

Adoption News

A quarterly newsletter from

Adoptions From The Heart



AFTH Birth Parent Scholarship Winner

\$5,000 Scholarship Awarded to Jump-start Felix's Nursing Career
Felix identifies as non-binary and is hoping to use a nursing career to help make a difference in the lives of others outside of the cis-gender community. Felix's preferred pronouns are they/them. To learn more about preferred pronouns visit: www.tinyurl.com/preferred-pronouns

AFTH is honored to name Felix Benyoussef our Fall 2018 Birth Parent Scholarship Winner. We are thrilled to be able to assist Felix begin their journey into the field of nursing at Salisbury University in Maryland.

Two years ago, Felix discovered that they were pregnant. They had just broken up with their boyfriend and had been battling depression. Felix was also struggling to find consistent work in order to keep up with bills.

Felix was shocked to learn they were pregnant and after exploring all of their options, they and their ex-boyfriend agreed that adoption was the right choice for their daughter. They had the opportunity to live in dorms provided by their agency. While they were there they made the difficult but life-changing decision to enroll in programs specifically designed for

battling depression as well as for those at risk of being homeless. It was there that the idea of a career in nursing was first planted in Felix's mind. It was a mentor in the outpatient program they were attending who first told them that they would make a great psych nurse. **"The fact that someone in that field believed I'd be so successful in the field as well was a huge motivator."** Felix sat on the idea as they were still trying to gain stability in life and wasn't sure how schooling would fit into the picture at that point in time.



"Anyone who donates to making this scholarship possible is making a real difference in people's lives."

It was a little over a year later when Felix was inspired again, this time it was a patient they saw while working as a physical therapy technician. He was a psych nurse who began with a bachelors degree in psychology just like Felix. They spoke about their dream to go into nursing and he encouraged them to take the first step.

Summer 2018

In This Issue



- 2 Birth Parent Scholarship
- 3 Letter from Maxine Chalker
- 4 Why I Believe in AFTH
- 5 Teaming Up To Make a Bigger Impact
- 6 Support Groups
- 6 Paper Heart Project
- 7 Legislation Update
- 8 Domestic Update
- 10 International News
- 11 Better Together: United Way
- 11 New AFTH Families

Special Insert:

Fall Festivals

Adoptive Parent Education Series

Picnic Recaps

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



“My daughter is a huge inspiration for me...I feel very motivated to be successful so that I can make her proud. I have learned a lot about myself in the past two years. I have people who believe in

me. I believe in me. I know that nursing will be challenging but also fulfilling. I feel that I can make an impact as a psychiatric nurse. I have a passion for mental health and a nursing position is the best for me to utilize my strengths. I’m ready to dive in and make my dream a reality.

Felix wants to use their nursing career to help make a difference in the lives of others. They are particularly passionate about mental illness and want others to know there is no shame in getting help. You don’t have to be alone!

“To win this scholarship means the world to me. I would not be able to go to school again and pursue my dream of becoming a nurse without some help. I want to become independent, financially stable, and happy. For many reasons I know nursing is the path I need to take to get there. Anyone who donates to make this scholarship possible is making a real difference in people’s lives. Going through with adoption was the hardest thing I have done in my whole life. I am very proud to be a birth parent. I am proud because I know I am strong and I also have great support. I had the support of many great people when I was pregnant and after I gave birth. I have support from the wonderful adoptive parents taking care of our child. Now, I have the generous support of donors to help me create my latest chapter in life. I am very grateful.”

Consider making a donation to AFTH’s Birth Parent Scholarship Fund to help us continue to make dreams come true for birth parents who want make a difference and give back, just like Felix.

www.afth.org/donate



Adoptions From The Heart

adoption@afth.org | www.afth.org | Maxine Chalker, MSW/LSW, Executive Director

Greetings Friends,

Adoptions From The Heart is proud to partner with individuals and corporate donors who are choosing to make a difference through our Expecting and Birth Parent Support Fund and our Birth Parent Scholarship Fund. Because of your continued generosity, we are able to provide much needed financial assistance during one of the most difficult times in many people's lives.

Kelly's power was shut off and she was doing her best but was still unable to pay her overdue bill.



From the outside, people might not know I was struggling. I did my best to hold everything together but it still wasn't enough. It's hard not to lose hope when people don't **see** you. Adoptions From The Heart was there for me when my IUD didn't work and I got pregnant. They helped me every step of the process. Even now, when I felt invisible to the world, **they** were there. Someone who didn't even know me, chose to pay it forward with a donation to AFTH's Birth Parent Support Fund. **Not only was my power restored, so was my hope.** I started a new job and things are much better for us. I don't know who helped me, but I want to hug them and say thank you! **They saw me and HELPED when I needed it most!**

A donation to AFTH's Expecting and Birth Parent Support Fund turned on Kelly's lights and gave her HOPE!

Kisha choose to break the cycle she was living in and focus on education, but she had no outside support.



Two years ago, I was going nowhere. I came from a family riddled with addiction and mental illness, where education wasn't valued. **After making the hardest decision of my life to place my daughter for adoption, I decided to make a change.** Education became my focus, my HOPE to break the cycle and create stability in my life. I had NO support, but I was prepared to work as hard as it took to reach my goal no matter how long it took. That's when Adoptions From The Heart came back into my life for a second time. **Through donations they received for their Birthparent Scholarship Fund, they were able to help me reach my dream faster.** Someone I didn't even know, **invested** in me...in my future! I've made the Dean's List every semester and I'm getting ready to graduate. I want to be someone my daughter can respect and be proud of. I am determined to become the person I know I can be for her and for me! **My DRIVE comes from my daughter. My HOPE comes from people just like you.**

The Birth Parent Scholarship Fund supported by donations helped Kisha to graduate and reach her dream faster!

Adoption is about community. It's about bringing people together, making connections and becoming family. Please consider partnering with us and joining the Adoptions From The Heart family. Whether it's a one-time donation or a monthly give, any monetary commitment will go a long way in helping men and women working with AFTH get through difficult times.

Adoptions From The Heart's Scholarship and Support Funds provide HELP and give HOPE. We would love for you to be a part of it!

Sincerely,

Maxine Chalker
Founder & Executive Director

*P.S. Visit www.afth.org/donate to make our tax-deductible gift online.
Consider a monthly giving option to continue partnering with AFTH year-round.*

Why, as a Birth Mother, I Believe in AFTH



Brittany Brooks works in AFTH's Wynnewood Office and while this is her first job at an adoption agency, she is no stranger to the adoption process. Just five years ago Brittany was going through the same process as many of the birth parents who walk through our doors.

My Story:

I was six months along when I found out I was pregnant and it was a shock! I didn't have any stability in life and was in no position to raise a child at that point. I knew in my heart that adoption was the right choice. It was difficult knowing that I wouldn't be the one to raise my son but I knew it was the right decision. I moved to Utah to live in the housing provided by the agency I was working with. The first week I was there I began looking at profiles. I choose a family that had been through so much devastation already with three late-term miscarriages and an adoption that fell through. What got me was her attitude. She was still so positive. It was her faith that got her through the hard times. I connected with the family and when we met for the first time, I knew it was them!

The day came when I was induced and my son entered the world. I signed the revocation papers while holding my son in my arms, the reality of the situation hit me. The weight of the pen was magnified.

I was able to stay in the hospital and bond with him for three days. Despite my sadness, seeing my son with the couple I chose gave me relief. It felt right. We have an open adoption and I have a close relationship with my son's parents. I never had doubts that I was doing the right thing even though it was the toughest thing I've done in my life.

Why I Started Working at AFTH:

I had an amazing social worker that guided me through my adoption. She had such an impact on my life that it sparked a desire in me to find a job where I could help others going through the same thing.

How Working at AFTH Impacted Me Most:

First and foremost, I was able to see the process from the adoptive parent side. It gave me a greater understanding of what my son's parents went through.

More surprisingly was the healing that came from working at AFTH. Eric, my son's birthfather, and I are still together though over the past five years we haven't talked much about adoption. While he didn't necessarily agree with adoption at first, he allowed me make the decisions during my pregnancy. It created a bit of an taboo topic for us after placement. After I started working at AFTH, I asked if Eric would share his story as a birthfather. He agreed. That conversation opened up discussion between us and created healing as a couple that might never have otherwise happened.

What Sets AFTH Apart:

I think I'll need to do another write up about this alone because there is so much. In a nut shell, the agency's dedication to openness. The fact that they have a minimum openness requirement for families and that they have events like the annual picnic to encourage visits with birth parents is unique. It shows the agency's commitment to the belief in the benefits of open adoption. Another thing that is so special about AFTH is how compassionate and dedicated the social workers are. As a birthparent myself, it's so important to see social workers advocating for expecting parents each step of the way. They talk about options and explain the process and are there each step of the way.

What's Important for Expecting Parents to Know:

Get support. Whether or not your family and friends are supportive, find someone who you can talk to about your thoughts and feelings. I'm so glad that AFTH has created an online Birth Parent Support Group. I didn't have a lot of support when I was going through the process and so glad that there are places like this to connect birth parents together. Birth parents interested in joining can email me at BrittanyB@afth.org.

Read Brittany's full story at www.afth.org/blog

Working Together to Make a Bigger Impact

A Sweet Donation from Nothing Bundt Cakes

On July 25, 2018, the new bakery on the block Nothing Bundt Cakes presented AFTH with a check of over \$400. Nothing Bundt Cakes generously donated 20% of their sales from their July grand opening. Their first bakery opened in Las Vegas, NV in 1997 and has accumulated more than 100 locations throughout the United States. Their donation will go to AFTH's Birth Parent Scholarship Fund. The Scholarship Fund provides birth parents with financial assistance who are hoping to pursue a degree in higher education.

AFTH is very appreciative of the new neighborhood bakery's interest in supporting our nonprofit. "We wanted to support a nonprofit that provides safe loving homes for adopted children and supports adoptive families," said Kim Wright the Wynnewood, PA franchise owner.

AFTH's Virginia Office is hosting a Benefit Day with Nothing Bundt Cakes in Chesapeake, VA on Friday, August 24, 2018. We are excited to see the future fundraising collaborations between Nothing Bundt Cakes and AFTH!



Check Presentation on July 25th. From Left to Right: Heidi Gonzalez (Associate Director), Maxine Chalker (Executive Director), and Kim Wright (Nothing Bundt Cakes Owner)

Cherry Hill 1st Grade Class Covers Adoption

A special thank you to Ms. Baker and Ms. Gillooly's 1st Grade Class at Bret Harte School in Cherry Hill, NJ. They learned about the different ways families are created while making fleece blankets at AFTH for newborns being welcomed into their forever homes. Adoption Social Worker Meredith Beckett Erdman also spoke to the class about adoption.



CPA Staff Member Dedicates Birthday to AFTH

AFTH Staff Member Libby Wischner hosted a birthday party recently with a special twist. Instead of asking for gifts, Libby asked for donations to the Birth Parent Scholarship Fund in her invitation. Combined, she was able to raise over \$100 after a homemade delicious birthday dinner. Thank you, Libby!



AFTH Support Groups

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

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

Upcoming Support Groups are listed to the right.

CHESAPEAKE - Birth Parent Support Group:

Saturday, August 18th from 4:00-7:00pm

Call (757) 361-0008 or Email NicoleF@afth.org to RSVP by August 17th.

GLASTONBURY - Adoptive Parent Support Group:

Monday, September 17th from 5:30-7:30pm

Call (860)-657-2626 or email ClaudiaM@afth.org to RSVP by September 10th.

CENTRAL PA (HARRISBURG) -

Adoptive Parent & Extended Family Support Group

The Extended Family Support Group is a new, unique support group at AFTH. It's a chance for extended family members of waiting families to ask anything about the adoption process in a supportive environment.

Wednesday, November 7th from 6:30-8:30pm

Call (717)-399-7766 or email LibbyE@afth.org to RSVP by October 31st.

Get Involved with our 2018 Paper Heart Project

Become a Heart Holder

Be an adoption advocate by getting involved in the Paper Heart project.

What is the Paper Heart Project?

November is National Adoption Month. To celebrate, AFTH created the Paper Heart Project to engage the community in supporting adoption. For \$1, businesses can offer their customers the opportunity to purchase a paper heart which will be displayed all month long. **100% of the donations support the AFTH Expecting & Birth Parent Support Fund**, which provides financial support to the men and women AFTH is assisting. Every heart purchased can help make a big impacts in someone's life!

Getting Others Involved

- Schools & Preschools
- Dance Studios
- Karate Studios
- Friends & Family
- Community Organizations
- Small Business
- Coworkers
- Churches

Sign up to be a Paper Heart Holder at www.afth.org/events/nam or email SaraM@afth.org for details.

Starting November 1st, hearts will be available for purchase in AFTH's branch office and in our online store www.afth.org/store in addition to participating businesses.



Fall Festivals

Central Pennsylvania Office

Join AFTH staff and other waiting and placed families for a fun seasonal celebration. All families waiting and placed who worked through the Central PA Office are welcome. Contact Libby at the office for more details.

Rapho Township Park in Mt. Joy, PA

October 13th from 11:00am-2:00pm

RSVP by October 8th to LibbyE@afth.org

Wynnewood Office

Join us for a Fall Family Fun Event at Colonial Gardens in Phoenixville! Wear your Halloween costume and enjoy all that Colonial Gardens has to offer. All in process, waiting, and placed families are invited to join the Wynnewood office staff for snacks, crafts, and other fall fun! This is a great opportunity to get together with local birth parents for a visit, or just spend some time having fall fun with other AFTH adoptive families.

Colonial Gardens in Phoenixville, PA

October 13th from 10:30am-1:00pm

Cost: Hayrides \$5/person, other activities similar cost

RSVP by October 5th to AshleyK@afth.org

Connecticut Office

Celebrate adoption with us at the Fall Festival at Robb's Farm, where families can enjoy a hayride to the pumpkin patch, a corn maze, and apple cider plus farm-made ice cream and other treats available from Robb's Ice Cream Stand.

Robb's Farm in South Glastonbury, CT

October 20th from 2:00pm-4:00pm

Cost: \$15/child over age 1 (*paid to farm on day of event*)

RSVP by October 15th to ClaudiaM@afth.org

Allentown Office

Enjoy a day with AFTH at Seiple Farms. Families can choose to from lots of activities for a nominal fee: straw maze, pony rides, hayrides, famous corn maze, pumpkin picking, rides and food! AFTH will provide some snacks. Open adoption reunions welcome.

Seiple Farms Located in Bath, PA

October 13th from 10:30am-12:30pm

Cost: Corn Maze \$6/child, other activities similar cost

RSVP by October 5th to NicoleP@afth.org

Cherry Hill Office

Please join Adoptions From The Heart's New Jersey office for our Fall Festival to celebrate National Adoption Month at Johnson's Corner Farm! Adoptive Families can purchase tickets to go on a hay ride, pick popcorn and sweet potatoes and tour the Animal Farm! Light snack will be provided but families can bring food as well as purchase fall treats at the farm!

Johnson's Corner Farm in Medford, NJ

November 3rd from 10:00am-1:00pm

Cost: Hayrides \$4.50/person, other activities similar cost

RSVP by October 8th to ChristopherP@afth.org

Virginia Office

Please join us for our 2nd Annual Fall Festival at our Chesapeake office! AFTH will be providing different activities for the children and supply the BBQ. Please indicate a side dish you will bring for sharing when you RSVP to Kim. See you there!

Virginia Office Located in Chesapeake, VA

November 10th from Noon-3:00pm

RSVP by November 2nd to KimberlyR@afth.org



Fall Education Series

AFTH Waiting Adoptive Parents Will Receive Required Continuing Education Credits for Attending!

Prenatal Drug & Alcohol Exposure - Class: \$25/person or \$40/couple

AFTH wants families to make informed decisions when completing their profile keys. This is a great opportunity to listen to medical professionals weigh in on prenatal exposure to drugs and alcohol. **This is especially important with the new key changes** (see *Domestic Update on page 8*). Each family has to decide what situations are right for them for however many families have come away from these classes feeling comfortable opening their key.

“After the class, we felt ready to modify our key. We submitted it two days after the class and less than three weeks later, we were matched with our daughter BECAUSE of our changes!” - Kim

“Don’t change your key just to get placed faster. Do it because you gained knowledge that now makes you comfortable for different situations.” - AFTH Social Worker

Delaware & Wynnewood Offices

Presenter Dr. Erin Meyer is an Internal Medicine and Pediatric Hospitalist who works in the NICU (Neonatal Intensive Care Unit) at Christiana Hospital. She is also an adoptive mom through AFTH, and can speak from both professional and personal angles. She will be discussing the effects of drug and alcohol use during pregnancy on the newborn as well as withdrawal symptoms and short and long term effects of exposure. This class is suitable for all prospective and current adoptive parents. There will be plenty of time for your questions.

Philadelphia Office in Wynnewood, PA
September 25th from 6:30-8:00pm

Bear Library in Bear, DE
September 22nd from 10:30am-Noon

Register 1 week prior to date. Classes fill up quickly. Call the hosting office with any questions.
Wynnewood 610-642-7200 - Delaware 302-658-8883

Online Webinar - \$35/family

Hosted by Dr. Erin Meyer (see above description)
November 3rd from 7:00-8:30pm
Upon registering at www.aftth.org, a link will be emailed.

New York - Hosted in Brooklyn

Please join us as Dr. Melissa Goldstein, MD from Carnegie Hill Pediatrics speaks about the effects of substance abuse exposure during pregnancy. Time will be spent reviewing the profile key and answering any questions regarding the effect on a child. This is a great opportunity to educate yourself and spend time with a professional working in the field of maternal health. Light refreshments will be served.

Brooklyn Library Williamsburg Branch in Brooklyn, NY
October 2nd from 6:30-8:00pm

Register by September 25th. Classes fill up quickly. Call 610-432-2384 with questions.

Pittsburgh - Hosted in Monroeville

Join Lisa M. Pietrusza, RN, DNP-FNP, who has over 10 years as a registered nurse. She will discuss effects of prenatal drug/alcohol exposure on the newborn, as well as mental health conditions and infectious diseases in the birthparents. This class is suitable for prospective adoptive parents and those already parenting. Question/answer period following lecture.

Monroeville Public Library
October 27th from 1:00-2:30pm

Register by October 20th. Classes fill up quickly. Call 724-853-6533 with questions.

Infant and Child Care - \$25/person or \$35/couple

Central PA Office

This infant care class especially for adoptive families will cover the basics of infant and child care including: newborn appearance, newborn behaviors, diapering and dressing, feeding, umbilical cord care, newborn health and safety basics, when to call your pediatrician as well as other changes that may come with new parenthood. This class is exclusively for prospective adoptive parents and allows them to learn in a non-medical environment led by April Stambaugh, a Certified Childbirth Educator. There will be plenty of time for questions and for AFTH families, this class will count toward the agency's childcare requirement.

Giant Community Center in Harrisburg, PA
September 17th and November 5th from 6:30-8:30pm

Register by 1 week prior to date. Call 717-399-7766 with questions.

Bonding with Your Adopted Baby - \$10/person, \$15/couple

Cherry Hill Office

Adoptive parents are certainly thrilled once they are placed with a newborn, but may have reservations about bonding and attaching to their baby, especially if they are first time parents. This connection may also be hampered by anxiety around a possible disruption, particularly in cases where there is a revocation period or unknown birthfather. Discover strategies and techniques to bond with your infant and learn ways to allay your fears to secure a healthy, close relationship with your new child. This seminar is being presented by Susan Clark, MIA, MS, LAC from the Center for Counseling and Education in Medford, New Jersey.

Cherry Hill, NJ Office
October 9th from 6:30-8:00pm

Register by October 1st. Call 856-665-5655 with questions.

In Our Own Voices: Reducing the Stigma of Mental Illness'

Virginia Office - \$10/person, \$15/couple

We are excited to announce that the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) will be presenting information and education on mental health stigma, diagnosis, treatment and day to day living. Immediately following the class will be a waiting parent support group.

Tuckahoe Area Library in Richmond, VA
October 13th from 10:00am-Noon

Register by October 1st. Very limited space, register early.
Call 757-361-0008 with questions.



AFTH Picnic Recap



Fort Washington Annual Picnic

AFTH hosted its 30th Annual Family Picnic at the Fort Washington State Park on Sunday, June 3rd. Despite the gloomy weather forecast, many families came out in celebration of adoption. There were games and crafts for the children and indie-rock music provided by the Barker Brothers (previously known as Under This Fire). And Ryan Bonner Photography captured family portraits for everyone. Donations from Herr's Potato Chips, Wawa, One Potato Two Potato, J&J Snack Foods, Giant Food Stores and Ambler Pizza complemented picnic lunches brought by families.

Raffles were a huge hit! From the "Family Fun" basket, to the "Tour of Philly", the raffle tables were swarmed by guests in an attempt to win the basket of their choice. Prizes included tickets to the Phillies, Sesame Place, Six Flags, and The Crayola Factory, various restaurant gift cards, two baskets from Pet Valu, a free season at Soccer Shots, and two timeshares to a choice of 160 locations! In total, close to \$700 was raised for the Expecting and Birth Parent Support Fund.

A very special thank you to our generous sponsors. Without them, this event would truly not be possible. Gold Heart sponsors: **Cofsky & Ziedman, LLC and Kling & Deibler, LLP**. Silver Heart sponsor: **Bob's Red Trucks**. Friends & Supporters: *Petrelli, Previtera, & Schimmel Family Law, Goldfish Swim School and Key Business Solutions*. Thank you again for your continued support of AFTH's mission and the Expecting and Birth Parent Support Fund. We are already looking forward to next year!

Virginia Annual Picnic

Over 140 people joined AFTH Virginia staff on Saturday, June 9th at the Chesapeake City Park Fun Forrest. We were thrilled to see attendance to continue to rise as well as the number of birth parent reunions taking place during the picnic. The weather was amazing and everyone had a great time. We are looking forward to a fun-filled fall festival with lots of families as well!

Connecticut Annual Picnic



AFTH's CT picnic returned to Beardsley Zoo on Sunday, June 24th. Over 85 adults and children were in attendance with 13 birth family reunions. It was a fantastic day with staff and families catching up with each other and celebrating the joys of adoption.

Idlewild Annual Picnic in Pittsburgh

Pittsburgh's annual picnic was held at Idlewild Amusement Park & Soak Zone in Ligonier, PA on August 4th. We sold over 100 tickets and enjoyed meeting up with both birth parents and adoptive parents from as far away as Virginia! The day started off with a steady rain but by noon, we were able to enjoy all the rides, wave pool and other attractions. Several birth parent reunions were held and the staff enjoyed getting to see all our wonderful families again. Our raffle items were a big hit and included items from Pittsburgh's Zoo & PPG Aquarium, Children's Museum, National Aviary, Omni Hotels & Resorts, Triple B Farms, and Laser Storm Pittsburgh to name a few. Thank you to everyone for supporting our Expectant and Birth Parent Support Fund!



Recent Legislation



PENNSYLVANIA - HB 58 which aimed at shortening PA's revocation period for birth parents from 30 days down to 14 days has stalled in the Senate. Since the 30-day revocation period was enacted in 2004, there have been several legislation attempts to decrease that time frame. HB 58 was introduced in January 2017 and after three considerations was passed in the House in March 2017 however it has currently stalled with no movement expected in the foreseeable future.

AMENDMENT TO ALLOW LGBTQ DISCRIMINATION IN ADOPTION - On July 11, 2018, the U.S. House Appropriations Committee attached an amendment to a funding bill for the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education which would allow publicly funded foster care and adoption agencies to discriminate against LGBTQ parents. Not only would it allow for widespread discrimination but the amendment also allows for a 15% decrease of federal funds for states and localities that refuse to allow discriminating agencies from participating. Civil rights organizations have banded together in attempts to stop this amendment from being entered into federal law.

JUDGE RULED RELIGIOUS ADOPTION AGENCIES CAN'T EXCLUDE LGBTQ PARENTS -

In March of 2018, Philadelphia's Department of Human Services (DHS) suspended contracts with two of the foster care agencies they were working with - Bethany Christian Services and Catholic Social Services - citing that they violated the nondiscrimination clause in DHS's contract. Both organizations have policies excluding same-sex families from receiving publicly funded foster care services.



In response, Catholic Social Services filed a lawsuit in federal district court seeking an injunction requiring DHS to continue their contract arguing that the U.S. Constitution's First Amendment protects their rights to deny services based on religious belief.



July 13th, just two days after the above anti-LGBTG amendment was approved in the U.S. House Appropriations Committee, U.S. District Court Judge Petrese B. Tucker issued what is being called a "historic" ruling. Tucker sided with DHS upholding its requirement that foster care agencies with city contracts follow its LGBTQ-inclusive nondiscrimination policies. He ruled that the city did not violate the agency's religious liberties citing that Catholic Social Services "provision of services meets the definition of public accommodations and, therefore, CSS must provide its services in accordance with the [Philadelphia] Fair Practices Ordinance," which does not allow discrimination against LGBTQ parents.



DHS will continue to make exceptions in specific cases such as a child being placed with a sibling already in a home approved by Catholic Social Services.

Agency News

Upcoming Events

Several of our branch offices are hosting Fall Festivals for their families to come together with staff for some seasonal fun! Families are always encouraged to use AFTH events as an opportunity to have a visit with their child's birth parents.

The AFTH's Fall Ed Series has been announced. Class topics include Prenatal Drug/Alcohol Exposure (both in-person classes and an online webinar), Infant and Childcare, Bonding with Your Adopted Baby, and Reducing the Stigma of Mental Health. The classes are developed to provide resources and create discussions to better equip families to raise children who join their families through adoption. The classes count towards waiting families' yearly education requirements.

See the newsletter insert for details on the above upcoming events as well as annual picnic recaps.

Agency News

2018 marks our Connecticut Office's 10 year anniversary. They have spent the last decade reaching into the community to provide services to expecting parents as well as adoptive parents all while advocating for the benefits of open adoption. Congrats to the Connecticut staff on hitting this milestone.

Domestic Program Update

AFTH is excited to announce that we will be reopening our domestic adoption program nation-wide to families seeking to adopt African-American children. This program expansion is due to increasing placement numbers of African-American infants and our need to have more families in our books to present to expecting parents for these placement situations. If you live outside of our service area and are interested in learning more, whether you are already home study ready or are just beginning the process, please contact Stephanie Capriotti at StephanieC@afth.org.

New Profile Key: A new key was sent to all waiting families along with new contracts. Any family not

turning in their new key by the end of June was put on hold until their social worker receives their new forms.

The new profile key now lists "total medical cost" as a consider question. What this means is that families who check off this box will be contacted about situations that match their key that are in need of total medical cost coverage. Because the amounts for "total medical" varies significantly from hospital to hospital, we want to encourage families who might otherwise shy away from checking off this option.

Additionally, the profile key was revised to better address the change in situations AFTH is seeing due to the country's rising opioid epidemic. We have seen a steady increase over the past two years and now close to 25% of infants placed through AFTH have been exposed to opioids. Aside from a distinction between prescribed and recreational opiates, all opiates are categorized together on the profile key because the overall impact remains the same. Most babies exposed to opiates in utero will experience withdrawal symptoms after birth and may need to be treated with medication, resulting in a longer hospital stay. Families are encouraged to do their own research regarding prenatal exposure to drugs and alcohol prior to completing or revising their profile key. AFTH partners with medical professionals to provide webinars and in-person classes on this specific topic for prospective adoptive families. It's an opportunity for families to ask questions and gather important information to completed or update their key.

AFTH has worked tirelessly to create awareness that adoption is an option for pregnant women who are using opioids and are looking for a permanent placement for their baby. Much of the medical community is under the assumption that calling the state or county to make a report is the only option they have when a woman or baby tests positive for drugs. However, AFTH has created outreach material to share with hospitals and clinics explaining that by calling us and involving one of our social workers prior to calling the state or county, a woman's options are left open for her to consider

making a permanent adoption plan. Choosing a family and making a private placement is often not an option once the state or county becomes involved. Adoption may not be the right choice for every expecting parent with opioid use however, for many it might provide the safety and permanency they desire for their child. We were honored to be featured in Rita Giordano's article "Love in the Time of Opioids" first published in the Philadelphia Inquirer and then picked up by the Associated Press and featured on news outlets nationwide including U.S. News & World Report.

Fingerprinting Process: Since Identigo has taken over the process in PA, we are seeing longer wait times for results. We advise families to begin their fingerprinting process two months prior to their clearance expiration to give enough time for the results to be returned.

Continuing Education Hours: Prospective adoptive families are now required to completed 5 hours of continuing education per person per year. Prior to placement, families are able to decide when and how they complete this requirement aside from the required Hospital Expectation Refresher webinar which must be taken each year. AFTH offers an array of waiting family support groups and education classes which can count towards hours. In addition, there are other great online resources such as PACT, NACAC, Adoption Learning Partners and Creating a Family to fulfill this requirement.

Offering Centralized Free CEU Training for Nurses & Social Workers

AFTH has been welcomed into hospitals and clinics to provide free CEU trainings for nursing and social work staff. In order to expand our reach, branch office have begun offering centralized training open to all nurses and social workers in the area who are in need of continuing education credits. If you would like to host a CEU training for your staff or are interested in information about the next free CEU training in your area, contact Ashley Kodet at AshleyK@afth.org

Personalize Your ParentFinder Profile

Our partnership with ParentFinder has been a great tool in increasing our families' exposure on the internet.

More and more women are contacting us asking about families they have found online.

ParentFinder profiles show expecting parents how recently prospective adoptive families have been active, so it's important to update things from time to time. A great way to show continued activity on your account is to utilize all the tools available. Did you know that you can write letters, make journal entries, and add albums of photos? If you just returned from a vacation to one of your favorite destinations, share that in an album! Another way for you to stay active is to upload home videos in addition to your agency video. Use these videos to show your personality and give a sense of what it would really be like for a child to live in your home. If you are not yet one of our ParentFinder families, talk with your social worker to learn how to begin. Whether you are starting from scratch with creating a brand new profile or just needing online exposure and marketing on a profile you have already created, ParentFinder can help.

Agency Waiting Statistics

As of August 1st, 74% of AFTH's families have been waiting in the books for 18 months or less and 56% a year or less. For families with keys open to African-American children, 85% have been waiting 1 year or less, and 65% have been waiting 6 months or less.

The wait can be one of the hardest parts of the adoption process for families. We recommend surrounding yourself with support and one way that can be helpful is to attend AFTH waiting family support groups (see page 6). The support groups are a time for families to come together in support and for social workers to touch base about recent statistics and situations as well as answer any questions families may have.

Other Statistics

Wrapping up the fiscal year at the end of June, we had close to 130 placements including 16 single women and 19 same-sex couples (12 male and 7 female). The agency's emergency placement rate for the last fiscal year averaged 56% with the first half of 2018 averaging closer to a 60%.



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.

Intercountry Adoption Information Act of 2018

Bipartisan senators introduced this law to improve Intercountry Adoption Information reporting. This law would help remove information barriers Americans frequently face while seeking to adopt children from other countries.

This act would amend the Intercountry Adoption Act (IAA) to require the State Department provide additional information on:

- All countries that have enacted policies to prevent or prohibit adoptions to the United States
- Actions the State Department has taken which have prevented adoptions to the United States
- How the State Department has worked to encourage the resuming of adoptions in both cases

The report includes information on topics such as the number of intercountry adoptions involving immigration to the U.S. and the country from which each child immigrates, the time required for completion of an adoption and information on adoption agencies.

This bill has passed the House and we will keep you updated as to the Bill's progression.

Addressing the Increasing Odds Against Americans Being Able to Adopt Internationally

In an article written July 3, 2018 the author addresses the fact that international adoption has become ever more difficult to complete with a successful outcome. One woman who was at the very end of the process of adopting from Guatemala received a call telling her the country was closed to adoptions. Families, such as this woman, are now fearful their chances of adopting will be even slimmer after the U.S. State Department increased fees and restrictions on adoption agencies this year. A new accrediting entity (IAAME) has been named to monitor adoption service providers. For a link to the complete article, visit [here](#).

Ukraine: Changes to Ukrainian Civil Code Affect Time-Frames for Adoptions

On December 15, 2017 the new Civil Code of Ukraine went into effect, increasing the appeal period of all civil cases, including the appeals process for adoption decrees, from 10 calendar days to 30. After a Ukrainian civil court approves and adoption decree, the judgment will not go into effect until 30 calendar days have passed to allow for an appeal to be filed. After this period, adoptive parents may be given physical custody of the adopted child and may then apply for a new birth certificate and passport and finalize the adoption.

Democratic Republic of Congo: The State Department Strongly Recommends Against Adopting from the DRC

The State Department understands that adoption service providers (ASPS) and prospective adoptive parents have been contacted by individuals from the DRC urging ASPS to resume operations in that country. However, the DRC adoption authorities have confirmed that the suspension on issuing exit permits in adoption cases has not been lifted. The Department of State strongly recommends against initiating any adoptions in the DRC at this time.

Better Together: United Way Giving

United Way improves lives every day by mobilizing the caring power of communities around the world.

AFTH is honored to be one of the non-profits eligible to receive contributions through the United Way Workplace Donor Program. Below are the steps to make a donation through your United Way Workplace giving.

All donations are tax deductible and directly assist men and women who reach out to AFTH for help. Together we can make a bigger impact in the lives of those who need it.

How to Contribute Through United Way:

- 1) Request a Donor Option Card from your company's United Way representative.
- 2) The agency's donor number is different in each area. The AFTH donor number for your area can be found in your United Way booklet. You can do this even if it is not listed in your particular United Way booklet. Just print ADOPTIONS FROM THE HEART and the local branch office's address (see page 2) in the designated box for the donor area.
- 3) Enter the amount of your pledge and your payment method (check, payroll deduction, etc.)



Congratulations to AFTH's New Families



Sons

Brandon & Kaitlyn
Bryant & Marko
Kevin & Brenda
Thomas & Kristen
Kevin & Ashlee
Joshua & Julie
David & Angelina
Jeffrey & Heather
Gary & Ronald
Glenn & Dora
John & Laura
Joseph & Kenneth
Richard & Carolyn
Ryan & Kristen
Michael & Suzanne
Huu & Roseanne
Patrick & Jenna
Shankar & Vasudha
Nicholas & Tariem
Robin

Daughters

Jason & Stacy
Shannon
Sean & Elizabeth
Brian & Angela
Keith & Kristen
Hiran & Maggie
Charles & Tina
Max & Sarah
Adrian & Amy (twins)
Aaron & Anne (twins)
Anthony & Christine
Amy
Jeff & Laura
Matthew & Gregory
Rahwa & Valencia
Craig & Kim
Tiffany





NONPROFIT ORG
US POSTAGE
PAID
Broomall, PA
PERMIT # 136

30-31 Hampstead Circle
Wynnewood, PA 19096

SUMMER

2018

or current resident

Is Our Mailing List Current?

Are your name and address incorrect? Want to be removed from mailings? Are you receiving more than one copy? Let us know: adoption@afth.org

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

Teaming Up With Local Businesses



We are excited to partner with great companies offering between 10-25% of their profit to be donated to the AFTH Birth Parent Scholarship Fund.

Summer fundraisers began with a Nothing Bundt Cakes Benefit Day in Wynnewood in July followed in August by two Isaac's locations (Harrisburg & Lancaster) and East End Brewing Co. in Pittsburgh.

STILL TO COME...

AUGUST - Nothing Bundt Cakes – Chesapeake, VA
SEPTEMBER - MOD Pizza – Cherry Hill, NJ
NOVEMBER - Capriotti's – Wilmington, DE

For dates & details visit afth.org/calendar-of-event
Be sure to PRINT OUT the flyer before you go!



FREE ONLINE WEBINARS

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

DOMESTIC INFANT ADOPTION
NOVEMBER 13TH AT 7PM

Registration Required
www.afth.org