

# Adoption News

A quarterly newsletter from

## Adoptions From The Heart



### Prenatal Effects of Drugs & Alcohol Exposure

#### ***Class is Led By a Doctor and Geared to Help Prospective Adoptive Parents Make Profile Key Selections***

First and foremost, it's important to state that not all women who are considering adoption have used drugs or alcohol during their pregnancy. Over 30% of the women working with AFTH have not had a drink or used any type of drug throughout their entire pregnancy. However, as the U.S. is facing an opioid epidemic, it is not uncommon for some of the infants being placed for adoption to have been exposed to some type of drug or alcohol use.

One of the toughest parts of the process for prospective adoptive parents can be completing their profile key which details the specific placement situations they are open to. Specifics which include drug and alcohol exposure can be really difficult to decide what to say yes and no to. It is a personal preference but it all comes down to making informed choices.

Social workers have discovered that families sometimes say no to certain situations due solely to a lack of knowledge. A family might say yes to a drug like methadone during the first trimester but not for the rest of the pregnancy without realizing that most pregnant women on methadone will continue taking it throughout the entire pregnancy. So by saying yes to it only in the first trimester, the family hasn't really opened their key to many situations.

#### ***Partnering with Dr. Meyers***

AFTH is proud to be partnering with Dr. Erin Meyer who is an Internal Medicine and Pediatric Hospitalist who works in the NICU (Neonatal Intensive Care Unit) at Christiana Specialist. She is also an adoptive mom through AFTH and speaks from both a professional and personal angle.

**"I drove 2 hours one-way to take the class with Dr. Meyer and I would have driven 4 hours one-way. It was just wonderful!"**

*- Prospective Adoptive Father*

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## 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. Glastonbury, CT 06033

**860.657.2626**

### Delaware Office

18-A Trolley Square Wilmington, DE 19806

**302.658.8883**

### New Jersey Office

451 Woodland Ave. Cherry Hill, NJ 08002

**856.665.5655**

### New York

**800.355.5500**

### Philadelphia Office

30-31 Hampstead Circle Wynnewood, PA 19096

**610.642.7200**

### Pittsburgh Office

1225 S. Main St. Suite 207 Greensburg, PA 15601

**724.853.6533**

### Virginia Office

1407 Stephanie Way, Suite H  
Chesapeake, VA 23320

**757.361.0008**

**Toll Free: 800.355.5500**

**Website: [www.afth.org](http://www.afth.org)**

Dr. Meyers discusses the effects of drug and alcohol use during pregnancy on a newborn including withdrawal symptoms and short and long term effects. The class is suitable for all prospective and current adoptive parents. At the end of the class, there is plenty of time for questions from attendees as well.

In order to maximize the opportunities for families to attend, AFTH is not only offering in-person classes but online webinars as well. There is a nominal fee for the classes. For a full list of upcoming dates and to register, visit [www.afth.org/education](http://www.afth.org/education)

### ***The Impact of Attending a Class***

Families who attended our most recent class in Central Pa on November 15th echoed the praise that we often see after each class. Stephanie Capriotti, an AFTH social worker, was told by families they found the class to be enlightening and very informative.

Many of our social workers have seen families turn in new keys open to more situations than their previous key has been all thanks to the knowledge they gained at this class. One couple, emailed their social worker Joan the morning after their webinar telling her how happy they were with the class and that they “have made some significant changes to our profile.”

Remember, these are *your* decisions reflecting your own personal preferences. There is no pressure to say yes to a situation you are really not open to. If you are adopting with a partner, it's important to be on the same page. What we want to avoid is decisions based on misinformation.

“Wonderful, wonderful webinar last night! The doctor was very thorough and really opened our eyes up to what types of drugs cause and don't cause various types of issues. Such a wealth of information. Glad we got to attend.”

- AFTH Prospective Adoptive Parent



## Share Your Heart Benefit Concert

### *Uniting in Support of the Birth Parent Scholarship Fund*

On Thursday, November 9th, AFTH's Wynnewood Office, just outside Philadelphia, kicked off National Adoption Month with their first Share Your Heart Benefit Concert. Together with Manayunk Brewing Company and local band Under This Fire, AFTH hosted this exhilarating fundraiser to benefit AFTH's Birth Parent Scholarship Fund.

Fifteen students of Villanova's Alpha Phi Omega service fraternity teamed up with AFTH's marketing team to staff the event. As college students, this particular fundraiser was important because the scholarships provided through AFTH's fund help men and women who might not have otherwise been able to attend school. Education often leads to a path towards a better future and opens up opportunities which might not have been there before.

The concert took place on the top floor of the Manayunk Brewing Company in Manayunk, PA. Guests began to arrive at 6:45pm and continued to flow in the doors until 8:00pm. In total, close to 130 people arrived to support the cause. Guests enjoyed the pizza and pasta provided by Manayunk Brewing Company while they enjoyed Happy Hour drink prices all night. And our go-to snack provider Insomnia Cookies donated over 250 cookies.

To get the evening started, The Nineteen Forties opened up the concert and turned over the stage to Under This Fire close to 8:30pm. Both bands helped to create a fun and lively atmosphere for guests. While the bands played, those in attendance tested their luck and purchased raffle tickets for our "Food Frenzy" and "Philly Fun" raffle baskets. Winners were announced at 9:30 just before the band completed their last set of the night.

Before the evening ended at 10:00pm, both NBC10 and 6ABC had stopped by. Guests left saying how much fun they had had and how they were so happy to be supporting such a great cause.

The night's success would not have been possible without the support of our sponsors. Thank you to Arthur Hall Insurance, Entrust, Goodwest, Petrelli, Previtera, & Schimmel and Yapple Yogurt. All in all the Share Your Heart Benefit Concert came close to tripling our anticipated profit by bringing in a total of \$1,400 which will go directly towards providing a scholarship to a birth parent.

Thank you again to everyone who came. We look forward to putting together another benefit concert in the future.



*Special thanks to photographer Ryan Bonner*

## Surviving the Wait During the Holidays



### ***How I Coped During my First Holiday Season as a Waiting Adoptive Mother***

*Written By an AFTH Adoptive Mother*

The holidays are upon us. I usually love every moment of the family focused season but this year feels a bit different.

I'm still excited for most things but as this is the first year I'll be experiencing the holidays as a waiting family, I'm already feeling an aching of sorts

I feel guilty when I confront this deep feeling inside. It's the holidays, I should be happy. Someday I *will* get to experience them as a Mom. But honestly those thoughts don't stop my feelings of sadness or anxiety. I experienced a similar feeling this summer when attending a dear friend's baby shower. She was glowing and they were so excited and while I was thrilled for her and her husband, I was also sad for myself.

For many people, there is an emotional duality for holidays. For those who have lost family members or are estranged, the holidays can be extremely hard. For women who have chosen adoption, Mother's Day as well as many other holidays can be really rough. Both happiness and sadness can live in the same moment.

### **So, I made my very own survival guide:**

#### ***Counting My Blessings in a Unique Way***

I have come up with a list of things that I can do easily this year that would be much harder if I had a little one. I can join my other crazy friends who will be waiting outside Best Buy at 3am this year to snag that really awesome gift I want to surprise my husband with. Another thing on my list is the heavy traveling we do a few days right before and after Christmas. While driving from my in-laws house to my parents, we take a 2 hour detour to hit up a town saturated with antique shops. I'm not sure I'll want to be on the road as much once we have a little one joining our road trips.

It may seem silly to some but celebrating these little

things as if they could be my last have eased some of my anxiety. I also added one thing I'm glad *not* to have to do yet – that darn Elf on the Shelf. I see parents posting bloopers about times they forgot to move the elf and the excuses they gave their children for it being in the same place. It's something I'd like to do when I have a child who might have fun with the idea, but for now I'm happy only to have to remember to lock the door and shut off the lights before going to bed.

#### ***Knowing My Triggers***

As the invites to gatherings pour in, I'm choosing to be honest with myself about my triggers and what may or may not be good to commit to. I don't want to bring anyone else down but I do want to protect myself. This year, I'm choosing to decline a friend's invite for a party the weekend after Thanksgiving to welcome home their newborn son. I just know that it might be too hard for me this year as many of the strangers will be asking how I know my friend and if my husband and I have children as well. However, I *have* already made plans to stop by their house myself earlier in the week to greet their newest addition. The point is not to have a woe-is-me attitude but to identify things that might really be painful this year and navigate around them.

#### ***Find Support in Other Waiting Families***

Throughout the adoption process, I have become close to a few other couples and singles who are pursuing adoption. I reached out to them with a simple two-line email letting them know I'd love to come together in support with anyone who is dreading the holidays. I immediately got a response from two of my friends and the three of us have created a "blah" text thread. We send each other messages when we are down and lift each other up.

The other day I got an email about an event for new parents during the holidays. I texted my friends with a screen shot of the flyer followed by "Bah Humbug". One woman replied in humor reminding me that being Scrooge isn't all bad as he spends nights swimming in a pool of gold. The other friend said that unlike the millionaire duck, her money would only fill a baby pool and so it's a good thing she is only 5'2". The

joke continued for most of the day easing my original feelings of sadness. We actually met at a YMCA that night for a “support swim.”

Of course, I don’t feel down all the time. It just hits me sometimes but I’ve found humor is a great way to get the feelings out while also connecting with those who truly “get” it.

### ***Seeing the Future Joy of Celebrating the Holidays Together as a Family***

Ultimately, I’m choosing to look into the future with excitement. There *will* be a Thanksgiving in the future when I’m holding a little one in my arms while trying

to devour turkey and stuffing while it’s still warm. Someday I *will* have a third stocking added to our mantel on Christmas Eve. I *will* love seeing my child play with their cousins at my parent’s house. I know there is so much in store for our future and when the time is right it will happen. Until then, I have bundled up for the cold and have prepared as best I can for the highs and lows this year may bring.

My wish for all those having a tough time during the holidays – whether it’s a birthparent who is missing their child, someone who has lost a loved one – is for peace, love, and laughter.

## **Joys of Open Adoption: One Year Later**



*Written by Kelly, a birthmother who recently placed her daughter through AFTH’s Connecticut Office*

The most difficult decision biological parents Jason and Kelly ever had to make was eased when they viewed Chris and Jaime’s profile. With the help of the dedicated employees at Adoptions From The Heart, dreams were coming true hundreds of miles apart.

Excitement and fear filled “the parents” hearts May 2016, when they official met one another face to face prior to the birth of baby Julianna.

Instantaneously, the four of them felt like family. With tears in their eyes, and a baby bump in between, the women embraced, reassuring the fathers-to-be that destiny was being made.

Fast forward to June 25, 2017. Chris, Jaime and Ms. Julianna, the bundle of joy that brought everyone together traveled from Pennsylvania to celebrate baby’s first birthday back in Connecticut with Jason and Kelly at AFTH’s summer picnic.

Pictures, videos, letters and emails over the course of the year keeps everyone in the loop at Julianna grows. The semiannual visitations Jason and Kelly make to PA, and the visits Chris, Jaime and Julianna make to CT show their commitment to openness. The love this group of individuals share was made possible through open adoption. This group truly shares an extraordinary bond.

The quintet of a family that was created would like to thank the representatives of Adoptions From The Heart for bringing two sets of loving individuals together for one beautiful little girl.

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*Kelly is also an AFTH’s birthmother mentor. It can be helpful for women considering adoption to connect with a women who placed. If you would like to discuss the process of open adoptions, ask questions or make a new friend, she is a great support system. Contact AFTH to be paired with an AFTH birthmother mentor.*



## Recent Legislation

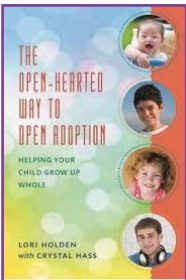


**ADOPTION TAX CREDIT SAVED** - The House and Ways and Means Committee has reversed the proposed elimination of the adoption tax credit by retaining the adoption tax credit as part of H.R. 1, Tax Cuts and Jobs Act. Thank you to everyone who contacted their representatives to voice their concern about the proposed cut of the adoption tax credit. Your voices were heard.

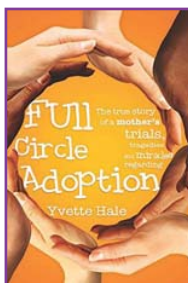
**PENNSYLVANIA** - A new law, effective November 3, 2017, allows adoptees, 18 years and older, request a non-certified copy of their original birth certificate. This is a victory for adoptees in Pennsylvania who have been fighting for their rights to access this information. Birth parents *do* have the ability to redact identifying information by completing a Name Redaction Request (NRR). In addition to the NRR, any birth parents wishing to have their name withheld must also complete a Pennsylvania Adoption Information Registry Birth Parent/Birth Parent Survivor Authorization to Release Information and Registration Form.

**TEXAS** - House Bill 3859, has passed giving child welfare agencies, including those that receive government funds, protections from legal challenge if they assert their “sincerely held religious beliefs.” This means that child welfare providers can discriminate against single parents, children and parents who identify as LGTBQ and individuals who practice a different religion. The Texas child welfare system is currently in turmoil, with close to 30,000 children now in care, of whom nearly 13,000 are waiting to be adopted. But this law is a big step in the wrong direction — it would abandon the best interests of children under the guise of religious freedom.

## Book Reviews



***The Open-Hearted Way to Open Adoption: Helping Your Child Grow Up Whole*** by Lori Holden & Crystal Hass - This book is well written, with great advice. The book presents open adoption as a lifestyle and not just the exchange of pictures and letters. It’s about being open about your child’s roots and putting their needs first. Answering difficult questions and trying to see things from the child’s point of view can help along the way. It’s not always easy and often times our initial gut reaction is of fear and jealousy but by opening our hearts and minds we can create a wonderful open adoption relationship that will benefit and help adopted children grow.



***Full Circle Adoption*** by Yvette Hale - Not many adoptive parents have been on the other side of the adoption process as a birth parent nor can they imagine it. Yvette has literally come full circle with adoption. When she was a young woman she made the difficult decision to place her child for adoption. Then after a marriage, divorce and medical issues that left her unable to conceive she found herself on the opposite side of the adoption table, as a prospective adoptive parent. Ultimately, Yvette adopts three children but her struggles and her story really show both sides of the adoption story.

# Fall Festival Recaps

## Central Pennsylvania Office

The CPA office held its Second Annual Fall Festival at Rapho Township Park in Lancaster County on Saturday, October 14th with 73 people in attendance plus staff. It was a great turn-out and the weather cooperated beautifully! Birth and adoptive families had great visits and the children enjoyed the arts and crafts and the playground activities.



## Virginia Office

We are happy to say Virginia's First Annual Fall Festival was a success! Nearly 80 attendees enjoyed barbecue, side dishes and desserts while painting rocks, jumping in the bounce house and chatting amongst one another. The weather was perfect with cool fall temperatures, sun shine and no rain. Laughter could be heard all over the park. Thank you to everyone who came. We hope to see everyone again next year.

## Cherry Hill Office

The New Jersey office had its Fall Festival at Johnson's Corner Farm in Medford, NJ on Saturday, November 4th. Many New Jersey families attended and several birth families had a visit during the festival. The families enjoyed apple cider and fresh cider donuts, took hayrides to pick popcorn, sweet potatoes, and more, visited the petting zoo and the Discovery Barnyard playground. Staff greeted families and enjoyed taking part in the autumn activities together.



*Caption: Leigh Ann, Brian and son Derek, along with Miriam and her daughter Jordan, are enjoying a hayride at The Cherry Hill, NJ office's Fall Festival at Johnson's Farm.*

## Wynnewood Office

Wynnewood staff and families enjoyed our Second Annual Fall Family Fun Event at Colonial Gardens in Phoenixville, PA on October 14th. Over 20 adoptive families and their kids joined us for a morning of pumpkin decorating, crafts, snacks, and visiting. Families also enjoyed picking their own pumpkins and taking a hayride around the farm. A few families also used the event as an opportunity to visit with birth parents, a trend we hope to see continue in the future.





## Cam is Three!

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*In honor of their son Cameron's 3rd birthday, parents Jessica and Andy wrote this poem depicting their journey to becoming a family.*

Three years ago, I was at work one day  
Just going about business in a usual way  
When my cell phone rang, and I could see from the caller ID  
That it was OUR ADOPTION AGENCY!

My heart swelled with joy as I heard our social worker say,  
"Jessica! An opportunity has come your way!  
A sweet baby boy, born in Washington, D.C.  
Is just waiting to meet his Forever Family!  
But the doctors have concerns, and it is true  
That, should you choose to parent this child,  
You may have quite a journey ahead of you.  
So take your time, think this through carefully.  
You must make the decision that is right for your family."

The next hour went by in a haze  
So many thoughts and feelings put me in a daze.  
But, ultimately, it was as clear as day,  
That you were meant to be our son,  
COME WHAT MAY!

So down I-95 we drove with all of our might,  
And you were snuggled in our arms by 11 o'clock that night.

And now, here we are, three years in  
And OMG WHAT A WHIRLWIND!  
You face every challenge with a HUGE smile on your face,  
And seem to live by the motto, "Slow and steady wins the race."  
You charm everyone who meets you with your temperament of gold.  
There is consensus that you are truly something to behold!  
You take things in stride, and if you had more language I am sure that you'd say,  
"You all need to relax! I've got this! I AM OK!"  
With a team of doctors, teachers, and therapists, too,  
It seems pretty clear that there is nothing that you can't do

So as you begin your fourth year, we hope that you know,  
That we are so proud of your progress, and how you continue to grow!  
And over the next 365 days,  
We can't wait to see how you continue to flourish and amaze!





## 'Tis the Season of Giving

The season of giving thanks and giving to those in need is upon us. We want to first thank all of AFTH's individual donors and corporate partners who have helped AFTH make a difference through our Expecting & Birth Parent Support Fund and our Birth Parent Scholarship Fund. Both of those fund have been able to provide financial assistance to those facing an unplanned pregnancy who are considering adoption as well as the men and women who have chosen adoption for their children. Because of your help, we have been able to impact lives in big ways.

AFTH's Scholarship Fund helped six birth parents this year alone take another step forward to their goal of an advanced degree. The scholarship recipients were honored to be recognized for their hard work and one woman was **speechless at the generosity of those who don't even know her personally but were willing to help her gain a leg up in this world.** She, along with all of the scholarship winners thank you. Recent receipts are going on to study business, conflict management, professional communications, finance, psychology and esthetics.

Since this time last year, AFTH has utilized donations allotted to the Expecting and Birth Parent Support Fund to help in many different ways. Needs have ranged from transportation and groceries to helping with pipes that burst in a birth parent's home. When we can say "yes" to helping someone, it makes a big impact in their lives. Not only in that moment but down the line as well.

One birth mother, who received assistance after struggling to make rent shortly after the birth of her son, has committed her life's focus to helping at-risk youth thanks to the social workers she became close when she placed her child through AFTH. She had often felt alone in life struggling to get by. Her family wasn't supportive and she didn't have many friends. Then, when she faced one of her darkest moments, an unplanned pregnancy, she was surprised to find a support system like she had never experienced. She has shared that she never felt pressured in any way. She knew the social workers were there for her and to help her in any way they could even if she decided not to place. Even after she placed, she felt she had a group of women who were cheering her on in life each step of the way. They wanted her to succeed and checked in on her from time to time. She is now close to graduating with a bachelors and is looking forward to use her own story and experience to help other young men and women who need someone to turn to for help.

We would be honored if you would consider AFTH when you are contemplating your year-end giving. Donations can be made online [www.afth.org/donate](http://www.afth.org/donate) or sent to our Wynnewood Office (address on page 2).

### Amazon Smile

Designate Adoptions From The Heart as your charity of choice when using Amazon Smile and all of your online shopping can support our mission at no cost to you.

#### How to set AFTH as your charity of choice:

- 1) Visit [www.smile.amazon.com](http://www.smile.amazon.com) & sign into your Amazon account
- 2) Use the search toolbar to select Adoptions From The Heart
- 3) Begin all your online shopping with Amazon Smile ([www.smile.amazon.com](http://www.smile.amazon.com))

### Gift Card Collection

For someone living paycheck-to-paycheck, the holidays can feel hopeless. Each year, social workers identify birth parents who are parenting other children and are 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 help out, pick up a Target, Walmart, or Visa gift card (ranging from \$25-\$200) and send to AFTH's Main Office: 30-31 Hampstead Circle, Wynnewood, PA 19096.



## AFTH Presents the Building Beautiful Families 2018 Calendar

### Sales Support AFTH's Expecting and Birth Parent Support Fund

Each year over 1,000 photos are submitted from families of children who were adopted through AFTH for our calendar contest. Children's ages range from just a few months old to teenagers and represent both domestic and past international adoption programs.

It is so amazing to see all the beautiful families brought together over the years. The Building Beautiful Families Calendar celebrates adoption and the families brought together through our agency.

Each and every calendar sold benefits AFTH's Expecting and Birth Parent Support Fund. At times, expecting parents working with AFTH are in need of some help securing food, housing, clothing and heat during the winter among other things. This fund allows AFTH to meet those needs. Over 200 calendars have already been sold.

**Cost: \$13.00 + \$1.50 shipping**

#### ***How to Purchase Your Calendars:***

- 1) Online at the AFTH Online Store at [www.tiny.cc/AFTHcalendar](http://www.tiny.cc/AFTHcalendar)
- 2) Complete the below form and mail in with payment
- 3) Stop at any AFTH Office and avoid the shipping charges.

## Building Beautiful Families 2018 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

## I'm Not Her Only Mother



*Written By Kristy, an adoptive mother*

Today is a special day. Our daughter is turning two. Today has also brought with it a lot of reflection. Not a day goes by when I don't think about her birth mother in some way, but today I spent quite a bit of time in deep reflection about what she must have been going through two years ago on this date.

Looking back on my son's birthdays, I recall knowing that "today was the day" I would meet them for the first time, and remember how I felt. As we all know, it's just not like that with adoption. Two years ago today, I had no idea this beautiful little girl was entering the world. And I was completely oblivious to the fact that, two days later, my social worker would walk into my office and say, "This is it!"

As we celebrate her birthday, I remind myself that it was two years ago on this day that a woman we had yet to know and would come to love intensely was struggling with the most difficult choice of her life. She broke her own heart for the love of her little girl.

My arms and heart are full, yet hers have an empty spot. I saw our daughter's first step, heard her first giggle, and was the first to hear her say MaMa. I get to be the one to scoop her up when she needs to be consoled and the one who snuggles with her and sings to her every night just before bed. The privilege of being chosen to be her mother by her mother is not be lost on me. I want to help our daughter understand the importance of roots and wings. To know herself fully is to look both backward and forward at the same time.

Together we are her mothers. Each with a different role, but both with love that pours out of our souls for the same beautiful little girl. This is a day filled with pain and joy for her birth mother, Momma J, and yet I received the most loving message from her today.

When people speak about adoption, their focus is often on the beautiful aspects, and the sadness and loss are brushed under the rug. To fully grasp what adoption is and the impact it has on adoptees and birth parents, it's important to acknowledge and examine that loss and brokenness.

People mistakenly tell our daughter how lucky she is. They certainly have it all wrong, as I'm the luckiest of all; I've hit the jackpot in having both her and her birth mother in our family.

## No SSN For Child What To Do For Taxes

Some families who adopted domestically in 2017 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](http://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.



## Agency News

### ***AFTH Holiday Closure***

AFTH offices will be closed for the holidays starting at 3pm on Friday, December 22nd and re-opening on Tuesday, January 2nd. Social workers will be available to hospitals for emergency placements during the break and will continue working with women who may deliver during that time.

Each year, AFTH sends postcards the week before the holidays to hospitals, clinics and other referral sources to let them know AFTH staff are available and ready to help even during the holidays. And every year, we receive calls for placements during the holidays as a direct result.

### ***Sending Gifts to Birth Parents Through AFTH***

Many families and birth parents send gifts to our local offices for us to then forward along. Be sure to send your gifts early enough to reach the office before we close on December 22nd. **We request families include money for postage to forward the gifts along to their child's birth parents.**

### ***Domestic Program Update***

We have been thrilled to see so many of our longer waiting families selected. In October alone, 5 of the top 7 longest waiting families received the call! We continue to see situations in which women prefer not to choose families or request to start with looking at the longest waiting families first.

Additionally, we are continuing to see expecting parents contacting offices with an interest in families they have seen on the website. We encourage families to take advantage of AFTH's relationship with ParentFinder as a way of increasing their exposure to expecting parents who are considering adoption.

AFTH offices have begun rotating the required courses. Home Study Courses must be done by your home office however all other course can be taken in any of our offices. Courses on a rotation include Education Course, Transracial Education

Course, Profile Meeting and video session. Families are also welcome to take all of their courses in their home office. Contact your social worker for a detailed list of upcoming courses.

Beginning in January 2018, AFTH is requiring waiting families to have 5 continuing education hours each year. More and more states are requiring continued education while families are waiting for placement. This not only serves as a refresher of topics covered in initial education, but also provides families an opportunity to prepare for adoption and parenthood. At the beginning of the adoption process families are giving lots of information all at one time and while time goes on it can be helpful to review and further discuss relevant topics.

There are several different ways, both online and in-person, to meet this new requirement. AFTH Education Series Classes, infant care classes, and support groups count as hours. Currently AFTH is developing their own webinars as well. One webinar, Hospital Expectations Refresher Webinar, will be required for all families. Social workers can provide a list of additional opportunities to gain hours outside of AFTH.

### ***Seeking Families for Short-Term Infant Care***

AFTH is currently seeking placed families who are interested in providing interim care for infants while their biological parents are considering adoption.

Short-term care is typically a couple of days and in special circumstances could be up to two weeks. Interested families would need to keep clearances and other relevant paperwork current in order to be considered. Families will be contacted when there is a need for care and can make a decision based on their availability. A daily rate is paid along with reimbursements for baby essentials not provided by the agency. Requirements include a car seat and a safe place for the baby to sleep.

To learn more about this opportunity, call the Supervisor of your local AFTH office.

### **Agency Waiting Statistics**

Between the 1st of October and the start of November, AFTH went from having 25 families waiting over 2 years down to 19. Between August and the end of October, we also had 3 disrupted families receive a placement.

As of November 1st, 73% of AFTH's waiting families have been waiting for 18 months or less and 58% a year or less.

For families with keys open to African-American children, as of November 1st, 83% of families were waiting 18 months or less, 63% 1 year or less, and 30% have been waiting for 6 months or less. For families who have considered opening their keys to transracial adoption, AFTH's Transracial Education Course can be helpful in determining if this is something you want to do. Contact your social worker to learn more about it.

Waiting family support groups hosted in our local offices are a great way to get updated statistics as well as review the recent situations the agency has seen. Both of these things, as well as coming together with other waiting families, can really help to ease the anxiety that comes with the wait. Just being with others who "get it" can be really helpful.

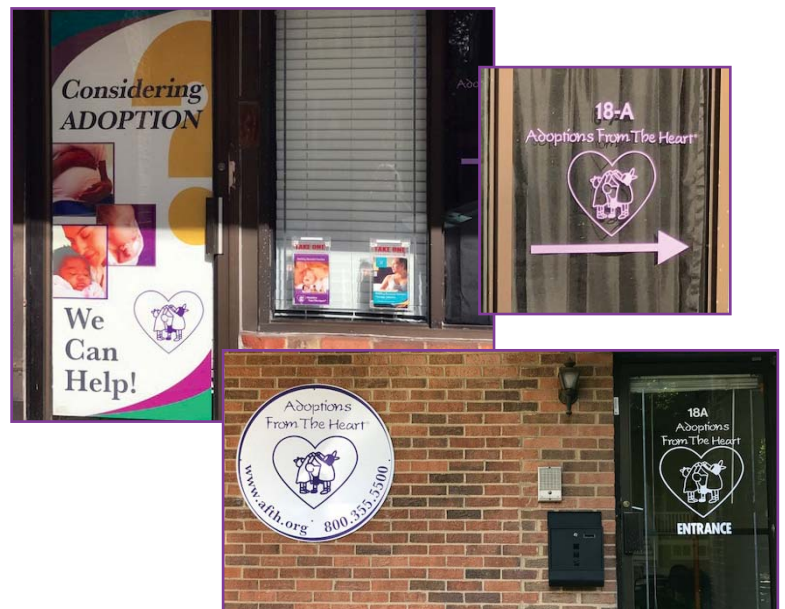
### **Other Statistics**

From the beginning of our fiscal year in July through the end of October, we have had 40 placements including 6 single women, and 7 same-sex couples (3 male and 4 female).

Over the past 2 months, the agency's emergency placement rate jumped to 77% from the typical 50%. It is very important for families to be prepared for an emergency placement with the percentage being so high. If you are unfamiliar with the protocol in the event of an emergency placement, contact your social worker for a quick refresher because chances are high that when you get the call it will be for an emergency placement.

## **AFTH Delaware Office**

It was time for some a facelift for our Wilmington, DE branch office. In addition to banners and signage to better direct guests to our front door, we have added brochure holders on the outside of the office hanging from the window for anyone interested in learning more. We are thrilled to say that the brochures both for expecting parents and prospective adoptive parents have been taken which is a great way to spread awareness about AFTH.



## **AFTH Support Groups**

**Birth Parent Support Groups** - One of the most healing tips that many birth parents have given to those just beginning their adoption process is to connect to others who have gone through similar circumstances. Many of the women who have met in the support groups have become close friends. Call your local office for details.

**Waiting Family Support Groups** - The waiting can be difficult and AFTH's local support groups bring waiting families together to connect. Groups are led by AFTH staff and cover a variety of topics designed for waiting families. Contact your office or visit our events calendar at [www.afth.org](http://www.afth.org).

## International Adoption News

*AFTH prides itself on keeping abreast of news regarding inter-country adoption. We collaborate with agencies across the U.S. that provide inter-country adoption placement services. AFTH is able to provide Home Studies, Education, Post-Adoption/Placement Reports and Services, and other assistance in support of international adoptions. Contact Roberta Evantash at [RobertaE@afth.org](mailto:RobertaE@afth.org) or 610.642.7200 to see how we can help you with your adoption process, including referring you to one of these partner agencies.*

### The Importance of Obtaining Certificates of Citizenship

*The following article was recently written by the National Council for Adoption and is reprinted with permission.*

Nobody enjoys filing paperwork or paying filing fees, and for families that have completed an international adoption, they often think they have had more than enough of both. Fortunately, most international adoptions now result in a certificate of citizenship (COC) being issued without any additional process or fees. That has not always been the case, and still is not always so, especially in cases where the child was issued an IR-4/HR-4 visa. In these situations, the child does not automatically become a U.S. citizen, and the placement requires finalization here in the United States.

Obtaining a COC for any child adopted internationally is an important way to definitively establish and demonstrate citizenship. When the cost of COCs was significantly increasing last year, NCFCA hosted a webinar led by McLane Layton and Christine Poarch. NCFCA also made available a printable factsheet addressing FAQs about certificates of citizenship. These resources continue

### Continued Decline of International Adoptions

The U.S. State Department's recently released statistics showed a continued decline in inter-country adoptions continuing the downward trend since 2005. The total number of international adoptions for the 2016 fiscal year was 5372, a 42% decrease from just 5 years ago.

#### Top 10 Countries:

- China - 2,231
- Democratic Republic of Congo - 359
- Ukraine - 303
- South Korea - 260
- Bulgaria - 201
- India - 194
- Uganda - 187
- Ethiopia - 183
- Haiti - 178
- Philippines - 156

to be helpful to better understand this issue and can be easily be found by searching COC on our website: [www.adoptioncouncil.org](http://www.adoptioncouncil.org)

Adoptive families may ask, "Why would I pay for this if I already have proof of citizenship with a U.S. passport or state issued birth certificate?" Although there may be other ways and options to prove citizenship, the Certificate of Citizenship remains the most permanent and definitive way of doing so. Unlike passports, the certificate of citizenship never



expires. State issued birth certificates are not always accepted as proof of citizenship, with issues raised if the name has changed or if the birth certificate lists a foreign place of birth.

Adoption professionals who have worked in this field for a number of years strongly advise a family to obtain a COC on behalf of their internationally adopted child. Sue Hollar, the Executive Director & CEO of The Barker Adoption Foundation, is a strong advocate of agencies working to ensure families have obtained COCs. She says, "Adoption agencies and adoptive families have an ethical and moral responsibility to these kids. At Barker, we hold a financial deposit from families and return it upon receiving a copy of the COC... No kid/adult should suffer the consequences of not having the documentation."

NCFA strongly encourages adoption agencies to obtain copies of the certificate of citizenship as part of their post-adoption reporting. This practice will ensure that families are obtaining their COCs within a reasonable timeframe upon returning, instead of many years later when it may be more difficult for the adoptive family to locate required documentation.

The application for a COC is called the N-600 and can be accessed through USCIS's website: [www.uscis.gov/n-600](http://www.uscis.gov/n-600)



## Congratulations to AFTH's New Families

### **Sons**

Joshua & Sarah  
Klaus & Wayne  
Kevin & Elise  
Scott & Melissa  
Christine  
Patrick & Katherine  
Mark & Jennifer  
Thomas & Ujjaini  
Bradley & Nicole  
Stephanie  
Jonathan & Hannah  
Kevin & Heather  
Nicolas & Morgan  
Carl & Margaret  
Erin & Sandra  
John & Susan  
Kevin & Colleen  
Craig & Jacqueline  
Rajeesh & Stephanie



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### **Daughters**

Jacob & Terra  
Timothy & Sara  
Keith & Laura  
Mara & Melinda  
Rhonda  
Mark & Cathy  
Daniel & Rafael  
Emanuela & Courtney  
Michael & Charles  
Maria  
Jeffrey & Carolyn  
Daniela  
Rachel & Hannah  
Rich & Jamie  
Christine & James



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Broomall, PA  
PERMIT # 136



*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.

## Get Ready to Run (or Walk)

We are excited to announce  
Adoption From The Heart's  
6th Annual Find Her Footing 5K  
will be on Sunday April 15th.



Save the date &  
look for details in the next newsletter.



## FREE ONLINE WEBINARS

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

DOMESTIC INFANT ADOPTION  
JANUARY 9TH AT 7PM

Registration Required  
[www.afth.org](http://www.afth.org)