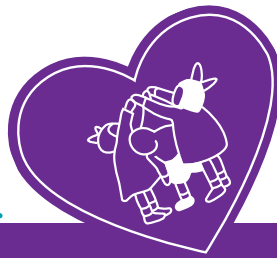


Adoption News



A Quarterly Newsletter from

Adoptions From The Heart

Winter 2016

AFTH Holiday Donations Aid 77 Children and 39 Birth Mothers

AFTH Donated Over \$15,000 in Gift Cards this December

Hundreds of expecting mothers and fathers reach out to Adoptions From The Heart each year for information and counseling about adoption.

About one-third of the men and women who choose to place a child for adoption through AFTH are also parenting other children as well. The holidays can be a financially stressful time of year, even for those who are not struggling to meet the basic needs. For parents who are, a big worry is how they are going to afford to make the holidays special for their children.

" I have no words. I am so grateful. you made Christmas possible this year. I am so grateful. I am crying, and this time not from pain.

- Jill

AFTH social workers are dedicated to helping expecting parents find resources and obtain assistance to help with all their needs. Highlighted throughout this newsletter edition are many of the ways AFTH is using donations from generous supporters to make a difference through the Birthmother Fund and Birthparents Scholarship Fund.

Samantha, a social worker in Wynnewood, had the pleasure of giving gift cards to a birthmother for the first time this year. "Victoria called me yesterday in shock. She was so thankful to have received the gift cards

for her three children at home and couldn't thank the agency enough. I'm really happy for them as they have been through quite a lot this year."

Below is an email that AFTH received from a Central PA birthmother:

"I just wanted to send a HUGE thank you. Because of you guys, I was able to get everything off my kid's Christmas list. I am so grateful. Thank you so much!"

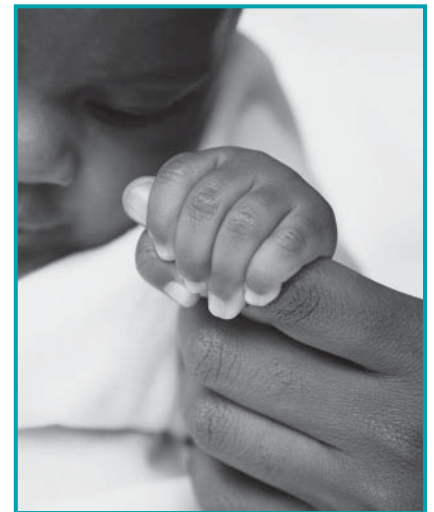
Friday 12:29 PM

Nicole... I am in tears. I just got your letter and gift. Thank you. Like from the bottom of my little heart, thank you.

Just opened the card... Thank you so much. This is going to be a great help for Christmas!

- text from Summer

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Holiday Party Recaps
Spring Ed Series
Upcoming AFTH Events
Recent Legislation
ATIN Tax Number

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., 2nd 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

To the Staff at Adoptions From The Heart:
Thank you to all who came together
and raised money for our family for
Christmas.

We appreciate it and cannot thank
you enough.

WISHING YOU PEACE
WISHING YOU JOY

HAPPY HOLIDAYS

Jacqueline

Even though the holidays are over, it's not too late to help make a difference! There are men and women who could use a little extra help all year long. Any donation you make, no matter the amount, will go directly into the hands of those who need it most. We hope that you will consider continuing to support AFTH throughout the new year. Gifts from donors just like you can help us extend our reach to all those who we connect with who need a boost.

Donations can be made online at www.afth.org/donate

All donations are tax deductible and can be designated to support either the Birthmother Fund, Birthparent Scholarship Fund or where it is needed most.

"We received the Christmas card in the mail today, as were shocked when we saw the \$200 Walmart gift card. I was in tears. I'm so happy with AFTH. Everyone has been so great. Thank you so much for everything." - Amanda

One of our Central PA social workers received a text from a birthmother who placed her baby earlier in the year and who is also parenting a child. She thought we made a mistake in the gift card by giving her too much. Thanks to the generosity of donors like you, she was overjoyed when she discovered the amount was correct and replied, *"every little bit helps and I want you to know that I'm so incredibly grateful for you and your wonderful company. I wish every a Happy Holiday season!"*

Below is a message from Aimee, a birth grandmother:

"I forgot to tell you how appreciative my daughter Lisa is for the gift card you sent her! She has not been able to find a job so she had zero money for Xmas for the children. Of course, we would be sure that Santa has plenty for them under the tree, but it made her feel so good to shop for them herself! She has an interview at Dunkin Donuts tomorrow so hopefully she will be able to work soon. Thank you again! Happy holidays."

On Your Mark, Get Set, Go Register

Registration Open for the Find Her Footing 5K

The 4th Annual AFTH Find Her Footing 5K Run, Walk and Kid's Dash is just around the corner...

Sunday, April 10, 2016
Delaware County Community College in Media, PA

8:15am Registration opens
 9:00am Kid's Dash followed by
 9:30am 5K Run/Walk

Last year over 175 supporters of all ages walked and ran the course, with parents pushing strollers the entire length! With the support of the community we were able to raise over \$5,400 for Adoptions From The Heart's Birthmother Fund and Birthparent Scholarships Fund.

The Birthmother Fund is used to help a woman "Find Her Footing" while she is considering adoption as well as after placement. The Birthparent Scholarship Fund ([see more on page 6](#)) is available to birth mothers and fathers who are pursuing further education. The Scholarship Fund is not limited to birthparents who have worked with AFTH.

Every step you take makes an impact and helps birthparents in times of need.



"Choosing adoption for my baby was the right thing. I work full time, but at minimum wage I was just making ends meet with my two other children. My C-section left me unable to work for eight weeks. Without a paycheck, couldn't pay rent and was getting evicted. AFTH covered 2 months of rent so I could keep my apartment. I'm back to work now, but I can't imagine having to take my children to a shelter because I couldn't go back to work right away after having a baby." - Lori

Every dollar raised directly impacts the lives of birthparents. 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!**

Register Online: www.tinyurl.com/FindHerFooting2016
Register before February 28th using the code RUN4AFTH and receive a discounted rate.

Questions? Contact DennaA@afth.org
For information on sponsorship or raffle donations contact DaniS@afth.org.



*Run, Walk
and Kid's Dash*



I

could keep my apartment. I'm back to work now, but I can't imagine having to take my children to a shelter because I couldn't go back to work right away after having a baby." - Lori

Paper Heart Project

National Adoption Month Fundraiser



AFTH is pleased to announce that the 2015 Paper Heart Project brought in \$3,261 which is almost \$1,000 more than last year! We had amazing participants who got extremely involved to raise a record-breaking amount for the AFTH Birthmother Fund.

2016 Building Beautiful Families Calendar



Thank you to everyone who submitted photos for this year's calendar and a very special thank you to each and every person who purchased a calendar in support of the AFTH Birthmother Fund.

We had a record breaking year of sales with 589 calendars sold bringing in over \$2,700 to go directly to the Birthmother Fund and into the hands of those who need it most.

There are still a few available to purchase in your local branch office and in AFTH's online store.

Start taking photos now for next year's calendar!

The Gamma Phi Beta chapter of Lehigh Valley University raised \$885, which DOUBLED the largest amount raised in the project's history!

TEK HealthCare Services in Virginia Beach raised the second most with \$478 for the Paper Heart Project! LevLane Advertising in Philadelphia, PA raised \$400. And the Startoni family of Hershey, PA raised a whopping \$339 this year.

Others who participated include:
The Tracy Family from Wilmington, DE ♥ Charlotte Fagraeus Vet Practice in Newark, DE ♥ Friedman's Service Center of Fountain Hill, PA ♥ LexaLu.com in Murrysville, PA ♥ Robert Half Professional Staffing Services in Woodbridge, NJ ♥ Mathnasium of Washington Township, NJ ♥ Dakota Pizza in Wynnewood, PA ♥ Shade Sunless Tanning in Ardmore, PA ♥ National Penn Banking in Wynnewood, PA ♥ Madison Avenue Salon in Madison, CT ♥ Papa Luke's Pizzeria in Monticello, NY ♥ Admark360 in Glenside, PA ♥ Stewarts XEROX in Philadelphia, PA ♥ Bob's Bake at Home Pizza in Havertown, PA ♥ Kate's Place Cafe and Sandwich Shop in Narvon, PA.



We also had individual families purchase hearts to support the Paper Heart Project. Thanks to everyone who participated, we wouldn't have been able to raise this record-breaking amount without ALL of your help and support. We look forward to making an even bigger impact next November!



Adoption 101



Beginning a new year often brings the feeling of a new start. If this is the year you have decided to begin your adoption journey, here are some pointers to get you started.

♥ **One Size Does Not Fit All** – What worked for your friends or relatives may not be right for you. There are many variables that determine which option is the best fit for your family. Domestic adoptions from the U.S. offer families the opportunity to know their child's medical background, meet their child's birth family, and the possibility of adopting an infant. International adoptions offer more predictable time frames, no chance of disruption, and the opportunity to bring an older child from another culture into your lives.

♥ **Do Your Homework** - There are few decisions in your life as important as this one, so turn to the experts for help. Attend free adoption information meetings or webinars, read books, ask questions.

♥ **Separate Fact From Fiction** - Myths surrounding all aspects of both domestic and international adoption are plentiful. Be open-minded, ask questions, and base your decision on the facts.

♥ **Adoption Professionals Are Not Created Equal** - When choosing an agency, consider years in business, the number of yearly placements, full list of services provided, counseling and treatment for expecting parents, and ongoing support services. Be sure that your agency is state licensed and non-profit, also Hague accredited if you choose international adoption.

If you choose to use an attorney, make sure they understand the adoption laws of the state you reside in and the states that the potential birth parents live. It is highly recommended to use an attorney who is part

of the American Academy of Adoption Attorneys. Ask what support and counseling the potential birth parents will receive before and after placement. Often attorney's can partner with agencies to provide these services.

If you are considering an Adoption Facilitator, first find out if this is legal in your state. Facilitators are usually small organizations with one or two staff members who often have no counseling background. Most adoption facilitators only provide a matching service and once a match is made, the facilitator passes it on to another professional and remove themselves from the rest of the process. They act as middle men who charge families extra money to facilitate their adoption.

♥ **Taking The Fear Out Of The Homestudy** – You don't have to be perfect, you don't have to own a home or make hundreds of thousands of dollars. A home study is a written evaluation regarding the suitability of your family to become adoptive parents. There is also an education component to help you better understand the unique aspects of creating a family through adoption.

♥ **Know The Numbers** – Understand the fee schedule and make sure all the costs are listed to avoid any surprises down the line. Steer clear of adoption professionals who aren't forthcoming about fees. Don't let fear of expenses keep you from adopting – get the facts, check out tax credits, employer reimbursements, grants, low interest loans, military subsidies and creative financing. Also be sure to ask when the fees are deemed earned and what would happen in the event of a disruption.

♥ **Be flexible** - The adoption process can be unpredictable. It's important to be flexible and not hold yourself to preconceived notions you had at the beginning.

♥ **Build A Support Team** – After all the paperwork is complete, classes taken and profile created, it's time to wait. Many families find this the most stressful part of the adoption journey. Join a support group either online or in person. Surround yourself with family and friends who can support you during this emotional time. Never be afraid to reach out and call your social worker. They are there to support you through this process.

♥ **You Can Create a Family Through Adoption** – Be patient, and persistent and it will happen. It may take time, but if you are persistent, it will happen.

AFTH Birthparent Scholarship Fund

Your donation TODAY is an investment in a better TOMORROW

“ When I found out that I was pregnant, I felt as though my dreams of becoming a nurse were out of the question. After placing my child through Adoptions From The Heart, I realized just how important it is to get an education. AFTH helped me get there. I am now an RN, at a children’s hospital, doing what I love. ”

After seeing birthparents determined to reach their educational goal doing everything they can to make it work yet still struggling to find ways to financially make their dream come true. AFTH established the Birthparent Scholarship Fund as a way to help them reach their next step. The Fund was established in the summer of 2014 and after six months of raising money, the very first scholarships were awarded in January 2015. Since then, six additional scholarships have been awarded. The scholarships are not limited to birthparents who have placed children through AFTH. Any birthparents who have placed children after 1985 are eligible to apply. Once awarded a scholarship, the winner is able to re-apply for the scholarship for up to eight semesters.

Heather, an AFTH birthmother, said it best when she spoke to the crowd at our 30th Anniversary event in October. She shared her personal adoption story and then left us all with this call to action: *“We, as birthmothers, also want to prove to you that we can make it, that we’re good and kind and smart. Remind us of that; help us heal by helping ourselves. Please give whatever it is you can to the Birth Parent Scholarship Fund, it will provide us with the very thing we try to instill in our children. Show us that you support us in everything we do and set out to accomplish. We want you to be proud of us too.”*



Partner with AFTH to provide even more scholarships to deserving men and women who could use support to get their education. Donations can be made online at www.afth.org/donate or by completing the below form.

“ I needed the scholarship to finish my last three semesters. As an environmental soil major, I want to work internationally to help farmers create more sustainable practices for agriculture, to help small villages and those who are struggling. I am now one step closer to achieving that dream and it would have been so much harder for me without the scholarship from Adoptions From The Heart. ”

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

AFTH Holiday Party Event Recaps



Stephen

CONNECTICUT

The Connecticut holiday party was held in December at First Church in Glastonbury and we were thrilled to see so many beautiful families come out for it. We had several birth family reunions, as well as a visit from one of Santa's elves. Adoptive families traveled from as far away as Illinois, New Jersey, and Virginia to see their children's birth mothers. The crafts were a big hit, but most just enjoyed the time to spend together and catch up, and of course enjoy some tasty snacks and sweets.

CENTRAL PA

On December 10th, the Central PA Office celebrated the holiday season with an open house. Children, birth parents, and adoptive parents enjoyed the holiday fun with AFTH staff. Many families came as a part of an annual tradition and others came for the very first time. It was great to see and hear from all the different families. What a joy to see such beautiful families who live open adoption every day. We look forward to more family reunions at next year's holiday party. It is terrific to have the office filled with fun and laughter from the children.



*Sean & Noelle
NJ adoptive parents*

CHERRY HILL

AFTH's Cherry Hill Office hosted a holiday open house on Wednesday, December 16th. There was lots of holiday cheer to be had with cocoa, cookies and carols, as well as crafts and gifts for the children. Many adoptive families remarked on how much they loved the 2016 Adoptions From The Heart Calendar!

VIRGINIA

Our holiday party was a great success even with the last minute location change. We had 6 birth parent visits and close to 90 people attend! The children made Rudolph popsicle stick ornaments and Santa stopped by for a visit. Several families bought AFTH calendars to start 2016 right! The staff really enjoyed seeing all of the children and families. It is great to have so many "regulars" who build connections with one another and we get to see the children grow year after year.

Wynnewood



*Olivia & Delaney in their
new reindeer hats!*

Wynnewood celebrated the holiday season on December 1st with several adoptive families. We moved to a new location in Horsham and appreciated being able to spread out in a nice large space. We enjoyed spending time together, eating dinner, making crafts, and

visiting with one another. After a few years of holiday parties, we are planning to transition to a fall get-together next year for Wynnewood families, so stay tuned for more information in the coming months.



Making new friends.

Upcoming AFTH Events

APRIL
10

4th Annual Find Her Footing 5K

Each year the 5K gains more supporters than the previous year and we are looking forward to a large crowd joining us on April 10th at the Delaware County Community College in Media, PA! Not a runner? It's a walk too and kicks off with a Kid's Dash. [See page 3](#) for details. Register before the end of February using the discount code Run4AFTH for \$5 off the registration fee.

JUNE
18

Ft. Washington Summer Picnic

Important Note... the Fort Washington picnic will not be the usual date this year. The park will be closed for a good portion of June. The Fort Washington Picnic has been moved to a new day and date for this year. The picnic will be on **SATURDAY, June 18, 2016.**

Summer
2015

Stay tuned for upcoming details about the Virginia, Connecticut and Pittsburgh Summer Picnic

Spring 2016 Adoption Education Series



AFTH Offers Classes Designed Especially for the Needs of Adoptive Parents

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 to help better equip adoptive parents.

REGISTER FOR CLASSES ONLINE

www.aftth.org/community/courses.html

Class on the Effects of Parental Drug Use and Mental Health Disorders

The Effects of Parental Behavior Health Disorders on Children (Cherry Hill, NJ)

The class will explore the characteristics of behavioral health diagnoses including Anxiety, Depression, Schizophrenia and Bipolar Disorder. The series will also examine what the current research shows about the possible hereditary and genetic effects on children whose parents have a behavioral health disorder. The seminar will be presented by Dr. Marc Gramatges, a Clinical Psychologist who specializes in mental health disorders.

Wednesday, April 13th from 6:30-8:30pm

Register By April 4th

\$25/person or \$35/couple

Call (856) 665-5655 with questions.

Impact of Birthparent Mental Health Disorders on Adopted Children (Bethlehem, PA)

This class will explore the characteristics of mental health disorders in birth parents, including Anxiety, Depression, ADHD, Bipolar Disorder and Schizophrenia. Elizabeth Vega Casey, LPC has a background in educating adoptive parents about the impact of birth parents' mental health on children.

Monday, April 25th from 5:30-7:30pm

Register By April 18th

\$25/person or \$35/couple

Call (610) 432-2384 with questions.

Substance Abuse During Pregnancy: Understanding Short & Long Term Effects (Brooklyn, NY)

Please join us in learning about the effects of substance abuse exposure during pregnancy with Dr. Melissa Goldstein, MD from Carnegie Hill Pediatrics. Dr. Goldstein's practice is partially devoted to adoption medicine and pre-adoption medical counseling. Time will be spent reviewing the profile key and answering any questions regarding the effect of substance use and abuse on the child.

Tuesday, March 15th from 5:30-7:30pm

Register By March 7th

\$25/person or \$35/couple

Call (610) 432-2384 with questions.

Effects of Prenatal Drug & Alcohol Use (Wilmington, DE)

Please come to learn more information about effects of drugs and alcohol on the newborn. Discussion of withdraw effects and questions answered. Presenter will be Dr. Erin Meyer a Internal medicine/Pediatric hospitalist who works in the NICU (Neonatal Intensive Care unit) at Christiana Hospital.

Saturday, April 2nd from 10:00am-Noon

Register By March 25th

\$25/person or \$35/couple

Call (302) 653-8883 with questions.

Additional Topics



Child Care Classes

Infant Care Class for Adoptive Parents (Wynnewood, PA & Harrisburg, PA)

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 plenty of time for questions at the end of the class.

Wynnewood Infant Care Class

Thursday, March 10th from 6:30-8:00pm

Register By March 1st

\$25/person or \$35/couple

Call (610) 642-7200 with any questions.

Harrisburg Infant Care Class

Monday, March 7th from 6:30-8:00pm

Register By April 29th

\$25/person or \$35/couple

Call (717) 399-7766 with questions.

For the Kids

Adoptee Pizza Party (Lancaster, PA)

This is a KIDS PIZZA PARTY! All children from ages 6 through 18 are invited to enjoy a fun evening of pizza and making new friends. It's a time to come together as young adoptees and share your experiences and connect with others who "get it". Share your thoughts and feelings about being adopted with others your age and enjoy delicious pizza as well.

**Date TBA...Late April in the Lancaster Office
\$5/child**

Contact the office today at 717-399-7766 to be added to the list to be updated when a date is selected.



Post Adoption

Post Adoption Advice for the "What If's" (Chesapeake, VA)

Come learn about what's next on your adoption journey. Whether you are already parenting or still a waiting family, it's always a great time to think about the future. We will discuss the "what if's": if your open adoption changes, if your child's birth family structure changes, if your child's perception of their own adoption ebbs and flows, and more! Come with questions and be prepared for a lively discussion.

Saturday, April 16th from 1:00-4:00pm

Register By April 8th

\$25/person or \$35/couple

Call (757) 361-0008 with questions.



The Art of College Cost Planning (Wynnewood, PA)

Presenter Ernest Chisena is a Certified Financial Planner who will provide information for parents of high school students and adult students looking to go back to school. Participants will learn about financial aid, including what it is, where it comes from, and strategies for obtaining as much aid as possible. Participants will also learn about which colleges and universities offer the most financial aid and how to choose the school with the best aid options.

Saturday, March 5th from 10:00am-Noon

Register By February 26th

\$10/person or \$15/couple

Call (610) 642-7200 with questions.

REGISTER FOR CLASSES ONLINE

www.afth.org/community/courses.html

OR visit the calendar of events at the bottom of our homepage www.afth.org



Recent Legislation



INTERNATIONALLY ADOPTED CHILDREN MAY BE AT RISK FOR DEPORTATION

- Thousands of foreign-born adoptees raised in the U.S. are vulnerable to deportation as adults due to a failure of immigration law and inaction by their adoptive parents. Without U.S. citizenship, they can be tossed out of the only country they've ever really known. Prior to the Child Citizenship Act of 2000, foreign-born children adopted by U.S. citizens entered the country as permanent residents, according to attorney Dan Berger, a member of the American Immigration Lawyers Association. After the typically lengthy and expensive process

of adopting children from overseas, Berger said, many parents would "take a breath" and not apply for citizenship for their child. Foreign-born adoptees who have green cards can work, are eligible for a driver's license, can vote in state and local elections, and even qualify for Social Security benefits and student loans **however** unlike citizens, they can be deported, even for nonviolent misdeeds.

Time will eventually solve this problem. The 2000 bipartisan law granted automatic citizenship to an estimated 75,000 adopted children then under age 18. The law applied to future adoptees as well. But it was not retroactive. Those who were already over 18 as of Feb. 27, 2001, were left off the welcome wagon. Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D-Minn.) is trying to help those who were left out of the 2000 law stay in the country. In November, she introduced an amendment to make the 2000 law retroactive.

DESPITE SAME-SEX MARRIAGE RULING, GAY ADOPTION RIGHTS UNCERTAIN IN SOME STATES

- While same-sex couples have long been able to adopt from private, gay-friendly adoption agencies, adopting children from the foster care system has proved more difficult in some states.

The U.S. Supreme Court decision in June that made same-sex marriage legal nationwide is changing that, but not everywhere—particularly in states with laws that limit joint adoption to a husband and wife. Some states have taken up legislation that would allow taxpayer-funded contractors that oversee state adoptions to refuse to let gay or lesbian individuals adopt children if it conflicts with the organization's religious beliefs. Mississippi is the only state that has a law that specifically bars gay couples from adopting foster children, and Julia Bryan, spokeswoman for the state Department of Human Services, said the law will be followed unless the legislature makes any changes when it reconvenes in January.

Although the court decision is leading to changes in some states, others are creating new roadblocks to gay adoption. Some states are creating laws that allows groups that contract with the state to oversee adoptions to decline service to any person or couple that conflicts with their "sincerely held religious beliefs."



No SSN For Child... What To Do For Taxes?

Some families who have adopted domestically in 2015 have not finalized before the end of the year which means their child has not officially been issued a Social Security number.

The IRS can issue families in these situations an Adoption Taxpayer Identification Number (ATIN) which is a temporary nine-digit number for a child who does not have a SSN in time to file taxes. ATIN numbers can be requested through the form W-7A which can be downloaded online at www.irs.gov. Documentation describing how your child was placed with your family will need to accompany the form. It can take up to eight weeks to receive an ATIN and it is valid for two years and can be used to claim dependency on tax documents.

Consult with your tax preparer if you have additional questions about requesting an ATIN for your child or about the tax credit.

Book Reviews



How Open Should My Adoption Be? Levels of Openness in Adoption by Russel Elkins - This 50 page book is packed with a lot of really important information. Elkins, an adoptive father, has a very open adoption with both of his children's birth parents.

These relationship form in different ways and change over time. Elkins is open about his mistakes in hopes that other adoptive parents can learn from them to better navigate forming new relationships with birth parents.

The gems in this book touch on social media, extended family, and the importance of communication. It also highlights why the first year is typically much more stressful than initially anticipated. Becoming new parents all while juggling a new relationship with your child's birth parents, lack of sleep, fear of disruption, and the continued involvement of social workers until finalization can put strain on what is already a very emotional time.

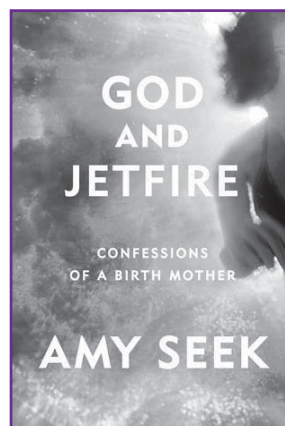
Another important section in his book covers the time in the hospital. It is important to respect the birth parents time with the child in the hospital. Remember that although you will be extremely excited, this time in the hospital needs to belong to the birthparents. It isn't your time to start parenting. You may have a lifetime to do that and they have the very short period of time spent in the hospital with their baby.

This book can be read in an hour but it is one you may want to keep around as a reference as you journey into the world of open adoption. He has some really great ideas and some really profound insight which will give adoptive parents and prospective adoptive parents quick a bit of food for thought.

Throughout the book, Elkins references his other books which are also excellent reads.



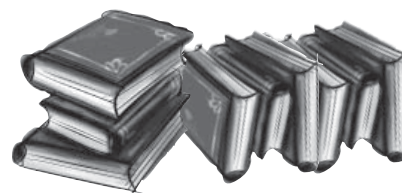
God and Jetfire: Confessions of a Birth Mother by Amy Seek - This books is a gut-wrenching account of Seek placing her son for adoption.



It is an honestly raw and soul baring account of placing a child for adoption. The mix of emotions, grief, anger, happiness, relief, frustration, and loss are laid bare for the reader. It reiterates that adoption is a lifelong process for everyone involved and doesn't end after placement.

Seek and her boyfriend compose a list of 100 questions and interview couples to find the "right" family. She has an open adoption with her son's adoptive family, she meets with them, talks to them and exchanges correspondence.

After several hours of labor, Seek ultimately starts having second thoughts. She winds up taking her son home and parenting him for about a month before she then decides to relinquish her rights. The book illustrates the power-shift that occurs after placement as it shifts to the adoptive parents. Seek felt powerless and lost with her emotions. It is so important for adoptive parents to grasp an understanding of the pain and loss that is experienced in adoption.



Adoption Related Books on Amazon

Get these and many other great adoption related books for adults and children at amazing prices on Amazon.



Use the below Amazon link and a portion will be donated back to AFTH with each order.

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

AFTH Program Updates



DOMESTIC PROGRAMS - AFTH hopes that you had a wonderful start to 2016 and wishes everyone an incredible year!

We had a wonderful turnout for our office holiday parties and we are looking forward to seeing all the families again at our summer picnics. It is important to note that for 2016, the Fort Washington Picnic has had to shift weeks due to the park shutting down the Flourtown pavilion for several weekends in June. The picnic will be held at the same time and place on **SATURDAY** (note the change from the typical Sunday), June 18th.

We are so happy to see how many new families and open adoption connections were made through our agency in 2015. In December alone, we had 15 families selected, 11 of those were for emergency placements. Even though the AFTH offices were closed for a week and a half for the holidays, several of our social workers were still busy with placements. Hospital social workers and nurses know they can count on AFTH to always be available even over holidays which is why the agency often sees several emergency placements during the holiday break.

As we closed out 2015, we saw an all time high emergency placement rate. 59% of all of our placements in 2015 were emergencies. So if you are currently a waiting adoptive parent, know that the chances of receiving the call and having less than 24 hours before you need to be at the hospital is likely.

This past year, AFTH placed 145 children into adoptive parent homes through open adoption.

Social workers are continuing their extensive outreach to spread awareness about AFTH's free services to women considering adoption. In 2015, AFTH social workers connected with over 1,600 referral sources to provide information and to offer trainings for staff.

In addition to offering trainings for professionals, AFTH offers specially designed classes for adoptive parents. Twice a year, AFTH hosts an Ed Series with various classes held in the different offices

that are specifically designed for adoptive parents. The most popular classes have been those that help prospective adoptive parents complete their key such as the Prenatal Effects of Drugs and Alcohol. Many of the families who have attended have said how much the information they gained during the class helped them to better decide how to complete their key. Our class line up for the spring also includes, infant care classes, impacts of parental behavior and mental health on children, post adoption advice, the art of college cost planning and even a pizza party for adoptees! The classes often fill up quickly, so please be sure to register in the next few weeks to reserve your spot. For class details, [see the newsletter insert](#).

Waiting Family Support Groups

AFTH branch office's host local support groups for waiting adoptive families to connect with each other for support during the wait. Offices host support groups at different times throughout the year. Contact your social worker for more details.

[AFTH support groups for February-April:](#)

WYNNEWOOD - Adoptive Parent Support Group:

Join us for a support group for waiting families. We will discuss placement statistics and a special topic, and will also offer time for families to share their joys, frustrations, and concerns with the adoption process.

Tuesday, February 9th from 6:30-8pm

Call (610) 642-7200 or Email AshleyK@afth.org to [RSVP by February 2nd](#)

WILMINGTON - Birth Parent Support Group:

Come meet and mingle with other birthparents from the area. It is a great support to come together to share experiences and help each other through the hard times. Lunch will be provided.

Friday, March 18th from Noon-2pm

Call (302)-658-8883, text (302)-276-3921 or email DanielleG@afth.org to [RSVP by March 14th](#).

A Letter from Executive Director Maxine Chalker



To say I'm proud that Adoptions From The Heart is now going into our 31st year of service is an understatement. First named The Adoption Agency, it began in the basement of my home and I laugh now when I retell the story of how my first adoptive couple walked by my washer and dryer to get to my office. I often wonder what they must have been thinking.

The past 30 years have taken AFTH places I never imagined when I founded it. I'm humbled to say that AFTH has had the privilege of placing 6,555 children into forever homes and we concluded 2015 with 145 domestic placements, 50% of which were emergency placements.

AFTH has built an extensive network through outreach and education with organizations that provide services to expecting parents. Our goal is for women considering adoption to do so armed with information about the process, their rights and the services AFTH can provide whether or not they ultimately place their child. Women have said over and over that they choose AFTH because they know we are here to help, not to pressure.

AFTH not only provides free services to expecting parents, but goes a step further to provide necessary financial assistance as well. During counseling, social workers see areas of great need such as food, clothing, housing that are not being met. AFTH events and fundraisers such as the Find Her Footing 5K, Paper Heart Project and the AFTH Calendar are intended to garner donations for the Birthparent Fund and the Birthparent Scholarship Fund.

In December, AFTH donated over \$15,000 in gift cards to birthparents with children who were struggling for the holidays ([front page](#)). I'm so grateful for the level of community support we had this year for the 5K, Paper Heart Project ([page 4](#)), event sponsors and donors and individuals who hosted fundraisers like the From the Heart Cabaret Benefit ([page 11](#)). Over the course of the past year, AFTH's marketing team has raised over \$30,000 in donations, every dollar of which will go toward making a better tomorrow for men and women in need.

The Birthparent Scholarship Fund was established in late 2014 and in January of 2015 AFTH awarded the first two scholarships to deserving applicants. Since then, six additional scholarships have been awarded ([page 6](#)).

In October, AFTH held the Building Beautiful Futures event at the Racquet Club of Philadelphia in center city. I was honored to see how many people came out in celebration of AFTH's 30 year milestone. It was a fabulous time with great casino entertainment not to mention the food and music as well as the celebrity host of the night Cory Wade.

In order to fully embrace open adoption, our policy was revised to require all prospective adoptive parents to be open to a minimum of one visit a year. Additionally, we believe families need to honor their commitment to openness whether or not future contact agreements are legally binding. We are continuing to develop our education programs to better equip parents raising children who are of a different race. After careful deliberation, AFTH no longer allows families the option of only being open to biracial children.

We have had quite a few prospective adoptive parents switch to our agency after beginning their adoption journey with a facilitator or matching service due their inability to offer a full range of necessary services.

Despite being unable to offer an accurate average wait time due to the number of variables involved, we can say that as of December, **the overwhelming majority (81%) are waiting less than 18 months, 66% waiting less than 1 year and 37% are waiting 6 months or less. Families open to African American children are seeing shorter wait times with 81% waiting less than 1 year and almost half only waiting 6 months or less.**

Congrats to all the new families created in 2015 and a warm welcome to those who have just begun their journey.

Sincerely,

Maxine Chalker



International Adoption News

AFTH prides itself on keeping abreast of news regarding inter-country adoption. Despite no longer having international programs, the agency is able to work as a supervised provider to offer international Home Studies, Education, Post-Adoption/Placement Reports and Services, and other assistance in support of international adoptions. 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:

There is little to report on this front. The CCCWA is currently assigning referrals to families with a Log in Date up to 1/6/07. Last June they were at the end of December 2006 with assignment log in dates. This goes to show how slowly they are moving. Our lives can change so radically over a nine year period that it is hard to imagine still waiting to adopt after all that time. There are three former AFTH families, who transferred to Carolina Adoption Services, with a LID of 1/16/07. It remains to be seen if any wish to move forward.

China's One Child Policy Has Ended:

As many of you already know it was announced in late October, China's One Child Policy has come to an end and couples will now be allowed to have two children. The one child policy was instituted in 1980 and adoption of their unwanted girls, as boys are traditionally favored, became popular in the nineties. The effects of the policy have left the Chinese with a rapidly aging population and potential labor shortages plus a lack of available women for the upcoming male segment of Chinese society.

Chinese Consul Thanks US Families for Adopting Children From China:

In December the Chinese Consul in San Francisco held a reception for 29 American families who adopted Chinese children and live in the Bay Area. He thanked the American parents for their "enduring love and selfless devotion to the Chinese children, bringing them up with warmth and happiness." He told the children "China, your country of birth, will never forget you and will always miss and welcome you. This means you belong to two families."

Colombia:

In a historic decision, Colombia's constitutional court opened the door in November for same sex couples to legally adopt children in the conservative South American nation. With this decision Colombia becomes one of a handful of South American countries, including Argentina and Uruguay, in allowing same sex couples to adopt.

India:

On October 21, 2015 the Indian government informed the U.S. Embassy in New Delhi that adoptive parents must possess an exit permit issued by the Foreigners Regional Registration Office (FRRO) in New Delhi before departing India with their adopted or prospective adoptive child. FRRO can be emailed at frrodli.support@nic or frrodli.support@gov.in.

Namibia:

The Hague Adoption Convention Entered into force in Namibia on January 1, 2016. U.S. prospective adoptive parents who may be interested in this country should check adoption@state.gov for updated information on the United States' determination.

Uganda:

As of 12/31/15, the U.S. Department of State has received information from prospective adoptive families currently in Uganda regarding reports that Ugandan government officials have visited prospective adoptive families and asked to review their dossiers. The Department is gathering more information about these reports and will post an update on their website as more information becomes available.

Community Support for AFTH

What do Ten Thousand Villages, cabaret benefit and Wells Fargo grant have in common? They are all ways our local community showed support for AFTH.



Ten Thousand Villages
They say it takes a village! Well, Ten Thousand of them to be exact. Ten Thousand Villages is one of the world's largest fair trade organizations with stores all across the U.S.

The organization strives to improve the livelihood of disadvantaged artisans in 38 countries by selling their products in retail outlets. AFTH recently partnered with Ten Thousand Village stores in Ardmore, PA and Pittsburgh, PA to not only benefit artisans in other countries, but also to raise money for AFTH funds helping birthparents in need who are working with AFTH. A portion of sales went toward the fund and between the two events with over 75 shoppers, a little more than \$400 was raised!

From the Heart Cabaret Benefit

Our Allentown Office was honored when Andrea, one of their adoptive mothers, contacted them about hosting a benefit cabaret to raise money for the Birthmother Fund. She works in theater and each year in November the Allentown BrewWorks chooses an organization as a beneficiary of the benefit show. AFTH was thrilled to be and the Allentown staff couldn't wait to attend. Karen Friedman, AFTH Office Manager said "last night's cabaret was really awesome. It was so honest and heartfelt and I felt lifted up working for AFTH. All of the talented singers had an adoption story to share and all the songs were geared towards love and childhood in between personal shared stories. Really cool!" With 50% of the tickets sales for their November 12th show being donated, it brought in \$250 for the Birthmother Fund!



Congratulations to Families Who Have Recently Adopted!

Daughters

Scott & Ho-Yin
Andrew & Jennifer
Eric & Rebecca
John & Susan
Brian & Lori
Denis & Brooke
Joseph & Dana
Todd & Erin
Martina & Thomas
Cory & Stephanie
Hilary
Christopher & Melissa
Julie
John & Cindy
Thomas & Kristin
Richard & Carolyn
Jonathan & Gregory

Sons

David & Holly
Josh & Anne
Daniel & Michelle
Robert & Sara
Chris & Michelle
Timothy & Aileen
Corey & Heather
Dwight & Laura – twins
Josh & Prutha
Kevin & Joy
Michael & Lisa
Kenneth & Kellie
Ihab & Amanda
Greg & Kim



Wells Fargo Community Connection Grant Program

The Wells Fargo program awarded our Allentown Office with \$1,000. We were delighted to be one of the 42 non-profits who were awarded grants for their work in the community. We were nominated for the grant by Roy, a Wells Fargo Store Manager, who adopted a child through our China Program back in 2002.

The theme of the event was Small is Huge:

"At Wells Fargo, we know that small acts can yield huge results and we are committed to supporting programs and organizations that we believe are important to the future of our communities' vitality and success. So we are proud to support Adoptions From The Heart with this grant."



Adoptions From The Heart®

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Upcoming Conferences

Visit the AFTH booth at the below events.
Go to www.afth.org for event details.

The Original LGBT Expo

March 12-13th

at the Javits Center in NYC.

FREE ONLINE WEBINARS

LEARN ABOUT AFTH'S PROGRAMS
FROM THE COMFORT OF YOUR HOME

DOMESTIC INFANT ADOPTION

MARCH 1ST AT 7PM

APRIL 5TH AT 7PM

Registration Required

Calendar of Events at www.afth.org

