



ADOPTION
NETWORK
CLEVELAND™

Educate • Support • Advocate
AdoptionNetwork.org

FALL 2016 • VOL. 29 no. 4
ISSN 1097-5624

fall guidance

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF ADOPTION NETWORK CLEVELAND

EST. 1988

Building a Bridge to Family

– THREE-PART SERIES –

PART THREE: BIRTHPARENT SERVICES





FROM THE DIRECTOR
 BETSIE NORRIS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Legislative News and Year-End Giving

Dear Friends,

Once a sibling, always a sibling? No, not in the child welfare world, although that is now beginning to change. Under current law in Ohio and most states if the parental rights of a child are terminated, that action also terminates the legal relationship of that child with all family members including siblings. By extension siblings have lost the right to request visits, stay in contact or be placed together in foster care or adoption.

Recent federal law changes are now filtering down into state law, and New York, Ohio and other states are adjusting their policies and procedures. This summer Ohio Administrative Code was changed to require that parents who have legal custody of a child's siblings be notified within 30 days and told of their options to participate in the care and placement of that child, as are other relatives, if a child is removed from their home. Also this summer, in New York, the Governor signed a law that clarifies the criteria and procedures for youth to seek sibling visitation and/or contact, and affords specific standing to youth to seek an order for visitation or contact with siblings. Siblings are defined to include "half-siblings and those who would be deemed siblings or half-siblings but for the termination of parental rights or death of a parent." It also amends New York law to establish that termination of parental rights (and by extension, adoption) does not terminate sibling relationships. Watch for more action in Ohio on this subject – sibling issues are part of Adoption Network Cleveland's public policy agenda.

Fall is the time for giving. As the year comes to an end, there are some simple, creative ways to give to Adoption Network Cleveland. As always, you can sign up on AmazonSmile and designate Adoption Network Cleveland for us to get a donation of 0.5% of your purchase. This is great for all of your online holiday shopping through Amazon. If you'd like to be particularly philanthropic this season and already have enough holiday sweaters, create a fundraising page on our website, AdoptionNetwork.org, and ask friends and family to make a donation in lieu of a gift this year. Promise to do something fun or special for friends or family if they help you reach the goal. Enjoy – and have a safe and wonderful holiday season.

In the spirit of truth,
 Betsie

A special thanks to Aharon Denton of Denton Portrait Design for the cover and inside photographs of Audrey, Trever, Kelly, Ryan, and Wren.

2016 Corporate Partners:



BENESCH, FRIEDLANDER, COPLAN & ARONOFF LLP
 ENVIROSERVE, INC.
 FOREST CITY REALTY TRUST
 IDEASTREAM
 MEDICAL MUTUAL
 MUTUAL OF OMAHA
 OCKERMAN CONSULTING

Contents

From the Director	2	Book Review / Programs	8
The Latest News	3	Awards / Advocacy	8
Cover Story	4	Search and Reunion	9
Programs / Kudos / Volunteer Spotlight	6	Fund Development	10
Events / In the Community	7	Membership / Donors	11

2016 Board of Directors

Anita Miller, M.S.E., M.B.A.
 CHAIRPERSON

Lisa A. Buescher, M.S.E.
 1st VICE CHAIR

Marissa Brydle, M.A.
 2nd VICE CHAIR

Thomas W. Dent, Jr., CFA, M.B.A.
 SECRETARY

Ted Grabowski
 TREASURER

Cathy Belk, M.B.A.
 Molly Cissell, M.H.A.

Keven Eiber, Esq.

Daniel J. Gisser, M.B.A., Ph.D.

Elaine Hagan

Tony Harris, M.B.A.

Danielle Gadomski Littleton, Esq.

Alicia Love, SPHR

Virginia Medina

Krysia Orlowski, M.F.A.

Rosanne S. Potter, M.B.A.

Anthony Sallah, Esq.

Elaine E. Schulte, M.D., M.P.H.

Ellen M. Stephens, SPHR

David Yates, CPA

Betsie Norris
 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Join us!

Adoption Network Cleveland
Annual Meeting and
The City Club of Cleveland Forum

Keynote Presenter for both:
April Dinwoodie, Chief Executive,
The Donaldson Adoption Institute

Annual Meeting –
“Let’s Adopt Reform: Moving Adoption
from Transaction to Transformation”
Thursday, November 10
5:30 to 8:30 pm
MCPc, 1801 Superior Avenue
For more information: bit.ly/ancAnnualMeet

The City Club of Cleveland Forum –
“Adoption in America Today: The Good,
the Bad and the Path to Reform”
Friday, November 11
Noon to 1:30 pm
850 Euclid Avenue, Second Floor
Adoption Network Cleveland is pleased
to be a Community Partner for this forum.
For tickets and more information: cityclub.org
Use discount code: ADOPTNET16

Adoption and DNA Genealogy
Research Workshops in October

Two Presentations:

Adoptee Access to Records: Ohio’s New Law
Presenter: Betsie Norris, Executive Director
1:00 to 2:45 pm

Solving for Unknown Parentage: DNA Basics
Presenter: Amanda Reno, Genetic Genealogist
3:00 to 4:45 pm

Saturday, October 8
Akron-Summit County Library
60 S. High Street, Akron, OH 44326

Adoptee Journeys

Fall Series Topic: Divided Loyalties
Presented in a Virtual Webcam Format

By Estes Turner, Facilitator, Life Coach, Adoptee

The process of search and reunion almost demands that as adoptees we confront a range of emotions – which could range from gratitude to resentment. We are here because we were given life and reared to adulthood by different families. Where do our loyalties lie?

Likely, our feelings about relinquishment and adoption were formed in childhood. As adults, we are faced with reconciling those feelings with our grown-up perspective and the search for our true selves. What do we hold on to and what can we let go of?

In the fall series, held every Wednesday night in October, we will explore the complex thoughts and feelings of being from two families; how to be loyal and to whom. Join us for this important discussion!

VIRTUAL FORMAT allows you to participate from anywhere.

Pre-registration needed. Register online and a link will be sent to you:
bit.ly/ancadopteejourneys

Attend one or all four – Wednesdays, October 5, 12, 19, 26
7:00 to 9:00 pm

Members: \$20 session / Non-Members: \$30 session

Register for all and get one free!

More Information: traci.onders@adoptionnetwork.org

Adoption Awareness Coalition
Annual Workshop
for Parents and Professionals
Friday, October 14, 2016

Morning Presentations
Educational Advocacy: Understanding Children’s Rights
Impacted by Adoption and Foster Care
Impact of Trauma on Learning and Classroom Behavior

Afternoon Panel Discussion
Collaborating to Meet Children’s Educational Needs –
with parents, advocates, and school professionals

Location – Southpointe Hospital, Warrensville Heights
More information – <http://bit.ly/adoptawarecoalition>

9:00 – 9:30 am	Registration / Light Breakfast	Adoption Awareness Coalition An alliance of agencies and organizations committed to promoting understanding and visibility of adoption in Ohio.
9:30 am – 12:30 pm	Morning Session / Presentation	
12:30 – 1:00 pm	LUNCH	
1:00 – 4:00 pm	Panel Presentation	

SOCIAL WORK AND COUNSELOR CEUs AVAILABLE



COVER STORY

Building a Bridge to Family

PART THREE – BIRTHPARENT SERVICES

Defining Family

By Audrey Bazyk, Birthmother, Adoptee

When you Google the definition of family it will tell you that it is “a group consisting of parents and children living together in a household.” Although this definition applies to some of the aspects of what a family is, I will argue that this isn’t an all-encompassing definition of what family means to all the people in our lives.

The most beautiful thing about the word family is that it has an ever-changing meaning for all of us. It’s the people who raise us, friends, and even unanticipated events that grow families and nurture our lives. One thing about the word family that seems to always remain, even as our definition of it changes, is that we support and love one another in both good times and bad.

And I know everyone’s family is different, but I think some aspect of support and love is what brings people together and forms all the varying definitions of family.

At first glance, my family appears to be very average; like Google’s definition of it. I have a dad, a mom, and a brother. But what you wouldn’t know at that initial look is that I actually have four sets of grandparents, siblings, a bunch of extra cousins, and a birthmom and birthdad. My family is significantly more intricate than average because I am an adoptee and also a birthmom.

Growing up as an adoptee, I have always had an open relationship with my birthmom. We see each other at least once a year and talk on the phone often. And when I unexpectedly found out that I was pregnant, my birthmom and I talked on the phone every week throughout my pregnancy; coaching me and guiding me through the emotional challenges that I was faced with as I planned for the adoption of my daughter.

When I found out I was pregnant, I was in shock.



Wren with her birthparents, Audrey and Trever.

Once that shock simmered, I knew right away that I wanted to have an adoption plan. I knew I wasn’t ready to be a mom and my daughter’s birthfather was not ready to be a dad either.

Although I knew what I wanted right from the beginning, that didn’t mean it was necessarily easy throughout the whole process. I faced many challenges while pregnant; people making judgments

of me and my decision, the judgments I made of myself, and the anticipated fear of the transition from being pregnant to becoming a birthmom. With these challenges in mind, I knew that if I didn’t plan everything I could, it would make this journey much more difficult for me. I needed to put everything into place, so I could do what I needed to do: give the best life I could possibly give to my daughter.

The support that a family offers is one that I know very well and I am very lucky to have it. My parents and birthmom were supports to me throughout my pregnancy. We had ups and downs, as all families do, but we supported each other through the whole process. That support and that love was something I knew I could give to my daughter because that is what my birthmom knew I deserved and gave to me through adoption; which I think was the best way she possibly could have. My very large, intricate family, is now filled with love and support that I could never imagine my life without.

The one thing I didn’t consider in all my planning was how much my definition of family was going to change. It seems like I would have understood this in the first place because I knew I wanted an open adoption, but I never imagined it would be as wonderful as it is now. We see each other regularly, have become great friends, and they are a part of my newly defined family.



Audrey, right, with her birthmom Lisa.

Accepted as Family

By Nancy Rapaszky, Birthmother

In 1960, I gave birth to a son at the age of 15. I had two options – get married to a 17 year old that I wasn't in a relationship with or be sent away to a home for unwed mothers. I chose the latter. I never saw or held my son at birth. I was told it was best. When I left the home for unwed mothers my parents and I were told to move on and forget this chapter of our lives.

Following instructions, my family never talked about this part of my life, and I internalized the experience and personally believed that I was truly a tarnished woman for committing such a crime that no one could talk about. I often prayed that my son was loved, knew God, and had a good life.

After 45 years of wondering, my son contacted me by telephone, and I found out that God had answered my prayers. We met in person within a week. What a cleansing experience/gift my son gave me. I found out that he had a good life and he found out that his birthmother didn't relinquish him because he was faulty.

My son shared that he had spent a lifetime wondering



Nancy with her son, Kevin Rush and daughter, Lisa.

what was wrong with him that his mother gave him up for adoption. I relinquished my son because I was a child who wasn't able to provide the life that he deserved. We have been in reunion for 11 years and we are blessed with much love for each other.

My son has a beautiful wife, three awesome adult children, and five beautiful grandchildren who have totally accepted me as part of their family.

I married in 1968 and had two children from this marriage. My daughter from this marriage has a meaningful relationship with her half-brother and his family. I look forward to the day when the son from my marriage takes the opportunity to get to know his half-brother better.

I have great respect and admiration for my son's adoptive parents and I believe that they hold the same feelings for me. My shame and feelings of unworthiness kept me from searching for my son. I am so very grateful that my son had the courage to seek me out. We bless each other with feelings of wholeness.

Her Family is Our Family

By Kelly and Ryan Fisher, Adoptive Parents

Adoption has definitely changed how we define our family. When we first began our adoption journey, we knew the terms "open" and "closed" adoption, but not much more than that. We learned so much from Adoption Network Cleveland, especially from hearing the feelings and experiences of other adoptive parents, birthparents, and adoptees.

As we really started learning about openness in adoption, it felt a little scary. It seemed like we would be opening up our lives, and our family, to a huge unknown factor, which felt overwhelming. However, the more we learned, and were able to hear about other people's experiences, and thanks largely to the support, and education from Adoption Network Cleveland, we really came to strongly value and prefer an open relationship.

When we first met Audrey and Trever we were incredibly nervous, but we liked them and felt comfortable together right away. We met with them throughout their pregnancy, and after our daughter, Wren, was born, it felt completely natural to



Wren with her mom and dad.

continue getting together. We've grown to know and love not only Audrey and Trever, but also their parents and extended families.

In the early days when we were getting to know one another, we found ourselves in an unusual relationship that was, and will always be, fundamentally rooted in very serious, sensitive, sometimes painful issues. We think (and hope) that the longer we continue in this relationship, the more comfortable we will continue to grow with each other.

Wren is our daughter and we will always be her mom and dad. Likewise, Wren's birth family is our family too. We are incredibly grateful for the relationships we have built with everyone. It feels good to recognize not only aspects of ourselves, but also of Audrey and Trever, in Wren.

As Wren grows up, we hope to share both little moments and big milestones with this big, extended family that we are building together through Wren's adoption. We feel that Wren (and all of us) can only benefit by a life surrounded by so many, many people who love her.



PROGRAMS

Life Coaching Now Available



Estes Turner

In an effort to provide additional resources to those connected to adoption in our community and beyond, we are excited to announce a new partnership to bring Life Coaching to our array of programs and services.

Coaching services are being offered by Estes Turner, certified Life Coach, adoptee, and long-time volunteer leader with Adoption Network Cleveland.

Personal sessions can take place in person, via the phone or an online site. To find out more go to AdoptionNetwork.org or <http://bit.ly/ancLifeCoach> or call Carolyn Spath to set up a free half-hour trial session at (216) 482-2309.

For a blog from Estes about Life Coaching, go to: www.adoptionnetwork.org/blog.

KUDOS

Wendy Blitzer Barkett, Linda Bellini, Brian Campolieti, Jeff Costello, Rose Curtin, Jim Deskins, Kim Donato, Becky Drinnen, Dawn Friedman, Lynn Grubb, Carol Hayward, Kevin Hoffman, Dottie Klemm, Steve Kelly, Denice Leddy, Kate Livingston, Susan Meek, Catie Mehl, and Estes Turner for dedicating another year as our General Support and Discussion Meeting co-facilitators

Cynthia Robinson and Cleveland Clinic's Engagement Committee for donating supplies to our Post Adoption programming.

Julie York Coppens, Molly Caldwell, Rosie Claggett, Kristina Musil, and Erica VanEe for sharing their personal adoption stories with the media.

Anita and Joe Miller, Karen and Kevin Gillooly, and Natalie and James Leek for hosting the July and August *Weaving Cultures Transracial Adoptive Family Group* activities.

Sherri Appleton, Linda Bellini, Dan D'Ettore, Donna Foote, Traci Onders, Diane Pexa, Marge Smith, Nanci Stein, and Kay Williams for volunteering with search this year.

Cleveland Browns for donating pre-season tickets; and to Tickets for Kids for donating Cleveland Indians and Cleveland Browns tickets to our members.

Josh Berger for all his hard work for several months volunteering every week in our Development Department, and for jumping in with both feet!

Noriliz Santiago for all her office, development and communications help this summer.

Jill Rusticelli, Brye Roth, Merav Cronin, Kathy McConaughy, Traci Onders, Marie Evans, Jamie St. Clair, Katisha Smith, Elaine Gingerich, Arnette Colbert for providing bakery for our programs and events.

Lauren Anderson, Joe Vicente, Amandah Blackwell, Brita Alaburda and MattressFirm employees for volunteering at our *Lanes for Change* event. And to Marissa Brydle for her interview on CBS Radio about *Lanes for Change*.

Marissa Brydle, Gina Gayle, and Tony Harris for hosting fundraising events for us.

Donna Wheatley Photography for staff photography.

HandsOn NEO and Robert Gibbons for their continued help with our Adoptive Family and Youth Support Group.

Rick Pratt for his help in the finance department.

Tim Carmany, a local artist from Canton, who taught a painting class for our mentors and mentees.

Linda Bellini and Shirley Schellentrager for proofreading.

Sharon Trabbic for making our staff "Love 'em Ups" every month.

CCDCFS In Recognition ...

Harriet Jackson, Shawn Green, Rosalind Hampton, Kirstin Dibbern, Antoinette Wallace, Lisa Garner, Patrina Hollowell-Martin, Lynetta Hood-Taylor, Tori McCurdy, Jennifer Burnette, Stephanie Phillips, Carley Webber, Tanya Spraggins for referring youth for *Digital Me* filmings.

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT



Josh Berger

By Kara Laughlin,
Volunteer Coordinator

1. How long have you been volunteering with Adoption Network Cleveland? I volunteered several days a week for seven months, from February to August 2016.

2. Why did you choose to give your time to us versus another organization? I am currently getting my Masters in Non-profit Administration at John Carroll and Betsie Norris came in and spoke to one of our classes about strategic planning. I was extremely impressed by everything Betsie and Adoption Network Cleveland have accomplished and when Betsie mentioned they are always looking for help, I thought it would be a good opportunity to give my time to a worthy cause and learn from a nonprofit that is making a difference in the world.

3. What has surprised you the most about working here? It was awesome to see how many people were touched and affected when the adoption records law was signed into law. Whether someone was reunited with their birthparents or adult child or if someone was able to fill that 'what if' in their life, it was great to see these people start to close the book on something that meant so much to them.

4. What do you wish other people knew about Adoption Network Cleveland? I wish more people educated themselves on adoption and all the wonderful services Adoption Network Cleveland provides families and individuals throughout out the entire process. It was inspiring to see how hard the staff works to give advice, support, and help every step of the way.

5. Overall, how has your experience as a volunteer been here? It was a very worthwhile experience and I would recommend anyone looking to give his or her time to look into volunteering at Adoption Network Cleveland.

6. What might someone be surprised to know about you? I have broken my nose more than 10 times!

If you are interested in volunteering in any capacity, contact: kara.laughlin@adoptionnetwork.org - or check out: www.adoptionnetwork.org/volunteer

EVENTS

Lanes for Change

By Dan Carroll, Development Specialist



Right, member Erica VanEe traveled from Grand Rapids, Michigan to be a part of the fun. Below, board member Ted Grabowski with his daughters; Below right, Executive Director Betsie Norris with Development Specialist Dan Carroll who was coordinating his first event for the organization; Inset right, board member Molly Cissel's son; Bottom, volunteers from MattressFirm.

Thank you to everyone who supported our 8th Annual Lanes for Change bowling event at Freeway Lanes of Parma on Saturday, August 20th! We had more than 100 people come out to join us for the morning to bowl and win great prizes while raising money for the programs and services of Adoption Network Cleveland. We also hosted several adoptive families and youth in our mentoring program with their mentors – thanks to the generosity of several of our corporate sponsors who donated their lanes. We could not do the work we do without the generosity of all those in attendance and we appreciate your continued embrace of our mission!

Thank you to our Event and Corporate Sponsors!

Special Events Sub Committee:

Marissa Brydle – Chair
Lisa Buescher – Outreach and Development Co-Chair
Keven Eiber
Tony Harris
Aviva Vincent

Fundraising Teams:

TOP WINNER: Cathy and Jim Belk
Lisa Buescher
Dan Gisser
Rosanne Potter

Event Volunteers

MattressFirm and their employees
Lauren Anderson
Amandah Blackwell
Joe Vicente

Auction and Food Donors:

Artist for a Day
B.A. Sweetie Candy Company
Bent Tree Coffee
Boston Mills/Brandywine
Cleveland Botanical Garden
Cleveland Browns
Doubletree by Hilton Westlake
Einstein Bros. Bagels
Happy Dog
Lake County Captains
Lake Erie Crushers
Painted Penguin
Presti's Bakery
Rinky Dink Fun Center
Segway Tours of Cleveland
Sky Zone Westlake
Snow Sisters Party Entertainment
Trapped! Escape Room



IN THE COMMUNITY

Intellicorp welcomed Betsie Norris, Amy Lomis, and Kathryn Mahon to their offices in Beachwood to celebrate the close of their third quarter fundraising efforts on behalf of Adoption Network Cleveland. Brian Campolieti, General Meeting facilitator, adoptee, and Intellicorp employee, helped coordinate Adoption Network Cleveland's participation in this event.

Betsie Norris and Kathryn Mahon provided information and volunteering opportunities at the *Take Action Fair*, which was part of the Cleveland Leadership Conference. It was an opportunity to give some of Cleveland's leaders the chance to take action right away to volunteer with nonprofits in their community.

Ayanna Abi-Kyles and a Parent Leadership Committee member traveled to Nashville for to the Annual North American Counsel on Adoptable Children (NACAC) Annual Conference.

Julius Jackson and Dan Carroll staffed an info table at the Cuyahoga County Division of Children and Family Service inaugural "Race for Home."

Nurenberg, Paris, Heller, and McCarthy chose Adoption Network Cleveland as its "Charity of the Month." We earned nearly \$1,000 recruiting additional NPHM Facebook likes; we received a short video PSA to promote our work; and watch for us on WKYC's *Live on Lakeside* on November 1.



BOOK REVIEW

Bastards: A Memoir

by Mary Anna King

Book review by Traci Onders, Interim Program Coordinator, Adult Adoptees and Birthparents



In this book, Mary Anna King fearlessly tells the story of growing up in a family in which pieces are chipped away slowly, and of gradually reunifying those pieces over time. Mary builds complex portraits of the people involved in her childhood, not shying away from painful truths as she starts life in poverty in New Jersey, born to parents who were “good at having (kids), just not good at keeping them.” There were seven children in all, and four of her baby sisters are each relinquished for adoption at birth. Mary vividly remembers tagging along with her mother to meet the prospective adoptive parents at coffee shops. Mary is then sent, along with her brother and sister, to Oklahoma to live with her grandfather and step-grandmother and experiences yet another loss as her brother is sent away while she and her sister experience a kinship adoption.

Mary grows up feeling indebted to her adoptive parents, and tries to be exactly what she thinks everyone wants her to be. Mary knows deep inside that her sisters will come back to find her one day, and she decides she must make herself someone worthy of finding.

This memoir is heartbreaking, wise and told with remarkable storytelling skills, which make the book easy to read and hard to put down. Its honesty, bravery and hopeful portrayal of the all-enduring nature of the human spirit make the book reminiscent of *The Glass Castle*.

As Mary begins to be found by her sisters, she realizes that being found is not a “finish line,” but the beginning of a marathon. She aptly describes being in-reunion and the crash that occurs after reunion. As Mary meets her sisters and their adoptive families, Mary is confounded by the factors that she now must face: “I had always told myself that adoption was a kind of triple-win scenario – birth families relieve the pressure of a child they are unable to care for, adoptive families gain a much wanted child, child gains a stable, loving family – but I was beginning to see that there was a flipside. There can be no winners without losers. So in a triple-win, there must be a triple-loss. Once adoption was on the table, everyone has already lost – lineage, origin, the vision of the future lives they thought they would live – and all losses were attached to someone else’s gain in an endless, confusing loop.”

Mary’s impressive descriptions of the complexities of loss, adoption, reunion, family and love make this memoir insightful, thoughtful and beautiful. Her wit and humor make this dark story a surprisingly enjoyable read.

PROGRAMS

Digital Me Filming

By Cassey Fye, Program Coordinator Youth Services

This summer, we completed the filming of 18 *Digital Me*’s of local youth in foster care. *Digital Me*’s are creative and individualized videos used as an adoption recruitment tool for these youth.

Watch for them on Cuyahoga County’s website – <http://cfs.cuyahogacounty.us> (Click on Heart Gallery.)

Thank you to these venues around Northeast Ohio that hosted these filmings:

- Cleveland Play House
- Mitchell’s Ice Cream on W. 25th Street
- Western Reserve Historical Society
- Preston’s H.O.P.E. Playground Park

AWARDS

Congressional Angels in Adoption Awards

Congratulations to **Cathy and Jim Belk**, nominated by Rep. Marcia L. Fudge, who were both distinguished with a 2016 Congressional Angels in Adoption Award in Washington, DC in September.

The honorees were recognized for their commitment to child welfare and adoption causes – Cathy through work with Adoption Network Cleveland on our board and committees, and Jim through mentoring.

ADVOCACY

Adoptee Survey: Deadline Nov. 1

Access Connecticut Now, Inc., an adoptee rights organization in Connecticut, is conducting a nationwide survey for adoptees, which will assist them in their legislative strategy. If interested, go to: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/F6PSCM2>.

Executive Director to be a Keynote Presenter in Texas

Betsie Norris will be a keynote presenter at Adoption Knowledge Affiliates (AKA) 2016 conference which will be held on Friday, November 4 and Saturday, November 5, 2016 in Austin, Texas. Betsie’s keynote “From Secrecy to the Statehouse: Ohio’s long road to restoring adoptees access to their Original Birth Certificates” will be presented on Saturday morning at AKA’s *Changing Face of Adoption* conference.

A Big Wonderful Family All the Way Around

By Diane Miller, Adoptee, Member

At the age of 18 months I was placed in a home with two wonderful parents and a brother. I have always known I was adopted and when anyone asked, I was my Daddy's adopted angel. My adopted extended family includes several aunts, cousins, nieces, and nephews. I also have three beautiful daughters and grandchildren, all boys!

When I turned 40 years old, I started having health issues. My mother suggested I search for my birthmother/family for medical purposes. I called Ohio Vital Statistics in Columbus and they told me I had to get permission from a judge to obtain my information. I tried three surrounding counties with no luck. I called Vital Statistics back and they informed me that the law would be changing in a year and I would be able to obtain my Original Birth Certificate (OBC). A year later I called Vital Statistics again and they sent me the paperwork to request my OBC. During this time I had to move to Kentucky for three months and when I returned to Ohio, I received my OBC.

My OBC listed my birthmother's birthplace as a very small town in Kentucky. I called a friend in Kentucky and she knew right where it was and I learned it was only 10 miles from where I had lived for those three months.

My husband and I love Bluegrass music. In June of this year we planned on going to a Bluegrass festival in Kentucky. While we were there, my friend showed us around the town where my birthmother grew up,



Diane Miller, center, with her birth sisters.

"My birth-sisters told me they looked for me in the wrong places. They thought I was stillborn and they were looking for a grave. Even though my birth aunt and birth grandfather told them I was alive."

including the high school she would have attended.

Through an odd set of circumstances, we were able to find out more about my birthmother. Before long, we met some relatives and then later, we were actually invited to my birthmother's home to meet her. I couldn't believe it.

My birthsisters told me they looked for me, but in the wrong places. They thought I was stillborn and they were looking for a grave. Even though my birth aunt and birth grandfather always told them I was alive.

When I reached out to Vital Statistics to obtain my OBC they told me about Adoption Network Cleveland. Shortly before my trip to Kentucky I reached out to Amy Lomis at Adoption Network Cleveland and became a search member. Now that I completed my search for my birthmother and birth family, I am now working with Amy to find my birthfather. According to my birthmother, he may not be alive, but we are not certain.

I have since moved back to Kentucky. I live down the road from one sister and not too far from my birthmother and another sister. I now have more nieces and nephews.

My mother in Ohio has come down to meet my one sister and my niece. They have welcomed her with open arms. I am thankful my birthmother gave birth to me and made an adoption plan that placed me with a loving and caring mother and father. I would like to thank Amy Lomis for all she has done for me and is still doing. I have a great big wonderful family all the way around!

IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN GETTING STARTED IN A SEARCH

The decision for adult adoptees or birth family members to search is a very personal choice. Adoption Network Cleveland validates those who are exploring that option and provides support throughout the process for those who decide to move forward. We have successfully assisted in thousands of searches since 1988.

TO GET STARTED:

CALL Traci Onders at (216) 482-2323 to discuss the process, including becoming a member and steps along the way.

JOIN us as a member at the Search Level.

ATTEND (strongly encouraged) at least two General Support and Discussion Meetings. These General Meetings are open to anyone touched by adoption, or related professionals, and are an opportunity to learn from others'

experiences and to prepare emotionally for this journey. bit.ly/ANCgenmeet – Locations: NE Ohio, Columbus, NW Ohio, Dayton, or Cincinnati, and online via the Virtual Webcam meeting.

APPLY for your original birth certificate, if you are an Ohio-born adult adoptee, by going to this link: bit.ly/odhadultadoptee. Birthparents can complete a current medical form and contact preference form by going to bit.ly/ODHbparent.

RECOGNIZING MEMBERS WHO HAVE RECENTLY COMPLETED SEARCHES:

Lisa, Barbara, Susan, Sarah, Rebecca, Michael, Kathy, Patrick, Tanya



FUND DEVELOPMENT

Workplace Giving

If your organization participates in a Community Shares workplace giving campaign, please consider designating Adoption Network Cleveland. Donations to United Way NON-PARTNER Agencies may be made by simply writing in the charity name on their Workplace Giving Campaign pledge form. (For write-ins there is a minimum \$100 total gift or minimum of \$50 minimum gift per agency. Up to 50% of the total gift may be directed to non-partner agencies.)

If you are a federal worker, you can donate through the Combined Federal Campaign. We are #33010.

If you are a state worker, you can donate through the Combined Charitable Campaigns, State of Ohio. We are #4503.

STAFF UPDATE

We warmly welcome several new staff members this quarter:



NICOLE CHERASO is our new Director of Finance and Operations. In her role, she supports the Executive Director in the overall administration and operation of the organization's activities and directs the financial affairs of the organization.



TRACI ONDERS is our interim, part-time Program Coordinator, Adult Adoptees and Birthparents. In her role she is working with those who were separated by adoption and who are looking to search and reconnect.



KAREN SMITH is our new Finance and HR Assistant. Karen handles many of the day-to-day financial, accounting, and human resources matters for Adoption Network Cleveland.



CAROLYN SPATH is our new Executive Assistant. Carolyn serves as direct support for the Executive Director as well as the Adoption Network Cleveland Board of Directors. She also compiles and tracks data on programming and helps to plan and facilitate internal events for the organization.

We say a fond farewell to **RICHARD PRATT, DARLENE COLLINS, and AMY LOMIS.**

Add Us to Your Holiday Shopping List!

By Dan Carroll, Development Specialist

The year is coming to a close and the holidays are fast approaching. On your holiday shopping list this year, please add a line or two to provide support services for those with a connection to adoption and foster care by making an end-of-year donation to Adoption Network Cleveland. With your help, we can try to make it an especially joyous season for those we serve.

Some items you could add to your shopping list:

\$25 can help create a lasting connection for a youth in foster care with a mentor who can inspire and guide them OR facilitate the adoption journey of a prospective family with an Adoption Navigator

\$100 can help reconnect an adult adoptee with their birthfamily or help a youth realize they are not alone through our Get Real Support Group

\$150 can help a child tell their story to work towards being adopted through the creation of a *Digital Me* recruitment video

This is more than a toy that may break or a game that will become outdated; this is truly a gift that will last a lifetime. Make a difference today – add Adoption Network Cleveland to your holiday shopping list! For questions or information, please contact Dan Carroll, Development Specialist, at (216) 482-2311 or daniel.carroll@adoptionnetwork.org.

Thank You!

Remember the Big Kids! Annual Gift Card Drive for Teens Impacted by Foster Care

We asked teens impacted by foster care WHAT GIFT THEY WOULD MOST WANT for special occasions and they were united in the idea that they wanted to be able to have a chance to pick out something for themselves or have an opportunity to pick out a gift for someone else. WE LISTENED. Through Adoption Network Cleveland's Annual Gift Card Drive, local teens impacted by foster care will get what they are asking for – to be able to shop for themselves. **EACH \$25 GIFT CARD DONATED OR PURCHASED THROUGH DONATIONS FOR THIS DRIVE WILL BE GIVEN TO A LOCAL YOUTH WHO IS CURRENTLY IN OR HAS BEEN IN FOSTER CARE.** For more info, contact: daniel.carroll@adoptionnetwork.org.

Community and civic group collections welcome!

DEADLINE: DECEMBER 4, 2016 FOR THE HOLIDAY SEASON

Thank You!

Planned Giving

Making a planned gift via a bequest, charitable gift annuity, trust or other vehicle ensures a stable future for Adoption Network Cleveland's programs and services. Planned gifts may be directed to support our endowment, programs or overall operations. By including Adoption Network Cleveland in your estate plans, you will become a member of our Legacy Circle. If you have already included Adoption Network Cleveland in your estate plans, please let us know so that we can add your name to the Legacy Circle. For more information, please contact Kathryn Mahon, Director of Development and External Relations, at (216) 482-2319 or kathryn.mahon@adoptionnetwork.org.



Legacy Circle members to date: Linda Bellini and Terry Evans, Kim Donato, Margaret Kacerek, Betsie Norris, Murray and Susan Van Epp

FUND DEVELOPMENT

Thank You to Our Donors

ALL DONATIONS ARE TAX DEDUCTIBLE AS PROVIDED BY LAW

Kathryn Mahon (216) 482-2319 Kathryn.Mahon@AdoptionNetwork.org.

FAMILY FUNDS

A Family Fund is a fund that is established in honor or in memory of any family or individual, to which friends and family can donate, thereby creating an ongoing and stable source of revenue for Adoption Network Cleveland. A Family Fund can be created by making a minimum gift or pledge of \$5,000 over three years.

THE FOLLOWING IS A LIST OF OUR CURRENT FAMILY FUNDS AND RECENT DONORS TO THEM (RECENT DONORS IN ITALIC).

BRAD NORRIS MEMORIAL FUND

created by Founder and Executive Director Betsie Norris
BETSIE NORRIS
REBECCA HELLER

BUESCHER FAMILY FUND

created by Board Member Lisa A. Buescher
and Brendan Buescher

KATTERHEINRICH-CRIST FAMILY FUND

created by Leanne Katterheinrich-Crist

LASHUTKA FAMILY FUND

created by Ken and Luanne Lashutka

DON E. AND KATHLEEN M. SOKOLIK FAMILY FUND

created by Don and Kathleen Sokolik

VAN EPP FAMILY FUND

created by Murray and Susan Van Epp

Corporate/Organizations and Foundations

Case Western Reserve University, Citizens Bank, Cleveland Automobile Club Orphans Outing Fund, The George Gund Foundation, Intellicorp, Junior League of Cleveland, MCPc Family Charities, Morgan Stanley, PNC Foundation, Progressive Insurance Foundation, The Helen F. and Louis Stolier Foundation, William J. and Dorothy K. O'Neill Foundation

Individual Donations

Mary A., John B., Alison B.-W., Anthony B., Marissa and Edd B., Sharon C.-S. Cheryl D., Bonnie D., Craig D. and Sandy S., Howard D., Jamie E., Danielle and Jared G.-L. Marilyn G., Ted and Colleen G., George G. and Michael F., Elaine H., Tony H., Lisa K. Sam K., Catherine and Steve L., Yimeng L., Linda and James L., Kathryn M. Tonya M., Sarah and Dan M., Anita and Joseph M., Moyo M., Dominic M. Cindy N., Lori N., Gary N., Betsie N., Todd and Minda N., Judy S. Linda S., Elaine S. and Kim L., Lauryann S.-I., Robert S., Felicia S. Craig S., Connie S., Mark and Annette S., Sue W., David and Catherine Y. Justin and Beth Z.; Christie and Dan Z.

In Kind

Denton Portrait Design; Jeff F.; Daniel G.; JMTC Theatre; Kathryn M.

In Honor / Memory

In honor of the marriage of George Graham and Michael Fleenor:
From June 18, 2016 to August 31, 2016:

Salla Groth Gill
Corynne Romine
Norman Riemer

Earlier Graham-Fleenor wedding donations in the Summer issue.

In memory of Nancy Hawkins, mother of Patti Solomon:
From August 25 to September 3, 2016:

Ms. Marina Anania (from Kelly, Linda, Ronelle, Kim, Katie, Susan, and Marina)
Brian Ferrier
Stacey C. Talley

The above reflects donations from June 1, 2016 to August 31, 2016

MEMBERSHIP

A Warm Welcome to Our New and Renewing Members

Michael N., Krysia O. and Brian H., Colleen O., Betty P., Kathy P., Robert P., Leslie Q., Rainbow Babies and Children's Hospital, Barbara R., Jennifer R., Susan S., Cassandra and Terrence S., Karen S., Nancy and Joseph S., Susan S., Joe S., Melissa & Thomas S., Thomas T., Margaret W., Linda W., Rona W., Deborah W., Brenda W.

Announcements

- Check out our "virtual webcam" General Support and Discussion Meetings on the fourth Thursday of every month. Pre-registration is required. Go to: <http://bit.ly/virtualmtg> – we will then send you a link. If you live out of state and you'd like an in-person adoption search or support group in your area, go to www.americanadoptioncongress.org - click on State Reps to find resources.
- Please check your mailing label on this newsletter. If any corrections are needed, let us know. If you have a change in your mailing address or email address, contact Kara Laughlin at (216) 482-2312 or Kara.Laughlin@AdoptionNetwork.org.

Join Our Community

Our members help ensure that there is a place where people can be empowered in the adoption process, where families can reconnect, and where youth in foster care can find a place to call home. Together we can change lives and create futures for all those touched by adoption and foster care throughout their journey. We ask you to become a member of Adoption Network Cleveland in order to utilize our programs and services. No one will be turned away for inability to pay.

BENEFITS of membership include:

- CONNECTION to a community of caring people like you who understand and support you in your adoption journey;
- SUBSCRIPTION to our quarterly newsletter, *Guidance* and monthly e-newsletter *Pipeline*;
- DISCOUNTS and advanced notice on programs and events;
- A VOICE in Ohio public policy issues affecting adoption and foster care;
- BORROWING PRIVILEGES to our Resource Library of books and movies;
- SEARCH AND REUNION support assistance at search membership level; UNLIMITED ATTENDANCE at support and discussion meetings including General Meetings and Post Adoption Groups.

To join, contact Kathryn.Mahon@AdoptionNetwork.org, call (216) 325-1000 or visit our website.



ADOPTION NETWORK CLEVELAND: *Changing Lives... Creating Futures*

Join Us!

Adoption Network Cleveland Annual Meeting

Thursday evening, November 10, 2016

Featuring a Keynote Presentation

**“Let’s Adopt Reform: Moving Adoption
from Transaction to Transformation”**

by April Dinwoodie,
Chief Executive,
Donaldson
Adoption Institute



At the Office of our lead Corporate Partner:



1801 Superior Avenue, Cleveland



Also –

Highlights from the year
and presentation of awards:

*Triad Advocate of the Year Awards and
Founder’s Award* for volunteer service

Adoption Network Cleveland Annual Holiday Party

Saturday, December 10, 2016

Noon to 3:00 pm

Free to members of all ages!

Includes: roller skating,
basketball and party room
and light refreshments

MultiPlex
Event and Sports Center

18909 South Miles, Warrensville Heights

www.multiplexohio.com

RSVP: Robert.Gibbon@AdoptionNetwork.org
(216) 482-2312

ADOPTION NETWORK CLEVELAND

recognizes adoption as a complex, lifelong and intergenerational journey for all those whose lives are touched by it. Founded in 1988, Adoption Network Cleveland has gained a national reputation but still has a grass-roots approach. **Our mission** is to connect and empower individuals, organizations and communities impacted by adoption and foster care, and provide a source of healing for those in need.



www.AdoptionNetwork.org
(216) 325-1000

© Copyright 2016. Please contact Betsie Norris,
Executive Director for reprint requests.