

Adoption News

A quarterly newsletter from

Adoptions From The Heart



Casino Royale: Betting on a Better Future Raises \$6,500 for the Birth Parent Scholarship Fund



Imagine a world where every individual has the potential and means to accomplish their goals. Thanks to supporters of Adoptions From The Heart's inaugural Casino Royale, we are able to help make that dream a reality for even more people. On Saturday, November 5th, AFTH supporters, friends and

staff members came together in Wynnewood for a night of fundraising, games and entertainment benefiting the Birth Parent Scholarship Fund.

Excitement filled the room from the minute guests entered the door. The special night truly offered something for everyone. For those who like to test their luck, there were casino tables. Dealers were even eager to explain game rules to some first-timers! The "foodies" in the crowd were certainly not disappointed thanks to Finley Catering and their delicious food. For guests looking to "bust a move," the Villanova Jazz Ensemble provided live entertainment. Deal seekers were offered the opportunity to bid on amazing silent auction items. Everyone enjoyed snapping some pictures at Rick's Pix Booth and LevLane's Step & Repeat photo station. And for the younger crowd a Snapchat geo-filter was designed specifically for the event. It was wonderful to watch guests genuinely enjoy themselves while spending time raising money for an amazing cause.

A very special thank you to Jason Lee of PHL17, who featured Casino Royale on their morning show, and also attended the event as host. Lee was joined by Thom Rossi, an adoptive parent and chairman of AFTH's Board. Rossi added a unique touch to his task as emcee, with many guests moved as Rossi and his wife presented a check for \$500 to contribute to the fund.

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Locations

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AFTH first introduced casino-style games at our Building Beautiful Futures 30th Year Anniversary celebration in October of 2015. As guests flocked to the casino section to play games with Cards or Dice Entertainment, an idea was born. Why not have a Casino Royale event? As the days passed and Casino Royale drew near, AFTH staff hoped for the same kind of enthusiasm seen at the casino tables one year ago. We received that same spirit of excitement from guests, and then some – we cannot thank our attendees enough for making November 5th the kind of evening that we will not soon forget.

We are thrilled to announce that a total of \$6,438.67 has been raised through this event for the Birth Parent Scholarship Fund. With two more donations on their way in, we are proud to have hit our \$6,500 goal for the night. The fund, which began in the summer of 2014, helps birth parents all across the United States as they pursue their dream to secure a better future through education. Any birth parent who has placed their child for adoption after 1985 is eligible to apply for the scholarship, regardless of whether or not they have a direct connection to Adoptions From The Heart. Since its inception, the fund has offered over \$8,500 in scholarships.

With events like the Casino Royale, we hope to increase both the value of scholarships offered as well as the number of scholarships each semester. Our most recent scholarship winner, Marisa Kealoha, recently described what the fund has meant to her. “When I see a girl on the streets in a crisis pregnancy like I once was, I am glad I can be a living example to her that with loving sacrifice and hard work, her dreams don’t have to fade.”

Thank you so much to all of our guests for an AMAZING night of fun. Because of your generosity and support, the Scholarship Fund will be able to impact many other birth parents in really big ways. We are already looking forward to next year and hope to have even more supporters join in the fun!

Special Thanks to the Casino Royale's Vendors:

Adam Schwartz Photography
 Cards or Dice Entertainment
 Finley Catering
 Rick's Pix Booth
 Villanova Jazz Ensemble



To Our Incredible Sponsors and Donors, We Could Not Have Done It Without You:

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	Wegmans



Credit Cards Accepted Online:
www.afth.org/donate

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

Please use my donation: Birth Parent Support 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, we are required to advise you that a copy of our official registration and financial information may be obtained from either the PA Department of State by calling, toll-free within PA, (800) 732-0999, and for the state of NJ may be obtained from the Attorney General of the State of New Jersey 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 VA Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Division of Consumer Protection, P.O. Box 1163, Richmond, VA 23218, phone number (804) 786-1343, and for the State of Connecticut upon a written request from the State of Connecticut Department of Consumer Protection, 165 Capital Avenue, Hartford, CT 06106, phone number (800) 842-2649

Building Beautiful Families 2016 Calendar

Sales Benefit the Expecting and Birth Parent Support Fund

Every year we receive over 1,000 photos submission from AFTH families for the calendar contest. The children featured in this year's calendar range from only a few months old up to sixteen and seventeen representing both domestic and international adoption programs.

The calendar is one of our favorite projects every year, not only because we get to see such amazing children, but also because it helps to raise money for AFTH's Expecting and Birth Parent Support Fund. The Fund provides assistance in various ways to the men and women working with AFTH who are considering or who have made an adoption plan for their child. Often times, the financial support is needed to provide necessities such as food, housing, clothing, heat during the winter. About 1/3 of the men and women we work with are parenting other children. The fund is able to also provide assistance for their needs as well.



Cost: \$13.00 + \$1.50 shipping

3 Ways to Purchase Your Calendars:

- 1) Online at the AFTH Online Store at www.tiny.cc/AFTHcalendar
- 2) Complete the below form and mail in with payment
- 3) Stop at an AFTH Office after Dec 6th and avoid the shipping charges.

Building Beautiful Families 2017 Calendar

Name: _____ Phone: (____) _____

Address: _____ City: _____ State: ____ Zip: _____

Please SHIP ____ # Calendars x \$14.50 = \$ _____ Total Enclosed

I Will PICK UP ____ # Calendars x \$13.00 = \$ _____ Total Enclosed

at the _____ AFTH OFFICE

Make Checks Payable to: Adoptions From The Heart

Mail Payment and Form To: 30-31 Hampstead Circle, Wynnewood, PA 19096

Getting Through the Holidays

The holidays are a time to celebrate love, friendship, and family. It can also be a time that is particularly hard on waiting adoptive parents as well as birth parents.

Tips for Birth Parents

The absence of your child during the holidays may trigger your sense of grief and loss. You may wonder what it might have been like had you made a different choice. Here are some tips other birth parents have found helpful in getting through the holiday season:

Establish a Support System

While there is no cure to take the feelings of loss away, it can be helpful to build a support system to help you work through them. Reach out to family, close friends, or even a counselor. Connect with other birth parents that may be going through the same thing. Contact an organization that offers grief support over the holidays and look into the resources that they offer.

Reach Out To Your Child

If you have an open adoption, coordinate a time during the holidays that you can spend together. If this isn't possible, request to talk on the phone or skype together, or even write a special letter to your child.

Take Time Out for Yourself

Although certain activities may be a tradition, don't feel pressured to attend any event that makes you feel upset or uncomfortable.

Start a New Tradition

You can incorporate your child into the celebration by creating a special ornament, lighting a special candle for them, or making a holiday scrapbook.

Remember Your Decision Was Made Out of Love

When doubt creeps into your thoughts, remember why you chose adoption. As a birth parent, you considered all of your options and made the decision you felt was best for your baby. That certainly doesn't mean you don't love your child or that you didn't want to parent - it means that you put your child's needs above your own wants.

Begin to Journal

Sometimes journaling can be a great way to express your feelings and help you work through the sadness.



Although the holidays may be difficult, remember they don't last forever! Allow yourself the time to grieve, but don't forget to enjoy the holidays.

Tips for Waiting Adoptive Parents

Holidays are a time to spend time with loved ones. They may also become a reminder of what is missing.

Avoid Things That Are Triggering

You don't have to show up to every single party you are invited to, especially if it might be triggering. It's okay to skip the party hosted by your friend with a newborn baby if you don't feel up to it this year.

Prepare Yourself for Uncomfortable Conversation

You will probably find yourself surrounded by strangers who like to small talk. Questions such as "do you have children?" may come up. Being prepared with a simple answer may help ease your anxiety.

Be Honest

Sharing your feelings regarding the wait with family and friends can help to take some weight of your shoulders. It will help them to be more sensitive and avoid making remarks that may be unknowingly upsetting.

Get Support from Other Waiting Parents

Being surrounded by families with children may make you feel alone. Reaching out to other parents who are also waiting can help you to realize that you are not the only one experiencing these feelings. Family and friends may not be able to understand your emotions, but other parents who are waiting to adopt will.

Do Something Special for Yourself

Channel some of your energy into doing something nice for yourself. Have an extra glass of wine, buy yourself a gift, or take yourself out for a spa day. Maybe find something you know you won't be able to do once you have a little one and make the time to do it now.

Gift Ideas for Birth Parents

What gift can you give someone that can possibly convey how much you appreciate them and how thankful you are for them? It's often the simplest gifts that matter most. Here are some ideas for heartfelt holiday presents for your child's birth parents:

Handprint Calendar - Create a calendar on your computer and make a special hand print for each month (a flag handprint for July, turkey November, snowflake for January).

Homemade Photo Magnets - Make homemade magnets using painted lids or other items around your house. Add your child's photo to the front and a magnetic strip to the back and you've created a unique gift.

Send a Hug - There are several simple crafts that allow children to make hugs to send in the mail. One quick search of "sending hugs" on Pinterest is all you need.

Matching Holiday Ornaments - For many families, it is a tradition to let children pick out a new holiday ornament each year. When you take your child to pick out their new ornament, buy multiples of the same ornament and give the other ones to your child's birth parents. This gift allows birth parents and children to have a special item that connects them each holiday season.

Send an email to Adoption@afth.org and tell us about a special gift you have made for your child's birth parents.

Gift for Birthparents from the Heart: Memory Bear

Jeff and Samantha, who just recently adopted their baby boy, Ethan, through AFTH, were so excited when they discovered they'd be expanding their family. Their bursting gratitude inspired them. They were on the hunt to find a special gift to show Ethan's birth parents how much they meant to their family. That's when Samantha discovered the memory bear.

Jeff and Samantha decided to make a teddy bear from baby Ethan's hospital blankets that he was swaddled in after birth. As their social worker described, "they told the nurses what they wanted to do and showed them pictures of what the bears would look like when finished. Staff gave their permission for them to take the blankets."

We spoke with Samantha to find out a little more about why their family decided to make this special bear.



After years of infertility and treatments, Jeff and I decided to choose adoption to complete our family. We started the adoption process December of last year and were recently placed with a baby boy, Ethan, on September 11. I originally started looking on Pinterest for adoption family picture ideas, advice and experiences a few months ago. That's when I came across the pin of a memory bear. I thought it would be an adorable idea to make a bear for his birth parents! I thought it would be a very thoughtful gift for them to always have a piece of their baby with them. I thought it would be comforting to have something of his, made by his mother and grandmother. I had intended to sew the bear myself, but under the circumstances we were in while Ethan was in the NICU for almost 3 weeks, Jeff's mom was able to do it for us. I'm very thankful for the time she took to make them for us!

It is wonderful to see such love and kindness towards birth parents. The empathy for their loss and grief is something that AFTH advocates for our adoptive parents to understand. Adoption is something that creates a great loss. We appreciate how thoughtful this special gift was and know that Ethan's birth parents treasure it deeply.

Family Fun Day at Colonial Gardens



Starting a new tradition, the Wynnewood office opted for a fall event instead of our usual holiday party. We wanted to take advantage of the beautiful weather and the opportunity to celebrate all that the fall season has to offer by having a fall festival. The inaugural event was held at Colonial Gardens in Phoenixville, PA, where AFTH staff offered snacks and crafts and the venue offered hayrides, a fun Pumpkinland play area, and pumpkins to pick! Everyone in attendance had a great time playing in the sandbox and Pumpkinland, decorating pumpkins, and visiting with other families built through adoption. We look forward to making the fall festival a new AFTH Wynnewood tradition!

Idlewild Picnic Recap

Idlewild Amusement Park and Soak Zone in Ligonier, PA was the site of the Pittsburgh AFTH Picnic on August 5. Families spent the hot and sunny day enjoying the park and especially the water rides and wave pool. Adoptive families visited with their children's birth families and celebrated that special bond created through adoption. The agency received some really great donations from area businesses for our raffle baskets which raised over \$100 for our Expecting and Birth Parent Support Fund. More than 30 families attended the picnic, some who had just recently adopted in the past year and some who completed their adoptions more than 15 years ago! Our Pittsburgh staff enjoyed spending the day with all of the families and especially loved seeing how wonderfully the children are doing with their forever families!

Central PA Fall Festival



Central PA staff were thrilled to have 53 adults and 25 children attend our very first fall festival. The hot dogs and s'mores were a huge hit with everyone! We had bean bag tosses and hula hoops for the kids, along with a fall craft making a turkey out of their handprint. Kids loved playing in the leaves! Families reconnected with friends and met new ones too. We also had a few birth parents visiting with their families and children. It was a beautiful fall day and we enjoyed being able to be both inside and out. We were able

to meet some of our neighbors in our development and make some great connections with them too. We hope to make it even bigger and better for next year.

Cherry Hill Fall Fun Day



The AFTH New Jersey office held its Fall Fun Day on October 22. Many New Jersey adoptive parents and children enjoyed seasonal activities including Witch Hat Ring Toss, pumpkin decorating, and the ghoulishly amusing Eyeball Lob! Fall treats were aplenty with locally picked apples from a nearby orchard. But the clear

favorite of everyone in attendance was the Apple Cider Donuts. Children ages 2 through 16 had a wonderful time celebrating the autumn season with tricks as well as treats!



Friends Through Adoption Become Family Via Kidney Transplant

Earlier this year, AFTH received an email from a family who had adopted through our China Program over ten years ago. Marie Kilgore and her family had a wonderful adoption experience and were enjoying the past ten years with their daughter, Grace.

The Kilgore family reached out to us because their story involved another AFTH family whom they had met while adopting from China and traveling together. This family included mother Liz Smith, who became close friends with Marie. Their friendship took a special twist this past year when Liz donated her kidney to Marie. They wanted to share their story to celebrate the connections made through adoption, as well as to share the importance of living donors. These were two topics that Marie and Liz both wanted to advocate for, and AFTH was honored to be asked to help them do it.



Liz and Marie's friendship was long distance from the start. As prospective adoptive parents, Liz and her husband were working with AFTH through our Virginia Office. Marie and her husband were hoping to adopt as well, but working with our Wynnewood Office. They initially met via a chat room for parents in the same travel group going to China to bring home their children. After meeting face-to-face on their trip to China, the two families became fast friends. Despite living far apart, they continued their friendship after returning to the states. Their daughters grew up as close friends. Lili, Liz's daughter, was especially caring for Grace and her difficulties with Epilepsy. Even though Liz's family has relocated to California, the families have remained close, not only with each other, but with other families from the trip as well.



These bonded families went on vacation together a couple years back. At one point during the trip, Marie broke the difficult news that she was having kidney issues and would eventually need a transplant. Liz immediately stepped up and offered to donate. Her offer was so quick, in fact, that Marie almost thought she was joking! Marie's husband had been planning to be her donor, so for the time, Liz's kind proposition was put aside. However, some months later, Marie and her husband found that he was not a match for the transplant. She called Liz, wondering if she really meant the incredible gesture at their vacation. Of course she did! She was a match and they were set for surgery.



In August of 2016, they had their surgery at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania. Despite some initial complications, all has been going smoothly since. Liz is now back in California with her family who happily help her with daily tasks. Marie is also recovering with the support of her family and friends.

These two women understand one another in a way no one else can. Not only have they shared the experiences of international adoption and raising a child from adoption, but they have also shared their lives together physically, emotionally, and mentally. They are more than friends now - they declare they are sisters. AFTH is so thrilled to see such a loving connection created through adoption. We thank Liz and Marie for sharing their story with us and allowing us to share it with you. In October, their story also received national coverage in USA Today.

Many Ways to Give Back

'Tis the season of giving thanks and giving back to others who are in need. We appreciate everyone who has partnered with AFTH in years past. Because of your generosity, we have impacted even more lives in big ways. The greatest need we see, in addition to providing our counseling services, is to provide financial assistance to expecting and birth parents. When an expecting mother isn't able to work the last few weeks of her pregnancy and cannot cover her rent, your donations make an impact. When a birth parent falls on hard times just before winter and could use help purchasing warm coats for her children, your contribution is vital. There are many different needs and with your incredible support, we can be there to answer them.

Amazon Smile

By using Amazon Smile, all of your online shopping can support your favorite non-profit every time you shop, at no cost to you. AFTH is happy to be one of the many organizations recognized by Amazon Smile.

Here's how to set AFTH as your charity of choice:

- 1) Visit www.smile.amazon.com & sign into your Amazon account
- 2) Use the search toolbar to select Adoptions From The Heart as your charity of choice
- 3) Bookmark the page to begin your online shopping with Amazon Smile (www.smile.amazon.com)

Extraordinary Give

Each year, the Lancaster County Community Foundation hosts its annual Extraordinary Give, the largest day of online giving in the Lancaster Area. "One of the goals of the Extraordinary Give is to inspire giving in the county, to encourage people to give a little bit extra to the organizations that care about them," says Tracy Cutler, a foundation vice president. This year marked the first time that AFTH participated in this wonderful day of local online fundraising.

We are thrilled to announce that AFTH received \$905 in donations in just one day! These donations, which benefit the Expecting and Birth Parent Support Fund, will help offset the cost of gift cards for men, women and children in need this holiday season. This year's Extraordinary Give was an astronomical success bringing in a record \$7.1 million dollars for over 425 charitable organizations in the Lancaster community. We are so grateful to the Lancaster County Community Foundation and all of our generous donors for making a difference in someone else's life. Your gifts will touch the lives of many who turn to AFTH for help. #ExtraGive!

Gift Card Collection

Roughly 1/3 of women working with AFTH are also parenting other children. For someone living paycheck-to-paycheck, the holidays can feel hopeless. Each year, social workers identify birth parents who may be in need. Last winter, more than \$13,000 in gift cards were given to help birth parents and their families during the holidays.

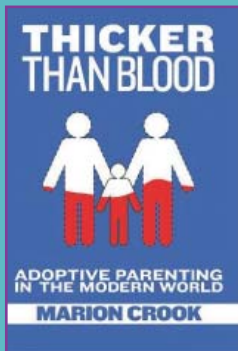


If you would like to give a gift card to help, AFTH will be accepting Target, Walmart, Wawa, Visa, and grocery/gas gift cards ranging from \$25-\$200. Gift cards can be mailed to AFTH at 30-31 Hampstead Circle, Wynnewood, PA 19096.





Book Reviews



Thicker Than Blood: Adoptive Parenting in the Modern World by Marion Crook - Author Marion Crook uses her own experience of parenting two sons who came into her family through adoption to get to the heart of parenting in today's world. While much of this book relates to adopting older children, there are many things that are still quite relevant when adopting an infant such as fears regarding birth parents and addressing issues of abandonment with children. Though Crook is from Canada, so many of the organizations and agencies she refers to are not relevant to the U.S., overall this is a good book that has some great advice and well-researched information.

Children Books: What is a Family? - Picture Book for Early & Beginner Readers by Ruthz SB - This is a sweet book about BeBe who is trying to define family. His friend poses different questions to him to get him to think harder about the question until BeBe



realizes there are many different types of families and that defining family isn't always so easy. This book shows many different aspects of what being a family means. In the end, BeBe realizes that family means different things to different people and none of these interpretations are wrong. This is a great book to start talking with children about different types of families and identifying all of the different types of families you may know

Sprout: An Adoption Story by Megan Meredith - Sprout



is a young seedling that is alone and in danger until a passerby sees him for more than his brokenness and gives him a place to grow. This beautifully illustrated story teaches us that one person can make all the difference. For children who are removed from dangerous or harmful environments and placed in new homes, this is a story of hope and love. It's a subtle story about

what love and encouragement can create and how these positive traits can help heal the wounds of brokenness. This book is a good book to help open up discussions with children.

No SSN For Child What To Do For Taxes

Some families who adopted domestically in 2016 may not be able to finalize before the end of the year. This means that some children will not officially be issued a Social Security Number in time for tax season. Here is what those families need to know come tax time:

The IRS can issue families an Adoption Taxpayer Identification Number (ATIN), a temporary nine-digit number for a child who does not yet have a social security number. ATIN numbers can be requested with form W-7A, available online at www.irs.gov. Documentation describing your child's placement will need to accompany the form. It can take up to eight weeks to receive an ATIN so families may want to start the process now. ATINs are valid for two years and can be used to claim dependency on tax documents.

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



Recent Legislation

NEW JERSEY - On January 1, 2017, adoptees born after November 19, 1940 will have access to their previously sealed original birth certificates. In May of 2014, Governor Christie amended the state's sealed adoption legislation, enacted nearly 80 years ago. The bill, S873, will allow adoptees, 18 years or older, to request an uncertified, long-form copy of their original birth certificate from the State Registrar. Although this new law allows adult adoptees access to their original birth records, birth parents still have the option to remain anonymous and deny contact. Beginning on August 1, 2015, birth certificates were automatically issued for all adoptions in the state. However, any birth parents who sealed their names prior to August 2015, have until December 31, 2016 to choose one of three options: allow adoptees to contact them directly, allow adoptees to contact them through an intermediary, or have their names redacted from the records and only share medical information. Furthermore, birth parents who choose to remain anonymous must update family medical history every year until the birth parent turns 40, then every 5 years after that.

PENNSYLVANIA - On November 3, Gov. Tom Wolf signed HB 162 into law. Effective November 3, 2017, PA-born adoptees will have the right to their original birth certificate (OBC) once they turn 18. If the adoptee is deceased, descendants can request a copy of the adoptee's OBC. While some adoptees may receive a redacted OBC (meaning the birth parent has requested the deletion of his or her name), it is not anticipated that this will affect many adoptees. If a parent did file a redaction, he or she is required to complete a medical history to be given to the adoptee.



MICHIGAN - there has been quite a bit of action on the floor of the House regarding proposed adoption bills.

HB 5629, sponsored by Rep. McCready, prohibits a parent from transferring custody of a child for more than 180 days. Current law allows a temporary custody transfer to take place, using a power of attorney, if it does not exceed 180 days.

HB 5628, sponsored by Rep. Hank Vaupel, criminalizes the transfer of custody with the intent to permanently divest oneself of parental responsibility, and also prohibits assisting or arranging an unregulated custody transfer.

HB 5626, sponsored by Rep. Tom Hooker, prohibits a person from advertising for potential adoptive parents without court involvement.

HB 5627, also sponsored by Rep. Hooker, classifies soliciting a child for adoption as a Class F felony. Sen. Rick Jones has introduced similar legislation, Senate Bills 923-926. "We have a responsibility to all Michigan children to protect their safety," said Jones, R-Grand Ledge. "We don't want to see people advertising children on the Internet. Children are not for sale. Plus, we never know who will respond; they could be a child abuser or a child molester. Ensuring proper precautions are taken is the best way to protect these children."

Domestic Program Update

The holiday season is upon us, so we wanted to release our fall newsletter before the impending snow. You may have noticed that the newsletter has a new look. We are currently redesigning all of our material, from brochures to business cards to flyers. We are excited to have a new and improved look to lead us into the new year.

We were so thrilled to have so many families join us for our various fall festivals (*see newsletter insert for recap*) and we are looking forward to seeing even more families at our upcoming holiday parties. Event details can be found on the online calendar of events at www.afth.org. If you haven't been receiving information about your local office's events, please contact your social worker to fill out the Stay Informed Form giving AFTH permission to email you. Another great way to stay connected is to follow AFTH on social media. Find us on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Tumblr, and Pinterest for adoption-related discussion and resources, as well as details about upcoming events.

Several offices are hosting waiting family support groups in the coming months. We encourage waiting families to join us and sit along side other families while you manage your wait.

Our inaugural Casino Royale, held on November 5th in Wynnewood, PA, was tremendously successful raising close to \$6,500 for the Birth Parent Scholarship Fund. *See page 3 for photos from our special night.*

AFTH has always understood the importance of networking with potential referral sources in our service area. One of the main ways AFTH stays connected is through outreach. Each month, social workers in every office complete outreach to maintain relationships with referral sources as well as developing new ones. So far in 2016, AFTH social workers have connected with over 1,750 potential referral sources in our service area.

Important Reminders to AFTH Families:

Offices will be closed for the holidays starting at 3pm on Friday, December 23rd and will re-open on Tuesday, January 3rd. Social workers will still be doing placements and taking calls from hospitals for emergencies during this break. Because of the positive response in the past, we will continue to send out postcards to hospitals, clinics and other referral sources reminding them that we are available and ready to help, even during the holidays.

Many families and birthparents send gifts to our offices to then forward along to the other party. Please be sure to send your gifts early enough to reach the office before we close for the holidays. Do not mail your gift to the office if it will arrive after December 23rd. Otherwise it may sit outside the office until we return on January 3rd and we do not want any gifts getting lost or stolen during that time.

Two important things to keep in mind when sending in photos for regular updates:

Be sure to include your full name and address on the envelope or on a note inside so we are able to identify who the photos are coming from. This is for internal use only. Your contact information will not be passed along with the photos. Additionally when writing notes on the back of photos please be sure to use a pen instead of a marker. We have found that markers tend to bleed onto other photos ruining them when they are stacked on top of each other.

Fiscal Year Statistics

So far for the 2016-2017 fiscal year we have had nearly 40 placements from July through the end of October. Additionally, each of our offices are currently working with several expecting women who are considering adoption as well as continuing to receive calls from local hospitals for emergency placement situations. We are expecting to see a busy holiday season with placements and hope that 2017 welcomes many new AFTH families who come together through adoption.

Pittsburgh Birth Parent Panel

AFTH staff was honored to have three birth mothers come to share their experiences at a special panel for adoptive and potential adoptive parents. Each woman spoke in depth about her reason for choosing adoption, how she selected her child's adoptive parents, and her fears and hopes for their future relationship with her child and their adoptive parents. Those who attended walked away with incredible insights which will help them in their own open adoption relationships. It is so very important as adoptive parents, to seek out opportunities to listen to other voices in the adoption triad and learn from their experiences.

AFTH received such wonderful feedback from several attendees:

The information we gained from the Birth Parent Panel was invaluable and very worthwhile. Hearing about the fears, concerns, and hopes for their children that these birth parents expressed has made a difference in our adoption journey. Knowing that these courageous women share similar fears and concerns as we do as potential adoptive parents was very interesting and showed us that we all have a common hope for the future—that our children know that they were loved from the beginning by all parties, and that their happiness is the most important wish from both birth parents and adoptive families. We learned how important it is to be honest and forthcoming in our relationship with the birth family, even if it means showing our fears and concerns about open adoption. These women were very honest about how and why they chose their adoptive families, and expressed both the positive and negative issues they've experienced. It was indeed very eye-opening and we would look forward to hearing from more birthparents in the future.



Staff News & Anniversaries

Danielle Goodman, Regional and District Supervisor, celebrated 10 years in November

and Special Congratulations to...



Amanda Aliberti
from AFTH's Delaware Office.

She was voted by her co-workers as **AFTH's Most Valuable Employee for November!**

Amanda proved to be a master juggler during her week being solo in the Delaware Office. She had two women deliver on the same day and then as she was finishing one of those placements, she received a call from a different hospital for another emergency placement making it a total of 3 placements in a matter of just 4 days.

We asked Amanda to share what it means to her to work at an organization like AFTH:

"Throughout my life, both personally and professionally, I have always had a passion for giving others, especially women, a voice. I am very passionate about allowing others to make choices for themselves that reflect their future success. I am very passionate about birth parents being given the ability to figure out what is right for them and their families and believe in what AFTH offers them. I love working 'on the ground' with clients and providing that face-to-face counseling. I also feel lucky to be able to be a part of the 'adoptive parent world' of building families. While the process of adoption is extremely encompassing, overall I feel very fortunate to be a part of this organization. I believe in what AFTH stands for, and feel that we are always evolving to meet the needs of our clients."





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 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 inter-country adoption services, contact Roberta Evantash at 610.642.7200 or RobertaE@afth.org.

The State of International Adoption

From the end of WWII until 2004, the number of international adoptions by Americans rose steadily, and in 2004 almost 23,000 children were adopted from overseas. Children arrived from China, Russia, Guatemala, South Korea, Ukraine, Colombia and Ethiopia. Over the past decade there has been a rapid decline in many of the receiving countries.

This may be due, in part, to the Hague Convention on the Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption. The treaty imposes mandatory waiting periods, residency requirements for adoptive parents and a preference for domestic adoption. UNICEF has also had a strong impact in making these changes as intercountry adoption has a negative impact on their ultimate agenda. Bureaucrats at the Department of State are now proposing newer regulations that, if instituted, would further limit United States International adoption agencies. Meanwhile millions of children are languishing in institutions all over the world.

The international adoption system can be hazy, Critics say it is not in the best interests of children to be adopted by families and grow up outside their native culture. But supporters insist if children are given a loving home, that in itself is in a child's best interest. What do you think?

Regulations that protect the rights of children should not prevent them from being adopted. Visit www.saveadoptions.org for more information.

Poland

Increased Delays to Finalize Adoptions: The U.S. Embassy in Warsaw reports delays in the processing and approval of intercountry adoption cases by the Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Policy, Poland's Central Authority under the Hague Adoption Convention. The process is currently taking approximately 60-90 days to receive approval to finalize the cases in Polish court. This is due in part to a reorganization within the Ministry.

Peru

Temporarily Suspends Adoptions: The Peruvian government announced a suspension of all adoptions (domestic and International) pending a review of adoption procedures and cases over the past five years. Peruvian officials said this review stems from concerns related to post-adoption reporting compliance.

Liberia

U.S. Adoption Service Providers Authorized to Work in Liberia: The Government of Liberia provided the



Department of State official notification that the following agencies have received authorization to provide adoption services in Liberia - Across the World Adoptions and Americans for African Adoptions.

Haiti

Delay in Passport Processing: The Haitian government recently notified the Department of State that it is experiencing a delay in passport processing. The U.S. Government is working with Haitian authorities to mitigate the effects of this delay on pending adoptions cases and wishes to clarify processing information for U.S. families who may be experiencing a delay in obtaining a Haitian passport for their adopted child.

Democratic Republic of the Congo Processing emergency adoption cases Kinshasa during civil unrest: The exit permit suspension for Congolese children adopted by foreigners is still in effect. While the DOS continues to advocate for any families whose already adopted children have not received exit permits, the DRC government has not lifted its suspension on issuing exit permits in adoption cases.



Congratulations to AFTH's New Families

Sons

Stephanie
John & William
James & Traci
Erin & Sandra
Robert & Maureen (twins)
Ashley & Nicole
Timothy & Regina
Daniel & Jennifer
William & Amanda
Nathan & Jillian
Randolph & Cheryl
Travis & Sarah (twins)
Jeremy & Christopher
Carlos & Darlene
Jeffrey & Samantha
Philip & Laura
Scott & Aylin



Daughters

Andrew & Susan	Jeremiah & Renee
Marty & Kelly	Nathan & Elizabeth
Jessica	Eric & Dennis
Theresa	Jason & James
Thomas & Penny	Carolyn
Alexandra	
Heather & William	
Randy & Kate	
Matthew & Gina	
Mark & Loretta	



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Get Ready to Run

*We are excited to announce
Adoption From The Heart's
5th Annual Find Her Footing 5K
will be on Sunday April 2nd.*



*Save the date &
Stay tuned for more details.*



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DOMESTIC INFANT ADOPTION

JAN 3RD AT 7PM

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