

Adoption News



A Quarterly Newsletter from

Adoptions From The Heart

Fall 2014

What Are Adoption Facilitators?

The Risks in Using a Facilitator vs. Local Agency

Adoption facilitators are a relatively new concept in the adoption world and often times potential adoptive and birthparents are unsure of the differences between adoption facilitators and adoption agencies. The



American Academy of Adoption Attorneys (Quad A) website states: "A facilitator is a person or organization whose role is solely to make introductions between birth parents and adoptive parents in exchange for a large, non-refundable fee paid in advance. Yet, facilitators are not held to any minimum threshold of expertise,

professional training or ethical standards."

Adoption facilitators are usually small organizations with a few staff members who often have no counseling background. Facilitators advertise to pregnant women and connect them with families. Once a woman selects a family, the facilitator refers both parties to a local professional (a law firm or licensed adoption agency) and removes themselves from the rest of the process. They are middle men who charge families to do one part of the adoption process - connecting families and pregnant women.

Why Birthparents, Hospital Staff, and Adoption Attorneys Are Alarmed about Women Working With Facilitators

Because of their positive past experiences, AFTH has a large network of sources that recommend our services to pregnant women wanting to learn more about adoption. These same professionals are also working with women using facilitators. Several hospital nurses and social workers as well as adoption attorneys have expressed their alarm at the total lack of counseling pregnant women working with facilitators receive.

Counseling and continuous support is vital for anyone making an adoption plan, however those working with facilitators are often lacking this important service severely increasing the risk for everyone involved. Without counseling, how are women able to make the right decision for themselves, not to mention prepare for the adoption process, especially after the baby's birth? The answer is, they can't.

AFTH social workers have seen an increase in women who began working with facilitators but then choose to instead work with AFTH who is able to better provide personalized services and support. Most of the communication between women and facilitators is through emails and phone calls as opposed to in-person services.

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OFFICE 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., 1st floor
Glastonbury, CT 06033
860.657.2626

DELAWARE OFFICE

18-A Trolley Square
Wilmington, DE 19806
302.658.8883

NEW JERSEY OFFICE

451 Woodland Avenue
Cherry Hill, NJ 08002
856.665.5655

NEW YORK

1.800-355-5500

PITTSBURGH OFFICE

1225 South Main St., Suite 207
Greensburg, PA 15601
724.853.6533

VIRGINIA OFFICE

1407 Stephanie Way, Suite H
Chesapeake, VA 23320
757.361.0008

WYNNEWOOD OFFICE

30-31 Hampstead Circle
Wynnewood, PA 19096
610.642.7200

TOLL FREE NUMBER

1.800.355.5500

VISIT OUR WEBSITE:

www.afth.org

Quad A states “face to face counseling with a licensed social worker or counselor experienced in the field is also recommended to ensure they consider the short and long term implications of their decisions.”

Women who have come to AFTH after starting with a facilitator have explained they felt as though their facilitators never really tried to get to know them aside from the standard questions. They felt more like a number than a client. The focus seemed to be more about connecting pregnant women and adoptive parents than actually cultivating a good match between families which is important in long term adoption relationship.

AFTH social workers get to know their clients in-person and are able to offer all the necessary counseling and support, not only during pregnancy but after placement as well. It is about helping women decide what is best for them and their baby not just making a match and moving on.

Why the American Academy of Adoption Attorneys Cautions Prospective Adoptive Parents Against Using Facilitators:

There are a few main reasons Quad A cautions prospective adoptive parents against using facilitators. First and foremost, the lack of regulations and ethical standards facilitators are held to. The government does not regulate facilitators in the same way they do other adoption professionals.

Secondly, Quad A states they have seen many matches from facilitators fall through because of the lack of knowledge of each state’s adoption laws. In many states, it is even illegal to use an adoption facilitator and many prospective adoptive parents do not understand that before paying a lump sum to facilitators. This costs families even more money because they then need to pay an attorney or an agency to complete the adoption as well.

Third, facilitators keep their fee whether or not the match leads to an adoption whereas adoption agencies often credit those funds towards another adoption.

Fourth, when working with facilitators, prospective adoptive parents are opening themselves up to a higher risk of being scammed. Due to the way facilitators advertise for pregnant women, lack of regulations in regards to money being given to pregnant women for expenses, and lack in-person counseling or even proof of pregnancy, prospective adoptive parents are risking a much higher financial loss due to an unsuccessful match.

Finally, adoption facilitators do not have the skill set to properly counsel, support and explain the adoption process to pregnant women and their families, which leads to more failed adoptions.

Facilitators Are Not Service Providers:

How about ongoing counseling or support for birthparents and adoptive parents after placement? What about helping to facilitate open adoption? And in regards to questions about being an intermediary in ongoing contact, services for adoptees, record keeping or central location for medical record updates, the answer is simple; facilitators are not service providers therefore their involvement in the adoption process ends after the match has occurred despite the fact that the need for adoption services continues far past the point of a match.

Birthmother Scholarship Fund

In the past 30 years, Adoptions From The Heart has worked with thousands of birth parents. We want to help birth parents establish long term careers and so AFTH has created an education scholarship fund as a way to assist birthparents who are pursuing continuing education. Scholarships can be used for trade schools or for undergraduate studies at a college or university. Recipients of AFTH scholarships are eligible for up to eight semesters.

Educational scholarships are available for birthmothers and birthfathers who have made an adoption plan for their child anytime after 1985 and it is not limited to birthparents who have placed with Adoptions From The Heart. Twice a year, the AFTH board will meet to review the applications and award scholarships to several birthparents.

“Making an adoption plan was the hardest decision of my life, but choosing to better myself so my daughter has someone to look up to was the easiest. Achieving my goal of getting a degree made me a better person.”

-Amy, AFTH Birthmother

Time Share Week as a Thank You For the First Few \$300+ Donors

Are you in need of a family fun trip or a romantic getaway for two? Dreaming of a beach in Florida, skiing fresh powder or taking in the New England autumn foliage? As a way to kickstart donations in support of the Adoptions From The Heart’s Scholarship Fund, we have been generously gifted several weeks for a timeshare that we are in turn offering as a thank you to our donors.

The first **FIVE DONORS of \$300** or more to the AFTH Scholarships Fund after October 20th will be gifted a **ONE WEEK VACATION GETAWAY* valued at \$1,500-\$3,000**. Because of the incredible value of the prize being gifted, the donations of the winners will not be tax deductible however the full amount donated will go directly to the scholarship fund. Donations can be made online at www.afth.org or by mailing the below form.

**One bedroom during the off season. Donor will need pay \$89 processing fee when booking at the location of their choosing from 170+ locations. The donor may upgrade to a prime season one bedroom for an additional \$25/day. The donor may add an second bedroom for an additional \$25/day.*



Please Make Your Checks Payable To: **Adoptions From The Heart**
and mail with form to: **30-31 Hampstead Circle, Wynnewood, PA 19096**

Credit Cards Accepted Online:
www.afth.org

Please use my donation: AFTH Birthmother Fund Scholarship Fund Where It’s Needed Most

I’d like to generously donate: \$50 \$100 \$250 \$500 \$1,000 Other: \$ _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ **State:** _____ **Zip:** _____

E-mail: _____

***JOIN THE AFTH PLEDGE PROGRAM:**
____ I authorize Adoptions From The Heart to invoice me in September, December, and March for 3 additional quarterly payments of \$_____ .

Adoptions From The Heart is a registered, charitable organization. In accordance with PA law, a copy of our official registration and financial information may be obtained from either the PA Department of State by calling toll-free (800) 732-0999, or the state of NJ by calling (973) 504-6215. A copy of our official registration and financial information may be obtained from the state of NY upon written request to the Office of the Attorney General, Department of Law, Charities Bureau, 120 Broadway, New York, NY 10271. A financial statement is available upon written request from the VA State of Office of Consumer Affairs, (800) 552-9963.

November is National Adoption Month

Celebrate and support National Adoption Month (NAM) with AFTH this year! Get involved in one of our special NAM projects and help us spread adoption awareness this November.

Gift Card Drive for Birthmothers and Their Children During the Holidays



Just before the holiday season each year, AFTH identifies birthmothers, parenting children at home who are in need of extra financial assistance to brighten up the holidays. *AFTH will graciously be accepting Target, Acme, Walmart, and Visa gift cards ranging from \$25-\$200 to be passed directly into the hands of women in need.* Without our annual gift card donations, many of these birthmothers would not be able to provide a special meal, warm clothes, and a few presents for their children during the holiday season. Last year, AFTH donated more than \$10,000 in gift cards to help 34 birthmothers and 67 children. Please consider this

opportunity when you pass by the gift card display at the store this week. Each year we receive wonderful thank yous from the families who receive the donated gift cards showing their appreciation for this wonderful gesture of paying it forward.

Gift cards can be mailed to the Wynnewood Office at 30-31 Hampstead Circle, Wynnewood, PA 19096 before November 20th. However, the agency will be accepting gift cards to pass along to birthmothers all year long.

Making a Difference, One HEART at a Time: Show Your Heart with AFTH's Paper Heart Project

On Friday, October 3rd, as a part of United Way of Bucks County's "Volunteer Bucks Day of Service," volunteers joined AFTH staff in preparation for this year's project. Over 4,500 purple paper hearts were cut, bundled, and are ready to go for AFTH's annual Paper Heart Project.



Throughout the month of November, participating businesses collect donations of \$1 in exchange for a purple paper heart which is then displayed on the wall of the business in November to help spread adoption awareness. All proceeds from the project benefit AFTH's Birthmother Fund. In addition to raising money for a worthy cause, the Paper Heart Project is a simple fundraiser to bring the community together in supporting and spreading adoption awareness.

Starting November 1st, paper hearts will be available in each AFTH Office. Additionally hearts are already available for purchase online in the AFTH online store located at the bottom of our homepage at www.afth.org. For questions or more details about the Paper Heart Project please contact Jessica Albert at JessicaA@afth.org.

Paper Hearts Participants Include: Jumping Jungle in East Brunswick, NJ ♥ Friedman's Service Center in Bethlehem, PA ♥ GIFT Family Services in Palm City, FL ♥ LevLane Advertising in Philadelphia, PA ♥ Easton Hospital Orthopedic Unit ♥ LexaLu.com ♥ Noah Wallace School in Farmington, CT ♥ Farmers Insurance - Foat Agency in Sicklerville, NJ ♥ Piscataway High School class of 2018 ♥ The Lutz Cente at Ceday Crest Collage ♥ The Ice Cream Lab Inc. in Walnutport, PA ♥ Bounce Town in South Windsor, CT ♥ Alpha Phi Omega at Dickinson College ♥ Kappa Kappa Gamma at Villanova University ♥ Alpha Phi Omega at Villanova University ♥ University of New Haven Psychology Club ♥ Luginbuhl Family ♥ Additional Organizations Joining Daily

...National Adoption Month Cont'd



Social Media Contest & Discussions

AFTH is very proud to say that we just hit 10,000 followers on Facebook. If you haven't found AFTH on social media yet, now is the time!

All month long in November AFTH runs a special National Adoption Month campaign on social media including theme weeks (one theme this year is Then & Now in Adoption), contests, photo shares, and of course some great adoption discussions.

Our National Adoption Month Campaign cannot be successful without supporters like YOU joining in the fun! Start following AFTH on social media today.



AFTH Support Groups

AFTH understands how important it is for ongoing support for those going through an adoption process. We believe that coming together with others who have or who are going through the same process can be extremely helpful. Each office offers support groups throughout the year both for waiting adoptive parents. We encourage everyone to get involved! Contact your office for details about upcoming support groups.

ALLENTOWN

The Allentown office will be hosting a support group for waiting adoptive families and their family and friends. Please bring one family or friend per adoptive parent to our group to learn about the adoption process, ways to offer support, using the appropriate adoption language and preparing for the arrival of a baby. Light refreshments will be served. Space is limited so sign up quickly.

Tuesday, November 12th

RSVP by Nov. 3rd

Call (610) 432-2384 or Email TammyC@afth.org

CENTRAL PA

Call (717) 399-7766 or Email AmandaK@afth.org

CHERRY HILL

One-on-one Support: Social workers available to meet with NJ waiting families to provide support, review profiles and discuss any concerns. Families register by the Wednesday prior to the meeting for time slots between 6:30-8:30pm.

Tuesday, November 12th

Call (856) 665-5655 or Email TerryP@afth.org

CONNECTICUT

Call (860) 657-2626 or Email SusanM@afth.org.

DELAWARE

Call 302-658-8883 or Email DanielleG@afth.org

PITTSBURGH

Call (724) 853-6533 or Email DebbieC@afth.org.

VIRGINIA

Call (757) 361-0008 or Email KimW@afth.org

WYNNEWOOD

Call 610-642-7200 or Email AshleyK@afth.org

Building Beautiful Families 2015 Calendar



With 100% of your purchase price going directly into the hands of the women in need, you KNOW you are supporting a great cause!

3 Ways to Purchase:

Order Online...
tiny.cc/AFTHCalendar

Complete the form ----->

Or visit any of our branch offices.

The Birthmother Fund assists expecting mothers who are working with AFTH and considering making an adoption plan for their baby. Many of the pregnant women we work with are struggling to provide for their basic needs during pregnancy - food, shelter, clothing, heat, etc. The financial hardships facing many of the expectant parents we work with don't end with placement and so the AFTH Birthmother Fund is able to offer assistance after placement as well.

CALENDARS PRICES:

Purchase at an AFTH office - \$12.00
Online & Those Being Mailed - \$13.50

Building Beautiful Families 2015 Calendar

COMPLETE FORM AND RETURN WITH PAYMENT

Name: _____

Phone: (____) _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

_____ # of Calendars x \$13.50 (includes shipping)
= \$ _____ Total Enclosed

Make Checks Payable to:
Adoptions From The Heart

Mail Payment and Form To:
Adoptions From The Heart
30-31 Hampstead Circle
Wynnewood, PA 19096

Or Visit AFTH Store to Order Online!



Legislation

NEW YORK - A Family Court Judge in New York determined that a man could legally adopt his husband's biological twins even though they were born to a woman under an illegal surrogacy agreement. Although the surrogacy agreement is void and unenforceable under New York Law, the Judge ruled that the best interest of the twins is the most important consideration in such a matter and, because the twins are thriving with the couple, the adoption was permitted to go forward. The current policy against surrogacy contracts has not been amended since its enactment. *New York Law Journal, April 10th, 2014*

INTERNATIONAL SURROGACY MAY LEAVE SOME BABIES IN STATELESS LIMBO - The lack of regulation around international commercial surrogacy has left many babies in stateless limbo, with no country granting them citizenship because of complex conflicts over who the legal parents are. Problems arise when the country of the intended parents and the country of the surrogate mother both refuse to grant the baby nationality, or when intended parents decide not to follow through with parenting after the baby's birth.

If the intended parent uses genetic material that is not either of their own, the legal parentage of the child remains a question. In addition, some LGBT families are finding it difficult to get a passport for their child born from surrogacy if the country where their surrogate resides is against LGBT families raising children. Although most citizenship problems arise when the parents are from a country that bans commercial surrogacy, like France, Italy, Germany and Spain, and the baby is born in a country where surrogacy is allowed like India, Ukraine, Russia and Thailand. Babies born to surrogates may also end up stateless if the intending parents reject it. This can happen if there is a fertility mix-up whereby the wrong sperm or egg was used, if the child is born with a disability, or if the parents divorce before the baby is born.

Legislation needs to catch up with these new technologies and ways of creating a family so that these children don't suffer. Many of these "stateless" children wind up in orphanages for years awaiting legislators to figure out what country they belong to.

No SSN For Child... What To Do For Taxes?

Some families who have adopted domestically in 2014 will not finalize before the end of the year which means that their child has not officially been issued a Social Security number yet. So how do those families file their taxes?

The IRS can issue families in these situations an Adoption Taxpayer Identification Number (ATIN) which is a temporary nine-digit number for a child who does not have a SSN in time to file taxes. ATIN numbers can be requested through the form W-7A which can be downloaded online at www.irs.gov. Documentation describing how your child was placed with your family will need to accompany the form. It can take up to eight weeks to receive an ATIN and it is valid for two years and can be used to claim dependency on tax documents.

Consult with your tax preparer if you have additional questions about requesting an ATIN for your child or about the tax credit.

PENNSYLVANIA: EFFORT TO BROADEN ADOPTEES' RIGHTS TO GET BIRTH INFORMATION GETS SENATE COMMITTEE'S APPROVAL - A compromise effort to give adopted persons dramatically expanded rights to seek the identity of their birth parents passed through state Senate's Aging and Youth Committee Tuesday on a 9-2 vote. Supporters are making a concerted effort to get the bill to Gov. Tom Corbett's desk before the end of the 2013-14 legislative session – scheduled to end next month – but acknowledged that will take some further negotiation.

The change would only affect those people involved in so-called "closed adoptions," estimated at about 5 percent of the 30,000 adoptions processed each year in Pennsylvania.

Under current law, birth records in those cases are generally not available without the natural parents' consent. Rep. Kerry Benninghoff's bill, which passed the state House last year, would flip control of that dialogue around, by letting adoptees born in Pa request their birth records by right once they've reached the age of 19.

AFTH Holiday Events & Activities



CHERRY HILL OFFICE

Holiday Open House -- Gift Card Drive



This year, in addition to holiday treats and activities, please join us in making the holidays a little brighter for some of our birth families who are struggling. We will be providing refreshments, crafts and games for the children, and door prizes.

We would welcome donations of gift cards of any denomination to be added to the agency birth parent holiday gift card drive.

Thursday, December 4th from 6:00-8:00pm
Location: Cherry Hill Office

RSVP by November 26th by calling 856-665-5655 or emailing TerryP@afth.org

DELAWARE OFFICE

Holiday Open House

Join the Delaware AFTH staff and other local adoptive families for an evening of holiday celebration. All are welcome to attend: placed families, waiting families, and in-process families. Snacks and drinks will be provided as well as activities for the children.



Tuesday, December 16th from 5:00-7:00pm
Location: TBD

RSVPs by December 8th by calling 302-658-8883 or emailing DanielleG@afth.org

CENTRAL PA OFFICE

Holiday Party in Harrisburg

Join us for a holiday celebration with staff and other AFTH families. Enjoy fun activities for all the children! In honor of the season of giving, we again ask each family to bring an item to donate to the Neighborhood Center in Harrisburg. Some of the highly needed items: diapers (size 4,5,6), baby wipes, alarm clocks, pajamas for women, twin bed sheets, blankets, cereal and canned fruit.

Thursday, December 4th from 6:00-8:00pm
Location: Giant Community Center in Harrisburg

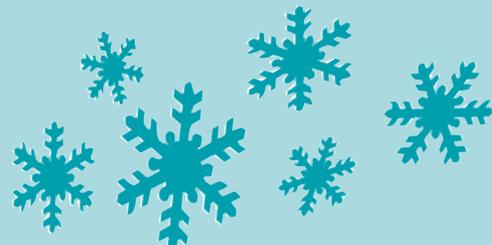
RSVP by November 26th by calling 717-399-7766 or emailing AmandaK@afth.org

Holiday Open House at the Office

Stop in and join us for a Holiday Open House celebration with staff and other AFTH families. Visit the office anytime between 6-8pm and be sure to bring an item to donate to the local missions in our area. Some of the highly needed items: canned soups, cereal, canned fruit, coffee, creamer, sugar, baby diapers, pacifiers, bottles, diaper cream, wipes, bath towels & wash clothes, shampoo, conditioner, soap and deodorant.

Tuesday, December 9th from 6:00-8:00pm
Location: Central PA AFTH Office in Lancaster

RSVPs preferred by not required by December 5th by calling 717-399-7766 or emailing AmandaK@afth.org



VIRGINIA OFFICE

Annual Holiday Party

Join our annual holiday party with a visit from Santa. Bring a dish to share “potluck style” and a non-perishable item for the church food pantry. AFTH will provide the drinks, cups, plates, napkins and flatware. Adoptive parents are encouraged to write a letter of invitation to their child’s birthparents for an annual visit.

Saturday, November 22nd from Noon - 2pm
Location: St. Martin’s Episcopal Church in Williamsburg

RSVP by November 19th by calling 757-361-0008 or emailing HopeB@afth.org



Wynnewood

Holiday Gathering

The holiday gathering is a chance for all present and past families to join in celebrating the holiday season with the AFTH staff and other adoptive families. This will be a time for families to meet new people and enjoy games as well as arts and crafts for the children.

Tuesday, December 16th from 6:00-8:00pm
Location: Haverford Township Free Library

RSVP by December 10th by calling 610-642-7200 or emailing AshleyK@afth.org



As you gear up for holiday shopping, remember to always begin your shopping at GiveBackAmerica.com. Adoptions From The Heart is listed in the Give Back America Online Charity Mall. Every time you shop, AFTH can receive a generous commission at no cost to you!

What is Give Back America?

Give Back America (GBA) was founded by the efforts of a small group of friends who had the desire to help charity. GBA took the growing popularity of online shopping and made it easy to literally “pay it forward” at no extra cost to the shopper.

With over 375 participating stores, it is as easy as a click of the mouse and even your routine online shopping can help benefit AFTH. The company you buy from is the same and price you pay is the same as going directly to the store’s website however by beginning your shopping at GBA and designating Adoptions From The Heart as your cause of choice, GBA will send a percentage of your orders directly to the agency to support our mission.

How Easy is it to use GBA to support AFTH?

With the click of a button....

- 1) Visit GiveBackAmerica.com
- 2) Designate AFTH as the recipient of GBA’s donations in the “Choose Your Cause” box
- 3) Shop Shop Shop!

Even easier...instead of starting at GiveBackAmerica.org, visit www.givebackamerica.ourtoolbar.com once, download the toolbar, and anytime you are shopping on a site affiliated with GBA, AFTH will receive a donation from GBA for a percentage of your purchases and it doesn’t cost you anything.

Don’t forget Cyber Monday is December 1st and you can score some amazing deals online AND skip the crowds of shoppers on Black Friday. While you are shopping online, you can pay it forward to AFTH too!

Birthmother Shares Her Post-Placement Experience

Written by Kelsey, an AFTH birthmother



As I watched my son's adoptive parents leave the hospital, hand in hand, with a baby carrier between them, I wasn't sure if my heart was bursting from the light that had slowly been building up during my three-day hospital stay or if my heart was breaking into a thousand pieces. Two years later, I'm still not really sure. There's something to be said about watching near strangers walk away with your child. It's just unfortunate that I don't—and probably never will—have the words for it. It's a strange mixture of life-ending sadness and pure elation.

Although my boyfriend Zach and I really only met them that day, Mike and Amanda didn't feel like complete strangers to us. They never did. Not in all of the awkward in-between months where I tried relentlessly to find my place in their lives, while trying to live my own. As we were about to leave the hospital, Henry swaddled in his seat carried by his parents, followed by us, his birth parents, I knew the smiles on Mike and Amanda's faces would make up for the pain I felt in my chest. Zach and I watched until we couldn't see them any longer, then we left the hospital. Left our son with his new parents behind. That was two years ago.

The first few weeks after placement were the hardest, and there was only so much that Zach could do to help me. Luckily, I had a great caseworker who made sure that I never felt alone. I felt like I had to be strong so I could prove my family—and their doubts—wrong. The problem with being “strong” was that I was so unforgiving to myself when I felt weak. As the weeks passed, it became a lot easier to manage the overwhelming emotions, and learn how to cope with my feelings. A lot of birth moms go through the adoption journey without the support of the birth father, and I can't imagine the incredible strength those women possess.

If the moments leading up to placement were heartbreaking, there's no way to describe the feelings after relinquishment. I can't sugarcoat my feelings and say I was without doubts during those first few weeks post-placement. There were days when all I wanted was to take it all back. The only thing getting me through it all was knowing that Mike and Amanda loved our son just as much as we did. I knew they would be able to give Henry a better (different) life than I could ever imagine. If I had chosen to parent, I would have loved him just as much and done everything I could for him, but I feel like I would have always struggled, and my son didn't deserve that. Now he has all the love in the world AND parents who can provide for him in ways I possibly couldn't.

Honestly, I wish there was some magical thing I could do that would take away the pain of post-placement life. There isn't, though. Most birth moms will tell you that the pain never goes away - there are simply good days, and then bad days. As time goes on, the good days start to outnumber the bad ones.

Everyone copes and deals with things differently. There were times where I couldn't bring myself to write back to the letters we got because it was too hard to separate myself from the bad days. I am thankful for my son's parents for never giving up on me, for continuing to write even when it was silence on my end. I am so grateful that they are just as eager for openness as I am. I remember there was a time when I didn't think I wanted that level of openness. I thought it would hurt me too much to see how Henry was flourishing without me in his day-to-day life. If anything, the openness has helped me to heal. It reassured me that it was the right choice for Zach and I.

There isn't a day that goes by that I don't think about my son at least once, but I never worry because I know he is in the best possible place he could be. I know a lot of adoptive parents are afraid that birth parents won't like them, but trust me, the feeling is mutual. There would be times where I would sit for an hour trying to compose a reply to an e-mail or letter because I was too afraid of saying the wrong thing.

Sometimes I feel guilty that I didn't chose to parent. But there are so many things that I've been able to do that I wouldn't have done if I chose to parent at this stage. Adoption has changed my life in ways I never thought it would. Making an adoption plan gave me the motivation to find a real job and live on my own. Not a lot of people can say this, but I am 22 years old and I am completely independent. Because of my placement, I discovered that I have a genuine passion for adoption, and I hope to go to school so I can work as an adoption counselor one day.

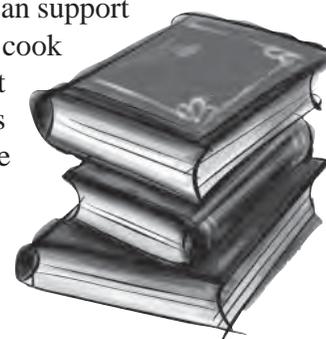
I won't say it's been easy, because it hasn't been. I feel like everyone in the “adoption triad” can agree with that statement. But it has been life-changing in so many good ways, even when it's hard. To me, that makes it worth it in the end. Despite the bad days, I can sleep at night knowing that I've already done the hardest thing I could do in life, and if I managed to get through that, nothing can stop me.

Adoption Related Books at Unbeatable Prices

Not only can you snag up some great adoption related books at fabulous prices, you can support AFTH in the process. We have books on international adoption, domestic adoption, cook books, country specific books, children's books, books about birthparent, books about transracial adoption, books that every prospective adoptive parent should read, books for adoptees and so much more. Start your search here and take advantage of these amazing prices before our inventory runs out:

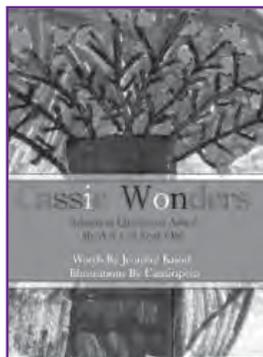
AFTH's Amazon Storefront: <http://tiny.cc/AFTH-Amazon-Sales>

AFTH Blog Recommends: <http://tiny.cc/AFTH-Book-Store>



Book Reviews

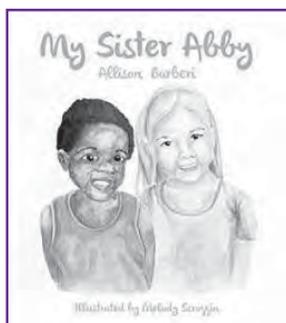
Cassie Wonders: Adoption Question Asked by a 6 1/2 Year Old by Jennifer Knoth & Cassiopeia - This is a great book



written with by a 6 1/2 year old adoptee with the help of her mom. Cassie also illustrated all the pages. Naturally, Cassie has questions about adoption and her birthparents and sometimes she is scared to ask questions because she is worried about the answer. Even when the answers to her questions may be difficult to hear, her parents find a way to

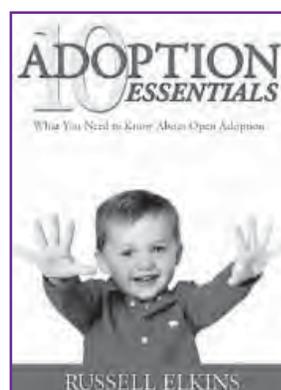
reassure her. The book is a great story to help children feel comfortable about asking their own questions and expressing their own thoughts about adoption. [Amazon \\$8.50](#)

My Sister Abby by Allison Barberi - This book



tells the story of a young girl whose family adopts another child of a different race and culture. At first she notices how different her new sibling is but then she discovers they have a lot in common and they begin to form a special bond. She learns that family members can look different

but that doesn't affect the love they feel for each other. This book can help introduce the idea of adoption to children in a way to encourage discussion about diversity. [Amazon - \\$8.97 Kindle \\$5.99](#)

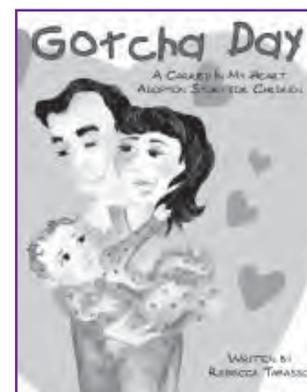


10 Adoption Essentials: What You Need to Know About Open Adoption by Russell Elkins - This book is a

good starting point for those exploring open adoption. It gives a great overview of some very important elements to open adoption: sharing information, communication, working through jealousy etc.

There is some really good information in this book and a great way to start exploring the world of open adoption and really dive into the different feelings that it can invoke. [Amazon \\$4.74 Kindle \\$2.99](#)

Gotcha Day: A Carried in My Heart Adoption Story for Children by Rebecca Tabasso - This is a fun



children's story about the special day Suzie's family celebrates every year, her "gotcha day" or the day they became a family. Suzie tries to figure out what the big day they will be celebrating soon is and she runs through all the holidays including the historic holidays on the US calendar. This book has bright, exciting illustrations and is a great way to express how much your adoption and your child mean to your family. [Amazon \\$10.86](#)

AFTH Program Updates



DOMESTIC PROGRAMS - During the first quarter of our current fiscal year, we have placed 31 infants through our Domestic Program including 1 set of twins and a special needs placement. Social workers in each office continue to do outreach to referral sources every month to spread awareness about AFTH's free services to women considering making an adoption plan for their infants. Adoptions From The Heart continues to work hard in providing birth parents all the services they need and continue to provide counseling, education, and placement services to our adoptive parents.

In the 2013-2014 fiscal year, Adoptions From The Heart placed a total of 125 infants in adoptive homes including 2 sets of twins and 2 special needs placements. AFTH also facilitated 12 identified placements including a set of twins.

Our percentage rate of placement vs those in the book continue to remain high with 71% of all of our pre-adoptive families waiting less than 1 year. Also 44% of our birthmothers report no drug or alcohol use which is wonderful. Additionally, as an agency our emergency placements are increasing. In 2013, about 40% of all our placements were emergency placements and so far for 2014, 44% of our placements have been emergencies.

As we begin to prepare for the upcoming holiday season, we hope that many of our AFTH families will consider joining us in celebration at our office holiday parties. For details on upcoming fall events and holiday parties see the newsletter insert.

We know how stressful the waiting phase of the adoption process can be and we also know how important it is to have support during that time. AFTH runs support groups in our different offices for our waiting families and we hope that you will join us. This is a great time to connect with other families who are adopting and to receive updates from your AFTH social worker regarding the Domestic Program.

You can also stay connected with AFTH by following us on social media: Facebook, Twitter, WordPress Blog, Pinterest, Etc.

A Few Important Reminders to all AFTH Families:

We are receiving many photos to be sent to birthparents that have writing on the back of them. We think that writing captions on the back of the photos is a great idea and



really captures some special moments, however please don't write on them using markers. We are finding that the markers are bleeding through the pictures and destroying the pictures or are leaving marks on other photos when the photos are stacked. For anyone writing on the back of the photos, we just ask that you please use a pen instead of a marker.

Many families are also sending pictures into the office from a third party site. When doing this your last name and the birth parent's names are not often included anywhere in the package. When this happens, there is no way for AFTH to know whose pictures these are or where to send them. Please make sure that you are including a note with your full name on it so we can identify who we need to forward the pictures to. Keep in mind, your identifying information such as address and last name is for our internal use only.

The holidays are approaching us quickly and will be here before you know it. Many families and birthparents send gifts to AFTH Offices to then forward along to the other party. **AFTH offices will be closed from December 24th and re-opening January 5th.** In order to ensure that your holiday gift will reach out offices before our holiday closing, please be sure to send your gift by the first week in December. Please do not mail your gift to the office if it will arrive after December 24th because it will sit outside the office until we return on January 5th and we do not want any gifts getting lost or stolen during that time.

Heartbeats Update on page 9...



HEARTBEATS - We are excited to announce that Hannah Burgess, one of our social workers in the Wynnewood Office, is our new *Embryo Support Services* Program Coordinator. To learn more about our Embryo Support Services or to schedule a webinar at your convenience, contact Hannah at HannahB@afth.org or 610-642-7200.

Embryo Placement offers an option for families in which a woman is able to carry an embryo donated by another family. Wait times for matching between recipient and donor families average approximately 1-2 months. A webinar is a great way to learn about the program and ask any questions you may have regarding the process and can be scheduled at your convenience.

AFTH has also developed an Embryo Education Series specific to addressing the needs of families created through Embryo Adoption. The webinars in this series address talking with children about embryo placement, potential contact with genetic relatives, and many other related topics.



Pittsburgh Picnic Recap

The AFTH Pittsburgh Office held its annual picnic at Idlewild on August 1. The weather was perfect and everyone who attended, including AFTH staff, enjoyed the amusement park plus the expanded water park. We were thrilled to have over 200 people join us in celebration of adoption. As always, we love having new families join in the tradition and come together with families who have been attending for years and years. AFTH staff was excited to witness all the heart warming reunions between birthparents and adoptive families.

An adoptive mother made up baskets again for us this year to raffle off. Our marketing team also contacted restaurants in the area that donated gift cards to also raffle to raise funds. We collected over \$300 from raffle sales to benefit the Birthmother Fund this year.

We had a wonderful time and look forward to seeing even more families at next year's picnic.

Conferences & Events

AFTH is proud to be a part of the below recent & upcoming events. For upcoming events, visit the calendar of events at www.afth.org for details.

October 16th

PA Conference for Women in Philadelphia, PA

October 24th

Let's Talk Adoption Conference hosted by the Concerned Person for Adoption (CPFA) in Piscataway, NJ

November 1st

Family Matters Conference hosted by Philadelphia Family Pride in Philadelphia, PA

November 8th

21st Annual Fertility Treatment, Donor Choices and Adoption Conference hosted by RESOLVE New England in Marlborough, MA

November 13th

Health and Wellness Fair hosted by Camden County College in Camden, NJ

November 13th

LGBT Adoption Cafe hosted by National Adoption Center in Philadelphia, PA

November 13th

34th Annual Adoption Conference hosted by Adoptive Parents Committee in Brooklyn, NY



International Adoption News

AFTH prides itself on keeping abreast of news regarding inter-country adoption. The agency continues to provide Home Studies, Education, Post-Adoption/Placement Reports and Services, and other assistance in support of international adoptions, despite no longer having placement programs in foreign countries. AFTH collaborates with many agencies across the United States that do provide inter-country adoption placement services. Contact your local AFTH office to see how we can help you with your adoption process, including referring you to one of these partner agencies. For details on AFTH's intercountry adoption services, contact Roberta Evantash at 610-642-7200 or RobertaE@afth.org.

INTERNATIONAL ADOPTION NEWS

In a joint statement by the American Academy of Adoption Attorneys for the National Council on Adoption they write "Universal Accreditation Act (UAA) Implementation Arrives Without Useful Guidance for Families and Adoption Service Providers." The UAA took effect on July 14, 2014. The aim of the UAA is to safeguard all parties involved in an international adoption, however, as written in this article the Department of State and the USCIS have "failed to provide clear guidance on the UAA up to this point, creating yet another barrier to finding a permanent family for all children." This is particularly true for families who wish to complete independent or relative adoptions. The article goes on to ask that increased clarification and training on the UAA be provided.

CHINA

As of September 8, 2014, the CCCWA has made referrals to families with log in dates (LID's) up to 12/12/06 - almost eight years ago. Apparently matches are coming in at a trickle with maybe two LID's a month receiving referrals. Our previous clients who transferred to Carolina Adoption Services have an LID of 12/20/06. There is only one family who has remained active after all this time and the possibility of perhaps one more.

ETHIOPIA

Pre-Adoption Immigration Review (PAIR): The state department wants to remind prospective adoptive parents that the entire PAIR process must be completed in every case BEFORE the adoption petition is filed at the Federal First Instance Court (FFIC) in Addis Ababa.

ISRAEL, THE WEST BANK, & GAZA

The State Department has written that they understand U.S. citizens are deeply touched by the situation of

children in Israel, the West Bank and Gaza, however, they strongly caution that affected children may not qualify for an inter-country adoption under foreign and U.S. law, including U.S. Immigration law.

VIETNAM

Vietnam's Central Adoption Authority, the Ministry of Justice, authorized two U.S. adoption service providers (ASPS) to facilitate inter-country adoptions of special needs Vietnamese children. They are Dillon International, Inc. and Holt International Children's Services, Inc. The special needs category includes children age five and older and children in biological sibling's groups. The program went into effect on September 16, 2014. The U.S. will not process any adoptions falling outside the parameters of this special adoption program.

INDIA

In an article from the Times of India (TOI) it was written that "Most children adopted from India end up in homes in the U.S., followed by Italy. Data from a reply from a Right to Know filed by the TOI with CARA shows that 662 were adopted by Americans between 2010 and 2013. A total of 377 children were sent to Italy, while 149 found homes in Spain and 88 in UAE. Preference is given to in-country adoptions, however, only 19,136 children were placed with families in-country from 2010 through 2013."

EBOLA OUTBREAK IN LIBERIA, GUINEA & SIERRA LEONE

Please be aware that local adoption authorities may close or limit their adoption processing as government resources are directed to addressing the Ebola outbreak. Continued availability of services at U.S. embassies is dependent on local conditions but they will do their best to continue processing adoption cases as a priority. Check for updated information at adoption.state.gov.

We Asked Our Facebook Followers:

What Were the Benefits You Saw of Working With AFTH as Opposed to a Facilitator, Matching Service, Attorney or Finding an Expecting Mother on Your Own

Tracey: “The sense of security AFTH provides. We never had to worry about being scammed. After the all of the initial paperwork and profile was done, it was out of our hands and into hands of very seasoned social workers. Was the wait stressful, of course, but made very much less so by our very caring social worker who kept us up to date every step of the way. I would be remiss if I didn’t talk about the support system for all involved in the adoption triangle! From lifetime support for the birth mother, to support for us and our daughter, is just fantastic. Never once did we feel like a “number”, but always felt like people. Hands down the greatest experience of our lives so far!”

Alissa: “The amount of information and experience cannot be compared.”

Melanie: “All we had to focus on was our family. We put together our bios, video, and paperwork...all we did once our pieces were complete was wait for the call. I have friends who did it other ways, and they always have some sort of issue that pops up.”

Dinorah: “The support & compassion from the staff.”

Francesca: “There was a sense of security and safety. The interests of the birth mom were always a priority. Nothing ever felt shady or icky. I also have to say finances were part of it. I knew that if there was a disappointment (and I had 3) that I was not going to lose thousands of dollars. My social worker was always there, as was everyone else at AFTH that ever had to answer one of my hundreds of questions.”

Sheryle: “They were knowledgeable and professional. I wouldn’t have done it any other way.”

Kelly: “The support of our social worker was what got us through the whole process!”

Mary: “We had the opportunity to talk to birthmoms who had already made adoption plans through AFTH... we were working with an agency that championed open adoption, and that meant everything.”

Jeff: “I have to say that having everything being watched over and our own social worker was great. ..she never let us get behind on any paperwork or stuff that needed to be done by a certain time...She helped us adjust our profile key and it ended up being one of the reasons we did get picked. All of the people at AFTH are great at what they do, you will be in good hands with them for sure.”



Congratulations to Families Who Have Recently Adopted!

Sons

Raymond & Amy
Richard & Susan
David & Jennifer
Marc & Lauren
Charles & Melissa
(twins, boy & girl)
Christopher & Dane
Richard & Rebecca
Michael & Thelma
Robert & Karen
Jeremy & Marie
Nicole
Douglas & Shannon
Kyle & Kathryn
David & Anne Louise
Leroy & Marie
Jeffrey & Jessica
Katherine

Daughters

Charles & Melissa
(twins, boy & girl)
Bryan & Lisa
Laura
Andrew & Carrie
Justin & Kathryn
Todd & Vikram
Steven & Rachel
Dean & Jill
Frank & Dana
Thomas & Christina
Christopher & Sharon
Scott & Josue
Glenn & Kelly
Shawn & Karen
Jacob & Rebecca





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FREE ONLINE WEBINARS

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

DOMESTIC INFANT ADOPTION

NOVEMBER 11TH AT 7PM

DECEMBER 2ND AT 7PM

Registration Required

Calendar of Events at www.afth.org

Get SOCIAL Find AFTH On...

Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest,
Google+, WordPress & Tumblr

Got E-mail?

The listserve is a way for families to stay in the loop of agency updates related to the domestic program. Waiting families can subscribe by sending a message with the word "SUBSCRIBE" in the subject line to:

DOMESTIC LISTSERVE -

AFTHDomesticUpdates-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

To connect, support, and share with other AFTH families in the domestic program, join the yahoo group created for discussion and support. To join, send an email with "SUBSCRIBE" in the subject line to the below address:

DOMESTIC DISCUSSION GROUP

AFTHopenadoption-subscribe@yahoogroups.com