales. 15% of the sales from the parties was donated directly to the AFTH Birthmother Fund and the product they earned from hosting the parties is going to be incorporated into the raffle baskets at this year's Idlewild picnic in August. Thank you to everyone who supported this fundraiser because with your orders, Sharon and Cindy were able to far exceed their goal by selling \$1,200 in products. \$180 was directly donated to the AFTH Birthmother Fund and \$670 of Thirty-One product will be raffled off at the picnic. If you are attending this year's picnic at Idlewild, make sure you stop by the raffles and purchase a raffle ticket, or two, or ten. Thanks to Sharon and Cindy for their awesome fundraising for The Birthmother Fund!

...Paying It Forward

After this year's picnic in Fort Washington, we had quite a few families asking how they can help with fundraising for the AFTH Birthmother Fund. We are always looking for new ideas and to get more of our AFTH families involved in supporting the fund. If you are interested in donating items for the raffle baskets or have a great fundraiser you would like to host to benefit the AFTH Birthmother Fund, please contact Jessica Albert by emailing JessicaA@afth.org. We are thrilled to have so many families who want to be a part of helping to fundraise for the Birthmother Fund!

To learn more about the AFTH Birthmother Fund and to see how the money is being used to directly help women in need, visit www.afth.org/support-our-mission/birth-mother-fund

AFTH Picnic Recaps: A Celebration of Adoption

26th Annual Family Picnic, Ft. Washington, PA

AFTH held its 26th Annual Family Picnic at the Fort Washington State Park on Sunday, June 6, 2014. The sun was shining down on the estimated 1,300 people, including adoptive parents, grandparents, birth parents and children from all over who gathered to celebrate adoption.

One of those families included adoptive parents David and Eric who attended their first AFTH picnic in 2009 and have been coming every year since with their two beautiful children to visit with their children's birthmothers. "We try and get together with our birth mom's at least twice a year: always at the picnic and around their birthdays, and another time if we can," David explained. Janet, another adoptive parent who attended the picnic, also noted the strength of the relationships she's formed through adoption. Six years ago, Janet and her husband attended an information meeting at AFTH and met three other couples who were looking to adopt. Through the home study process, profile making and placement (all within a seven month span from each other) those four families created a special bond that they come together and celebrate at the Family Picnic every year. "Our kids are growing up together and we share so many experiences because of Adoptions From The Heart."

Everyone at the picnic enjoyed great giveaways including adoption related books for all ages and goodies from our sponsor, Cavity Busters. Music from The Raucaous Brothers played all afternoon and children really seemed to enjoy the face painting and Music Fun with Tom. All those in attendance snacked on the generously donated goodies from Herr's, Whole Foods, Trader Joe's, Wawa, Giant, Wegmans, and JJ Snack Foods.

Raffles were a huge hit as always and congratulations to the winners of our many baskets that included items donated from [Scholastic Books](#), [Eastern State Penitentiary](#), [Vertex Fitness](#), [The National Constitution Center](#), [Hershey Park](#), [Apple](#), [The Cheesecake Factory](#), [Valley Forge Casino and Resort](#), [The Crayola Factory](#), [The Philadelphia Flyers](#), [Cavaliers Country Club](#), [Twenty9 Restaurant](#), [Oasis](#), [Wilmington Blue Rocks](#), [Longwood Gardens](#), [Corner Bakery Café](#), [Zakes](#), [Chilis](#), [Rolling Thunder](#), [Field House Sports Bar & Grill](#) and [Target](#). A heartfelt thank you to all of our AFTH board members and staff, volunteers and local organizations who donated to our event, we could not have done it without you! We had lots of families expressing interested in donating items for next year's baskets. For those interested in donating items for the raffle, contact Jessica Albert at JessicaA@afth.org

Another wonderful display of family, love and adoption at the 26th Annual Family picnic, we are so thankful for the bonds adoption creates and we cannot wait to see everyone again next year!



Virginia Summer Picnic

The Virginia Annual Picnic was a huge success again this year. The weather was perfect. It was one of our biggest picnics so far with 114 people in attendance including 14 reunions! We even had some families make it an all-day event by starting at the picnic and then continue their visit with birthparents at other locations such as the pool or restaurant. Everyone enjoyed playing in the Fun Forest and the kids loved running through the castle maze and climbing the rock wall. We want to thank all our children, birth parents, and adoptive parents for making this picnic such a great event. We look forward to seeing you all again at our holiday party or next year's picnic!

Connecticut Summer Picnic

It was a spectacular day for our CT picnic! Blue skies, sailboats on the lake, and a light breeze capped off a wonderful day for all our attendees. We had 6 meetings between birth and adoptive families and approximately 100 people in attendance overall. Quassy Amusement Park provided a tasty barbecue buffet and the children enjoyed the waterpark and rides.



Fall 2014 Adoption Education Series



Not only Building Beautiful Families, but Helping Strengthen Them Too!

The adoption journey is lifelong, so regardless of what stage of the adoption process families are in, AFTH's goal is to strengthen families by empowerment through knowledge. The AFTH Education Series is designed to offer support through educational opportunities and discussions.

"We went to the class on the Effects of Drugs and Alcohol. With the information we gained, we were able to open our key to situations that we initially didn't think we would accept but after the class we had information to help us make better educated decisions on our profile key. I would highly recommend this class." - Kim

"The first time I saw the class, I didn't register. I didn't think we were 'close enough' to need a childcare class. Thank goodness the next time I saw it, I sign up because it wasn't too long after the class that we were placed. I cannot tell you how helpful it was to have learned basic childcare. Things I wouldn't have even thought about before she was born. It was really nice to be in a class with other adoptive parents too." - Lori and Dave

♥ Harrisburg, PA

Caring for Infants and Older Babies: What New Adoptive Parents Need to Know

Learn the basics of infant care in a comfortable setting with other adoptive and prospective adoptive parents. This class includes newborn care, feeding, sleeping, adjustment to parenthood and so much more. An invaluable learning experience for all.

Monday, October 27th from 6:30-8:30 PM

\$25/person or \$35/couple

Call (717) 399-7766 with questions.

♥ Glastonbury, CT

Ethnic Hair Care

This class will educate families on basic hair care techniques such as washing, brushing and simple braids. Sample bags will be given including elastic hair ties, combs, and products. Space is limited and families are taken on a first come first serve basis so it is important to register quickly to reserve your spot for this class.

Wednesday, September 10th from 6:00-8:00pm

\$15 per family

Call (860) 657-2626 with questions.

♥ Lancaster, PA

Profile Key Selections: Drug Exposure in Newborns

Please join agency staff and other prospective adoptive parents for an information session with our guest speaker Jean Young. Jean is a hospital NICU R.N. and is also an adoptive mother. It is very important that as you complete or update your profile key, you are educated about your choices so that you can make informed decisions. Jean is coming to us with years of experience in the field working with drug exposed newborns.

Thursday, November 6th from 6:30-8:30 PM

\$25/person or \$35/couple

Call (717) 399-7766 with questions.

♥ Richmond, VA

Infant Care Class

Jennifer Hayes is a medical professional and social worker in Richmond eager to share her knowledge about basic infant care to help educate prospective adoptive parents about feeding, changing, and bathing infants. Jennifer will also be covering signs to look for and when to contact your pediatrician. Please join us. This informative class is recommended for all waiting families.

Saturday, October 4th from 1:30pm-3:00pm

\$10/person or \$15/couple

Call (757) 361-0008 with questions.

♥ Wynnewood, PA

Understanding Potential Effects of Drug and Alcohol Exposure on a Pregnancy

We will be having Dr. Amy Renwick, the co-director of the Adoption Consultation Service at Nemours/Alfred I. DuPont Hospital for Children, provide families with some helpful information regarding drug and alcohol exposure during pregnancy. This information will assist waiting families in making educated decisions on the profile key as well as providing insight for those with children already placed. Please come and join us with your questions.

Saturday, September 13th from 10:30am-12:30pm

\$25/person or \$35/couple

Call (610) 642-7200 with questions.

♥ Greensburg, PA

Effects of Pre-Natal Drug Exposure

Dr. Scott Curry, Clinical Assistant Professor of Medicine at UPMC Presbyterian Division of Infectious Diseases, will speak about the effects of drug and alcohol exposure during pregnancy. Dr. Curry brings many years experience as both a research doctor and clinician. He is also the adoptive father of two children through AFTH. Discussion of short and long-term effects of substance use and abuse. Class will provide families with helpful information in completing their profile key. Dr. Curry welcomes your questions!

Date, Time and Location to Be Announced

\$25/person or \$35/couple

Call (724) 853-6533 with questions.

We have brought back some of our most popular classes this fall. Due to high demand of these topics, the classes fill up very quickly. Pre-registration is required.

For ONLINE Registration:
www.afth.org/community-education/educational-series-seminars/

To Register by Mail - fill out the below form & return with payment to:

Adoptions From The Heart

30-31 Hampstead Circle, Wynnewood, PA 19096

Name(s): _____ Phone: () _____ - _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

\$25/person and \$35/couple

Number of Attendees: _____

☐ *Caring for Infants (Harrisburg, PA)*

Total Amount Enclosed: _____

☐ *Drug/Alcohol Effects on Pregnancy (Wynnewood, PA)*

☐ *Effects of Pre-Natal Drug Exposure (Greensburg, PA)*

☐ *Profile Key Selections - Drug Exposure in Newborns (Lancaster, PA)*

\$10/person and \$15/couple

\$15/family

☐ *Infant Care Class (Richmond, VA)*

☐ *Ethnic Hair Care (Glastonbury, CT)*



Live United!

United Way improves lives by mobilizing the caring power of communities around the world to advance the common good. It began in 1887, and was created as an organization to serve as an agent to collect funds for local charities, as well as to coordinate relief services, counsel and refer clients to cooperating agencies.

Fast forward to 2014...thousands of companies participate in the United Way Workplace Campaign each year. The purpose of the campaign is to provide companies and their employees unique philanthropic opportunities that will aid local non-profit and charitable organizations in continuing their missions.

Adoptions From The Heart is eligible to receive contributions through the United Way Donor Program. Your United Way contribution will help us to continue our dedicated service to adoptive parents, pregnant women, and children.

How to Make a Contribution to AFTH Through the United Way Donor Option Plan:

- 1) Request a Donor Option Card from your company's United Way representative.
- 2) The agency's donor number is different in each area. The AFTH donor number for your area can be found in your United Way booklet. *You can do this even if it is not listed in your particular United Way booklet:*
PRINT: ADOPTIONS FROM THE HEART and the local branch office's address (see page 2 for addresses)
- 3) Enter the amount of your pledge and your payment method (e.g. check, payroll deduction, etc.)

AFTH is Looking for YOUR Help for the 2014 Paper Heart Project

Runs November 1st – 30th



What is the AFTH Paper Hearts Project?

Each year in November in honor of National Adoption Month, AFTH networks with local businesses to spread awareness about adoption through the Paper Hearts Project. Local businesses offer their customers the chance to purchase a paper heart for \$1 and write their name on it in support of adoption. The local business then displays the hearts all month long to show their support of AFTH and National Adoption Month. The donations collected benefit the AFTH Birthmother Fund which goes directly to help women working with AFTH who are struggling to provide for their basic needs.

Reasons to Join the Paper Heart Project?

- 1: Spread Adoption Awareness in Your Community
- 2: Support Pregnant Women in Need
- 3: Celebrate Beautiful Families Created Through Adoption

So How Can You Help?

Ask your child's karate or dance studio to participate. Invite your school or after school program to participate. Ask your local businesses to join in the fun. You can register online at www.afth.org through our National Adoption Month page OR print, fill out, and send in the registration form. Promote the project in any way you can! Contact Jessica Albert at JessicaA@afth.org for more information or with any questions!

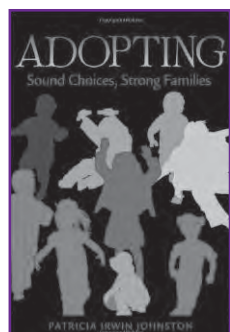
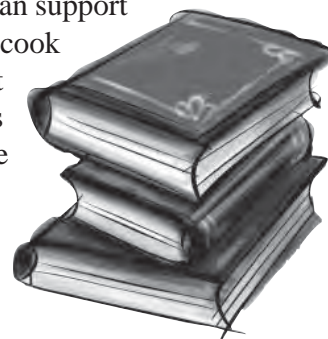
Hearts will be available for sale in the AFTH offices as well as at participating businesses starting November 1st.

Adoption Related Books at Unbeatable Prices

Not only can you snag up some great adoption related books at fabulous prices, you can support AFTH in the process. We have books on international adoption, domestic adoption, cook books, country specific books, children's books, books about birthparent, books about transracial adoption, books that every prospective adoptive parent should read, books for adoptees and so much more. Start your search here and take advantage of these amazing prices before our inventory runs out:

AFTH's Amazon Storefront: <http://tiny.cc/AFTH-Amazon-Sales>

AFTH Blog Recommends: <http://tiny.cc/AFTH-Book-Store>



Adopting: Sound Choices, Strong Families by Patricia Irwin Johnston

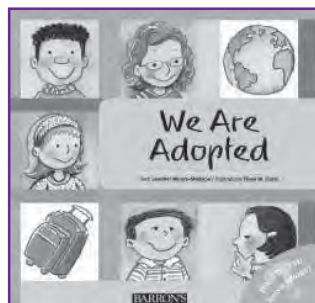
- If you are trying to decide whether to adopt, or how to adopt, or from where to adopt, or what age of child to adopt, this book will walk you through making

those decisions. It is not a how-to guide for the adoption process, rather, its goal is to serve as a guide through the hard questions that must be addressed and examined before any realistic decisions about adoption can be made beginning with whether or not adoption is even the right choice for your family. Through Johnston's insight, expertise, and personal experience in the fields of adoption and infertility, she brings knowledge and understanding to a diverse audience of readers from infertile couples and singles, to their children and even to supportive family members and friends. Underlying this book is a great how-to guide for communication in marriages and partnerships and it offers support and practical advice to readers after they make their own decision of what is best for them. In 2010, *Adopting* received the Mom's Choice Award gold medal for family-friendly adoption books. A great starting point for families considering adoption.

Kindle \$15.00, Amazon \$20.00 Hardcover

We Are Adopted (Let's Talk About It Books) by Jennifer Moore-Mallinos

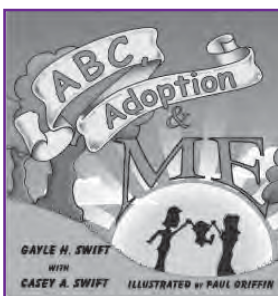
- This adoption story is told by a sister who is waiting for her parents at the airport who are arriving home with her



Book Reviews

new little brother. Both she and her brother have been adopted from Russia. The new family goes to a picnic with other adoptive families where they share their experiences and talk about their birth countries. This book explains adoption in a way that is easy for a child to understand. The book concluded with the statement "I'm glad to be me!" The book also includes guidelines to help parents open up discussions with their children as well as activities to do together.

Amazon - \$6.29



ABC, Adoption & Me by Gayle H. Swift & Casey A. Swift

- *ABC* was named a Favorite Read of 2013 by *Adoptive Families*. This book is a multi-cultural picture book filled with bright illustrations.

Each page goes through a letter of the alphabet and explains another detail of adoption. *ABC* may look like a children's book, but it is so much more. It is a MUST READ for all adoptive families, because it not only talks about the elements of adoption in a way a child can understand, it also instructs adoptive parents

on how to use the book. *ABC* summarizes the joy and challenges of adoption from a child's perspective without idealizing as often seen in children's books giving permission for children to feel their emotions and ask the questions that they have been curious about. Reading *ABC* with your children is a great way to spark adoption conversations with your child. Kindle \$5.99, Amazon \$12.23

AFTH Program Updates



DOMESTIC PROGRAMS - We hope your family was able to attend one of our agency's annual picnics in June. The agency picnics are always a wonderful way for families to come together and celebrate adoption! AFTH staff love to see new families who are just starting the adoption process, families who just received placements as well as families who have been coming for years. We would like to thank all our families who came out to celebrate adoption with us for another year and making these events so special. We hope to see you again next year!

In the 2013-2014 fiscal year, AFTH has placed a total of 149 infants in adoptive homes including 2 special needs placements, 3 sets of twins, and 12 identified placements. AFTH also assisted 34 families with their home study only cases this past fiscal year. AFTH is extremely proud to say that currently, of those families who are in the books waiting placement, 73% of them have been waiting 1 year or less. And 54% of families open to African-American children have been waiting 6 months or less. Additionally, as an agency, our emergency placements are increasing. In 2013, 40% of all our placements were emergencies and so far in 2014 we are seeing about 45%. In June alone, 9 of 14 placements were emergency placements.

With 29 years of dedicated services, AFTH understands the importance of offering personalized and dependable services to all our clients as well as offering adoption education and trainings within the larger community. AFTH has developed adoption and option counseling trainings and has been invited to present at many local hospitals and clinics. Our NJ Office is able to offer social worker CEUs as well. As an agency, we are focused on building better adoption awareness as an option for women facing unplanned pregnancies. Because adoption has changed so much over the last 30 years, our trainings specifically identify the choices pregnant women now have thanks to open adoption.

AFTH has lots of great classes lined up in our Fall Education Series. We brought back our most popular classes this time around and we encourage families to register right away as they fill up quickly. See the newsletter insert for details or go directly to the AFTH calendar of events at www.afth.org.

To AFTH Waiting Families: AFTH is continuing to see an increase in families being selected directly from our website. Families who have opted to have their profile listed on the website are increasing their exposure and chances of being selected. And now through AFTH's partnership with Adoptimist, families are able to have even more online exposure when they choose to have AFTH list their online profile on Adoptimist as well. These are both great opportunities we encourage all AFTH waiting families to consider.

AFTH local offices host support groups throughout the year for our waiting adoptive families and we hope that you would consider joining us. The support group is a great way to connect with other families who are adopting and to receive updates from your AFTH social worker regarding the Domestic Program as well as be a part of informational adoption related discussions.

You can also stay connected with AFTH and join in the discussion by following us on social media: Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Tumblr, and WordPress. The Yahoo Domestic Discussion Group is another great way to connect with other AFTH families in the Domestic Program. To join the AFTH Domestic Adoption Discussion group on Yahoo, just send an email with the word "Subscribe" in the subject line to AFTHopenadoption-subscribe@yahoogroups

To AFTH Placed Families: AFTH continues to see a growing need for financial assistance for the pregnant women we are counseling. This year's annual appeal (see page 3) calls for AFTH families, friends, and adoption supporters to consider making a donation. Every penny donated to the Birthmother Fund aids pregnant women working with AFTH and birthmothers who have placed who are struggling to provide for their basic needs such as food, clothing, and shelter. New this year, AFTH has created a Scholarship Fund to financially assist bithparents who are continuing their education. Donors are able to earmark their gifts specifically for the cause they would like their contributions to support. All donations, no matter what amount, are graciously accepted and are tax deductible. Thank you for considering to give in support of AFTH and the women we work with.

Cont'd on page 9...



HEARTBEATS - Our *Embryo Support Services* offer an option for families in which a woman is able to carry an embryo donated by another family. Wait times for matching between recipient and donor families average approximately 1-2 months. A webinar is a great way to learn about the program and ask any questions you may have regarding the process and can be scheduled at your convenience.

AFTH has also developed an Embryo Education Series specific to addressing the needs of families created through Embryo Adoption. The webinars in this series address talking with children about embryo placement, potential contact with genetic relatives, and many other related topics.

To schedule an webinar or for details about the Embryo Education Series, contact Jeanne McGee at JeanneM@afth.org or 610-642-7200.



Recent Legislation



NEW YORK - A Family Court Judge in New York determined that a man could legally adopt his husband's biological twins even though they were born to a woman under an illegal surrogacy agreement. Although the surrogacy agreement is void and unenforceable under New York Law, the Judge ruled that the best interest of the twins is the most important consideration in such a matter and, because the twins are thriving with the couple, the adoption could go forward. The current policy against surrogacy contracts has not been amended since its enactment. *New York Law Journal, April 10th, 2014*

CONNECTICUT - A new state law in Connecticut will make certain records available to adults who were adopted as children three decades ago. The Connecticut State Senate passed legislation by a vote of 31 to 5, requiring the Department of Public Health to give individuals at least 18 years old, and whose adoptions were finalized on or after Oct. 1, 1983, copies of their original birth certificate. *CBS NY/AP May 10th, 2014*

UTAH - A Utah House-passed bill allowing grandparents to petition for visitation rights in cases where parental rights had been terminated was killed in the Utah Senate. HB 418S3, which failed on a 13-13 vote, would have applied only to children who were adopted by relatives. Lawmakers in opposition of the bill argued that allowing grandparents to petition for visitation rights would discourage parents from adopting. Those in support of the bill argued that it benefited the child and strengthened and preserved families by giving grandparents access to their grandchildren. *The Salt Lake Tribune, March 12th, 2014*

Utah also enacted a law (SB229) requiring first/birth mothers who have not resided in the state for at least 90 days to "file with the court a declaration regarding each potential birth father" and giving the court discretion to "order the birth mother to serve a potential birth father notice that she intends to consent to adoption or relinquishment of the child for adoption." Passage of the law follows several cases in which out-of-state first/birth fathers challenged their children's adoptive placements in Utah on the grounds that they did not receive adequate notice and opportunity to consent to or oppose the adoptions. *Donaldson Institute Newsletter May 2014*

WISCONSIN - In April, Wisconsin became the first U.S. state to pass a law (2013 Wisconsin Act 314) in response to media reports about "re-homing," to prevent that practice in which parents offer their children online for placement without state oversight. The law restricts advertising of children for adoption by including any permanent physical placement and online/electronic communication channels, as well as eliminating the exception of advertising to place one's own child for adoption. The law also requires court oversight when a transfer of care or custody is made to non-relatives for a period longer than one year. Similar legislation is pending in Ohio (HB438). *Donaldson Institute Newsletter May 2014*



International Adoption News

AFTH prides itself on keeping abreast of news regarding inter-country adoption. The agency continues to provide Home Studies, Education, Post-Adoption/Placement Reports and Services, and other assistance in support of international adoptions, despite no longer having placement programs in foreign countries. AFTH collaborates with many agencies across the United States that do provide inter-country adoption placement services. Contact your local AFTH office to see how we can help you with your adoption process, including referring you to one of these partner agencies. For details on AFTH's intercountry adoption services, contact Roberta Evantash at 610-642-7200 or RobertaE@afth.org.

CHINA: In May, two families who transferred from AFTH to CAS brought home their children from China. Our next anticipated family referral has a log in date of 12/20/06.

On another note, we have learned that when a Chinese match is received from the CCCWA, the designated family must have current I800 approval in order to accept the referral. This new requirement means that families who have allowed immigration approvals to lapse must now begin the process to have their home studies completed and all documentation submitted to USCIS well in advance of anticipated referral time. Social workers will contact families about eight months before an expected referral to begin the process.

AFTH India Families: If you have adopted from India and wish to contact other AFTH families who have done so please contact RobertaE@afth.org.

Russia to Ban Citizenship Change for Adopted Children: It is rumored that Russian MPs (members of parliament) intend to ban changing of citizenship of adopted Russian children over fears NGOs (non governmental organizations) specializing in adoptions might send children to the U.S. via third world countries. According to the Justice Ministry, four NGOs have been registered in the country, four Italian and one American, bringing the number of such groups to 53. Russian MPs have proposed a set of amendments that would restrict the transfer of Russian children from adoptees to other families. The MP also proposes a ban on renouncing Russian citizenship for an adopted orphan until the child comes of age.

Update on New Adoption Referrals to the Ukraine: The Ukrainian government is considering a resolution to temporarily suspend adoption referrals to Donetsk and Lugansk regions for the duration of

the ongoing anti-terrorist operation. Cases already in process should not be impacted.

Cambodia to Resume International Adoptions in 2014: Adoption from Cambodia will resume more than four years after suspending them over concerns of child exploitation. A detailed time frame was not given.

Brazil Accepts Adoption Service Provider Applications for Authorization: The Brazilian Central Authority for the Hague Adoption Convention announced last week that it will accept applications from U.S. Hague accredited adoption service providers for authorization to provide inter-country adoption services in Brazil.

Alert - Reports of Child-Buying Operations in Nigeria: Prospective adoptive parents are warned about possible scams involving children who may be illicitly offered for adoption.

Adoptions from Vietnam:

In early June, the U.S. Department of State (DOS) announced that a new inter-country adoption program with Vietnam may soon begin. Through a special adoption program for children with special needs, children aged five and older, and children in biological sibling groups, adoptions from Vietnam may commence under the Hague Adoption Convention three weeks after Vietnam authorizes U.S. Adoption Service Providers. The DOS anticipates the Ministry of Justice will announce its authorization decision by the end of 2014.

A Bipartisan Bill to Reform International Adoption in the U.S. is Running Into Stiff Opposition: "We believe this bill will increase the protection of children and help ensure that parents raise children not governments", Sen. Mary L. Landrieu,

Have a Stress-Free Family Vacation

Summer's here and that usually means it's time to hit the road for a vacation. Whether your idea of relaxation involves rock climbing or lounging by the pool, you can enjoy a stress-free trip (or at least minimize the hassles) with some basic planning:

Involve your children. Whether you're traveling with toddlers or teenagers, get them engaged in the preparations. Asking them what they want to see and do, which swim suit to pack, and incorporating their wishes when possible, will lead to a smoother experience for everyone.

Pick your time. Flight delays and crowded airplanes rarely improve the quality of your trip. When flying, your best bet is to travel Monday through Wednesday, early in the day. Fly direct if possible to cut the chances of your luggage getting lost (or having to drag your carry-ons from one end of the airport to the other).

Pack some snacks. Kids and adults get cranky when they're hungry. Carry along something healthy to eat: granola bars, raisins or other dried fruit, peanut butter crackers, and treats for when you or your kids need something special.

Schedule some downtime. Don't try to cram too many activities into the day. Rushing through one museum to get to the next one, and the one after that, will quickly grow exhausting. Allow some time to relax, watch TV, read, or take a stroll.

Keep some routine. For small children specially, maintaining some elements of a regular routine will keep things running smoothly. Bedtimes, regular meals, and normal rules of behavior provide a comforting sense of structure.

Be flexible. Expect delays, then when they happen they won't stress you out. Break the schedule when something more interesting comes up. If you want to spend more time in a museum that intrigues you, do it. You may not have the chance again.

International Adoption News Cont'd

Louisiana Democrat and lead sponsor of the Children in Families First Act (CHIFF) in the Senate, said Tuesday, May 20th. Thousands of U.S. adoptions of orphans have been blocked, by "arbitrary" State Department policies, as adoption agencies told Secretary of State John Kerry in December according to an article in the Washington Times on 5/20/14. This act would help correct those obstacles.



Congratulations to Families Who Have Recently Adopted!

Daughters

Mark & Nancy
Joseph & Regina
Bryan & Michelle
Joe & Gillian
Brett & Carl
Leslie
Raja & Amy
Philip & Laura
Dennis & Christine
Jeffrey & Carolyn
Frank & Lindsey
Linda
Dustin & Albry
Jessica
Todd & Alison
Lukas & Michelle
Michael & Danielle
Charles & Candace
Daniel & Colette
James & Paul
Michael & Christina
Michael & Rhoeda

Sons

Gary & Pamela
Joshua & Ardith
Daren & Janie
Brian & Kevin
Kenneth & Marci
Erik & Bethany
John & Lynn
Daniel & Anne
George Brian & Caroline
David & Kevin (twins)
Jason & Jamie
Stephen & Bertina
Carlos & Michel
Rahwa & Valencia
Patrick & Katherine
Sangeeta & Sonia
John & Nicole
Marcos & Andrea





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FROM THE COMFORT OF YOUR HOME

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AUGUST 5TH AT 7PM
SEPTEMBER 2ND AT 7PM

Registration Required

Calendar of Events at www.afth.org

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Got E-mail?

The listserve is a way for families to stay in the loop of agency updates related to the domestic program. Waiting families can subscribe by sending a message with the word "SUBSCRIBE" in the subject line to:

DOMESTIC LISTSERVE -

AFTHDomesticUpdates-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

To connect, support, and share with other AFTH families in the domestic program, join the yahoo group created for discussion and support. To join, send an email with "SUBSCRIBE" in the subject line to the below address:

DOMESTIC DISCUSSION GROUP

AFTHopenadoption-subscribe@yahoogroups.com