



ADOPTION
NETWORK
CLEVELAND™

Educate • Support • Advocate
AdoptionNetwork.org

SUMMER 2017 • VOL. 30 no. 3
ISSN 1097-5624

summer guidance

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF ADOPTION NETWORK CLEVELAND

EST. 1988

Cover Feature:

Transracial Parenting

Stories From Our Families





FROM THE DIRECTOR
 BETSIE NORRIS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Thank You for Your Continued Embrace of Our Mission

Dear Friends,

We are pleased to announce that our *Fill the Gap Campaign* was a success. We are relieved and happy that we are back on sound financial footing and that so many individuals, foundations, and other funders stepped forward to help us through our six-month period of need.

In addition to heartwarming support from the community, starting at the end of March we also received funding from the Ohio Attorney General's office to provide a base of support for several of our programs previously funded by the Cuyahoga County Division of Children and Family Services.

In other news, after their bidding process the Cuyahoga County Division of Children and Family Services has chosen to move forward with a different provider to administer mentoring for youth in foster care starting July 1. As the provider for the *Permanency Champions Mentoring Program* for the last 12 years we have been proud of establishing and overseeing this important program which has helped many youth heal through strong solid relationships.

Recently, up to one third of the teens in foster care referred for mentoring have been from failed adoptions – meaning that they had been adopted, their adoptions had not worked out, and they found themselves back in foster care without a family. We have taken this to heart and are redoubling our efforts in our programs for adopted youth and families so that they will have the supports and relationships they need to be successful. Going forward, this will include mentoring for adoptees. We look forward to continuing to serve youth in, and adopted from, foster care as we all work toward the common goal of ensuring these vulnerable youth have every opportunity to make the connections and have the opportunities to become successful.

Our post adoption services, youth services, and adoption navigation remain strong, as does our work with adult adoptees, birth families, and professionals.

We are heartened with the outstanding results to our *Fill the Gap Campaign* and have emerged from this funding transition with a solid financial base, a focused and energized staff, and an exciting path forward. Thank you to all of our supporters for being a strong part of that.

In the spirit of truth,
 Betsie

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THE LATEST NEWS

Join us!

ADOPTION NETWORK CLEVELAND'S
INAUGURAL

Mini Golf Outing

at Sweeties Golfland



You won't want to miss out!

Our Inaugural Mini-Golf Outing at Sweeties Golfland will make you feel like a kid in a candy store. Come and enjoy a morning with family and friends and support a cause you care about. This event is sure to be a hit with adults and kids alike – spend your morning golfing, winning raffle prizes, and exploring b.a. Sweetie Candy Company's 40,000 square foot warehouse! You can register your team now.

How to get involved:

- 1. Register your team** – Teams can be made up of 4-6 mini-golfers (ages 4 to adult) of any skill level. Join as “Just for Fun” or go for the top spot in the “Competitive – Family” or “Competitive – Adult” divisions to win a prize!
- 2. Get your friends and family to sponsor you** – Create a personal fundraising page (Dan in our office can show you how – it's easy) and share with your network to multiply your impact! Invite your friends and family to join you at the event.
- 3. Have fun with us** – even if you aren't golfing, you can still have as much fun as a kid in a candy store!

Sponsorship opportunities are available:

– \$125, \$250, or \$500! Sponsors can be individuals, families, or businesses.


Saturday, July 29, 2017
9:30 am to 1:00 pm

Rain Date:
Sunday, July 30, 1:00 to 5:00 pm

Thank you! Event Sponsors:



PRE-REGISTRATION REQUIRED.
FOR MORE INFO, GO TO:
Bit.ly/ANCminigolf

Cost: \$30 for Adults (\$20 for those not golfing)
\$20 for Youth (\$10 for those not golfing)
Children 3 & Under are FREE
\$25 to help sponsor families and youth in need

Includes one round (18 holes) of mini-golf for golfers as well as breakfast, snacks, and ice cream.

Location: Sweeties Golfland
at b.a. Sweetie Candy Company
6770 Brookpark Road, Cleveland, OH 44129

Annual Cookout

Join us for our Annual Summer Cookout as we celebrate the end of summer and the beginning of the school year – it'll be a fun afternoon of games, face painting, door prizes, raffles, and more! Hot dogs, hamburgers, and drinks will be provided; please bring a side dish or dessert to share.

Date: Sunday, August 27, 2017

Time: 2:00 to 5:00 pm

Place: Cleveland Metroparks Keystone Shelter – in the West Creek Reservation, 2277 W. Ridgewood Drive, Parma (just west of Broadview Rd.)

Cost: FREE / Potluck – bring your favorite side dish

RSVP: to Ayanna at (216) 482-2331 or email ayanna.abi-kyles@adoptionnetwork.org.

Nominations Open! – Now to September 1st

Triad Advocate of the Year

This award recognizes individuals who have made a significant contribution to the adoption field as demonstrated by a specific accomplishment, project, program, or milestone. For a nomination form and more information, visit bit.ly/ancTAYA17 – For a list of past winners, go to: http://bit.ly/past_ancTAYA

Winners over the years include – April Dinwoodie, adoptee, Donaldson Adoption Institute; Rita Price, *The Columbus Dispatch*; Jean Strauss, filmmaker; Nickie Antonio, State Representative; Dominique Moceanu, Olympian and author; Danita Harris, NewsChannel 5; Jim Ewinger, *The Plain Dealer*.



COVER STORY

Transracial Parenting: Stories from Our Families

Three Families Share Their Experiences*Introduction by Kevin D. Hofmann, Author and Transracial Adoptee • Photography by Julia Taylor*

Introduction

Fifty years ago this August my eventful life began. I was the product of an affair between my white mother and black father and at the insistence of my white mother's white husband I was immediately placed for adoption. Ninety days later I was welcomed into the home of a white family who had three biological white children before I arrived. This began my introduction into a world and life that would be defined often-times by the color of my skin. Our family was a multi-cultural family long before there was such a term. My parents had no role models; no other families like ours to help them navigate this interesting life. They assumed they could parent a child of color in the same manner they parented their white biological children. Soon after I arrived home they realized their good intentions didn't prepare them for what this new life would bring.

Our family struggled. We struggled with where to live and where to go to school. We struggled with finding a balance where all the children would feel safe and accepted. We struggled with how we were seen as a family that didn't match, and we struggled with the fact that we would have different life experiences simply because of the color of our skin. Through our experience as a transracial family we learned that a transracial life is a purposeful life. Decisions had to be made proactively to avoid certain struggles. Effort had to be given to find ways to put me in touch with children, families, and role models that looked like me. Important things wouldn't magically fall in place. My parents had to line them up, shove them forward, push them back, and pull them over.

I wonder what life is like today for transracial families. Would they be more prepared? Do they see color? Do they celebrate color? Do they take advantage of the many resources available to raise confident children of color? Do they struggle with where to live or where to go to school? Do they come to the same conclusions my parents did?

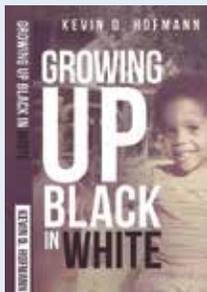


Presented here, three transracial families share what life is like for them to live as a multi-cultural family in today's color-conscious world. They're fortunate to have a

support system of other families like theirs, through Adoption Network Cleveland's Weaving Cultures Transracial Adoptive Family Group.

Kevin D. Hofmann, of Toledo, is the author of *Growing Up Black in White*. In its second edition, it includes insights into raising children of color and honoring birthparents.

<http://www.kevinhofmann.com>



The Importance of Racial Mirrors

By Michael Cosgrove

My wife, Danielle, and I are white and we adopted children of color, Jaden (11) and Ellington (7) both as infants. For them, we chose to move to the diverse North Collinwood neighborhood in Cleveland. Our boys attend Cleveland Public Schools and are active in so many sports – soccer, baseball, hockey, and rugby. Jaden is also an accomplished drummer, and Eli is imaginative and loves animals.



Adopting transracially has pushed us to grow in ways we never anticipated. We both knew that race matters in America, and that we would have to be racially aware as parents of black children. But while we went in with somewhat open eyes, we weren't truly aware of what we didn't know. As white adoptive parents of black children, we've realized it really does take a village to raise our children. Our children will experience things we can, at best, only know at an intellectual level – we can read books, listen to podcasts, watch movies, and listen to friends to learn about what it means to be black in America, but we can't experience being black in America. Our boys need a network of connections, both peers and adults, who can give them what we cannot.

One important connection is the one each boy has with their birthmother, which gives our boys a sense of where they came from. We do feel that we can do a better job strengthening their connection with their birthmothers, but at least Jaden and Ellington know who their birthmothers are and can see them on occasion in their open adoptions.

From the start, we worked to provide our children with racial mirrors they could connect with. We were able to find a daycare with a healthy racial mix and, importantly, teachers who were black. Today they attend a diverse school, although we struggle with having only a few teachers who are people of color. But our oldest son recently was selected for a summer program with a strong academic emphasis open only to black boys and led by black teachers. It is important that they are exposed to black adults who are not only athletes, but also professionals such as educators, doctors, and lawyers. It is easy to fall into patterns of what we know, but we keep trying to expand their exposure.

It isn't just about finding a diverse educational experience, though. Being parents of black children has forced us to get out of our comfort zone. We used to live in a much

whiter neighborhood of Cleveland before moving to North Collinwood. But even with living in a more diverse area, we still have to act with intentionality to broaden our social circle.

We have also found that we are now hyper-aware of when we are in predominantly or exclusively white spaces, even to the point of affecting how we plan vacations. Last year we vacationed in Atlanta – a destination we probably wouldn't have considered had we not been encouraged in a transracial adoption Facebook group to think about race when planning vacations. While at our hotel, our boys were able to look down into the atrium to see so many people who looked like them. It mattered to them. They talked about it. We could see it in their beaming faces. (If it sounds like I'm overstating this, try spending time in spaces where you're the only white person. You will feel conspicuous. Your children probably feel conspicuous if they're in mostly white spaces, though they may not tell you because they don't want to worry you.)

Adoption Network Cleveland's *Weaving Cultures Transracial Adoptive Family Group* was an important part of our learning and continues to connect us and our kids to similar families. All transracial white adoptive parents should try to find groups where their children can connect with other kids like them. Black children growing up with white parents have experiences unlike white children with white parents or black children with black parents. Our kids need access to other transracial adoptees – especially adoptees older than them who have grappled with some of the questions they might have as they grow up.

Weaving Cultures alone isn't enough, though, because relationships with adults who are persons of color are also important. We continue to work hard to expand our social circle, enriching not only the lives of our children, but also our lives as well.

He Adopted Us

By Natalie and James

We are a racially blended family formed from the blessing of adoption. My husband is Caucasian, I am Indian American, and our adoptive son is Caucasian. At three, when Krishna first began to note his own physical differences from mine as his mother, i.e. hair and skin color, we started our first conversations about adoption. His first words on the topic were, "I adopted you." As his adoptive parents, considering the synchronicity of Krishna's presence in our life, we had to agree that indeed, in so many deeply subtle ways, it was Krishna who adopted us rather than the reverse. Since then our family introductions to therapists and strangers have echoed these words.

The fact that I was born and raised in India was a concern even at the first meeting I had with our local children's service staff when we applied to be certified as a foster-to-adopt family.



Photo provided by Natalie and James

I was worried that the laws would not permit me to parent a child in this country despite being a naturalized citizen. However, I was quite surprised and reassured to hear the director say that she did not think it would be a problem. Indeed, as we were approached by the agency for various placements, the critical need for forever families became clear to me. James and I felt encouraged that having a child in our lives would be a real possibility.

We went through a year-long training and vetting process with the agency. While we found many of the classes provided by the children's service agency immensely useful and informative, there was nothing that quite prepared us for the challenges of transracial adoption, especially of a brown family adopting a white child. The nuances of our not-so-common situation came to light only after we had received and accepted a placement of an infant with special needs into our home. As we connected with more adoptive families, I came to realize that there are many more white families that have adopted children of color or of Asian descent than families of color or of Asian descent that have adopted white children. Books and commentaries on social media or online also more often relate to experiences of the former.

Initially, when I would be out on my own with my infant son, at shopping malls or other public venues, I would notice that people treated me more like his caretaker rather than his mother. Often my response to people who question our physical differences, upon my husband's suggestion, is this quip, "he gets his blue eyes from his grandma." This simple response would often take them by surprise, sometimes bring a smile and deter any further questioning. If my husband were accompanying us, people would more readily accept that we were a mixed family. His 6'7" tall frame would certainly help as well. Despite the fact that we were not the first in my husband's side to have created a family through adoption, many close family members struggled to accept the situation. Ironically, the brown side of the family has found it easier to accept our unique family make up.

Adoption Network Cleveland's Transracial Adoptive Family Group

is a part of our Weaving Cultures programming. This group offers opportunities for families to connect, discuss experiences, ask questions and share resources for parenting across racial lines. The group provides opportunities to connect through:

- Monthly family friendly gatherings
- Soft Shoulders – parent-to-parent peer support
- Online community group
- Notifications on area events
- Resource sharing

For more information about the group, arrange a Soft Shoulders contact, or to find out the next monthly meeting date and place, contact:

Krysia Orlowski, Parent Coordinator
(216) 225-0320
krysia_orlowski@hotmail.com

or
Ayanna Abi-Kyles, Program Coordinator, Post Adoption
(216) 482-2331
ayanna.abi-kyles@adoptionnetwork.org

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/WeavingCulturesTransracialAdoptiveFamily/>



COVER STORY

More recently, our toddler son has found himself in a situation having to explain the differences in our family to his friends at school. He seems to have to answer the question more so than I do, as to why his mother does not look like him, whether it is the blue eyes versus the brown eyes or the blond hair versus the brunette.

My interest in sharing our family story through this article is to encourage and offer support to other couples like us that may be considering adoption. While my husband and I still feel like we are new to this experience ourselves, we hope that just by reading our story, we may be able to inspire others to walk this journey as well. Our child also experienced major physical trauma at birth that led to a developmental disability. As we walk this path, I have come to realize that living in a metropolitan area like Cleveland has been a big blessing. If we were asked to offer a single piece of advice to future transracial parents like us, it would be to live close to or in a metropolis where you will find more acceptance of racial differences.

We got involved with Adoption Network Cleveland's *Weaving Cultures Transracial Adoptive Family Group* after being members for nearly two years. The biggest benefit in our minds has been the opportunity to expose our son to other families that look like us, where he does not need to explain our racial differences. The world has become a very small place today. As a parent of color, I am glad that our son will grow up cultivating an empathy not only for racial and physical differences, but differences of all kinds.

Race Does Matter

by Lori McCarthy

In May of 2007, my husband and I sat our three sons down. They were nine, 13 and 15 years old. They had all been adopted as infants. They were all Caucasian. My husband and I are Caucasian. We asked the boys, "What have you always been asking for?" One boy said, "A puppy." One boy said, "A PlayStation." One boy said, "A sister." We said, "Well, it looks like you will be getting a sister." They were all so excited, and we went on to tell them, "Well, she may not look like us. She will be African American." They were still very excited and one of the boys said, "We don't care if she's purple."



Two months later, our beautiful daughter was born. She was not purple. She was greatly loved by her big brothers. She was embraced by our family, neighbors, and church community. We congratulated ourselves because, after all, "race doesn't matter."

The first micro-aggression we experienced was a statement by a little friend of our nine year old. He looked at our beautiful baby girl and told us, "She doesn't even look black." Gee ... guess that was the ultimate compliment in his eyes. She made it to 16 months of age before we heard the "n" word, uttered by an elderly resident of the nursing home where my dad lived. I pretended not to notice.

Ignorance is bliss. My husband and I plugged along parenting our little princess with the thought that race will matter at some time, but not sure quite when. Her (biological) newborn sister joined our family in 2012. At least there was someone else in the family who she resembled. In 2013, daughter number one and I attended a camp for families that have adopted transracially. WOW, I finally started to get it. The keynote speaker that summer was incredible. I realized that we need to be more proactive as a family; that YES, race DOES matter.

Our two girls are very similar in some ways; very different in other ways (like any other sisters). After spending four years learning how to do the hair of daughter number one, along came daughter number two with completely different (and more challenging) hair. Daughter number one is very tall and very strong. Daughter number two is NOT very tall and is very strong willed. Are those differences because of adoption? Because of race? Because of their birth order? Because we are over 50 years old and parenting these young girls? Who knows?

A few years ago, we were invited to attend the family reunion of the birthfather of daughter number one. It was a chance for my husband and me to experience being the minority. It was a chance for our daughter to be surrounded by people she has a blood connection to. She was in heaven. As an adoptee myself, I could only imagine how special that feeling could have been. I did not find my birth families until adulthood.

In Adoption Network Cleveland's *Weaving Cultures Transracial Adoptive Family Group*, it has been energizing to spend time with other families that are dealing with these issues. It is so helpful to be able to exchange ideas with other parents. We love having a place for our girls to see other children of color who have parents who look different from them. And, it's a place to just have fun. We enjoy the bowling, and the skating and the hiking and the picnics. Because, after all, we are just families.

IN THE COMMUNITY

Betsie Norris was invited to be included in a panel discussion "What is the Future of Foster Care in Greater Cleveland?" with The Plain Dealer's Phillip Morris as the moderator. Other panelists were Professor David Crampton, Ph.D., CWRU; Edward L. Gilbert, author,

attorney, and foster care advocate; and Kate Lodge, A Place 4 Me, YWCA Greater Cleveland.

Sunday Mornings at St. Malachi's topic for Mother's Day: "The Journey of Adoption," facilitated by Linda Bellini

with a panel including Elaine Hagan, birthmother; Joan Thompson, adoptee; and Susan Stephen, adoptive mom.

Adoption Network Cleveland was at PolyOne to share information on our services and volunteering.

PROGRAM

Testimonies: Our First Birthmother's Day Ceremony

By Dawn Colson, Taylor and Paul Adamczak – reunited family

Dawn: For me, the ceremony spoke the words of my heart as a birthmom, and what my voice could not. Our stories are as unique as the lives we live. We came together with one commonality. I left knowing there are other birthmothers out there. Moms who felt the same pain, cried the same tears, and who know what that alone feels like.

Taylor: As an adoptee, I thought I had some sort of understanding of the pain my birthmother felt, but the Birthmother's Day Ceremony showed me I was so wrong. The poem "I Felt You First" hit the hardest due to its descriptive story. I will definitely attend again because I never want to minimize or lessen the sacrifice Dawn made.

Paul: I am an appreciative adoptive father of Taylor, a 19 year-old who was reunited last summer after 18 years apart. It was an amazing honor to be at the Birthmother's Day Ceremony and hear the heartfelt stories from the women and to experience it with Taylor and Dawn.

For more, go to our blog – adoptionnetwork.org/blog and for photos – adoptionnetwork.org/gallery

STAFF

Honored to Take The Call

Here is a little on the personal history of Traci Onders, our Program Coordinator, Adult Adoptees and Birthparents

In her role, Traci Onders helps adults separated by adoption and provides support and guidance with the search process and other life issues connected to adoption. Traci has a special passion for this mission, as she too went through the reunification process, searching for her own birth family when Adoption Network Cleveland successfully led the effort to open records to adult adoptees in 2015.

As far back as she can remember, Traci's experience with her own adoption has played a major role throughout her life. Her adoption placed Traci in a position of self-reflection. Like most adoptees in this era, Traci was constantly reminded that she was "chosen." She found herself always striving to live up to the special expectations placed on her as "chosen." While this position made her uncomfortable, it also drove her to much success – excelling in school and her first career in international sales.

Traci endured decades of closed doors prior to the law changing. After reuniting with her birthmother, she then joined our staff to give back. Traci works with great energy to provide support, compassion, and guidance to those who reach out to her. She also coordinates our many General Support and Discussion Meetings, and leads a team of volunteers who assist her. Traci beams with pride, "My work here is extremely rewarding. It gives me a chance to help so many who felt like me at the time, so alone in this process. I'm honored to be the one who answers their call."

For more, go to our blog – www.adoptionnetwork.org/blog

KUDOS

Erica Curry Van Ee, Denise Barone, Dionne Griffin, and Jasmon Scott for sharing their personal adoption stories for our film "Answers," and to Paul Moskowitz and Len Brown of Akron Video Makers for creating it for us.

Ashley Koza for her months of help with Creating Futures – and to Joan Thomson, Nicole Cheraso, Morgan Craig, Cassey and Josh Fye, Jennifer Zisk-Vitron, Annette Levy, Erin Cardis, Alienna Arnold, Josh Koza for helping at the event.

Denise Barone, Bev Haettich, Amy Lomis for sharing their birthmother stories with *Cleveland Scene* magazine and *Sound of Ideas* on WCPN 90.3 Ideastream. Thank you also to Karen Williams for calling in to share her story on *Sound of Ideas*.

Elaine Hagan, Carol Hayward, Jeanne Hood, Amy Lomis, Pamela McKinney, Traci Onders, Nancy Repaszky, Loretta Taus, Linda Bellini, and Alison Bedford-Wilson for serving on the planning committee of the Birthmother's Day Ceremony; to Linda Bellini, Kelly Fisher, Joan Thomson for volunteering; to Elaine Hagan for the facility donation; to Jakprints for printing the ceremony invitations; to Monica's Flowers for giving us a discount on corsages; Bellefaire JCB for the floral donation; and to Linda Bellini for donating envelopes.

Pawley Bornstein, Kathy Christensen, Merav Cronin, Tanya Reynolds, and Katisha Smith for baking for our programs.

Alison Bedford Wilson and Nancy Rapaszky for leading our Birthmother Support Group.

Dottie Klemm for helping to co-facilitate the May Rocky River General Support and Discussion Meeting.

CCDCFS

In Recognition ...

Cuyahoga County Division of Children and Family Services

Jackie McCray, Beverly Torres and Andrea Ginter for their continued collaboration and support.

Erin Cardis, MSASS Intern, for help with mentoring contacts and youth support.

Rachel McGill, mentor, for setting up our participation in an outreach event at her place of employment, PolyOne.

Sherri Appleton for helping us with office space arrangements.

Anne Mueller, Anita and Joe Miller, and Kathy Adler for hosting our March, April, and May Weaving Cultures Transracial Adoptive Family Group's social outings.

Maureen Heffernan for leading our *Adoption 101: Where Do I Begin?* workshop, and to panelists: Susan Petrone, Phillip and Chad Chan, and Jeff and Linda Ivanoff for sharing their parenting stories.

Roy Gay and Cynthia Robinson for their work on our Parent Advisory committee.

Linda Bellini, Kay Williams, Donna Foote, Sherri Appleton for volunteering with our Search Program.

Estes Turner for providing resources, information and training to the facilitators during our past two Facilitator Quarterly Meetings. Linda Bellini, Jim Deskins, Kim Donato, Denice Leddy, Dottie Klemm, Estes Turner, Brian Campolieti, Carol Hayward, Steve Kelly, Rose Curtin, Kate Livingston, Marni Hall, Becky Drinnen, Lynn Grubb, Susan Meek, Kevin Hofmann, Jeff Costello, and Wendy Blitzer Barkett for co-facilitating our General Meetings.

Kristina Camp Musil, Sarah Hastings and Barbara Robertson for their help as administrators of our Ohio Adoption Search and Reunion Facebook Group.

Audrey Bazyk and Trever Rerko for participating on the *Adoption 201: Adopting Infants Domestically* panel in March.

In Recognition ...

of all of our Permanency Champions Mentors:

Jim Belk, Benjamin Pawley Bornstein, Melissa Collins, Kristin Cusher, Bernice Dyson, Sara Fuller, Cassey Fye, Elaine Gradisher, Sarah Greywitt, Dionne Griffin, Pauline Holcomb, Colleen Horan, Rita Jackson, Gizelle Keppler, Patty Kilmore, Martin Kosmin, Annette Lomis, Brigitte Lowe, John Malone, Rachel McGill, Amanda Michalson, Fred Mowery, Meaghan Musarra, Kendra Proctor, Jane Rockwood-Tougouma, Deby Rossignol, Heidi Shunk, Jennifer Skop, Christine Taylor, Jarrel Taylor, Sabrina Tucker, Dashawn Tunson, Carole Turner-Steel, Noelle Whitehouse, Margot Williams



EVENTS

Creating Futures Benefit and Silent Auction

By Dan Carroll, Development Specialist

On Friday, April 28, more than 175 friends and supporters joined Adoption Network Cleveland at the 10th Annual Creating Futures Benefit & Silent Auction: Diamonds are Forever, at the Music Box Supper Club. Fabulous entertainment was provided by *Anna and the Clear*, featuring lead singer Anna Mae Karnstein of Chagrin Falls.

The evening's guest speaker was Erica Curry Van Ee, an Ohio adoptee now living in Grand Rapids, Michigan who received her original birth certificate and reunited with her birth family in 2015 after Adoption Network Cleveland's successful fight to open the records for more than 400,000 adoptees. Erica was also part of a short film, *Answers*, donated by Akron Video Makers, which debuted at the event. You can see the video at <http://bit.ly/ancANSWERSfilm>.

Thanks to the generous support of everyone in attendance, our Corporate Partners, and all those who made donations, we were able to raise a net income of more than \$55,000 to help support our programs.



Top image: 2017 Adoption Network Cleveland Board of Directors.

Photography by Julia Taylor. More are available on: adoptionnetwork.org/gallery

Special Events & Development Committees:

Denise Sanelli Barone (Chair, Events)
Anita Miller (Vice Chair, Events)
Cathy Belk (Co-Chair, Outreach and Development)
Marissa Brydle (Co-Chair, Outreach and Development)
Lisa Buescher
Mimi Datta
Keven Drummond Eiber
Tony Harris
Jessica McCamon
Virginia Medina
Chris Milligan
Karen Ostanek

Host Committee:

Denise & Mike Barone
Cathy & Jim Belk
Jessica & Curt McCamon
Thom & Celeste Nykamp
Karen & Steve Ostanek

Auction Item Donors:

A Christmas Story House & Museum
Adventure Zone
Alex and Ani
Ballet Met Columbus
Barone, Denise
Barre3
BE.Gallery
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Cleveland Metroparks Zoo
Cleveland Orchestra
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She Never Forgot About Me

By Anthony Boey

I saw an ad on YouTube that said “Ohio’s Adoptions Laws are changing” and if you were adopted between certain years you could get a copy of your original birth certificate. It stopped me in my tracks. I was born and adopted in Ohio during those years! Within a few days, I applied for a copy of my original birth certificate, and when I received it, I began my search. Without understanding the best process, my search was coming up empty. I was beginning to lose hope that I would ever know my past.

During the holiday season, my wife asked me what I really wanted for Christmas. I told her that I wanted to know anything about my biological family, good or bad. I contacted Adoption Network Cleveland and was connected to the Coordinator of the Adult Adoptee and Birthparent Program, Traci Onders. Traci helped me through it all – to find any leads and support me through the process along the way. After a few months of working through many twists and turns, Traci was able to find an email address of someone who could potentially be related on my birthfather’s side. When I sent the email I had just finished my shift at work, I was worn out and tired. Soon, I noticed that I had a reply in my in-box. I was thinking to myself that it was another dead-end lead. I opened the email and it was a letter from my biological sister Barbie. I was so happy that I squealed with delight.

I learned that Barbie always knew that she had a younger brother who was adopted out of the family. She told me that it was one of her dreams that she would be in contact with me. She was so overjoyed when she read my letter that she startled

Traci helped me through it all – to find any leads and support me through the process along the way.



her husband who thought that something was wrong. She asked her husband to read the letter again, thinking that “this must be a dream.”

In the email I sent her, I had included a picture of myself along with my phone number. She responded with a photo of herself and her number as well. I called her almost immediately, and she was so happy. She was crying and I was too. She just wanted to know that I was all right, and if I was happy. She told me that my biological family never forgot about me. She also said if I wanted nothing to do with them, that it was okay. I told her that I wanted her and her family to be a part of my life. She was so happy, that she called everyone in her family to tell them that we found each other. She wanted them to know and never forget that “nothing is more important than family.”

I cried happy tears for about hour. My wife had a tough time settling me down for the night.

Now I write to my sister almost every day. We never knew that as we each were growing up we were in neighboring suburbs. We might have passed each other by and not known who each other was. It’s so important to me to know that she never forgot about me. All she wanted to do was find me, and to know that I was all right. Finding my sister was the best Christmas gift of all time. Every day is sweeter now. Both of my biological parents have passed on, but I feel knowing that their family is now complete, they can rest in peace.

As my sister said to me and her family, “Never give up on your dreams, because your dreams will never give up on you.”

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, 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:

Sheila, Tiara, Jean, Anthony, Tevin, Judy, Rebecca, Jeff, Kris, Maret, Mark, Ebony, Julie, Jeff, Kathleen, Joe, Vanessa, Brenda, Michelle, Debra, John, Phillip, and Jennifer.



BOOK REVIEW

The Girl in the Shadows

A Journey from Darkness to Light

by Susan E. Anthony
Published in 2017

Review by Jeanne Hood, Birthmother, Member

As a 1950s-era birthmother, I found myself being drawn into Susan's story in her book *The Girl in the Shadows*, as she and the daughter she named 'Emily' began their reunion journey. Susan never intended to search for her daughter and like so many birthmothers from the 1960s era, she never talked to family or friends about that painful time in her past.

It was a Monday early in 1997, when she received an email from someone who was writing on behalf of the family of her potential birth daughter asking for further information to verify if this, in fact, was her daughter, 'Emily.' It was ... and her name was Kristin.

Susan wrote, "The last lingering doubt fell away, and like a helium balloon free of its tethers, I soared, sailed, and swooped over the rooftops of my mind."

Soon the emails were directly between Kristin and Susan. After their first phone conversation, Susan was emotionally drained. "The truth is I was blindsided. I wasn't prepared for the grief. It came out of nowhere. There were many happy times ahead, though, traveling together and communicating back and forth. They were creating memory moments. In 2013, Susan wrote, "My daughter and I have been in reunion for over 15 years. Although there have been a few bumps in the road, I am the most grateful of women. My daughter is firmly in my life."

Susan was there in the Ohio Courthouse, in 2013, advocating for adoptees to have access to their original birth certificates. She never got to finish her book or see the enactment of the law. She passed away in 2014 from pancreatic cancer. Her husband, Larry and daughter, Kristin wrote the final pages. Kristin wrote: "I kept myself at emotional arm's length for many years as I tried to figure out how she fit into my life. It wasn't until Susan was terminally ill, which was only for a few short months, that I could say out loud, 'I love you.' And I said it often."

FUND DEVELOPMENT

Have Your Workplace Help You Change the World!

By Dan Carroll, Development Specialist

Oftentimes, it can feel like we spend all of our time at work, doing work from home, or thinking about work. We give so much of ourselves to our work – let your work help you give back to the causes you care about, including Adoption Network Cleveland!

Each year, many workplaces run charitable giving campaigns through organizations such as United Way or Greater Cleveland Community Shares, or simply through their own Human Resources department. You can designate Adoption Network Cleveland as your charity of choice for a one-time gift or payroll deduction to support our programs and services all year long.

If your organization participates in a Greater Cleveland Community Shares workplace giving campaign, please consider designating Adoption Network Cleveland.

Donations to United Way NON-PARTNER Agencies (such as Adoption Network Cleveland – #58096) may be made by simply writing in the charity name and agency number on their Workplace Giving Campaign pledge form. (For write-ins there is a minimum \$100 total gift or \$50 minimum gift per agency. Up to 50% of the total gift may be directed to non-partner agencies.)

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

Your employer may even match your charitable contributions – check with your Human Resources department to find out more.

We are grateful for your consideration of Adoption Network Cleveland in your upcoming workplace charitable giving campaigns this fall. Please let us know if you have designated us as a charity of choice so that we can plan on those funds to support all who have been touched by adoption and foster care.

Our Endowment: An Investment in the Future

The Adoption Network Cleveland *William N. Skirball Endowment Fund* is an opportunity for you to make a gift now that will mean many more dollars of support far into the future.

What a return on your investment – thousands of people helped along in their adoption journey! With oversight from our board, the Cleveland Foundation stewards our fund and ensures that each dollar multiplies over time to generate revenues earmarked for Adoption Network Cleveland. You can contribute through the Cleveland Foundation (<https://www.clevelandfoundation.org/give-now/>). Choose "Adoption Network Cleveland Endowment Fund" next to Choose a Fund.

Legacy Circle

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, Director of Development and External Relations (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

BETSIIE NORRIS

ALYCE AND REESE JENKINS

TODD AND MINDA NORRIS, IN MEMORY OF ELIZABETH NORRIS

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

Anonymous, Autodesk Foundation, Baraona's Bakery, The Children's Guild, Community Endeavors Foundation, Inc., First Unitarian Church of Cleveland, The George Gund Foundation, Junior League of Cleveland, Lubrizol Foundation, Martin D. & Mary J. Walker Charitable Foundation, The Musca Family Charitable Fund, Nations Lending Corporation, Robert H. Reakirt Foundation through PNC Charitable Trusts, Thrivent Financial Thrivent Choice Program, Z/G Foundation

Individual Donations

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Tony & Noelle W., David and Catherine Y., Justin and Beth Z.

MEMBERSHIP

A Warm Welcome to Our New and Renewing Members

Mary Ann A., Alison B.-W., Nathaniel and Jaimee B.
Lauren and Darren B., Judy B., Bill B., Judy C.
Rev. John C., Lois C., Barbara C., Elizabeth D
Jim and Pam D., Rebecca D., Donna E., Jeff F. and Diane R., Brent G.-B., Ada F.-G., Ted and Colleen G.
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Susan S., Joanne S., Karen S., Kathleen and Don S.
Loretta T., Deborah T., Suzan T., Joan T.
Priscilla and Michael V., John W., Phillip and Merritt W.
Wingspan Care Group, John and Sara Z.

In Honor / Memory

Jan Jones and Sheldon Artz in honor of Lisa Buescher
Thom Frazier in honor of Traci Onders
George and Ellen Shook in honor of Philip B. Shook
Jed Weisman in memory of Harriet Weisman
Mary Ann Cozzens in memory of Thomas A. Cozzens
Kevin Gladish in memory of Judy Sobocinski
Meaveen O'Connor in honor of Beth DeGaetano
Bill Beagle in honor of Cathy Doyle and John Beagle
Sherri Appleton in honor of Esther Sokol, Keira McGannon, and Pam McKinney
Ashley Taylor in honor of Brianna Zgodinski

In Kind

Thom and Celeste N., Linda B., AGC, Akron VideoMakers, Consolidated Graphics, JakPrints

The above reflects donations from March 1 to May 31, 2017

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. To join, contact kathryn.mahon@adoptionnetwork.org, call (216) 325-1000 or visit our website.



ADOPTION NETWORK CLEVELAND: EDUCATE • SUPPORT • ADVOCATE

Join Us!



Kyle Lanzer/Cleveland Metroparks

Annual Cookout

Sunday, August 27, 2017

2:00 to 5:00 pm

Cleveland Metroparks, Keystone Shelter
Parma, OH 44134

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.

This publication was supported by grant number 2017-VOCA-79358862 awarded by the Office for Victims of Crime, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice, through the Ohio Attorney General's Office. Victims of federal crimes will be served.



www.AdoptionNetwork.org
(216) 325-1000

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Executive Director for reprint requests.

SAVE THE DATE

Annual Meeting

Friday, November 17, 2017
5:30 to 7:30 pm

Reception: 5:30 pm
Program: 6:00 to 7:30 pm



Ohio Representative Sarah LaTourette
Keynote Presenter

Advance Ohio Building
(Formerly The Plain Dealer Building)
1801 Superior Avenue
Cleveland, OH 44114