

# Adoption News

A quarterly newsletter from

## Adoptions From The Heart



### Expecting and Birth Parent Services

#### ***Options Counseling, Support Groups, Scholarship Fund - AFTH Offers Quality Services to Men & Women Considering Adoption***

One great way to judge an agency is to look at their expecting and birth parent services both before, during and after the adoption process.

Maxine Chalker, as an adoptee herself, founded Adoptions From The Heart as an open adoption agency because she wanted to change the way adoptions were being done. She also saw a need to provide better services to expecting and birth parents. When the agency began in 1985, adoptions were typically closed. A woman placing her child had little or no say in regards to the adoptive family, not to say anything about the lack of post adoption support for birth parents. Much of the time, children weren't even told they were adopted until the "secret" came out much later in life.

Maxine understood the importance of providing quality counseling and ongoing support for birth parents. As the agency grew, so did the services provided to expecting and birth parents. AFTH continues to seek new ways to provide for birth parents' needs, not only while working with the agency but in a way that will impact their lives positively into the future.

#### ***No Pressure Environment***

When a woman comes into our office or speaks with someone on the phone, she is met with understanding and acceptance. Our staff are here to help, not to judge. We like to say we have seen and heard it all. Social workers are available to talk with women about all of their options. If a woman chooses the path of adoption, a social worker will speak in depth about her rights, revocation periods, and that receiving services and assistance from the agency in no way obligates her to placing her child.



#### ***Birth Father Support Too***

Some agencies leave birth fathers out of the adoption planning process. AFTH finds it essential to include fathers in as much of the process as possible. It is the right thing to do, and the law requires this level of

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#### ***Special Insert:***

*Summer Picnics*

*Spring 2018*

## 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)**

involvement in many states. Fathers have the same rights as mothers, and need to be informed of these rights and provided counseling to help them make a decision regarding adoption, parenting, or an alternative plan. Fathers are provided supportive counseling throughout the process, as well as after the placement.

### ***Offering Choices***

Each step along the way, expecting parents have the opportunity to make decisions about their child's future. These decisions include choosing the adoptive family, their desired level of contact after placement, and how involved the adoptive family will be at the hospital. Expecting parents are empowered to make the choices that feel best for them, and are assured that it is normal to change their minds about aspects of their plan as well. Social workers meet expecting parents wherever they are in life, and help them along the way.



### ***Securing Prenatal Care & Assistance***

Some expecting parents need assistance securing medical insurance or accessing prenatal care, while others may require help in locating resources, paying their rent, or battling addiction. Social workers work with expecting parents to identify their needs through the adoption process, and can help to meet those needs through sharing resources, providing financial assistance, and advocating on their behalf.

### ***Ongoing Support***

AFTH finds it important to provide support to birth parents not only during the pregnancy and at the hospital, but even long after the placement. Placing a child for adoption is not a one-time event, but a lifelong process, and ongoing support is essential to help birth parents through the journey.

Recognizing that making an adoption plan means birth mothers leave the hospital “empty-handed”, AFTH has begun providing a small gift for women at this time. This package includes a letter from a

fellow birth mother reassuring her that she is not alone, resources for ongoing support, and some pampering items to help her through the first days at home, as well as a picture frame to hold a photo of her baby.

AFTH holds support groups and gatherings for birth parents to connect with one another, share their experiences, and receive support. For those who may not be able to join these groups in person, AFTH also offers a mentoring program, allowing birth parents to connect with others who have placed a child for adoption in the past, and a private Facebook group for birth parents to connect with each other online.

### ***Expecting & Birth Parent Support Fund***

Over the past two years, AFTH has distributed more than \$25,000 in gift cards during the holiday season alone to birth parents in great need. Help, however, is not limited to the holidays. Through the Expecting and Birth Parent Support Fund, AFTH is able to provide necessary financial assistance throughout the year to birth parents facing hardships. The Support Fund has been used to help in a variety of ways, including avoiding eviction by paying back rent, restoring heat by paying utility bills, and providing public transportation passes for travel to work and doctor appointments.

### ***Birth Parent Scholarship Fund***

Established in 2014, the AFTH Birth Parent Scholarship Fund has been providing scholarships to help birth mothers and fathers pursue their dreams and make a difference. Scholarships are granted twice a year. Eligible candidates include men and women who have placed children for adoption since 1985, and are currently enrolled in a college or trade school. Applicants are not required to have worked with AFTH. Candidates must demonstrate financial need and submit an essay regarding their adoption story. Winners are able to re-apply for up to 8 semesters.

#### **Fall Semester Deadline: July 1st, 2018**

**To Apply for the Scholarship, Visit:**

**[www.afth.org/pregnant/birthparent-scholarships](http://www.afth.org/pregnant/birthparent-scholarships)**

### ***Thank You to Donors & Supporters***

Much of the assistance provided would not be possible without our generous charitable donors and corporate sponsors. Whether you run in the 5K, bid on a raffle, donate annually or are a sponsor of an AFTH event, we thank YOU! It's because of YOU that we are able to help so many women, men and children. Thank you for supporting our mission. It's our honor to partner with you to make a difference.



## **Monthly Giving Made Simple**

Did you know that AFTH makes it easy for you to set up monthly giving? Whether it's \$5 or \$50/month, you set up what you want to give and we take care of the rest. You can designate your donation to benefit the Scholarship Fund, Expecting and Birth Parent Support Fund or for AFTH to use where it's needed most.

Visit [afth.org/donate](http://afth.org/donate), enter your information and the amount you'd like to give monthly then check: "I would like this donation to automatically repeat each month."

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> I would like to designate this donation to a specific fund
Designated Fund: Let my gift support the Birth Pa <input type="text"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> I would like this donation to automatically repeat each month

## 6th Annual Find Her Footing 5K SUPER Fun-Filled Day

### *Conquering the Weather to Raise Over \$3,500 for AFTH's Support Fund*

Our 6th Annual Find Her Footing 5k was held on Sunday, April 15th at Delaware County Community College. While the weather was a challenge, AFTH supporters emerged from their warm cars into the drizzling cold to participate and raise money for the Birth and Expecting Parent Support Fund.

Despite the cold and rain, over \$3,500 was raised for our fund which provides financial assistance to birth parents both during and after pregnancy. In the past, the fund has helped birth mothers with rent, transportation, and groceries among other things. Several runners went above and beyond to gather donations from family, friends and co-workers for the cause.

This was our second year incorporating a superhero theme after it was so well received last year. The children who lined up to kick off the event with the Kids' Dash were draped in superhero capes and masks. The crowd clapped and cheered as each child crossed the finish line to receive their medal and certificate.

After Imani, an AFTH birth mother, gave a moving speech about the importance of the fund, 50 runners and walkers of all ages lined up at the starting line. Today's 96.5 radio station pumped up the crowd with music and participants took off on the course which weaved and wrapped around the college campus. We welcomed back our wonderful volunteers from Villanova's chapter of Alpha Phi Omega and Marple Newtown High School's Interact Club who guided and cheered on the participants along the course.

As people made their way across the finish line, they headed for the bagels from Original Bagels, bananas from Trader Joe's and water donated by Wegmans, then checked in with the raffles before they closed. Ranging in value from \$100-\$2000, the raffle baskets included signed memorabilia from the Philadelphia Flyers and Eagles, various restaurant gift cards, trainings sessions from local gyms, free party packages

from the Flyer's Skate Zone and Wynnewood Lanes, and two time shares to a choice of over 160 locations.

A big thank you to our other event SUPERHEROS, the sponsors: Banville Law (*Justice League Sponsor*), The Law Offices of Deborah E. Spivack (*Superman Sponsor*), Arthur Hall Insurance (*Kids' Dash Sponsor*), and Republic Bank.

Thank to everyone, including AFTH staff and board members, who refused to let the weather dampen their spirits. Come snow, rain, or sleet the 5K raises money for a worthy cause and we were glad to see families and runners who agreed! We have already put in a request for better weather as we begin our plans for next year!



## Secret Thoughts of an Adoptive Parent

Oh the things we think but don't say. Sometimes it can be a good thing, like not telling your mother-in-law that you really *don't* like the lemon cake she lovingly makes for you each birthday. Other times, not sharing what is on your mind can hold you back from moving through it.

The truth is, there are a lot of fears and concerns that are common in adoption. There can be many reasons men and women choose not to share their inner thoughts with their spouse or even their social worker. But, more often than not, when they finally decide to share it they discover that it's actually pretty common. Knowing that others can relate to your fear can help alleviate the worry.



Earlier this year, AFTH's Central PA Office held a support group for waiting and adoptive parents. The focus of the discussion was to bring those secret thoughts to light as they are actually fairly common.

### Not Bonding Right Away

Sometimes bonding takes time and the struggle may not be for any reason other than becoming comfortable as a parent. Adoptive parents may feel guilty for not immediately falling in love and having a strong bond from the start. Even with the best of intentions, the stress of the legal risk period can prevent adoptive parents from being fully vulnerable. This is especially common if families had a long wait or have previously experienced a disruption or disappointment. It is important to note that post adoption depression (PADS) is real and if it persists, be sure to open up to your partner or social worker. There is nothing to be ashamed of by wanting to get some help.

### Hospital Experience and Medical Conditions

Another topic discussed at the support group surrounded the hospital experience and the emotions and reactions that come along with all the unknowns. At first, the adoption process is predictable. You have a meeting, fill out paperwork, have a home visit, make a profile...however once "in the books" all the unknowns come into play. When will I get picked? Will it be an emergency placement? Will we get along with the birth parents? The unknowns continue through the hospital experience as well. Sometimes there are changes with the hospital plan. Sometimes unknown medical issues come about. It can create an internal struggle with the idea that you've had to jump through so many hoops, both financial and emotional, to get to this moment and now are faced with the idea that your baby might not be "perfect". It takes some time to realize that this could happen with any child and there is nothing to protect from life's unexpected ups and downs. Your baby is perfect even with imperfections.

### Share Your Worries with Your Social Worker

Please don't be afraid to tell your social worker how you are feeling! Don't hold things back and let worries fester. Sometimes parents don't share because they feel their whole lives have already been scrutinized through the adoption process and they don't want to seem unfit. You are human and the truth remains that your social worker wants to help you no matter what you are going through and they can only help when they know what's going on. The Central PA staff have a saying, "we keep ordering our crystal balls but they never arrive."

### Recommended Readings

This is Not the Life I Ordered by Deborah Stephens, Michealene Risley, Jackie Speier & Jan Yanehiro

The Post Adoption Blues: Overcoming the Unforeseen Challenges of Adoption by John Thompson & Karen Foli

## Philadelphia Main Line Mural Celebrates Adoption

With the rainy and snowy weather out of the way, GoodSpace Murals, a Minneapolis-based mural and arts consulting studio, was ready to begin installing the newest mural addition of the Main Line. The mural is massive covering the entire broad side of Adoptions From The Heart's Wynnewood office facing the new Whole Foods as well as wrapping around to the front facing Lancaster Ave.

While the official planning and preparation began months ago, Saturday, April 14th was the first day of the official installation giving a glimpse of the masterpiece to the Main Line community. The new project will celebrate the agency's work of weaving families together and the red thread that connects us all. The agency is looking forward to enriching the Main Line with murals and notable public art, like the illustrious murals that decorate thousands of walls throughout Philadelphia.



GoodSpace Murals is run by Greta McLain and Candida Gonzalez. Lead artist McLain has ties to the Delaware Valley and previously worked with Mural Arts Philadelphia to create some of the city's most remarkable pieces. Gonzalez has ties to AFTH through her sister Heidi Gonzalez, Associate Director of the agency. "I am excited to be working with my sister and her company GoodSpace Murals to brighten the agencies exterior, bring more public art to the Main Line and celebrate our work of creating families." said Heidi.

After a two-day break Sunday and Monday due to the rain, GoodSpace Murals was back to work in Wynnewood on Tuesday morning. As lifts moved the team up and down, panel by panel the mural grew. Thank you to PHL 17, NBC 10 and Savvy Main Line who ran stories about the beautiful new addition.

## Now Accepting Photos for the 2019 AFTH Calendar



**Submit your photos by July 1st, 2018**

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

If sending multiple emails due to file size, # the emails 1 of 4, 2 of 4 etc.  
Include: parents name & address, child's name, age, & birth country

Or Mail Photos to: Marketing Team Calendar Search  
 Adoptions From The Heart 30-31 Hampstead Circle Wynnewood, PA 19096

### ***Tips for Submitting Your Photos:***

- \*horizontal layout preferred
- \*send a variety of photos (*seasonal photos a plus*)
- \*No adults in photos please
- \*Use highest pixel setting on camera/phone
- \*Siblings (*adopted or not*) can be included in some photos as well

## Annual Summer Picnics

**RAIN or  
SHINE!**

### 30th Annual Picnic - Fort Washington, PA



**Sunday, June 3rd  
11am - 2pm**

Thank you for allowing us to be a part of your journey to becoming a family. Join AFTH staff and families (both domestic and international) as we celebrate family.

Bring a blanket and picnic lunch. AFTH will provide some drinks, snacks and entertainment. You will not want to miss out on the incredible raffles including a time share getaway. All the proceeds raised from the raffles benefit AFTH's Expecting and Birth Parent Support Fund.

Families with **OPEN ADOPTIONS**, we encourage you to invite your child's birth parent(s) to the picnic. It's a great place for a visit surrounded by others who are also touched by adoption! Send a letter of invitation for AFTH to pass along. Please include a separate confidential note to our staff with your full name and birth parent's names. Be sure to send it in enough time for us to forward and receive a response. AFTH will not invite birth parents without a family's consent.

Arts & Crafts,  
Live Music, Snacks  
Face Painting, and Ice Cream  
for each child!

**Free Family  
Portraits!**

### What To Know Before You Go:

- If you are meeting others, be sure to designate a specific area to meet (balloons are great to help connect)
  - Mark all valuables with your name
  - Please supervise children at all times

**\*\*DO NOT PARK ON GRASS UNLESS DIRECTED BY A PARK RANGER**

**Fort Washington State Park - Flourtown Picnic Area**

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

*Use the above address in your GPS.*

*You will arrive directly across the street from the park.*



# Virginia Annual Picnic

**Saturday, June 9th**  
**Noon - 3pm**

Chesapeake City Park  
"Fun Forest" is the  
ultimate playground.

*Check out the...*

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



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

**Come and enjoy our annual adoption celebration!**

Bring a picnic lunch (grills available for families to use)

Come celebrate another year of open adoption with AFTH at our annual picnic. Please bring a lunch for your group. Drinks, ice, and paper products will be provided. There are also charcoal grills available for use at the park.

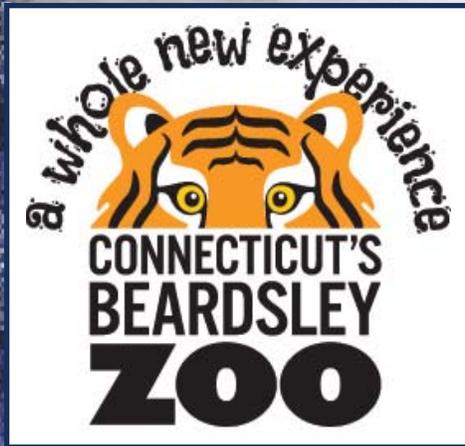
Families with **OPEN ADOPTIONS**, if you are inviting your child's birth family please send an invitation to them with enough time for coordination. If sending your invitation to AFTH to pass along please include your full names and birth parent names on a separate confidential note for our staff.

We are looking forward to seeing you there!

**RSVP by June 1st**

**Email [KimberlyR@afth.org](mailto:KimberlyR@afth.org) or call 757-361-0008**

# Connecticut Annual Picnic



**Sunday, June 24th**  
**Noon - 3pm**

**Beardsley Zoo**  
**in Bridgeport, CT**

**We hope you will join us!**

## **A Fun Day at the Zoo**

- See Over 300 Different Animals
- Stroller Rentals Available
- Parking is Free

Bring your own lunch or order at the Peacock Cafe. We encourage families in **OPEN ADOPTIONS** to invite their child's birth parents. It's a great place for a visit.

***Tickets Must Be Purchased in Advance:***

***Deadline: June 1st***

**\$8/person and Children under 3 Free**

Send checks payable to  
Adoptions From The Heart  
703 Hebron Avenue  
Glastonbury, CT 06033

Please note the number of  
adults & children.

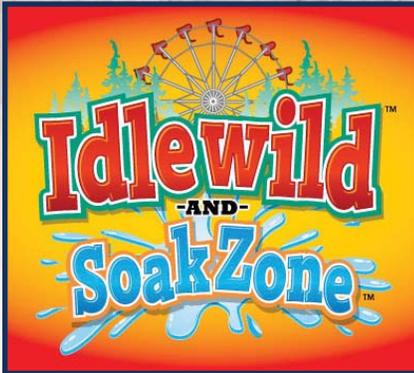
**Contact:**

**SusanM@afth.org**

**860-657-2626**



# Pittsburgh Annual Picnic



**Friday, August 3rd**  
*Idlewild in Ligonier, PA*

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

Bring your own lunch or purchase food at the park. Enjoy the 7 themed areas of the park including Splash Zone with AFTH staff and other families in celebration of adoption. We encourage families in **OPEN ADOPTIONS** to invite their child's birth parents.

***Tickets Must Be Purchased in Advance: Deadline July 21st***

**Cost is \$23/person. Children 2 & under are free.**

*Tickets will be sent directly to you before the picnic.*

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

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

**Deadline: July 21st**

**or Purchase Tickets ONLINE** (\$1 service fee)

Click on the Online Store at the bottom of [www.afth.org](http://www.afth.org) and go to Special Events

## Dos and Don'ts of Post-Adoption Contact

On March 24th, a group of waiting and placed adoptive parents gathered for an education class held by AFTH's Chesapeake Office entitled "Post Adoption Contact: Dos and Don'ts". The discussion focused on the importance of maintaining contact with a child's birth parents after placement, examples of creative ways to keep communication flowing, and time for families to ask questions. There was a lot of positive feedback after the class and participants left feeling as though they have a deeper understanding of the importance of ongoing contact as well as the variety of ways open adoption updates can look like.



### ***When to Start Your First Update***

We encourage families to start writing their very first update immediately. Agency policy requires families to send their first update within 5 days of placement so it's best to start working on it right away.

### ***What to Say***

If you find yourself struggling with what to say, just think about all the things your child's grandparents like to hear or if you were gone for a day or two what would you want to know. Funny little expressions, hilarious interaction, new skills, what they did at school etc. One mother told us she keeps an on-going list on her phone of all the things to include between updates which she has found to be very helpful. Include your child's artwork or worksheets from school. Your updates should be more than a simple hi and quick update about your child, it should help to capture all that was missed during the time since your last letter.

### ***When to Write***

Even if it's not your scheduled "time" to send an update, cards for Mother's Day, birthdays and the holidays are a kind gesture so your child's birth parents know you think of them all year long.

***It's important to send updates to arrive by the deadline.*** While some birth parents are more casual about the time frame, we have other birth parents who are so excited to receive their updates that they come into the office on the day they are expecting a letter.

### ***Creative Ways to Keep in Touch***

There are lots of creative ways to maintain contact. Many families send the traditional photos and letters each year while others take a different approach. It's

about finding what works for you. One couple send their child's birth mother 4-5 new scrapbook pages every few months and then when it is full they send a new scrapbook to begin filling. Other families have created private Facebook pages to stay in contact and share videos and photos. One AFTH family picks 20-30 photos every few months and sends them directly to a CVS close to their daughter's birth mother. They pay for the prints and let her know a bundle of photos waiting for her. Another couple who has contact with both birth parents divides the responsibility. The mother writes the birth mother and the father writes the birth father. While they cover much of the same things in their updates, our staff find it amusing how differently they are written.

### ***What to Do When Updates Aren't Being Received***

Even if your child's birth parents aren't picking up the updates sent to the office, it's important to continue sending them. One day they may be ready to get updates and when they contact the office, they will already have updates there waiting for them. It's important to show your child that **you** continued sending updates and kept the door open for contact.

### ***Toss the Excuses***

We understand life has a way of getting really busy however it's vital that post-adoption contact doesn't fall through the cracks.

Victoria Sims, of our Virginia Office put it best:

"A woman made a choice to place her baby with you on the grounds of what you promised to do in regards to post-adoption contact. It's important to keep those promises no matter, what not only for her, but also for your child."

## Agency News

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### **Upcoming Events**

We welcome all AFTH families (domestic and international) to join us in celebration at our annual summer picnics. We encourage all families in open adoptions to invite their child's birth parents for a day of fun surrounded by AFTH staff and others touched by adoption. [See insert for picnic details.](#)

AFTH continues to host regular Infant Care and Drug & Alcohol Exposure classes for families. These hours count for yearly education requirements. Visit [www.afth.org/calendar](http://www.afth.org/calendar) for upcoming dates.

The agency is excited to team up with several businesses to raise money for our Birth Parent Scholarship Fund. [See back cover for details.](#)

### **Agency News**

A special shout out to staff who are celebrating milestone anniversaries in the spring and summer:  
[25 years - Marilyn in the Central PA Office \(April\)](#)  
[15 years - Luli, AFTH Business Manager \(May\)](#)  
[10 years - Martha in the Wynnewood Office \(July\)](#)

### **Domestic Program Update**

The AFTH Marketing team and Domestic Program Manager were excited to release updated and redesigned packet of marketing material in January of 2018 used by offices as an outreach tool.

The packet includes information for professionals working with expecting parents as well as a packet designed for an expecting parent wanting to explore adoption. Some of the material includes: Frequently Asked Questions, Open Adoption Advantages, Why Women Choose AFTH, Know Your Rights, and Tips for Counseling about Adoption.

The most notable addition was a brochure called Learn About Your Options. This options brochure has been warmly received in clinics which had previously turned away our material. They were looking for non-biased material to give to pregnant women who want

to explore all their options. The new brochure has opened doors for AFTH that were previously shut.

Social workers are committed to community outreach to raise awareness about adoption and the services AFTH can provide. In the first 3 months of 2018, social workers have visited over 640 businesses and organizations to provide information about adoption.

In addition to going door to door, offices have been hosting centralized trainings offering continuing education credits giving free access to nurses and social workers who would benefit from it but whose workplace is unable to coordinate an in-house training. Trainings have been successful and AFTH has had calls from local hospitals as a result.

### **New Birth Parent Online Support Group**

Ongoing support is important for everyone touched by adoption. In the past, getting birth parent support groups off the ground has been challenging not from lack of interest but because those interested lived so far apart. To overcome that challenge, we created a private birth parent Facebook group led by Brittany, a birth mother who now works in AFTH's Wynnewood Office. Six birth parents joined within the first few days and there has been a lot of great support and conversations over the past month. Birth parents interested in joining the group should email [BrittanyB@afth.org](mailto:BrittanyB@afth.org).

### **Profile Exposure**

We encourage families who have not yet utilized our partnership with Parent Finder to create their profile or join their Networking Program to showcase their profile online to strongly consider doing so. We regularly have women reach out to our social workers with an interest in specific families they have seen on our website. Recently, we have also had several families who had been waiting for quite some time decide to redo their profiles using Parent Finder. And not long after, two families were selected based partly on the look of their new profiles.

### **Agency Waiting Statistics**

As of April 1st, 77% of AFTH's families have been waiting in the books for 18 months or less and 59% a year or less. For families with keys open to African-American children, 74% have been waiting 1 year or less, and 60% have been waiting 6 months or less.

AFTH Waiting Family Support Groups provide families with updated statistics and a review of recent situations. This information as well as support from other waiting families can ease the anxiety of the wait. For a list of upcoming support groups, visit: [www.afth.org](http://www.afth.org).

The Wynnewood office will be hosting a Support Group on May 29 featuring an adoptive mother whose baby was exposed to opiates in utero and experienced withdrawal after birth. She will speak about her experience, including discussion of the extended hospital stay, meeting the birth parents, and the baby's progress. Her 7-month old daughter will be present at the group. RSVP to [AshleyK@afth.org](mailto:AshleyK@afth.org) by May 24.

### **Other Statistics**

From the beginning of our fiscal year in July through the end of March, we have had close to 90 placements including 12 single women and 14 same-sex couples (8 male and 6 female). Since the start of 2018, the agency's emergency placement rate has climbed to about 60%.

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

AFTH is currently seeking placed families in New York 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. Clearances and other relevant paperwork will need to be kept current. Families are contacted when there is a need 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, contact [JennaS@afth.org](mailto:JennaS@afth.org)

## Scholarship Fundraising Event Planning Committee



Would you like to help plan a spectacular yearly fundraising event to help raise money for the Birth Parent Scholarship Fund? We envision a cocktail party honoring a member of the community hosted in Center City Philadelphia. The party would benefit the Scholarship Fund which enables women and men who have placed children for adoption gain an advanced education.

Until now, we have only able to provide small scholarships, however, with the rising cost of education whether it's for a trade school program, undergraduate or an advanced degree, these barely make a dent in the tuition. Our goal is to award more substantial scholarships to winners.

If you enjoy planning events, or are skilled at securing sponsors and prizes for raffles, we'd love your help! If interested, please contact Maxine at [MaxineC@afth.org](mailto:MaxineC@afth.org)

## Recent Legislation



**GEORGIA** - HB 159 is the most significant legislation to pass the Georgia General Assembly so far this year. The legislation shortens the revocation period to 10 days, allows adoptive parents to reimburse birth mothers' living expenses, and simplifies out-of-state adoptions.

## 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.*

### Reflection: 10 Years After the U.S. Joins the Hague Convention

*The following is a summary of an article by Ryan Hanlon which appeared in the National Council for Adoption's publication *Adoption Advocate* published April 1, 2018).*

As of March 2018, 98 countries were contracting parties to the Hague Treaty. The Convention went into effect in April 2008. Congress passed the Universal Accreditation Act of 2012, requiring that all intercountry adoptions follow the requirements of the Hague Convention and the U.S. implementing regulations. The purpose of the Hague is to make sure that intercountry adoptions are in the best interests of the children served and to prevent the trafficking of said children.

In seeking families for international adoptions, the underlying theme is that children should remain in their family of origin when possible and, if not, with kin, followed by domestic adoption and, finally, international adoption. This is called The Subsidiarity Principle. All this takes time and the question is: how long should children wait for the most "preferred" option?

Upon reflection of the last ten years of intercountry adoption in the United States, it is clear that on the whole children's needs have, emphatically, failed to have been met. Government officials, adoption professionals and child welfare advocates have collectively failed to achieve the hope and promise offered by the Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption. In 2004 over 20,000 children were adopted internationally and in 2016 the number dropped to approximately 4,600. Probably most of the problem rests in the implementation of the Convention and the fact that it has been a missed opportunity in the U.S.

Today inter-country adoptions are safer for the adults-not the children. The process is more trustworthy so this is positive. However, the same cannot be said for the children waiting to be adopted. While maintaining safeguards for the adoption process we must also ensure we are pro-actively seeking safeguards for children

### **Here are some options U.S. adoption service providers can try and do in the next decade:**

Continue finding and assisting families for orphaned children, identify and nurture new country programs, foster collaboration, increase knowledge of regulatory and accreditation standards and advocate for change.

### **What the U.S. Central Authority can do in the next decade:**

change the current narrative, partner with ASPs and other stakeholders, set measurable goals with foreign Central Authorities, increase training and oversight of DOS's foreign service officers, work to support outgoing adoptions and develop practical processes for U.S. citizens to adopt relatives through intercountry adoption.



## Surviving the Wait



As an adoptive mother, I think it's important to realize that each family's process and journey is truly their own. Now many people will try to be encouraging and say things like "the right baby will find you"—which of course I believe, but when you are in the middle of the process those words often aren't enough to settle the anxiety you're feeling.

While we did not wait long in the books, our drawn-out part of the process was after placement. I had one other waiting couple tell me that they would rather have an even longer wait if it meant not experiencing the trials we went through post-placement. I think it just goes to show that each adoption journey is unique.

Some waiting families come from long bouts with infertility prior to choosing adoption and some do not. Some families enter the books in as little as four months and for others it takes a good bit longer. Some families have extremely open keys and others more limited. Some may wait a month and be matched with a woman who isn't due for five months and another couple may wait five months and have an immediate placement with an emergency. Another adoptive parent may only wait three months but experience a disruption and disappointment while others seem to experience the longest time frame every single step of the process.

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

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Jared & Glen  
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Justin & Avi  
Kevin & Cherie  
John & Carrie (twins)  
Jodi  
Corey & Sarah  
Shelton & Alison  
Robert & Kristin  
Bryan & James  
Justin & Kathryn  
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Andrew & Kimberly  
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