

Adoption News

A quarterly newsletter from

Adoptions From The Heart

Adding Depth to My Understanding and Empathy Towards Birth Parents

Becoming a Mother Changed Who I Am as a Social Worker



Throughout my years as an adoption social worker, I have always had respect and appreciation for expectant and birth parents and the struggles they experience as they try to make a decision for their child's future. Becoming a parent has added depth to my practice as an adoption social worker more than I ever expected. I have always known intellectually that making an adoption plan is a difficult, emotional decision for expectant parents. Experiencing pregnancy, childbirth, and parenthood has helped me to relate to expectant and birth parents in a different way. It has pushed that intellectual knowledge to the background and has replaced it with a deeper empathic, emotional understanding.

Though I began as a direct practice social worker, my role with Adoptions From The Heart has shifted over the years and is mostly behind the scenes now, supervising social workers and working on policies and paperwork. My work with expectant and birth parents is less frequent, so it was almost 4 months after my daughter's birth that I was faced with my first emergency placement after becoming a parent myself. The expectant parents I worked with in this situation were young, and their situations were so different from mine. The expectant mother was confident that adoption was the best plan for her – she wanted to finish school and reach her goals. The expectant father was a little less sure, as he faced a lot of family pressure to bring the baby home. I provided options counseling and talked through the adoption process with them as I had so many times before, but my heart pulled me in a different direction.

I felt so many different emotions for this young woman, who hadn't planned to become pregnant and wasn't ready to be a mom. She was

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*Fall Festival Recap
Season of Giving*



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

certain that parenting wasn't the right plan for her, yet I felt so heartbroken for her as a new mom myself. I thought about the incredible feat her body and mind had been through – growing and sustaining this baby for 9 months without the opportunity to celebrate and marvel at every kick and hiccup, then experiencing the pain of delivery without the euphoria of meeting this long-awaited baby. I thought about the hormonal changes she would experience, and the reminders her body would give her of her baby long after leaving the hospital without him. I began to more fully understand how placing a baby for adoption is an experience of grieving in waves – over and over again, in new and different ways, as reminders flood the body and mind.

As social workers, we remind both expectant parents and prospective adoptive parents “everything changes after the baby is born” – a woman who feels entirely certain of her adoption plan may feel very differently when the baby in her belly becomes the baby in her arms. Despite repeating this refrain again and again in my years with the agency, I didn't understand how true it really was until I delivered my child. It suddenly made sense why so many expectant parents change their minds about adoption after the baby is born – they can't bear to let their precious baby go.

I also began to see emergency placements in a new way as a result. For some women, the reality of their situation, and their need to make an adoption plan, may not come into focus until the baby is born. I've had clients tell me that it wasn't until they actually looked at their baby that they knew that they had to make an adoption plan. Those women who can look at their child and say, “your needs are more important than mine, and the best way to meet them is to place you with a different family” are the strongest, most resilient people I have ever met.

After working with this mom in the emergency placement, as I experienced the post-partum process with my daughter, I thought often of her and other birth parents, going through the same process, but without their babies. It quickly made me realize just how important the monthly pictures and letters are

I Thought I Couldn't Either

A Birth Mother's Reflection Five Years Post Placement

If you are a birth mother who is a few years post placement, hopefully you have found inner peace with your decision. If you're involved in an open adoption, I hope you

are validated that the family you chose is a great fit for your child. Getting pictures and letters help tremendously to keep you involved in your child's life.

I am five years post placement and I must admit **I am not the same person I was when I placed.**

I am different in the best of ways. I have matured and always keep an open mind. I love speaking to my son's adoptive mother about all the crazy, cute things he does.

Unfortunately, from the outside looking in many people might not understand the bright side of your story. Some people have a positive perception about the adoptive families experience while holding a negative misconception towards birth parents. The belief that all birth mothers are on drugs, homeless, or worse is untrue unfair and yet people still believe it. The belief that you "gave up your child" because you didn't want to be a parent is another common misconception. It cuts deeper when it comes from close friends & family that share the same misconceptions.

Coping post placement isn't just a struggle with your own emotions regarding your decision. It also consists of learning to deal with people who think you should feel a certain way. People have told me that I should be ashamed of myself, but I'm not ashamed. People have told me I will regret my decision in the long run, but I don't.

For me, what hurt worst was hearing the all-time line "I could never do that". **Once upon a time, we didn't think that we could "do that" either.** Fortunately, we thought with our heads instead of our hearts, so our child could have more opportunities in life. The further you get through post placement you begin to figure out good ways to dodge certain questions and even better ways to respond to them.

After all this time, I couldn't imagine being without the adoptive parents I chose for my son. I wouldn't change that for the world. Embrace your strength as a birth parent and those negative misconceptions that others have will become a breeze in the wind because you know your truth!

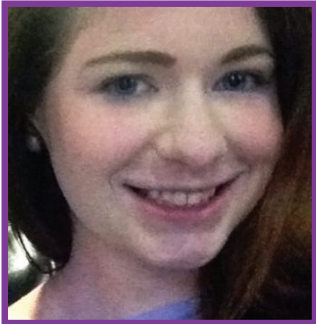
Becoming a Mother Continued...

to birth parents requesting openness. Each month, I celebrate my daughter turning one month older, taking a cute photo and remembering her milestones over the last month. Birth parents remember their children placed for adoption in this same way, each day and certainly each month. Receiving updates about their child's milestones and progress can help them feel connected as they continue to process and grieve. The same holds true for holidays and other special events, which adoptive parents should bear in mind as they prepare update packets for their child's birth family. I often remind adoptive families – the only other people who care as deeply about every tiny milestone in your baby's life are their birth parents. Share those moments!

The expectant parents in the emergency placement chose to move forward with an adoption plan, despite family pressure and many competing emotions. They felt more confident in their decision as they met the prospective adoptive parents and planned for an open adoption with the exchange of pictures, letters, and visits. They left the hospital without their baby, but with a new relationship just beginning to form with the family they had chosen to raise him. I left the hospital with an added perspective about my job and a renewed empathy and respect for all expectant and birth parents who are grappling with so many factors in order to make the decision that feels best for them.

Welcoming AFTH's New Staff in 2018

Several AFTH offices saw a change in staff earlier this year and we'd like to take this opportunity to introduce you to the newest faces at AFTH.



Meagan Twardy
*Public Relations &
Marketing Coordinator*

Before joining AFTH's team, I worked in public relations for a plethora of different organizations and agencies including

Hilsinger-Mendelson, Domain Integrated, Herman-Almonte Public Relations, Mode PR, Video One Productions/Allure Films and Philly PR Girl. All of my past employment opportunities involved promoting clients within a variety of different industries which I believe has strengthened my communication and pitching abilities.

My favorite part about my job, is getting to know all the families we have helped build over the years. The beauty of an open adoption really shines through when you hear about amount love all parties within the adoption triad have for one another. More people need to hear about these adoption triad relationship stories, and I make it my mission to share them.

Kelly VanMeter, BSW
Delaware Social Worker

Prior to coming to AFTH, I started my social work career as a mentor, in-home parenting coach and working in private adoptions for 2 years. I also interned in private adoption in Illinois. I then worked in a transitional living program for males 16-21 who



were aging out of foster care or being paroled from the Juvenile Department of Corrections. I went on to work as a foster care caseworker for a private agency for five years. My job just before coming to AFTH was as a child welfare specialist for the IL Department of Children and Family Services. I worked at the child abuse and neglect hotline.

My favorite part of my job at AFTH is working with expecting and birth mothers. It is rewarding to work with the women facing different life challenges. I enjoy helping them through the difficult situations in hopes that they can be at peace with whatever decision they make and be successful with their goals.

Eryka Waller, MSS/LSW
Wynnewood Social Worker

Before starting at AFTH, I was a Neonatal Intensive Care Unit Social Worker at a hospital in Philadelphia. I began working there as an intern and then became full time as the NICU social worker for a total of almost 4 years. I also have experience as a School Social Worker and an Early Intervention Social Worker as well. I have enjoyed working with children and families throughout my entire social work career thus far.



So far, my favorite part of my job is creating families and helping others change their view on what family means and what families look like. Family is bigger than blood - family is truly wherever and with whomever there is love!



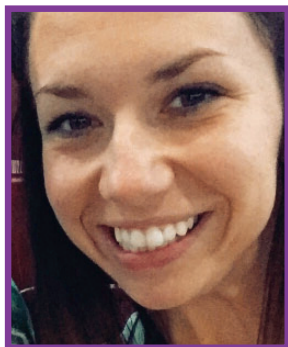
Libby Wischner
Central PA Office Manager

I originally worked in the snackfood industry as a Sales Support Specialist & Order Management Coordinator before coming to AFTH. The most important aspect of working in that sector that I have brought with me is building and maintaining strong client relationships. Being a point of contact for client inquiries and concerns taught me how to identify problems, review information and develop options to implement solutions.

I have two equally favorite parts of my job:

First, helping families begin their adoption journey by providing them with information to help them make an educated decision they feel good about. And second, seeing the photos and letters exchanged between adoptive and birth families as they build an open adoption relationship; it brings me joy to get a glimpse into something so giving and beautiful.

Kyra Allen, BS
NJ Adoption Counselor



I came to AFTH with 4 years in the Adoption/Foster Care field. My previous titles include Foster Care Case Manager and Child Preparation & Profile Specialist. These positions involved working with children who were placed in foster homes and counseling them about their journey through foster care and path to adoption.

So far, my favorite thing about working at AFTH is the wonderful adoptive families I've met. I personally love doing post-placement visits and witnessing how much joy is on the family's faces while they navigate the new world of parenting and watching their child grow.

Nicole Peinkofer
Allentown Office Manager



Prior to joining AFTH, I worked as a Customer Success Representative at a nonprofit giving platform and held several internships at nonprofit organizations. Through these professional experiences, I developed the ability to take on multiple projects, communicate effectively with clients, manage my time efficiently, and organize thoughtfully – all of which I do in my role as Office Manager. Most recently, I worked as a recruiting coordinator in which I was tasked with many of the same office management duties as I am in my current position. I also have a Bachelor's degree in Sociology and Communication.

My favorite part about my job is the impact I feel I'm making every day. Although I have a more indirect effect than our social workers, I know I'm making a difference in the lives of birth and expecting parents and adoptive parents through the work I do at AFTH. I feel proud to be a part of an organization that strives to help birth parents beyond adoption through scholarships and financial stability, and it's powerful to know my role in the adoption process is meaningful.

Did You Know...

It's Beyond our Profession, It's Personal

AFTH has more than a dozen staff members who are themselves members of the adoption triad - adoptive parent, birth parent or adoptee.

Through the month of November for National Adoption Month, we are highlighting many of their stories on Facebook. Find us on Facebook and read more about their personal connections to adoption and why it has made their impact in the agency unique.

AFTH Share Your Heart Benefit Concert

Adoptions From The Heart held our 2nd Annual Share Your Heart Benefit Concert at the Manayunk Brewing Company on Thursday, November 8th from 7-11pm to kick off National Adoption Month. We welcomed back The Barker Brothers (previously known as Under This Fire) and newcomer haha charade. More than 100 concert-goers enjoyed a night of live music, raffles, drinks and delicious food. Over \$2,000 profit was raised to benefit AFTH's Birth Parent Scholarship Fund, which provides financial assistance to birth parents looking to pursue a degree in higher education.

The top floor of Manayunk Brewing Company was garnished in purple and teal decorations (AFTH's colors). Each table was adorned with purple and white flower centerpieces, balloons, and heart-shaped jars filled with Hershey Hugs & Kisses. Guests started flowing in around 6:45 and continued coming in until around 8:30. A Snapchat filter featuring the concert's logo was featured all night for guests to share all the fun they were having on social media.

Our two bands stole the show - the first hitting the stage at 7pm and second around 9pm. We are so grateful for the support from The Barker Brothers and haha charade. Both bands did a stellar job at entertaining the audience and creating a fun and lively atmosphere.

We were also fortunate to have Kisha Robinson, our Fall 2017 Birth Parent Scholarship recipient, speak on behalf of the fund:

"Adoptions From The Heart is a great organization. They have definitely been very supportive in what can be a daunting process. Education is a huge thing for me. I was already in school but needed to finish and they were there when I almost wasn't able to. It's wonderful to see so many people here that will contribute to someone else being able to finish their education goals. I want to thank everyone for coming out and to Adoptions From The Heart as well."



The raffle baskets drew a big crowd throughout the evening. Items included autographed Philadelphia Eagles and Flyers merchandise, two timeshares, a YMCA family membership, theatre tickets, and various restaurant gift cards among other things.

This event would not have been possible without the help from our generous sponsors: The Law Offices of Deborah E. Spivack, Arthur Hall Insurance, Eagle Peak Marketing, Penn Medicine (Bala Cynwyd), and Yapple Yogurt. Students from Villanova University's Alpha Phi Omega chapter also donated their time to help staff our event.

Thank you to everyone for coming out and supporting the Birth Parent Scholarship Fund. We hope to see you again next year!



Recent Legislation

TEXAS - In an October 4th ruling, U.S. District Judge Reed O'Connor struck down a law aimed at keeping Native American children with Native American families as non-constitutional citing that it discriminates against non-Native Americans. Judge O'Connor's ruling stunned Native American rights advocates fearing that it may not only put Native American children at risk but also may begin to erode at the legal precedent of tribal sovereignty.

Federal Change in the Definition of Gender -

The Department of Health and Human Services has proposed adopting a new definition of gender in an effort to roll back federal protections and recognition of transgender people. The agency's proposed definition cites a person's sex as unchangeable and either male or female as determined by the genitals a person is born with. An estimated 1.4 million Americans who have chosen to recognize themselves as a gender other than the sex they were born into would be at risk of losing federal protection. Civil rights groups, including the Human Rights Campaign, have been diligently fighting against the administrations push to change the federally recognized definition of gender.

No SSN For Child What To Do For Taxes

Some families who adopted this past year may not be able to finalize before the end of the year. This means 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 questions about requesting an ATIN for your child or about the federal adoption tax credit.

LOVE Builds Families
Adoptions From The Heart®

NAVIGATION: ADVOCACY ORGANIZATIONS | BLOGS WE FOLLOW | CONTACT US | INFERTILITY | ABOUT US | BOOK STORE

DESCRIPTION: A blog by Adoptions From The Heart to help families interested in Adoption and to support those who have adopted.

YOU ARE FOLLOWING THIS BLOG: You are following this blog along with 1,683 other amazing people (manage).

ARCHIVES: Select Month

RECENT POSTS:

- I'm Pregnant and Considering Adoption as an Option
- Single Parent Adoption: "Not An Opportunity to Be Other"
- What to Do if My Partner & I Don't Agree During the Adoption Process
- The Top 8 Best Books For Adoptive Families

Blog Post Grid:

- PA REVOCATION PERIOD: ADOPTION LAWS, ADAPTIVE PARENTS, BIRTH PARENTS, PENNSYLVANIA REVOCATION PERIOD
- ADOPTIVE PARENTS, PARENTING: WHAT EXPECTING PARENTS SEARCH FOR IN POTENTIAL ADOPTIVE FAMILY PROFILES
- OPEN ADOPTION: OPEN ADOPTION - REMEMBERING IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT ME
- 8 Things to Know Before ADOPTING
- ADOPTION: A TEACHER'S GUIDE TO INTRODUCING ADOPTION IN TO THE CLASSROOM IN 4 EASY STEPS!
- ADOPTION LAWS, BIRTH PARENTS, OPEN ADOPTION: OPEN ADOPTION: THE BIRTH PARENT PERSPECTIVE

AFTH's Blog Gets a Face Life

After over 9 years, it was time for AFTH's WordPress Blog to have a new look! The new design has lots more visuals and is much easier to navigate using categories and tags to make it easier to find additional posts about your topics of interest.

Take a look and be sure to subscribe so you don't miss out on the new weekly content: <https://afth.wordpress.com/>

Fall Festival Recaps



We Build Beautiful Families



Allentown Office

The cold weather didn't stop the fun at Allentown's Seiple Farms fall festival! We were thrilled to welcome not only local families but also families who made the long travel from New York City and Wyoming Valley, PA. It was a pleasure to see how much the children have grown and to reconnect with everyone. Families stopped by the tent to enjoy cookies, brownies, chips juice and water! The corn maze and hay ride was the highlight as usual however the piglets born only two week prior added to the excitement. We want to thank our families for braving the cold weather as well as Seiple farms for providing discounts to the corn maze and pumpkins. We look forward to seeing even more families join us next year, inviting you to visit with us and perhaps with birth families at this wonderful farm. Here's to better weather in 2019!

Central Pennsylvania Office

Central PA Regional Office held their annual Fall Festival on Saturday, October 13th, at the Rapho Township Park in Mt. Joy, PA. We had a large group of adoptive and birth families in attendance. One birth mother was able to visit with her child after 4 years of contact through pictures/letters. The children all enjoyed the craft table and they loved the playground! Everyone enjoyed macaroni and cheese, hot dogs, and hot chocolate with the colder weather. Families donated non-perishable items to the Water Street Mission and a family donated money to the Birth Parent Fund. Names were drawn for door prizes throughout the day for the adults and the children. A wonderful time was had by all.



Cherry Hill Office

On Saturday, November 3, the New Jersey Office of Adoptions From The Heart held its annual Fall Festival at Johnson's Corner Farm in Medford. Many adoptive and birth families came together to enjoy the crisp, cool autumn weather and to celebrate National Adoption month! Families spent time enjoying fun fall activities including hayrides to pick pumpkins, popcorn, apples and sweet potatoes, the playground and the farm's petting zoo. Tasty seasonal treats were on hand including apple cider, whoopie pies, apple cider donuts and beautifully decorated cupcakes donated by Gallo's bakery in Cherry Hill, NJ.

Virginia Office

Our 2nd Annual Virginia Fall Festival had over 50 guests including 4 birth parent reunions. While the temperatures were chilly, the sunshine made it a perfect fall day to be outside. The kids practically had to be pulled off the bounce house, but were eager to do so when face painting was announced! The hot apple cider kept the parents warm while chatting about updates and experiences with AFTH. An abundance of desserts and side dishes were brought by all attendees, while AFTH provided pork and chicken barbecue, buns, and drinks. We look forward to seeing all our friends again next year for a fun filled day celebrating adoption!

Wynnewood Office

The Wynnewood office of Adoptions From the Heart held our third annual Fall Family Fun event on October 13 at Colonial Gardens in Phoenixville. Despite a slightly rainy and chilly day, many families joined us to decorate pumpkins, eat snacks, and celebrate fall. We enjoyed the hayride, corn maze, and pumpkin patch at Colonial Gardens as well. We look forward to continuing this tradition next year!



'Tis the Season of Giving

Partnering Together to Make a Bigger Difference

The impact that AFTH has is not limited to the work of the social workers and support staff. The aid that we have been able to give through the Expecting & Birth Parent Support Fund and Birth Parent Scholarship Fund would not have been the same this past year without generous partnerships with organizations and caring donors just like you. Whether you make a one time contribution or sign up for our monthly give online at www.afth.org, you are coming together with others who want to help and sharing your heart with others in need. Thank you!

Whole Foods Market in Wynnewood, PA Donated \$1,511

A 5 cent donation is made to a charity for each customer who brings their own bag. Adoptions From The Heart was selected as the charity during the summer and after three months, more than \$1,500 was donated to AFTH's Expecting and Birth Parent Support Fund.

Nothing Bundt Cakes Grand Opening in Chesapeake, VA

As a part of their grand opening celebration, Nothing Bundt Cakes in Chesapeake donated a portion of one day of their sales opening week back in August. Over \$600 was donated to AFTH's Scholarship Fund.

Extraordinary Give in Lancaster County

For the past five years, the Extraordinary Give, a 24-hour event, has been Lancaster County's biggest day of giving. With the help of local sponsors and individual donations, over \$22.5 million has been raised for local organizations. Last year close to \$1,500 was raised for AFTH's Expecting and Birth Parent Support Fund. We are honored to be asked to participate again this year on Friday, November 17th.



Gift Card Collection

The holidays can feel hopeless for someone living paycheck-to-paycheck, especially when there are children in the home.

Each year, social workers identify birth parents who are parenting other children and are in need of a little help. Last winter, more than \$12,000 in gift cards were given to help birth parents and their families during the holidays.

I wasn't going to be able to give my two little girls presents this year but YOU made it possible. There will never be enough ways to express how thankful I am for this. - Kristen D

If you would like to donate a gift card for a birth parent in need, the most needed gift cards are Target, Walmart, or Visa ranging in value from \$25-\$200. You can send your donation to AFTH at 30-31 Hampstead Circle, Wynnewood, PA 19096.



AFTH's 2019 Building Beautiful Families Calendar



When You Purchase a Calendar, You Share Your Heart with Someone Facing a Difficult Time

Each and every calendar sold benefits AFTH's Expecting and Birth Parent Support Fund. All year long AFTH's Support Fund provides necessary financial assistance to expecting and birth parents facing hardships. At times, expecting parents working with AFTH are in need of some help securing food, housing, and clothing among other things. The Fund has also been used to help avoid eviction by paying back rent, restore heat by paying utility bills, and provide public transportation passes for travel to work and doctor appointments. AFTH's Support Fund allows AFTH to meet all of those needs.

The calendar features photos submitted by families of children who were adopted through AFTH - ranging from just a few months old to teenagers and represent both domestic and past international adoption programs. The calendar honors adoption while raising money to help those are putting their child's needs above their own.

Cost: \$14.00 + \$1.50 shipping

How 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 any AFTH Office and avoid the shipping charges.

Building Beautiful Families 2019 Calendar

Name: _____ Phone: (____) _____

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

Please SHIP ____ # Calendars x \$15.50 = \$ _____ Total Enclosed

I Will PICK UP ____ # Calendars x \$14.00 = \$ _____ 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

AFTH Adoptees: Where Are They Now

Seeking Young Adults and Teens Who Were Adopted Through AFTH to Share Their Stories

We are hoping to hear from AFTH adoptees and families who adopted years ago through any of AFTH's domestic or former international programs. We are hoping to highlight stories from AFTH families in our blogs, newsletters and even potentially on Adoptions From The Heart TV see page 13. AFTH has been facilitating adoptions for over 30 years and we are so honored to have been a part of your family coming together.

For parents, we want to hear what you remember most about your adoption journey and also an update about your family now. Feel free to send photos as well.

We also want to hear directly from young adult and teen adoptees who are willing to share with others about their adoption experience. We want to elevate the voice of adoptees and their unique perspectives since more often they go unheard in the adoption community. What was it like growing up? What would you want younger children to know about navigating the world as an adoptee? We welcome your unique story and all the joys and challenges along the way.

If you were adopted transracially, we would love to hear about your experience and any advice you have for prospective adoptive parents who are planning to raise a child of a different race. What are your biggest dos and don'ts you would suggest for them?

Are you an adoptee wanting to connect with other adoptees? We can do that too. Reach out so we can help make those connections.

We are eagerly waiting to hear from you. To share your story, email KristyG@afth.org.

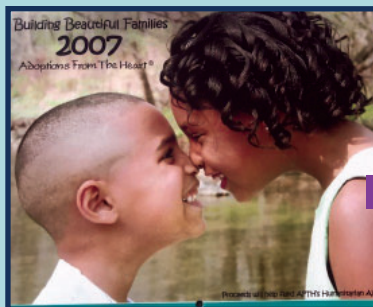
Calendar Throwback

Here is a throwback to our first two years of the AFTH Building Beautiful Families Calendar when we featured one large photo on the front cover.

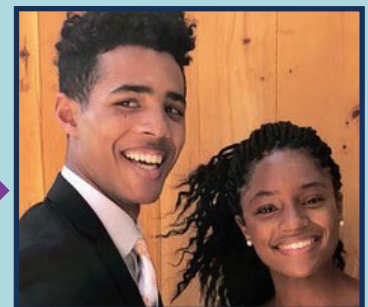
Ben and Carli who were both adopted through AFTH's Domestic Program were featured on the cover of the 2007 Calendar. Rachel who was adopted through AFTH's Kazakhstan Program was featured on the 2008 calendar cover.

Keep an eye out as all three are featured again in this year's 2019 Building Beautiful Families calendar.

2007 & 2008 Covers



Present



Agency News

AFTH Holiday Closure

AFTH offices will be closed for the holidays starting at 2pm on Friday, December 21st and re-opening on Wednesday, 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 21st. Families should include money for postage to forward the gifts along to their child's birth parents.

Domestic Program Update

Adoptions From The Heart is excited to announce the **nation-wide reopening of our Out-of-Area Domestic Adoption Program**. At this time, this program is only open to couples and singles open to adopting African American children. Prospective adoptive parents must be screened and approved through a home study process by a local non-profit, licensed agency. Families will then be required to attend a 2-day Education Course in-person in the Lancaster, PA Office. Similar to families in our services area, prospective adoptive parents must be able to arrive at a hospital for an emergency placement within 24-hours after being notified of a match. It's important to know that close to 50% of AFTH's placements are emergencies.

To learn more about the Out-of-Area Program, attend a live webinar – upcoming dates are on our online calendar at www.afth.org or contact Stephanie Capriotti at StephanieC@afth.org.

We are thrilled to share that Adoptions From The Heart has been granted the opportunity to provide adoption training to all of the nurses at Christiana Hospital – the largest hospital in the state of Delaware. These trainings, offered on several dates during different shifts, will cover topics such as options counseling, positive adoption language, myths and facts about adoption as well as answer any questions the nursing staff may have. Nurses will receive continuing education credits for attending the trainings. This is an exciting opportunity to increase awareness about adoption options in the nursing community.

If you would like to attend or host a training at your organization, please contact Ashley Kodet at AshleyK@afth.org.

Just a reminder that families currently in our program will be receiving an updated Contract and Agency Policies in December. These important documents should be reviewed, signed, and returned as soon as possible. Families who are already placed but not finalized also must return the documents.

Waiting for a placement during the holiday season can feel especially difficult. Each person may cope in a different way. Your social worker is there to provide guidance and support, don't hesitate to reach out. Stephanie and Rae, social workers from our Central PA Office, will be featured on the November 20th Adoptions from the Heart TV episode "Coping with the Wait During the Holiday Season". Learn more about Adoptions from the Heart TV on page 13.



Agency Waiting Statistics

As of November 1st, 77% of AFTH's waiting families have been waiting for 18 months or less and 63% a year or less.

For families with keys open to African-American children, as of November 1st, 84% of families were waiting 1 year or less, and 68% have been waiting for 6 months or less.

Emergency Placement Statistics

Since the beginning of the new fiscal year in July, 61% of our placements over the past four months have been emergency placements. So, 3 in 5 families picked for placements are required to be at the hospital within 24 hours of getting the exciting call.

Families picked for emergency placements have a lot to process in a short period of time and so it's important for families to understand the expectations for them at the hospital. Even with the yearly Hospital Expectations Refresher Webinar, you might have questions about what to and not to do in an emergency placement. Be sure to ask your social worker who can help answer any questions you might have.

Important News About the Newsletter

As of January 2019, only electronic versions of AFTH's newsletter will be sent out to waiting and placed families. If you are an AFTH family currently getting the hard copy edition of each newsletter, the email address we have on file for you will be imported into our email blast system ***unless you notify KristyG@afth.org by January 2nd that you do not want to receive email newsletters.***

If you do not hear back from you telling us that you don't want to be added to the email blast system, you are consenting to receive marketing emails from: Adoptions From The Heart. You can revoke your consent to receive emails at any time by using the SafeUnsubscribe® link, found at the bottom of every email coming from AFTH via Constant Contact.

Reminder about Continuing Education

As a reminder, AFTH requires waiting families to have 5 continuing education hours each year to be completed at the time of the home study update or yearly home visit.

There are different ways, online and in-person, to meet this requirement. AFTH Education Series Classes and support groups count as hours. One webinar, The Hospital Expectations Refresher Webinar, is required for all families. Another optional webinar provided by AFTH covers openness and features videos of birth parents sharing their experiences.

One of our most popular classes is with Dr. Erin Meyer, a Hospitalist at Christiana Hospital. She covers the effects of drug and alcohol exposure during pregnancy. These classes are offered in person and by live webinar several times a year. After attending, many families have opted to change their profile keys based on the information they learned.

Social workers can provide a list of additional opportunities to gain continuing education hours outside of AFTH classes.

Adoptive Parent Meet Up Run By an Adoptee

Robert Hafetz MS/MFT /TRS will be hosting a free workshop for adoptive parents and foster parents. The group will meet every two months and topics will cover trauma informed parenting, understanding adoptee behavior, avoiding power struggles, creating a secure attachment, resolving anger, shame, and grief, non verbal responses that calm the adoptee, implicit memory, dealing with the birth family.

As an adoptee, Robert combines his life experience with his training as a marriage and family counselor to help adoptive and foster families better understand the needs of the children in their care.

The first class will be on Sunday, December 9th at 7pm in Robert's Warrington, PA home. Space is limited. To sign up for the class email Robert at roberthafetz@verizon.net.

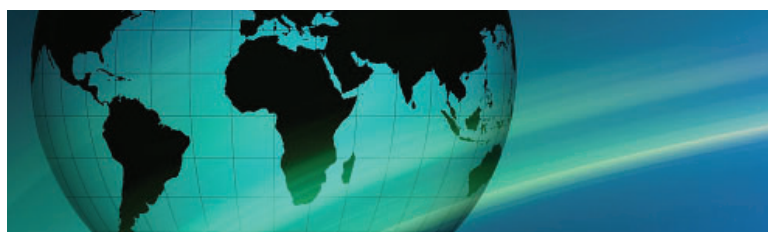
International Adoption News

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 or 610.642.7200 to see how we can help you with your adoption process, including referring you to one of these partner agencies.

UNICEF & Vietnam

UNICEF and the French government joined efforts to improve international adoption standards in Vietnam. UNICEF and the French Embassy in Vietnam have signed an agreement to make their collaboration official to improve international adoption standards in Vietnam.

The two-year project will help to strengthen the legal and policy framework on adoption. It will also support a pilot project in two provinces on intercountry adoption in compliance with the international standards defined in the 1993 Hague Adoption Convention. Finally the project will help build capacity of agencies and organizations working on adoption including monitoring and supervision through training on alternative care and adoption processes and procedures. In order to implement the three parts of the project, the Intercountry Adoption Service has allocated to EUR 100,000 to UNICEF for two years which will fund activities with different government agencies in charge of intercountry adoption in Vietnam and pilot a high-quality operational model of intercountry adoption in Ho Chi Minh City and in Da Nang.



Adoption in Jamaica

The government is taking steps to amend the Adoption of Children's Act with a view to streamline it so it conforms to national standards. The existing legislation was passed in 1958. The government is committed to making the adoption process more efficient. The State Minister recognizes global studies that show children perform better in a family setting and a nurturing environment. Up to March of this year, a total of 217 Jamaican children were permanently placed with families -171 locally and 46 overseas. This is a 26% increase over the previous period. The State Minister reports that the previous two-tiered system was problematic and time-consuming and has been abolished and this has allowed them to shorten the process. Children between the ages of six weeks and eighteen years old are eligible for adoption. Under Jamaican law, any person twenty-five years and older can adopt a child. However, persons who are eighteen years old can adopt younger relatives. There is no upper age limit to adopt in Jamaica.

AFTH Alumni 18 Years Later



Left to right: Xavier Mack, Emma Barr, Margot Schaumann, Rachel & Nick Grant and Daniel Freeman

In 2000, 16 families traveled with Paul and Sandy to Vietnam and adopted 17 children. Many of the families have stayed very close through the years, maintaining a uniquely special bond. Even though it becomes harder to do so each year, we have never failed to hold an annual reunion. This year we met in Mt. Laurel. Thank you for your good work, which has brought us 18 years (and counting) of great joy.

Introducing...



Facebook Debut November 6th

We kicked off National Adoption Month 2018 with a bang with the debut of Adoptions From The Heart TV. It debuted on Facebook the morning of on Tuesday, November 6th. Our very first episode took us back to the very beginning by meeting the woman behind Adoptions From The Heart - Maxine



Chalker.

We learn how being an adoptee influenced why and how she created AFTH and how things have changed over the past 33 years.



Join us on Facebook each Tuesday morning with our host Amanda Aliberti as we cover a variety of adoption related topics which include: Coping with the Wait During the Holiday Season, My Story as a Birthmom, Birth Parent Support During the Holidays,

Facing the Unknowns in Adoption, Exploring Options When Facing an Unplanned Pregnancy, Choosing an Adoption Agency, Open Adoption 101, and the Importance of Support for Expecting and Birth Parents.

Don't miss out: www.facebook.com/adoptionsfromtheheart

Congratulations to AFTH's Newest Families..

Sons

Patricia & Jennifer
Travis & Lauren
Anthony & Eileen
Keith & Graziella
Jesse & Shannon
Daniel & Rachle
David & Carrie
Rodney & Rebecca
Christopher & Nicole
Darlene & Ann Marie



Daughters

Michael & Jennifer
Romain & Christina
Geoffrey & Evan
Brandi
Will & James
Phillip & Lawrence
Robert & Andrea
Michael & Martin
Jeffrey & Scott
Matthew & Nicole
Mindy & Michael
Sasha & Jason
Adam & Tyler
Jennifer





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