

Adoption News

A Newsletter From:

Adoptions From The Heart



Honoring National Adoption Month

From the past we learn, through stories we grow.

Each November, communities across the country come together to recognize National Adoption Month. A time to raise awareness, share stories, and reflect on the impact of adoption. But before it became a nationwide celebration, it started with a very specific and important mission: to find permanent, loving homes for children in the foster care system.

The observance began in 1976, when Massachusetts Governor Michael Dukakis announced the first “Adoption Week,” focused on bringing attention to the thousands of children in foster care who were waiting for families. The effort gained momentum, and in 1984, President Ronald Reagan made it a national initiative. By 1995, President Bill Clinton expanded it to the entire month of November, giving agencies, organizations, and communities more time to advocate, educate, and inspire action.



Over time, National Adoption Month has grown to include many perspectives within the adoption world, from public to private, domestic to international. Yet, it's important to remember its original purpose: **to ensure every child has the opportunity to experience the stability, love, and belonging of a permanent family.**

At Adoptions From The Heart, we honor that original mission while also embracing the broader story of adoption, **one that includes the experiences of adoptees, birth parents, and adoptive parents alike.** We believe that the beauty of adoption lies in understanding all voices that make up the adoption triad, recognizing that each story is deeply personal, complex, and meaningful.

This National Adoption Month, AFTH is focusing on uplifting those voices and sharing stories that reveal the many sides of adoption. The joys, the challenges, and the ongoing journey of connection and identity. Through these stories, we aim to foster empathy, awareness, and continued growth within our community.

We also want to emphasize **the importance of education**, learning from the

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past, understanding how adoption practices have evolved, and continuing to build a future that prioritizes ethical practices, transparency, and respect for every person involved.

As we celebrate this month, we do so not by redefining what National Adoption Month means, but by reaffirming its purpose: to shed light on the needs of children and families while embracing the full, honest, and human story of adoption. By listening, learning, and sharing, we can continue to move forward, together.

Follow Adoptions From The Heart throughout November as we share powerful stories, reflections, and educational resources honoring the voices that make the adoption community what it is today.

Locations

Connecticut Office

1 Regency Dr. #108, Bloomfield, CT 06002
860.657.2626

Delaware Office

18-A Trolley Square Wilmington, DE 19806
302.658.8883

New Jersey Office

523 Hollywood Avenue, Suite 209,
Cherry Hill, NJ 0800
856.665.5655

New York

87 Mineola Blvd, Mineola, NY 11501
800.355.5500

Virginia Office

1403 Greenbrier Parkway Suite 560
Chesapeake, VA 23320
757.361.0008

Pennsylvania Offices Mailing Address

30-31 Hampstead Circle Wynnewood, PA 19096

Allentown Office

610.432.2384

Philadelphia Office

610.642.7200

Pittsburgh Office

724.853.6533

Central Pennsylvania

717.399.7766

Toll Free: 800.355.5500

Website: www.afth.org

A Second Chance Through Open Adoption: Alison's Story



When Alison found out she was pregnant in 2016, she was in one of the darkest chapters of her life. Deep in the throes of addiction, she was overwhelmed by fear and uncertainty. As a mother already to her son Brady, born in 2011, she loved being a mom, but addiction had drained her strength and ability to care for him the way she wanted. Adding another child into

that dynamic, she knew, would be unfair to everyone involved.

"When I found out I was pregnant, it was not planned and I was in quite possibly the worst part of my life at the time, deep into addiction."

Faced with an unplanned pregnancy, Alison explored her options and came to a decision that she felt would be best for her baby, herself, and her family: open adoption. That's when she found Adoptions From The Heart (AFTH).

Finding Support at AFTH

From the beginning, Alison says AFTH offered not only guidance but genuine care. She connected with Amanda, her AFTH counselor, who quickly became her strongest advocate.

"I was frozen with overwhelming fear, but when I met Amanda, she stuck by me every step of the way. Fighting for me when I couldn't, fighting with me when I needed to be fought with, and always supporting me no matter the circumstances."

Alison was candid about her struggles during pregnancy. Depressed and still battling addiction, she received very little prenatal care. But when she did make it to appointments, it was because Amanda helped her get there.

One of the most meaningful parts of working with AFTH was learning that adoption isn't one-size-fits-all. Amanda showed her the many ways open adoption could be shaped around her needs and values.

Choosing a Family

When it came time to choose an adoptive family, Alison was given a binder full of profiles. One in particular

stood out: an LGBTQ couple with a daughter already at home.

She didn't set out to choose a family based on sexual orientation, but she's grateful her son, Isaac, is growing up in a home filled with love, inclusion, and acceptance.

In January 2017, Alison gave birth to Isaac. Out of deep love and selflessness, she chose not to spend time with him in the hospital. She wanted to give those precious first bonding moments to his adoptive parents.

"If I loved him one ounce less, I would have kept him."

Healing After Placement

Six months after Isaac was born, Alison reunited with him and his two moms at AFTH's Annual Family Picnic. That moment marked a turning point in her journey. A moment of healing, gratitude, and connection.

Her relationship with Isaac's family has grown beautifully over the years.

"My relationship with his parents is wonderful. We've adjusted and learned each other's boundaries. Recently, Isaac started asking more about who I am and wanting to talk with me more. Our relationship is growing, and I couldn't be happier."

Today, Isaac knows who Alison is and the important role she plays in his life. And Alison credits his parents not only for giving him a loving home but also for giving her a second chance at life.

"Them making the decision to adopt Isaac also afforded me a second chance at getting this right. There aren't words to adequately express my gratitude for everything they've done; for my life and for that wonderful little boy."

On May 12, 2025, Alison celebrated eight years clean. Her journey wasn't easy, but with support, love, and the opportunity to heal, she's now the mother her children deserve.

Open adoption, as Alison says, is a journey of learning and growing, for everyone involved. It's about creating relationships based on love, trust, and understanding.

Heart-to-Heart: The Eras of Adoptions From The Heart



On November 3rd, Adoptions From The Heart hosted a very special Heart-to-Heart event: The Eras of Adoptions From The Heart, **an evening dedicated to honoring 40 years of service, connection, and impact in the world of adoption.** From 6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., our AFTH family came together virtually to reflect on four decades of growth and transformation. We were thrilled to have over 30 attendees join us for this milestone celebration, and through their generosity, we were able to raise \$624 in support of AFTH's ongoing mission.

The purpose of this Heart-to-Heart was to bring together members of the adoption community: adoptees, birth parents, adoptive families, and professionals. To celebrate the legacy of Adoptions From The Heart, founded in 1985 by Maxine Chalker, who pioneered open adoption on the East Coast.

Throughout the evening, guests took a walk through time, revisiting the agency's journey from its humble beginnings to becoming a leading voice in open adoption. Speakers shared reflections on change, discussing how adoption practices, laws, and perspectives have evolved over the years, always with a focus on compassion, transparency, and the lifelong connections at the heart of adoption.

The event also featured personal stories from members of the adoption triad and AFTH professionals, each offering a moving glimpse into the ways adoption has shaped their lives. **These heartfelt testimonies reminded us of why our work matters.** The joy of family, the strength of birth parents, and the resilience of adoptees who continue to shape the future of adoption.

We closed the evening with a celebration of milestones, recognizing the countless lives touched by AFTH over the past four decades. From the first open adoptions facilitated in the 1980s to the ongoing support programs offered today, each chapter of our story reflects a shared commitment to love, openness, and advocacy.

More than anything, The Eras of Adoptions From The Heart was a **celebration of community;** a chance to pause, reflect, and look ahead together. As we step into our next era, we remain dedicated to building families through love, empowering voices across the adoption triad, and continuing the mission that began 40 years ago: creating connections that last a lifetime.

Give Back with Heart This Holiday Season

Shop for a Cause: AFTH x Kendra Scott Fundraiser



Join Adoptions From The Heart on **Friday, December 6th, from 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.** at **Kendra Scott in Suburban Square** for a special shopping event that gives back!

During this exclusive fundraiser, shoppers will have the opportunity to **shop to support AFTH and our vital adoption services**. A percentage of all sales made during the event will directly benefit our mission to support birth parents, adoptive families and adoptees.

Guests can also purchase a **signature jewelry piece** created especially to celebrate **adoption and the heart of AFTH**, available at Kendra Scott's Color Bar that day only!

We invite our community to come out, enjoy an afternoon of shopping and connection, and help us continue to make a difference in the lives of those touched by adoption.

Event Details

Friday December 6th, 2025
2:00pm - 4:00pm
Kendra Scott, Suburban Square
8 Coulter Ave, Adrmore, PA 19003

*Come shop with heart and support
Adoptions From The Heart!*

[RSVP TODAY](#)

Support Birth Mothers This Holiday Season



This holiday season, Adoptions From The Heart is hosting our annual Gift Card Drive **to support birth mothers, fathers and their families**. Many of the incredible women who make adoption plans also have other children at home, and the holidays can be a challenging time.

Your generosity can help bring comfort and joy to these families by providing them with **gift cards for groceries, clothing, or holiday gifts**. Every contribution, big or small, helps us show these mothers that they are seen, supported, and appreciated long after placement.

Join us in spreading kindness and giving back to those who have given so much. Together, we can make this season a little brighter for the families we serve.

To donate, please consider contributing Online at on our [donation page](#) and choosing the Expecting and Birth Parent Support Fund for your donation.

"We placed our newborn but were also parenting a son together. I lost my job and then our house, and we moved in with my parents. Our car needed an inspection, and with no way to get to work, my girlfriend was about to lose her job. AFTH saved her job by paying for the inspection and gave us Walmart gift cards to help buy food. AFTH got us through one of the most difficult times in our lives."

- Alex, Birth Father

Meet Joan Smith: A Heart for Adoption



For 13 years, Joan Smith, a compassionate and dedicated social worker in AFTH's Western Pennsylvania office, has been helping families navigate the emotional and life-changing journey of adoption. But Joan's connection to adoption began long before her time as a professional, it began with her own story as an adoptive mother.

In the late 1990s, Joan and her partner set out to grow their family through adoption, only to face roadblocks at nearly every turn. "We called multiple agencies across the U.S. over ten months, only to be told that because we weren't married, we couldn't adopt," Joan recalls. "When we finally reached out to Adoptions From The Heart, we didn't expect much, but that call changed our lives."

The social worker on the other end of the line welcomed them without hesitation. Within minutes, she confirmed that AFTH could help them begin the process. "There was no negativity, no questioning, just 'yes, we can make this happen!'" Joan says.

In August 2000, after completing their home study and being matched through AFTH's China program, Joan and her partner traveled overseas to meet their daughter. The moment they first held her remains etched in Joan's memory. "It was surreal. A mix of joy, relief, and disbelief that it was actually happening," she shares. "It was an amazing experience that I'll never forget."

Joan's journey to parenthood also opened the door to a new calling. When her own adoption social worker mentioned a need for more counselors in the Pittsburgh area, Joan saw an opportunity to give back. "Having gone through the process myself, I understood what families were feeling," she says. In 2008, she joined Adoptions From The Heart as an adoption consultant, and she's been serving families ever since.

Her personal experience allows her to connect deeply with both adoptive and birth families. "I know the fears

and worries that pre-adoptive families have. It's a leap of faith," Joan explains. "I can support them by listening and reassuring them that those feelings are normal."

With birth parents, her focus is on empowerment and compassion. "It's about helping them through one of the most difficult times in their lives, whether they choose to parent or make an adoption plan," she says. "I feel joy when I can find the resources they need or help them connect with the right family. My greatest joy, though, is seeing the love shared during visits between birth and adoptive families."

Joan's ability to share both perspectives, as an adoptive parent and as a social worker, gives her a unique lens in her work. "It's important to help adoptive families understand the sacrifice birth parents make, and to help birth parents understand the emotions adoptive families experience," she says. "Both sides come from such different places, and bridging that understanding is at the heart of what we do."

Over her years at AFTH, Joan has witnessed the landscape of adoption evolve dramatically. "Adoption has changed for the better," she reflects. "With open adoptions, adoptees can know as much as they wish about their birth history. Everyone deserves access to both their biology and their environment, that's what gives a person a full understanding of who they are."

Today, what keeps her inspired is simple: "Helping to build families, just like I built my own," she says. "And being part of a great team that works tirelessly to support everyone in the adoption triad."

For Joan, every story, every family, and every child reaffirms why she chose this path, and why, 13 years later, she's still as passionate as ever about building families through love, trust, and heart.

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Finding Joy Through Open Adoption: Kristen's Story



In 2017, Kristen, a young woman from Pittsburgh, PA, faced an unexpected pregnancy and the uncertainty that came with it. Unsure of what steps to take, her biggest concern was how to provide the best possible future for her child.

One day, Kristen's father heard a radio ad for Adoptions From The Heart (AFTH) and shared the information with her. Curious, Kristen began researching AFTH and the concept of open adoption. The more she learned, the more she felt that AFTH was the right place. One that would support both her and her baby with care and respect.

When Kristen reached out, she was connected with her AFTH caseworker, Taylor, who quickly became a steady source of support. Taylor made the process easier by traveling to meet Kristen in person and helping her explore her options. Kristen appreciated being able to choose how involved Taylor would be as she navigated this deeply personal journey.

At first, Kristen worried she might have to compromise on her hopes for the right adoptive family. But Taylor reassured her with compassion and confidence.

"I thought I was going to have to settle, and Taylor said absolutely not. We will look until we find you a family that is absolutely perfect."

And that's exactly what happened. Kristen eventually found the family she had been dreaming of. One whose

beliefs, values, and warmth aligned beautifully with her own.

From their very first meeting, Kristen knew she had made the right choice. The family took a photo with her that day and framed it for their nursery, a gesture that spoke volumes about how much they valued her. When Kristen's daughter was born, they named her Joy, symbolizing the happiness she brought into their lives, and gave her Kristen's middle name, Elizabeth, as a tribute.



Today, Kristen maintains a close relationship with Joy and her adoptive family. They continue to share special moments, including Joy's second birthday, which was celebrated with a Toy Story theme, Kristen's favorite movie.

"The fact that they go out of their way to make sure that my family and I feel welcome... It's just a really good relationship," she shares.

Kristen hopes her story reminds other expectant mothers that they are never alone.

"There are options out there and you're not alone. That was the most important thing; knowing that I wasn't alone in this."

Through openness, honesty, and love, Kristen found the family that felt right for her daughter, and in doing so, discovered the true meaning of Joy.

Did you Know?

AFTH has a blog! Keep up with stories from all the members of the adoption triad, agency news, resources and much more.

[Check it out!](#)

Important Announcement for Clients Sending Gifts Through AFTH Offices



ATTENTION

AFTH Clients who send gifts through AFTH Offices

Please read this important message.

During the holiday season, AFTH receives gifts to forward along to members of the adoption triad. We ask for you to please include funds to cover the postage needed to repackage and send the gift from our office. To ensure enough time for mailing, **please have packages delivered to our offices no later than Monday, December 1st.** Gifts received after this date **cannot be guaranteed to ship before AFTH's holiday closing.**

We ask that packages remain under 5–7 pounds and no larger than 12 inches. Packages within this size range can be easily stamped and mailed directly from our office without additional trips to the post office. Suggested gift ideas include photos, books, jewelry, artwork, or gift cards. If your package is heavier or larger than this, please contact the local AFTH office where you plan to send it. Our offices have UPS accounts and can provide a price quote for shipping that way.

Address Mailing Guide for Clients

When sending gifts and updates to AFTH, please remember to include a note for internal use only that has your last name.

This speeds up the process for staff to correctly identify recipients.



Please send your gifts to the office listed below **based on the birth parent's location.** Be sure to include **your first and last name for internal use only.**

If the birth parent's office is...

Virginia: 1403 Greenbrier Parkway, Suite 560, Chesapeake, VA 23320

New Jersey: 523 Hollywood Ave, Suite 209, Cherry Hill, NJ 08002

All Others: 30-31 Hampstead Circle, Wynnewood PA 19096

Holiday Closing Schedule

AFTH offices will be **closed for the holidays starting Monday, December 22nd**, and will **reopen Monday, January 5th at 9:00 AM.** Social workers will remain **on call for emergency placements** and will continue to support expectant parents who may deliver during the break.

Agency News

The Holiday Season Feeling For Adoptees

Holidays and birthdays are often associated with happiness, traditions, and family. However, these times can also evoke complex emotions for those who are adopted. These occasions often highlight the absence of biological ties, raising questions like:

- Do my birth parents think of me on this day?
- What are the traditions I might have had if I'd grown up with them?
- Why was I placed for adoption?

Even in loving and open families, this sense of “duality” can be difficult to navigate. Even if your child doesn't openly talk about their adoption, it doesn't mean those thoughts and feelings aren't present. Many adoptees process their stories internally, using imagination to fill in the blanks or silently wondering about their birth families. These special dates can stir up emotions or unanswered questions, even if not verbalized.

As a parent or caregiver, gentle check-ins make a difference. You don't need to wait for your child to bring it up; you can open the door by reading a book with them about adoption, revisiting their story together, or simply saying “I'm here if you ever want to talk about your birth family or how you're feeling today”. These open conversations build trust with your child; they are free to share and ask anything they'd like, even if it can be painful. This reminds your child that their whole story matters and that all parts of their identity are welcome.

To Waiting Families: It's Okay if This Season Feels Complicated

While you're preparing to welcome a child to your family, you might find yourself experiencing a mix of emotions to include hope and anticipation, but also grief and loss. This journey toward building your family may have come after infertility, losses of pregnancy, disappointments or disruption in adoptions, and/or years of waiting. Those experiences leave their own emotional marks, and it's okay, and possibly crucial, to honor them.

Waiting can feel like a pause or a constant “no”, but

it's also an important time for reflection, education, and preparation. This is a season to understand the complexities of adoption, to sit with your own feelings, and to get clear on how you want to show up for your future child; this is not just about love, but empathy for the losses they and their biological families may carry too.

The holidays can bring up sensitive dynamics. You may be fielding well-meaning but hurtful questions or feeling the weight of being the only one in the room who knows how much you're longing. It's okay to set boundaries. It's okay to protect your heart. You don't owe anyone explanations for how you choose to celebrate (or not) during this time.

You can use this waiting period to:

- Grieve what you've lost or are still longing for
- Learn about trauma-informed parenting and adoptee voices
- Set boundaries with extended family and friends
- Build rituals that honor your journey and future child's story
- Connect with others who understand the unique path you're on

Waiting doesn't have to be passive; it's active, emotional, and deeply meaningful. You're building your family from the inside out. Sometimes, when stuck in the waiting it may feel like “never”, but with 70% of our placements emergencies in 2025 so far, preparedness for the call is an important part of your wait. [Visit our Client Portal](#) for profile meeting reminder paperwork and for your “Emergency Preparedness Checklist”.

If you need support and connection this holiday season, AFTH has many opportunities to connect. Check out more about our finding connection this holiday season on page 11.

Important Update: Pennsylvania Offices

All Pennsylvania AFTH offices have officially combined. Going forward, **all Pennsylvania correspondence and mail should be sent directly to the Wynnewood location at:**

30-31 Hampstead Circle, Wynnewood, PA 19096. Please note that we are **no longer receiving mail at our regional PA offices.**

Building Connections Through Play: Triangle Time Returns In 2026

Triangle Time



New Sessions Coming 2026

In November 2024, Adoptions From The Heart's Wynnewood office proudly hosted its first-ever Triangle Time session. A brand-new in-person program created for placed adoptive parents and their children. The event offered a welcoming space for families to connect, learn, and grow together through shared adoption-centered activities and open conversation.

The session was led by Jacquelyn Fagioli, **an adoptive mom through transracial adoption and an experienced educator**. Jacquelyn brings an incredible mix of warmth, enthusiasm, and professional insight to the program. Drawing from both her personal journey and educational expertise, she designed activities that naturally incorporated key adoption-related concepts in an age-appropriate and engaging way. Her thoughtful approach helped families deepen understanding, celebrate identity, and strengthen connections, both within their own families and with others in the adoption community.

Following the success of the initial session, Triangle Time expanded to four sessions over the past year, becoming a beloved and meaningful resource for young adoptees and their parents. Families expressed how much they valued having a safe, supportive environment to connect with others who share similar experiences.

Given its positive impact...

AFTH is excited to continue offering Triangle Time as an ongoing resource. The next three-session series

will be:

- January 10, 2026
- February 7, 2026
- March 7, 2026.

All sessions are from 10am - 11am.

Pricing:

- \$100 per child for the three-session series.
- Additional Siblings (12+months): \$45 for the series.
- Siblings under 12 months: Free of charge

Space is Limited, so make sure you sign up soon!

Triangle Time continues to embody AFTH's mission of nurturing community, connection, and understanding within the adoption triad, one family at a time.

[Register now](#) to reserve your spot and join a community built on connection and care.

We absolutely loved Triangle time! Our daughter was a little less than a year old at the time and not quite walking yet, but she was still able to enjoy story time and dance time while the other kids moved around the floor. For us parents, it was nice to connect with other adoptive families and know we are a part of something special. There is so much love in that room!

- Patrick, Adoptive Father

Finding Connection This Holiday Season



The holiday season can bring a mix of emotions for everyone in the adoption community like joy, reflection, and sometimes, unexpected challenges. That's why support groups are especially important this time of year. They provide a safe, understanding space to share feelings, connect with others who "get it," and remind one another that no one walks this journey alone.

We invite you to join our December support groups to find comfort, community, and encouragement during the holidays. Whether you're an adoptive parent, birth parent, or adoptee, your story matters and you deserve a space to be heard and supported.

December Support Groups

Birth Parent Support Group (zoom)

An opportunity to come together, lean on other birth parents and share your thoughts, feelings, and concerns with others with similar experiences. Reach out to Amanda Aliberti at AmandaA@afth.org for more information.

December 2, 2025 | 7:00pm - 9:00pm

LGBTQ+ Adoptive Parent Support Group (zoom)

Join our LGBTQ adoptive parent support group to engage in meaningful discussions about the unique challenges faced by LGBTQ families. This group is open to any past or present AFTH LGBTQ families and fosters a supportive environment where you can share your experiences and gain insights from others who understand the complexities of navigating family life within the LGBTQ community.

December 9, 2025 | 6:00pm - 7:00pm

Adult Adoptee Support Group 15yrs+ (zoom)

This support group is run by adoptees. Adoption is often times a difficult journey for all of those involved. As adoptees ourselves, we understand the hardships that come while navigating life as an adoptee. Although our journeys may look different, many of our feelings

and ideas are similar. Here is an open group to hear the stories of others and share your own in a safe environment that promotes adoptees finding their own voice.

December 15, 2025 | 7:00pm - 8:30pm

Waiting Family Support Group (Zoom)

Open to **ANY family in the adoption process** working with any AFTH office. Join other waiting prospective adoptive parents for a time to process the highs and lows of the adoption journey. One credit hour will be given for waiting families for attendance.

December 16, 2025 | 7:00pm - 8:30pm

[You can register to all support groups here.](#)

Action, Education, and Preparedness to Parent an Adoptee

Join Adoptions From The Heart this November for two powerful virtual sessions focused on action, education, and preparedness to parent an adoptee.

- Nov. 6 – Navigating Open Adoption After 5+ Year
- Nov. 18 – Elevating Adoptee Voices Panel

Don't miss this opportunity to learn, connect, and grow with the adoption community. Reserve your spot today and be part of the conversation that matters.

Podcast Episode:

During this conversation, Dr. Stokes shares his personal adoption journey, offers professional insights on managing the emotional ups and downs of the waiting process, and provides valuable advice for families navigating their feelings during the holiday season. Additionally, he delves into the concept of duality in adoption, offering a thoughtful perspective on balancing joy and grief. [Don't miss this engaging and heartfelt episode!](#)

Other Support Groups

We offer support for everyone in the adoption triad. Most support groups are held quarterly and some are held every other month or monthly. To learn more about all support groups coming in 2026, check out [AFTH's calendar of events.](#)

Hard Holiday Season for the Adoption Triad

The holiday season is often portrayed as a time of joy, togetherness, and celebration. For many, it's a time filled with cherished traditions, delicious meals, and the warmth of family gatherings. However, for individuals connected to the adoption triad, adoptee, birth parents, and adoptive parents, the holiday season can be a complex and emotionally challenging time.

For Adoptees

The holiday season might evoke a sense of longing and questions about their roots and identity. While surrounded by festivities, adoptees may grapple with feelings of loss. Wondering about their birth family and the circumstances that led to their adoption. It can be a time when the absence of biological connections feels more pronounced, leading to a mix of emotions that can be difficult to navigate. While open adoption can ease these feelings, for those without such openness or limited contact with their birth family, the season can be particularly tough.

For Birth Parents

On the other hand, may experience a profound sense of grief and yearning during the holidays. They might reminisce about the child they placed for adoption, wondering how they are doing and longing to be a part of their lives, especially during a time traditionally associated with family reunions and shared moments. For many, the holidays serve as a poignant reminder that they might not have the opportunity to share this special time with their child.

For Adoptive Parents

The holiday season can bring a blend of joy and empathy for their child's emotions. They might strive to create a nurturing environment and honor their child's adoption story while also managing the complexities that arise from various family dynamics.

Navigating these emotions during a time that emphasizes family and belonging can be overwhelming for everyone in the adoption triad. Expectations of picture-perfect celebrations can amplify the feelings of isolation and emotional dissonance that some members may experience.

What can be done to support individuals in the adoption triad during the holidays? Firstly, acknowledging and validating their feelings is crucial. Creating an environment where discussions about adoption and its impact on the holiday season are encouraged. They can provide a sense of comfort and understanding.

It's essential to allow space for traditions that honor both the adoptive and birth families. This can include activities that acknowledge and celebrate each part of a child's identity. They foster a sense of belonging to both worlds.

Seeking Out Support Networks?

Adoption communities or counseling services can also offer a safe space for sharing experiences. It can help you find solace in the company of others who understand the unique challenges of the adoption journey.

Ultimately, while the holiday season may present unique challenges for those in the adoption triad, it also offers an opportunity for compassion, reflection, and the strengthening of familial bonds in all its forms. By fostering an environment of acceptance and support, we can make the holiday season a time of healing, connection, and understanding for everyone involved in the adoption journey.

Counseling Support for the Adoption Community

AFTH is expanding its network of partnering therapists across Pennsylvania to better serve our community. If you're interested in adoption-competent therapy services or would like to learn more, please contact your local AFTH office or [email us at adoption@afth.org](mailto:email_us_at_adoption@afth.org).

AFTH is also proud to share that Liv McNulty, an adoptee from China via AFTH, is now offering therapy services through Forward Wellness Counseling in Pittsburgh, PA. Liv is a licensed therapist in PA providing both in-person and virtual counseling. She specializes in adoptee support and counseling for all members of the adoption triad. You can learn about her services at Liv@forwardwellnesscounseling.com

Stay Connected!



We're excited to announce the launch of the Adoptions From The Heart Donor Newsletter. A new way to stay connected with the heart of our mission and the impact of your generosity.

As a valued supporter, you'll be among the first to receive exclusive updates, inspiring stories, and behind-the-scenes looks at how your contributions are helping create and support families through adoption. Each issue will highlight the real stories of love, resilience, and hope made possible by your donations, as well as upcoming events, fundraisers, and opportunities to get involved.

Your continued support helps us expand essential services for birth parents, adoptive families, and adoptees. Ensuring that every story begins with care and compassion.

Sign up today and be part of a community that's building beautiful families, one story at a time. [Click here to register!](#)

New On-Demand Webinars Coming November

We are expanding our library of on-demand webinars, bringing even more valuable education and insight directly to adoptive parents and those preparing to adopt. Beginning this November, we'll be adding several new classes designed to support families in every stage of their adoption journey.

One of the standout additions is **Parenting an Adoptee**, a powerful course that's already receiving incredible feedback from our community. Kristy, an adoptive mother and professional at AFTH for over 20 years, shared:

"I recently watched the Parenting an Adoptee on-demand class, hosted by two of our social workers who are also members of the adoption triad, and I cannot recommend it enough! There's so much value in learning to view your child's life through an adoption lens, so you can be better equipped to parent them... I believe this is a course that all prospective and adoptive parents should take."

The new sessions reflect AFTH's ongoing commitment to education and lifelong learning within the adoption community. Keep an eye on our [website for new on-demand offerings](#) and take the next step in deepening your understanding of adoption.

Understanding the Adoption Tax Credit

Tax season is right around the corner, and Adoptions From The Heart wants to ensure that families who adopted this past year are prepared to take advantage of the Adoption Tax Credit (ATC). This federal credit helps offset qualified adoption expenses and can provide valuable financial relief for adoptive families.

Some families who adopted this past year may not yet have finalized their adoption, meaning their child might not have an official Social Security Number (SSN) in time for tax season. If so, families should apply for an Adoption Taxpayer Identification Number (ATIN). A temporary nine-digit number issued by the IRS for tax purposes.

Here's what families need to know:

- The ATIN allows you to claim your child as a dependent and apply for the Adoption Tax Credit before finalization.

- You can obtain the ATIN application form from an IRS walk-in office, by calling 1-800-829-3676, or by visiting www.irs.gov.
- Documentation describing your child's placement must accompany the form. AFTH can provide a confirmation letter of placement upon request. Please contact your local office to obtain one.
- Processing can take up to eight weeks, so families are encouraged to begin the process early. ATINs are valid for two years and can be used until your child receives a Social Security Number.

The Adoption Tax Credit is an important benefit for adoptive families. Make sure you don't miss out! Start gathering your documentation now and reach out to AFTH if you need assistance.

Heart & Soul'd: A Mission Match Made with Heart



Adoptions From The Heart (AFTH) is honored to partner with Heart & Soul'd, a nonprofit thrift store based in Swarthmore, Pennsylvania, whose mission is to support organizations dedicated to foster care and adoption. Founded by Terry and Kristen, AFTH adoptive mothers and sisters, Heart & Soul'd was created with one clear purpose: to turn community generosity into meaningful impact for families and children in need of love and stability.

Heart & Soul'd collects and sells high-quality, gently used items, using proceeds to raise funds for “mission matches;” nonprofits whose work aligns with their vision of supporting children and families touched by foster care and adoption. Every item purchased and every donation made to Heart & Soul'd helps provide resources, education, and support for these organizations and the people they serve.

AFTH is proud to be one of Heart & Soul'd's mission matches and has partnered with the organization for over a year. During this time, Heart & Soul'd has helped raise more than \$5,500 in support of AFTH's programs and open adoption initiatives. These funds directly contribute to helping expectant and birth parents receive vital support, ensuring adoptive families have access to education, and empowering adoptees through community resources.



Currently, Heart & Soul'd is hosting a bracelet fundraiser benefiting AFTH. Each bracelet sold represents more than a beautiful accessory—it's a symbol of connection and compassion within the adoption community.

AFTH is deeply grateful for Terry and Kristen's unwavering dedication and creativity. Their ability to combine purpose with community spirit has made a lasting difference for families across Pennsylvania and beyond. Their work reminds us that when people come together for a cause, small acts of kindness can transform into something truly powerful.

To learn more about Heart & Soul'd, shop their collection, or support their mission, visit heartsould.com.

Together, we can continue building stronger, more connected communities for children and families. You can learn more about the sisters in their upcoming AFTHtv Episodes coming out this November on our YouTube Channel.

Working with Terry and Kristen has been fantastic, they bring an amazing energy to everything that they do. We are so happy to be one of their mission matches and cannot wait to continue this partnership with them for years to come.

- Mayra, AFTH's Marketing Manager

Congratulations to AFTH's Newest Families!

Wishing you all joyful days and endless happiness as you embark on this beautiful adventure together.

July 2025 to October 2025 Families:

- Brian & Rebecca
- Jennifer
- Jordan & Michael
- Greyson & Nina
- Stephan & Nicole
- Joseph & Lisa
- Gregory & Erin
- Thia & Mark
- Patrick & Shane
- Andra
- Matthew & Victor
- Shana
- Matthew & Melissa
- Charles & Christine
- Margaret & Jane
- Thomas & Guillermo
- Nick & Kelly

AFTH's 2026 Building Beautiful Families Calendar



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

Moving forward 100% of the proceeds of each calendar benefits AFTH's Expecting and Birth Parent Support Fund. We are hoping to sell out again this year and have less than 15 calendars left to sell!

The calendar features photos submitted by families of children who were adopted through AFTH. They 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: \$15.00 + \$2.00 shipping

How to Purchase Your Calendars:

1. Online at the AFTH Online Store
2. Complete the form and mail with payment

Building Beautiful Families 2026 Calendar

Name: _____ Phone: _____
Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Please SHIP ___ # Calendars x \$17.00 = \$_____ Total Enclosed

Make checks payable to: Adoptions From The Heart
Mail Payment and form to: 30-31 Hampstead Circle, Wynnewood, PA 19096



*30-31 Hampstead Circle
Wynnewood, PA 19096*

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

Year Round Donor (YRD)

At Adoptions From The Heart we believe every expectant and birth parent should have the support they need to make informed choices. Your donation helps provide critical resources, counseling, and financial assistance to those navigating the adoption journey.

By giving today—or *becoming a Year-Round Donor (YRD)*—you ensure that expectant and birth parents have ongoing support, adoptive families receive the guidance they need, and children find safe and loving homes. A monthly commitment creates a ripple effect of lasting change!

Join us in making a difference.

[Donate today](#) and become a YRD to help us build brighter futures, one adoption at a time.



A Word From One of Our Donors:

“I choose to support Adoptions From The Heart because I’ve seen firsthand the difference they make in the lives of expecting and birth parents. Knowing that my contributions help provide guidance, resources, and compassionate care during such a pivotal time in a family’s journey makes me proud to be part of this mission.”