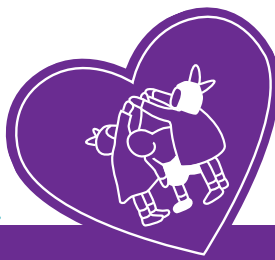


# Adoption News



A Quarterly Newsletter from

Adoptions From The Heart

Spring 2016

## 4th Annual Find Her Footing 5K

Over \$1,800 Raised to Help Birthparents

When participants registered for our 4th Annual Find her Footing 5K, they knew to expect a fun event, activities for the children and great raffle prizes. What no one expected was for there to be snow on the ground. Never before had snow shoveling and ice removal been a part of the 5K prep however it was a first and we got it done.

Despite the snow the morning of April 10th, Adoptions From The Heart had over 130 people in attendance including over 35 student volunteers from Marple Newtown Senior High School Interact Club, 5 Kohls employees from Kohls Cares, and Mrs. Delaware County.

“*It’s amazing to know that Adoptions From The Heart is supportive of birthparents even after the adoption!*”  
- Shawnee,  
an AFTH  
Birthmother

We were thrilled to see that the weather didn’t stop the 85 participants age 1-75 from being ready to walk, run and dash their way in support of the AFTH Birthmother Fund and Birthparent Scholarship Fund. The Delaware County Community College in Media, PA provided a closed course and tons of parking for the event. At 9am, children gathered on the starting line to kick off the 100 meter Kid’s Dash. The crowd clapped and cheered as they ran the course and crossed the finish line to receive their medals.

After the Dash, giggles and laughter radiated from children jumping and playing in the bouncy house donated again this year by one of our favorite 5K sponsors Boing! House Rentals.

Shawnee, an AFTH birthmother, drove two and a half hours to share her heartfelt story. “I went through Adoptions From The Heart almost two months ago to place my daughter for adoption. I chose this agency because from the very first phone call til now and in the future they are all caring, loving and supportive. You always see ads and stories about this agency and their ads are exactly as they say...Thank you to Stephanie, my social worker for being there every step. She’s there every phone call, appointment visit and every email.” Shawnee highlighted the reason for our 5K, to support expecting parents and birthparents who are in need to help regain their footing during a difficult time in their lives. Each dollar raised is able to help make a difference and impact in someone else’s life.

*Cont’d on page 2...*

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**Insert:**  
AFTH Summer Picnics

## 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](http://www.afth.org)

We want to thank all of our corporate sponsors. It is because their support in addition to the participants and individual donors that we were able to raise over \$1800 in profit that will go directly into the Birthmother Fund and Birthparent Scholarship Fund. Caroline Leusner Photography captured beautiful moments from the event while 92.5 XTU provided music. College Funding, which helps families plan for college, was there to talk with families and share some of their secrets. T&N Homeade Kitchen food truck was a delicious addition to our event and made their own donation to support our cause. Thank you to our returning sponsors Bryn Mawr Running Company, PFit Inc., National Penn Bank and Admark360 for your 5K support. And special thanks to Main Line Health & State Farm Insurance who joined us as new sponsors this year!

Though the snowy weather resulted in fewer runners than in past years, our raffles were some of the best yet raising even more money than last year. Be sure to check out the AFTH Facebook page to see all of Caroline's amazing photos and to hear Shawnee's emotional speech.

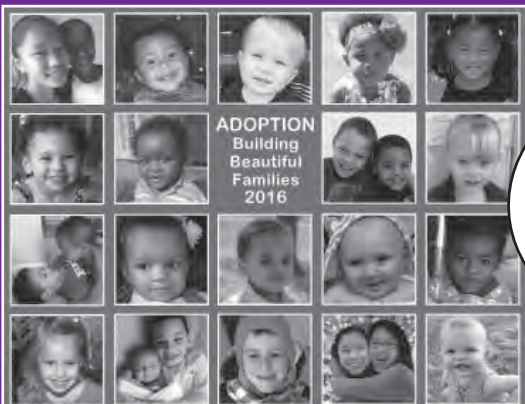
Thank you to everyone who supported through their donations, time, and sweat! The real thanks comes from all the men and women who will be helped through the Birthparent Scholarship Fund and the Birthmother Fund. Between now and the 2017 5K, we hope to see many of you at our summer picnics.

### Special thanks to all of our 2016 Find Her Footing 5K Donors:

Acme, Amici di Bertuccis, After Shokz, Anytime Fitness, Arnolds Family Fun Center, Avenue Kitchen, Buddys Burgers Breasts and Fries, Dos Gringos, Flyers, Fratelli's, Fuel, Hayden Printing Company, Healing Hands Massage, Hope's Cookies, Iron Hill Brewery, Keiretsu Forum, Kohl's Cares, More than Just Ice Cream, Oaks Italian Deli, Oaks Nail Spa, Oasis Family Fun Center, Original Bagels, Painting with a Twist, Philadelphia Rock Gym, Pinocchio Pizza, Primo Hoagies, QVC, Signs By Tomorrow, Sky Zone, Sesame Place, Stephens on State, Studio Di Estetica, Thirty-One Bags & Vertex Fitness



Now collecting pictures for the  
2017 Calendar Starring AFTH Children



Submit  
Your  
Photos!

**Label Photos:** child's name, age, country, parents name & address.

- Send horizontal pictures (it helps with design!)
- Send pictures with clean faces and endearing expressions!
- Send seasonal pictures and photos representing holidays!
- Use your digital camera's highest pixel for clarity!
- Send multiple pictures, variety is good!
- Send photos of **only** the children (make them the stars)

NOTE: if you have to send multiple emails due to file size, number the emails so we know we got them all! (eg. 1 of 4, 2 of 4)

## Deadline July 1, 2016

**Email to:** [KristyG@afth.org](mailto:KristyG@afth.org)

*(Kristy will respond with confirmation of receipt)*

**Mail to:** Marketing Team Calendar Search  
Adoptions From The Heart

30-31 Hampstead Circle, Wynnewood, PA 19096

## AFTH Picnic Corporate Sponsors

Over the past year, we are proud to say we've had many new organizations and corporate sponsors who have joined forces with AFTH in support of our mission and to help raise money for our Birthmother and Birthparent Scholarship Funds. We cannot thank them enough for their part in the success of our fundraising events. Here's a special shout out to our 2016 Summer Picnic Sponsors!

Platinum  
Heart Sponsor

[carranzacontracting.com](http://carranzacontracting.com)



### Gold Heart Sponsors



Sponsoring Family  
Portraits at the Picnic



Sponsoring a Candy Table  
at the Picnic



Sponsoring the  
Band's Performance

### Silver Heart Sponsors

Admark360 - Face Painting

Keller Williams Real Estate - Arts & Crafts

Soccer Shots - Kids Activity

Bob Cermignano Air Conditioning and Heating -  
Ice Cream Truck

Credit Cards  
Accepted Online:  
[www.afth.org](http://www.afth.org)

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

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.



## Social Workers Are the Backbone of AFTH

Prospective adoptive parent and expecting parents are often asked from others considering adoption why they choose to work with Adoptions From The Heart. Their number one response continues to be...our social workers.

March was National Social Work Month and we wanted to show how much our social workers mean to us. In addition to a special gift, we wanted to share what some of our clients have said about our social work staff. There were so many responses, we couldn't include them all however we are so proud to have receive such positive client feedback about all of our social workers. Here are just a few of the comments:

*Thank you to Ashley. You've been there for us through the ups and downs of our journey. We can't wait for our second call from you! – Jeff*

*We can never thank Ashley and Nicole enough for your guidance and support on our journey. The process was just that much more memorable and special because you were both a part of it! – Tracey*

*Forever grateful for Tamara, Danielle and the whole AFTH crew. Even now, when our little man is practicing for his terrible twos – Amy*

*Marilyn R, you will forever be a champion in our lives! –Melinda*

*We love Hannah very much for all her support throughout our journey! We are still waiting for our little one to join our family but her love and patience has made waiting easier! – Lauren*

*One of our most special memories is when Jeanne came to our finalization hearing. We were so nervous, but once she arrived all of that went out the window and we were able to truly enjoy and cherish that moment. - Jeff*

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## I Should've Known, But Didn't Fully Understand

As an employee of Adoptions From The Heart for the past 12 years, I have always known how dedicated our social workers and staff are to serving their clients. They raise the bar of ethics in a field where unethical behavior can be seen splattered constantly in the news, where often times getting the placement is more important than the people involved.

I have seen AFTH social workers dismiss themselves from holiday meals with their own families to drive to a hospital to be with a woman who is considering adoption and feels alone. I have seen them stand beside men and woman at the happiest times in their lives as well as shed tears with them during the hardest times. I hear how the social workers speak about their clients with such devotion and care as if they were family.



I knew from watching AFTH staff work, that their highest priority was their clients. So you would think that when my husband and I decided to officially begin our adoption journey that there wouldn't have been too many surprises in the level of service I received from AFTH, but you would be wrong. I was truly blown away by how "there" the social workers were for us. When I was struggling with a decision or concern along our journey, my social worker was constantly reminding me to let her be my sounding board so she could help us. When I would misplace the paperwork, I know shame shame, she would quickly respond and email all the forms that I needed, again. When I was driving myself crazy with stats, she was able to pull all the information I needed to answer my questions and

walk me through things one at a time. When she came into my office to tell me that we had been picked I think she was almost as excited as I was! When I spent nights and days in the hospital, she balanced checking in with me with giving me space to adjust to the little one's needs and re-entering the world of sleepless nights. When we went through a possible disruption after placement, the level of care and concern as well as humbling reminders as to why we are going through this process were her strengths. Never once did I feel alone or without guidance. My social worker's key phrase was "that's what we're here for" anytime I thought I was making a silly request or discovered how much of the process I couldn't really understand until I was personally going through it.

As the months passed and I grew much closer with my daughter's birthmother, I heard how incredible the social workers were to her as well. When we went in the books, what I wanted even more than "the call" was for our would-be child's birthparents to be given the highest level of care and attention as possible. For their social workers to walk them through the process hand in hand and hear out every single one of their concerns and fears. To advocate for them in all areas even if it wasn't what was best for me on the other side of the process. Before we ever became personally connected, I wanted to know that the woman who I know and love as my daughter's other mother would feel the genuine commitment and dedication from her social worker during this extremely difficult time in her life. That she was able to explore all her options and make the choice she decided was right for her and her baby and that there would be someone beside her to help see it through whatever she ultimately decided. I wanted to know that there was someone who would be there to hug her when her heart was breaking as she signed the papers or in the event that she changed her mind was telling her that it was ok to do that as well. In connecting much deeper with my daughter's birthmother after placement, I know that her experience did indeed match my hopes. During some of the most difficult days of her life, she had someone to lean on, someone to tell her she had the ability to choose whatever she felt was best and was there for her in all the ways she needed.

Throughout my entire experience, I have been astonished by how much above and beyond work the social workers put in for each and every client. It's so much more than what I thought and I had already entered the process with the bar set high.

I know it may seem obvious that I would be thrilled with my experience and recommend AFTH to everyone since I work there. However the moment we submitted our application, it got personal and it was about much more than supporting my employer. It was one of the most important journeys we will have in our lives and I would not have trusted anyone other than AFTH with such a life changing experience for myself or for my daughter's birthparents. **I'm also proud to say that my experience was not based on the fact that I'm an AFTH employee. It is based on the fabric of who AFTH social workers are and their dedication to ALL clients throughout and long after the process is complete.**

## AFTH Waiting Family Support Groups

AFTH understands the waiting process can be hard for families and so AFTH local offices host support groups for waiting families to come together in support. Support groups are led by AFTH staff and will cover a variety of topics designed for waiting families. Visit our events calendar at [www.afth.org](http://www.afth.org) for upcoming support group details or call your local office for more information.

## AFTH Birthparent Support Groups

One of the most helpful healing tips that many birthparents have found is to connect to others who really "get it." AFTH's birthparent support groups bring together men and women who have made the difficult decision to place their children. It's important to find support throughout the entire process, especially post placement. Friends and family as well as your adoption counselor can be great supporters. However connecting with others who have travelled down the same road can provide another level of understanding and support that those who haven't personally placed a child are unable to truly provide. Call your local office, 800-355-5500, for more details or visit our events calendar at [www.afth.org](http://www.afth.org) for upcoming support group details.

# Breaking Through the Fear of Open Adoption

In previous generations, adoptions were often stigmatized and kept secret. This practice reflected the cultural ideal at the time that adoption illegitimized the connection between parents and their adoptive children. Most children didn't have any information about their birthparents and many adoptees were not even told they were adopted until they were older, if they were ever told at all. It was believed that closed adoptions made it easier for birthparents, adoptees, and adoptive parents to adjust and move forward. However, the secrecy in previous closed adoptions left everyone involved with unanswered questions and unresolved feelings of loss, as well as the inability for adoptees to access their medical history or obtain information about their genetic background.

Today, society has become more accepting of adoption. Studies have proven both the negative effects of closed adoption as well as the positive benefits of open adoption on all the members of the adoption triad. Though the evidence supporting the need for open adoption, the concept is still often misunderstood and met with fear and hesitation. It is important to remember that although open adoption may seem like a scary concept at first, it's important to dive into the fear and break apart the insecurities in order to really see how the benefits typically outweigh the negatives. Most importantly, it is about helping the child be able to securely establish a sense of identity as they grow and to continue to ask questions and receive answers.

## Deciding On a Level of Openness

When deciding on a level of openness you are comfortable with, it is important to determine what will work best for you and your family, not just in your current situation but going forward as the child grows up. Be sure not to make any promises you aren't certain that you will be able to keep. Once you decide on an openness level, your choice will be used to present your profiles to expecting parents who desire a similar level of openness.

## Relationships and Openness Often Change Over Time

As your relationship deepens and continues to develop over time, you may find that your openness level begins to increase. *"At first we were open to 2-3 visits a year and communication with the agency as the intermediary. However after about 4 months after placement, we already felt comfortable enough to share phone numbers and now text and share photos on Facebook regularly. She has become a part of our family and has strengthened our resolve to keep our promises to her and our child."*

Leave room for your relationship to grow and change over time. Remember, communication may ebb and flow based on what is going on in your child's birthparents' lives. All relationships take work, including open adoption communication. Be sure to stay committed to your promises and focus on the benefits of forging this important relationship with your child's birthparents.

## Benefits to Birthparents:

- Helps to gain peace of mind by knowing that their child is doing well by receiving updates, photos and even visits
- Allows the opportunity to develop relationships with their child and child's adoptive parents
- Assists in some ways with easing the loss

## Benefits to Adoptive Parents:

- Opportunity to build healthy relationships with their child's birth families
- Obtain medical history and important background information about their child
- Gives the opportunity to contact their child's birth families in order to answer questions they may have regarding their child's history
- Helps to gain a shared respect for the child's birth family

## Benefits to Adoptees:

- Lessens a child's need to fantasize about their parents and where they came from and instead gives them opportunity to view their birthparents as real people.
- Gives them the opportunity to ask questions directly to their birthparents as they grow
- Allows them to have a knowledge of their history
- Provides a deeper understanding of their identity
- Allows access to their genetic and medical history
- Increases the understanding for their placement and decreasing their sense of abandonment on some levels
- Increases the number of adults in their lives as a support system
- Provides the opportunity to connect with biological siblings in the future
- Creates a level of transparency eliminating secrecy and decreases the feeling of shame regarding adoption



# Adoptions From The Heart®

hosts its

## 28th Annual Picnic

RAIN or SHINE!

*New Day & Date For This Year*

Saturday, June 18, 2016

11am-2pm

Join AFTH staff and families, both domestic and international, as well as waiting families as we celebrate building beautiful families. Bring your family, a blanket, and a picnic lunch. AFTH will provide some drinks, snacks, and entertainment.

**Those using GPS:**  
State parks do not have street addresses, use

**44 W. Mill Road  
Flourtown, PA 19031**

It's the home across the street from the park.

Raffles,  
Arts & Crafts,  
Live Music, Snacks  
Face Painting, and Ice  
Cream for each child!  
**Free Family  
Portraits!**



**OPEN ADOPTION VISITS...**We encourage all our Open Adoption families to invite their child's birth parents. Send a letter of invitation with your full name and the birth parent's name to your local AFTH office. Be sure to send your letter soon so your child's birth parents do not miss out on this great event. AFTH will not invite your child's birth parent without your consent.

## What To Know Before You Go...



Waiting Adoptive Parents we welcome you to join us behind the welcome & raffle tables in order to meet other AFTH waiting families.

*MEETING OTHERS? DESIGNATE A SPECIFIC MEETING AREA  
- BALLOONS ARE A GREAT WAY TO MAKE IT EASY TO BE FOUND*

*FOLLOW RANGER'S PARKING INSTRUCTIONS*

*THERE WILL BE AMAZING RAFFLES! (CASH/DEBIT/CREDIT)*

*NEW THIS YEAR... 2 FOOD TRUCKS!*

Chef Donte's Delicious Dishes and Breaktime Mobile Kitchen, 2 of Philly's finest food trucks will be selling food and donating up to 25% of the profit back to the Birthmother Fund!

# Connecticut's Annual Adoption Picnic

Come spend an afternoon with old friends and new friends!



**Wickham Park Manchester**

**Sunday, June 26<sup>th</sup>**

**Noon-3pm**

**-MCGRAFT PAVILION-**

**[www.wickhampark.org](http://www.wickhampark.org)**

**NEW VENUE  
THIS YEAR**

We have a private pavilion with access to sports facilities including tennis, volleyball, and horseshoes. There are gardens, ponds, playgrounds and an aviary to explore!  
There will be plenty of beautiful space to enjoy the day with your family!

Please bring a picnic lunch... snacks and drinks will be provided!  
*Please note that there is a \$7.00 charge for cars to park.*

**RSVP REQUIRED!**



**RSVP By Calling:  
(860) 657-2626**

**Please contact Claudia  
with any questions:  
[ClaudiaM@afth.org](mailto:ClaudiaM@afth.org)  
or call (860) 657-2626**

***Deadline for Reservations: JUNE 23RD!***





Adoptions From The Heart®

# 2016 Virginia Annual Picnic

**Chesapeake City Park  
"Fun Forest"**

**Saturday, June 4<sup>th</sup>**

**Noon - 3:00 pm**

**Rain or Shine**



"Fun Forest" is the ultimate playground with an imagination center & family adventure area.

**Get ready to enjoy our annual adoption celebration!**

- ♥ Bring a picnic lunch.
- ♥ Grills are available for families to use.
- ♥ AFTH will provide paper products, drinks, and ice.

Check out the...

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

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



Families who adopted through the **Open Adoption Program** are encouraged to invite birth parents to the annual picnic. If interested, please send a letter of invitation for your child's birth parents to the Chesapeake AFTH office and be sure to include your full name and birth parents' names. We will forward the letter to your child's birth parents. Please send letter as soon as possible to allow time for birth parents to respond. **No birth parents will be invited by the agency without your consent.**

**RSVP by Monday, May 30th: (757)361-0008 or [KimberlyR@afth.org](mailto:KimberlyR@afth.org)**

**Chesapeake City Park "Fun Forest" 900 City Park Drive, Chesapeake, VA 23320**

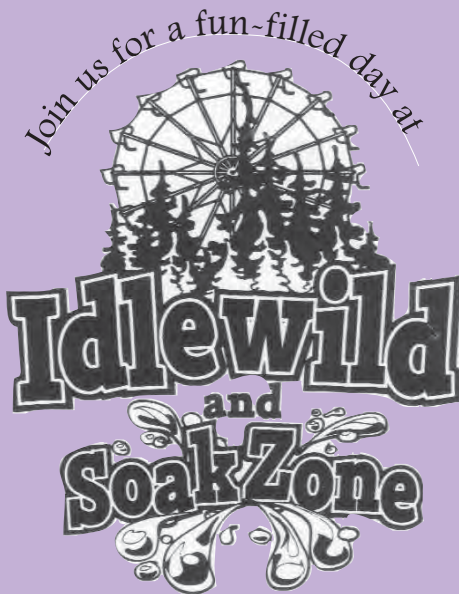


Adoptions From The Heart®

# 16th Annual Pittsburgh Office Picnic



Friday, August 5th



Exciting rides! Seven Themed Areas!  
Roller coasters and water slides!  
WAVE POOL and Kiddie Pool!

BRAND NEW - lazy river!

Bring your own lunch or choose from  
several eateries at the park.

Located on Route 30 in Ligonier, PA

*Park opens at 10:30 am  
Join us at Pavilion C2 & C3  
from 11am-2pm*

*Directions on website  
(724) 238-3666  
[www.idlewild.com](http://www.idlewild.com)*

Cost is \$23 per person. Children 2 and under are free.

Tickets will be sent directly to you before the picnic.

*If you have questions or need directions ...*

*Call Katie at (724) 853-6533 or email [KatieH@afth.org](mailto:KatieH@afth.org).*

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

# of tickets \_\_\_\_\_ # of people attending \_\_\_\_\_ Amount enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Make checks payable to:  
Adoptions From The Heart

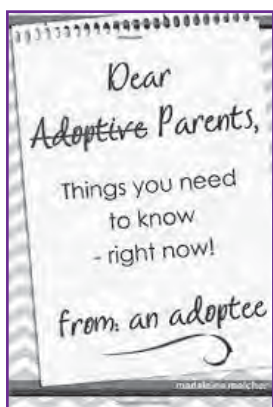
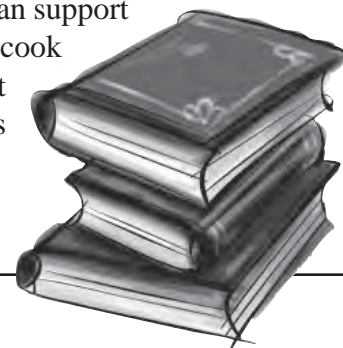
Send this form and payment to:  
Adoptions From The Heart  
1225 South Main St. Suite 207  
Greensburg, PA 15601

**Deadline to order: July 8th**

# 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.

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



## Book Reviews

**Dear Adoptive Parents: Things You Need to Know Right Now - from an Adoptee by Madeleine Melcher** - Written as a series of letters to parents who have adopted, Melcher offers positive encouragement and great advice.

There are several important take aways. 1. Don't live your child's adoption. It does not have to be the most important thing in the room at all times. 2. Your tone regarding adoption sets the tone that they will carry with them about adoption as well as how they will view it how they perceive it. If you voice complaints or negative things about adoption, adoptees will often internalize it. 3. Listen to your child. Make sure you are listening to them and their needs and not just what you perceive their needs to be. Overall this is a very positive book that is empowering to parents who have formed their families through adoption.

### In Their Voices: Black Americans on Transracial Adoption by Rhonda M. Roorda

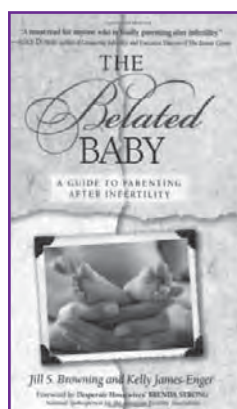
- This is a straight forward and very eye opening book for white families adopting a black or biracial child. It's focus is to help white families empower their children of color without sugar coating the realities. It's about teaching parents how to help their children grow up in a still very racist society.

Transracial adoption isn't the right path for everyone. It's not always comfortable, it's not



always easy, but the rewards are worth it when you raise a confident child who has a sense of cultural identity. Straddling two worlds can be complicated as Ms. Roorda can attest to as a woman of color raised by white parents. This book encourages families to step up and look at the hard questions in deciding if transracial adoption is the right fit for them.

While some of the content of this book may seem very in your face, it is a must read for all white parents who have or are considering adopting a black child. There is a need to break through the barriers of those who take on a color blind approach to parenting. The world isn't color blind and so adopting transracially often means getting out of your comfort zone for the sake of your children.



### The Belated Baby: A Guide to Parenting After Infertility by Kelly James Enger & Jill S. Browning

- Approximately 7.3 million American women have struggled with infertility; the echoes of which may be felt long after they live out the dream of having a child either through birth, adoption or surrogacy. This book shares the

stories of many women who have gone through post infertility depression. It also discusses the many stages that couples may go through as they struggle with infertility and then ultimately find themselves new parents. This book is straight forward and validating as well as encouraging to those who find themselves facing a similar position.

## AFTH Program Updates



**DOMESTIC PROGRAMS** - AFTH was excited to welcome Spring this year as it seemed in many areas winter didn't want to let up as apparent with the snow we saw on the ground in mid-April the morning of our Find Her Footing 5K.

With the start of warmer weather comes picnic season! AFTH welcomes all AFTH families (international, domestic, placed and waiting) to attend our upcoming summer picnics. The large agency picnic is held in Fort Washington, PA each year. Please note that due to the State Parks closures, the picnic was not able to be held on the first Sunday of the month as it has been for the past 27 years. **The time and location are the same but for this year the picnic has been moved to SATURDAY, June 18th.** The picnic will still be packed with activities and fun for families as well as great music and raffles which support the Birthmother Fund. Don't worry if you miss out on the hot dogs the AFTH Board Members are cooking at the start of the picnic because two of Philadelphia's most popular food trucks have teamed up with AFTH for our picnic. Chef Donte's Delicious Dishes and Breaktime Mobile Kitchen will have food available for purchase and what's even better than their incredible food is that they will be donating up to 25% of all their profits for the day back to AFTH's Birthmother Fund! Our outer offices including Pittsburgh, Connecticut and Virginia also host yearly summer picnics. For more information on the picnics see the newsletter insert. Not only are the picnics a great chance for staff and families to catch up, but it makes a great venue for visits with your child's birthparents. We encourage all our open adoption families to invite their child's birthparents to the event. Be sure to send your letter of invitation soon so that you don't miss out on this great event to come together for a visit. Be sure to include your full name (for internal use only) and your child's birthparent's name so that we can pass along your invitation. Waiting families are also welcome to join in the picnic fun!

Spring also means that we have opened up the call for adoptive families to submit photos of their children adopted through AFTH for the 2017 AFTH Building Beautiful Families calendar. **Make sure to check out the details on page 3!**

AFTH also hosts education classes and childcare classes as well as support groups for waiting families and birthparents throughout the year. Contact your social worker or visit [www.afth.org/calendar](http://www.afth.org/calendar) for upcoming events.

So far this fiscal year, AFTH has experienced the highest percentage of emergency placements we have ever seen. This attests to our social workers' strong relationships with hospitals and staff. They know from past experience with AFTH that they can rely on us to be there anytime we are needed and that we will be there for patients no matter what they decide in the end. Since July, the majority of our placements each month have been emergency placements. However beginning in February, we have seen a shift in emergency placements back to a rate that was more typical in years past. With that said, more and more of our monthly placements are non-emergency cases which means social workers have more time and ability to counsel expecting parents prior to birth.

Offices have focused outreach efforts to saturate areas where expecting parents considering adoption might be looking for resources and additional information about their options. In the first three months of 2016, AFTH social workers have hit more than 500 potential referral sources in-person to provided them with information to hand out to expecting parents who are exploring their options. Social workers are committed to offering hospitals and clinics specialized adoption training to help them better assist their patients who are considering and choosing adoption.

For those who are at the beginning of their adoption journey and are exploring their options, we welcome you to attend one of our free information meetings held at one of our many offices. The meetings are a great way to learn about our program, meet the staff and ask any questions you might have. Adoptive parents come to several of the information meetings to share their experience with the agency and the adoption process. AFTH also offers monthly online webinars, similar to our info meetings, that you can participate in the comfort of your own home. For more information about an upcoming webinar or meeting, visit our online calendar of events at [www.afth.org](http://www.afth.org).

# Recent Legislation



**PENNSYLVANIA** - If all of these proposed bills pass in PA they could be beneficial to both expecting parents and prospective adoptive parents in Pennsylvania. Currently these bills are under review and in committee and slowly progressing toward a vote.

- HB 1524 - updates the requirements about each county compiling a counseling list to be provided to expectant parents considering adoption; also adds a \$75 filing fee which will go towards each county's counseling fund
- HB 1525 - requires proof of diligent search for putative fathers and requirements about publication for unknown fathers; allows biological parents to sign a waiver of notice of hearings related to the adoption proceedings
- HB 1526 - changes the revocation period to 5 days instead of 30 and eliminates the need to provide biological parents notice of hearings
- HB 1527 - repeals the requirement of the report of intermediary in PA - would instead include the information in the petition for adoption
- HB 1528 - allows adoptive families to appeal their approved adoption subsidy amount
- HB 1529 - allows adoptive parents to pay living expenses for expecting parents 3 months prior to birth and up to 60 days after birth
- HB 1530 - allows correctional officers to witness consents for biological parents who are incarcerated
- HB 1531 - eliminates the need for a confirmation of consent hearing in some cases

For updates on these bills and for a list of contact information for the representative who are sponsoring the bill, visit: [www.legis.state.pa.us](http://www.legis.state.pa.us)

## With Over 14,000 Facebook Followers, AFTH's Social Media Adoption Discussions are in FULL BLOOM!

Our social media has been exploding with specialized content, questions and answers and thought-provoking adoption discussions. Whether you are a prospective adoptive parent, birthparent, adoptee, or adoptive parent already, we want YOU to join in the discussion. Let's Get Talking!



Facebook isn't the only way to get involved with AFTH on social media. Stay in the loop, join in the discussions, participate in contests, read valuable articles and connect with great resources for prospective adoptive parents, those going through the process, and families after placement as they continue to raise their children.

Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest, Tumblr  
Instagram, Google+, & WordPress





## 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](mailto:RobertaE@afth.org).

### CHINA

There are few changes to report since our last newsletter. The current Log in Date for referrals is January 9, 2007 and the LID for past clients of AFTH was January 16, 2007. There may be one or two ex-clients still waiting.

### HAITI

*Transition Cases:* USCIS and DOS continue to have discussions with IBESR (Haiti's Child Welfare Agency) on how these cases may proceed.

*Processing Convention Adoptions:* Haiti entered into the Hague Convention on April 1, 2014. ASPs and PAPs are strongly encouraged to read the significantly updated guidance now available on the Department's updated page on adopting from Haiti. New adoption procedures may be finalized by IBESR as early as March 2016. Also IBESR has agreed to review cases with known prior contact issues and/or out-of-order adoptions on a case by case basis.

### KAZAKHSTAN

On February 20, 2016, the Ministry of Education and Science in Kazakhstan has requested the submission of all outstanding post-adoption reports on Kazakhstani children adopted by U.S. families. This includes 237 reports that the Ministry has identified as missing. If you adopted from Kazakhstan through Adoptions From The Heart and you know a report is or was due, please contact Roberta Evantash at [RobertaE@afth.org](mailto:RobertaE@afth.org) for more information. Apparently gathering the missing reports is necessary before Kazakhstan will re-open its doors to further adoptions.

### NEPAL

Due to the recent earthquake in Nepal, there are many more orphans in that country. However due to the lack of infrastructure there, Nepal cannot confirm these children as orphans which is the necessary first step

in making them eligible for adoption. Adoptions to the U.S. are still suspended except for children who are voluntarily relinquished or abandoned by their parents which is extremely rare. In 2014, there was one relinquishment case and in 2015 there were only two.

### SOUTH KOREA

As of 10/1/15, the I-600 process has changed. There is no longer legal guardianship of the adoptee upon leaving the country, whereas, adopting families completed the adoption in the United States. All South Korean adoptions are now finalized in that country. Details can be found on the South Korea page of USCIS.

### UGANDA

On March 2nd, the Parliament of Uganda unexpectedly passed the 2015 Children's Act Amendment Bill. The bill is now pending President Museveni's approval prior to becoming law. Apparently this law restricts fast-track foreign adoptions in which children-often living with parents-can be whisked overseas in a matter of days. The new bill requires foreigners seeking to adopt children to live in the east African country continuously for at least one year before applying and bars them from the quicker route of claiming legal guardianship. The bill also states inter-country adoption will only be permitted in cases where the child has no known relatives, legal guardians or foster parents.





## Surviving the Wait

*Advice from an  
Adoptive Mother*

Waiting can be one of the hardest parts of the adoption process for families and so AFTH's Wynnewood Office recently held a support group called "Surviving the Wait" to tackle the topic. It was a time for waiting families to come together and share their challenges with the wait as well as any advice they have found helpful in easing the time in the book. The support group included an adoptive mother sharing about her journey, AFTH social workers sharing articles and advice about the wait, and adoptive families in attendance also shared things they have found helpful during their wait. Here's the advice one mother shared:

*From my experience with the adoption process as an adoptive mother, I think it's important to realize that each family's process and journey is truly uniquely their own. The process has many ups and downs and can feel much like a roller coaster ride. The wait is no exception. Family and friends will try to be encouraging and will say things like "the right baby will find you" which of course I believe but when you are in the process those words aren't often enough to settle the anxiety of the wait.*

*The wait wasn't our biggest challenge during the process, it was post-placement when facing a potential disruption. We have friends who were waiting for about 8 months longer than we had who commented that they have come to the realization that they would rather an even longer wait if it meant not experiencing the trials we went through post placement. I think it just goes to show that each adoption journey must be embraced for it's own unique experience. Some waiting families came from long bouts with infertility prior to choosing adoption and some do not. Some families enter the books in as little as 4 months and for others it takes a good bit longer. Some may wait a month and then be matched with someone who isn't due for 5 months and another couple may wait 5 months and have an emergency placement. Yet another couple may only wait 3 months but experience a disruption and disappointment in that short time while others seem to have the longest time for every single step of the process.*

*The bottom line is that it's about really opening yourself for the **whole** journey, your whole experience as it will be from start to finish, fast or slow, hilly and rocky or smooth and easy. It's about focusing on the end goal, to be a family and opening your lives to the paths that you will travel down to get to that finish. And once you do, there is a whole other challenge called parenthood!*

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## Congratulations to Families Who Have Recently Adopted!

### Daughters

Rodney & Anne  
Scott & Joeline  
Robert & Jennifer  
Alexander & Falhima  
Justin & Maureen  
Joseph & Erin  
Doug & Shelly  
Nicholas & Kelly  
Shani  
Michael & Christopher  
Matthew & Amanda  
Rhonda  
Arturo & Linda  
Remi  
Amanda & Kathleen  
Christopher & Katie

### Sons

Jason & Amy  
Mario & Jennifer  
David & Mark  
James & Gretchen  
Glen & Christine  
Sean & Noelle  
Edwin & Dawn  
Stephen & Kristy  
Charles & Krystal  
Raymond & Margaret  
Jacob & Joanne  
Ryan & Leanne





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2016

*or current resident*

### Is Our Mailing List Current?

Are your name and address incorrect? Want to be removed from mailings? Are you receiving more than one copy? Let us know: [adoption@afth.org](mailto:adoption@afth.org)

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



## FREE ONLINE WEBINARS

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

### DOMESTIC INFANT ADOPTION

JUNE 7TH AT 7PM

JULY 5TH AT 7PM

*Registration Required*

*Calendar of Events at [www.afth.org](http://www.afth.org)*

## Recent and Upcoming Events & Conferences

Visit the AFTH booth at the below events.  
Go to [www.afth.org](http://www.afth.org) for event details.

### RECENTLY ATTENDED:

#### April 16th

APC Mini Conference in Port Chester, NY

#### May 5-7th

27th Annual NYSCC Conference in Albany, NY

#### May 6th

NASW 31st Annual Conference in Cromwell, CT

### UPCOMING:

#### May 24th

Where to Turn Resource Fair in Pittsburgh, PA

#### September 24th

6th Annual DELMED Conference in Lewes, DE

#### November 24th

36th Annual APC Conference in Brooklyn, NY