



FROM THE DIRECTOR
 BETSIE NORRIS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Siblings: The Longest Relationships of Our Lives

Dear Friends,

There are so many ways that siblings can be interconnected through the complicated families of adoption. This newsletter issue shares personal stories of several of these ways among our members and staff – adoptive siblings sharing their lives, birth siblings being lost to each other and then found, siblings by birth being raised together elsewhere, etc.

When raised together, the sibling relationship is for most of us the longest relationship we may have in our lives. Best practice in child welfare has morphed from the days when siblings were hardly considered to now recognizing that relationship and honoring it, whenever possible, by placing siblings together, considering adoptive families of siblings as a prioritized placement option if a subsequent sibling comes into foster care, to now some states creating laws to maintain the legal sibling tie when legal parental rights have been terminated. Maintaining the legal sibling relationship in this circumstance is something I'd like to see Ohio pass into law, and in first exploration there seems to be support for the idea. Watch for more information on this as the year progresses.

My own journey through adoption is filled with siblings – two (adoptive) brothers with whom I was raised, three (birth) brothers with whom I was reunited (two of them being identical twins), three (step) siblings who entered my life when I was 10 years old. I've watched with awe as my adoptive brother has reunited with his full birth siblings, finding a brother with whom he is a soulmate – after meeting when my brother was 40 they have developed a bond like one I've hardly ever seen. This same brother of my brother (we need more expansive terminology in our language for this, right?) sought to adopt shortly after their reunion, and I was able to give guidance that led to the adoption of a young brother and sister in foster care in his state. As a result these siblings, now young adults, were able to grow up together.

I hope you enjoy these pages filled with sibling stories.

In the spirit of truth,
 Betsie

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See page 11 for more information on our Corporate Partners Program.

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THE LATEST NEWS

Join us!

ADOPTION NETWORK CLEVELAND NIGHT AT THE MONSTERS



**Tuesday, March 21, 2017 at 7:00 pm
vs the Chicago Wolves**

Get your tickets at <http://bit.ly/ANCMonstersNight>

Ticket Prices (Located in the Lower Bowl):
\$19 each, 2 for \$35, 4 for \$70

Join with family, friends, coworkers, or your Adoption Network Cleveland family for a great evening of fun, friends, and hockey.

A portion of every ticket purchase goes back to Adoption Network Cleveland – and you don't pay any of the ticketing fees!

Adoption Network Cleveland will also be the featured charity for the 50/50 raffle that evening and will have locations around the concourse to enter for a chance to win the jackpot!

If you can't make it or are feeling generous, consider purchasing a ticket or tickets for those we serve. Donated tickets will be used for youth in foster care, mentees or mentors, and adoptive families.

Info: Dan Carroll (216) 482-2311 or daniel.carroll@adoptionnetwork.org.

Creative Gathering

**Thursday, February 9, 2017
6:00 to 8:00 pm with potluck
A special activity for our monthly
Adoptive Family and Teen Support Group**

Parent participants will engage in creative outlets while exploring the importance of self-care and its impact on the family. Youth participants will participate in theater games to explore emotional expression, teamwork, peer connection, and confidence building.

RSVP: ayanna.abi-kyles@adoptionnetwork.org



Save the Date!

Creating Futures

Benefit and Silent Auction

Friday, April 28, 2017

Music Box Supper Club

See back cover for items we need

Cycle for Adoption

**CycleBar Beachwood
3355 Richmond Rd #101a • Beachwood
Saturday, February 4 • 2:30 pm**

Join Adoption Network Cleveland for a 50-minute spin class raising money to serve those with a connection to adoption or foster care. Just bring yourself, your workout gear, and your friends – we'll take care of the rest!

Spinning shoes, towels, water bottles, fresh fruit, and more will be provided. We will be holding a small reception afterwards with light snacks and beverages as well as a 50/50 raffle benefiting Adoption Network Cleveland's programs and services.

Price: \$25 per rider

**Register today at adoptionnetwork.org
LIMITED SPOTS!**





COVER STORY

Siblings All Around

Whether siblings by biology, or adoption, or both – their connection is indisputable

By Kathryn Mahon and Linda M. Schellentrager

**Separated Adoptees Reconnecting:**
Barbara Robertson

Barbara Robertson restored the process of searching for her biological past as soon as Ohio's law changed. Through her search, she was shocked to find another person was searching for her birthmother as well. It would turn out to be her biological sister, Lisa.

"I was stunned for a couple of weeks before I contacted her," Barbara said.

She finally called and once the mutual connection had been made they talked on the phone for hours that first day. Lisa knew she had a sibling out there somewhere and was thrilled to finally start building a relationship with her.

The sisters met for the first time on Thanksgiving. And, there was another profound reunion that day – her sister and their birthmother met. Barbara said it was like they had been getting together on the holiday for years. "It was one of my best Thanksgivings ever," she said.

On reflecting on her relationship with her birth sister, she said the bond is powerful and she cannot imagine her life without her moving forward. "We both share something in common that no one can take away from us," said Barbara.

As a social worker, Barbara worked with youth involved in the foster care system. Through that experience she has witnessed the profound support and comfort a sibling can offer during the most difficult times. That is something Barbara can no longer imagine being without.



Lisa, left, and Barbara met on Thanksgiving 2016

Forever Siblings: Ralph Dempsey

Ralph Dempsey is a single man who spent time in foster care as a young person. Now, he is an adoptive father to five.

In 2008, he was the biological father of two adults and a foster father to many. When it became too difficult to say goodbye to his children through fostering, he decided to pursue adoption from foster care. Over time, Ralph adopted not one, but two sibling groups and is about to



Two of Ralph's children are same-age sisters now, after being adopted from two sibling groups.

finalize the adoption of another young boy. He didn't set out to adopt two sibling groups, but after finalizing the adoption of his first two children, who were biological brother and sister and 8 and 10 years old, they asked (and asked) him to adopt a sister or brother for them. After some time and consultation with Julius Jackson, the Adoption Navigator at Adoption Network Cleveland, Ralph took his two young children to an "Adoption Mixer," an event for prospective parents to meet children who need loving, permanent families.

At the mixer, his daughter and son started talking to two sisters, ages 4 and 9, and immediately hit it off. The sisters at the mixer had spent some time apart in foster care and had their hearts set on being adopted together. "My older children are the ones who convinced me that those were the girls for our family. I felt it was important to empower them in the process and thought it would help them all with the adjustment as our family grew," said Ralph.

Ralph isn't finished building his family. Earlier in 2016, Ralph started working on the adoption of a 9-year-old boy. Once his adoption is final, Ralph is talking to Julius about looking for more children in need, perhaps more siblings, who can fit into his family. Julius has been with Ralph through all of these decisions and transitions, and adds, "Ralph is a special kind of adoptive parent who understands the importance of the biological connections of his kids. Not only did he work hard to keep these sibling groups together, he also is committed to keeping some important extended family relationships in their lives, as well."

Siblings in Openness: Drew Murphy

Leading a full life as a husband and father, Drew learned some news one day that would rock his world. There was another child out there. It was likely his child – a seven-year-old boy who had been born and placed for adoption without his knowledge and before his marriage. And, devastatingly, he had no idea how to find this boy or if he had "a right" to find him.

"This was the only time in my life



Adoptive dad Scott, left, and Drew have become great friends.

that I felt at a loss,” said Drew recently. “There was a little boy out there who may be thinking that he had a dad out there who doesn’t want him.”

He learned about and started attending birthparent meetings with the Ohio Birthparent Group (OBG) in Columbus. There, he found others who felt as he did. “Ultimately, OBG helped me channel my strong emotions in a positive way,” said Drew.

Through some research and digging, Drew was able to find that “needle in a haystack,” as he describes it. He talked to the agency, met with the social worker a few times, who then reached out to the boy’s parents. After two meetings with the adoptive parents, and a positive paternity test, Drew met his son.

Drew adds, “When we brought our two families together, the kids started playing together right away. It was amazing.”

It’s been four years since that first meeting. His son is now 11, and the middle child of his adoptive family, with an older sister, 15, and younger sister, 8. In Drew’s family, he also fits in beautifully with an older sister and three younger half siblings, ranging in age from 2 to 15. Together, they’re making childhood memories to build on for a lifetime.

Drew has been blogging about this experience and shares these additional thoughts: “We are two families that both see the great things that can come out of such a complicated situation. Both families see this as an example as how to handle life’s curve balls. There is no jealousy, fear, or pessimism. Instead there is selflessness, bravery, and optimism. We know we are writing our own guide and we are writing it as a team.”

Siblings by Adoption: Kevin and Kerry Gladish

As they were growing up, siblings Kevin and Kerry always had a nagging question of whether or not they were adopted. Even though their father told Kevin they were not, the thought never went away. It was suspected but never discussed.

Kevin, who now lives out of state, heard through the media about the adoption records opening in Ohio. He requested his original birth certificate through the mail and when it arrived, it confirmed everything he had suspected as he grew up – he was, in fact, adopted. He was a “late discovery adoptee” as he learned it is called in adoption circles.

A couple of days later, Kevin called Kerry, his sister by adoption, to tell her the news. “He started going on about his original birth certificate and I thought ‘Oh, he’s going to tell me he’s adopted,’” Kerry said. Relief and a sense of peace came over her.

Kevin began the process of searching and soon learned that, sadly, his birthmother had passed away. He continues to search using DNA and has reached out and connected with cousins.

It has been a year and a half since the siblings finally got confirmation of what they always knew. At this time, Kerry has chosen not to search.



Kerry and Kevin grew up together as siblings but didn't know they were adopted until last year.

“Now we can talk about it,” Kevin said. “We have more of a connection now than we had before.”

Being two late discovery adoptees and siblings is a pretty unique situation, Kevin pointed out. This experience has connected them even deeper and changed their relationship forever. “Now we can have a true, real relationship,” Kerry said. “The walls have come down.”

Siblings Always: Linda and Jeff Ivanoff

Ten years ago Linda and Jeff Ivanoff were unsure if they’d ever be able to fulfill their dream to be parents. Interested in adoption, but confused about the process and which direction to head, they heard about Adoption Network Cleveland’s *Adoption 101: Where Do I Begin?* workshop. There, they learned details about the three paths to adoption, but what really tugged at them were the stories of children waiting in foster care for families. They also learned about the “Moving Hearts Gallery” and searched out its location at a local library. They were pining to actually see the faces of kids who needed a family. “Through *Adoption 101*, the Heart Gallery, and the Adoption Navigators, we became really inspired about public system adoption,” says an impassioned Linda, reflecting back.



The Ivanoff siblings have a lifelong biological connection in their adoptive family.

The Ivanoff’s adoption story is a long and tangly one with years of prep and trainings and a decision to also become licensed as foster parents. Eventually, to their home and hearts came the foster placements of three infant siblings – a boy, then a girl, then another girl – each born and placed about one year apart. One by one, they each became available for adoption and they became permanent members of the Ivanoff family. The children are now 5, 6, and 7 years old.

“I never expected a situation like ours, but once we heard about a baby sister to our son, there was no way we could say ‘No,’ and then we felt exactly the same when we learned of another sister,” says Linda. “The children are just beginning to understand a little about what adoption means – that they each grew in another woman’s tummy and because it was the same woman, it means that they’re biologically connected to each other. I know that as the years go on, and the concepts resonate more, that reality will be more and more important to them. Despite their young age, their bond is strong and their similarities are indisputable. We continue to try to help them be good people in the world by first being good to each other.”

In recent years, the Ivanoffs are paying it forward as parent presenters at the *Adoption 101* workshop. “We’re hoping to provide the same inspiration we felt about the children in foster care who need a loving, permanent family, and to also share the power of being open to adopting siblings as well.”



PROGRAMS

Volunteers Needed



On **Mother's Day weekend** we come together to honor, support, and recognize the unique journey of birthmothers at our Annual Birthmother's Day Ceremony. Our 25th annual event will be on Saturday, May 13th and we would love to have your involvement – as a part of the planning committee, as a reader, or as a volunteer at the event.

It's a moving program of poetry, music, and readings on this special day of remembrance, so no matter your connection to adoption, we welcome your participation and attendance. If you're interested in learning more, please contact Traci at traci.onders@adoptionnetwork.org or (216) 482-2323.

KUDOS

2017 Committees – Outreach & Development: Cathy Belk, Marissa Brydle, Mimi Datta, Keven Eiber, Virginia Medina, Anita Miller, Chris Milligan, Tony Harris, Angela Rincon; **Special Events:** Anita Miller, Dee Barone, Marissa Brydle, Lisa Buescher, Jessica McCamon, Karen Ostanek; **Program:** Ellen Stephens, Dan Gisser, Danielle Cosgrove, Maureen Heffernan, Krysia Orłowski, Nancy Rapaszky; **Finance:** Ted Grabowski, Julia Dean, Rosanne Potter, Dave Yates, Jennifer Sage, Brian Hirko, Dan McLain, Carlin Culbertson; **Public Policy:** Molly Cissell, Danielle Gadowski-Littleton, Anthony Sallah, Maritza Nelson, Elise Hagesfeld, Jared Gadowski Littleton, Aaron Ockerman, Kate Livingston

Amanda Lockhart and Ted Grabowski for their help with the venue for the Annual Meeting; to Joan Thomsen and Elise Hagesfeld for their volunteer help with our Annual Meeting.

The Adoptive Parent Advisory team of the Post Adoption Program for their efforts in organizing a well-attended Adoptive Family and Teen Group in November.

Zoe Breen Wood, PhD for giving professional insight, and to Jasmon and Kristi Scott and Dionne and Porsha Scott for sharing their adoption stories on WCPN 90.3 IdeaStream *Sound of Ideas* radio broadcast.

Rielly Spencer-Trueman and George Graham for sharing their stories with *Your Teen Magazine* for Parents.

Kai Kyles volunteering to call our adoptive families.

Erin Cardis, our CWRU MSASS student intern, for research help.

Darlene Davis teen librarian for help with Get Real Groups.

Sheila Becking and Krysia Orłowski for hosting Weaving Cultures Transracial Adoptive Family Groups in the fall.

Jill Rusticelli, Merav Cronin, Katherine Kiskin, Megan Dzurec, Brye Roth, Nicole Yim, Katisha Smith, Modestiy Settles, Kathy McConaughy, Elle Marcus, Craig Rimlinger, Elaine Gingerich, and Jessica Payne for baking for our programs and events.

HandsOn NorthEast Ohio for their continued help with Adoptive Family and Youth Group.

Debbie Zeledonis for her help at the front desk every week.

Linda Bellini and Shirley Schellentrager for proofreading.

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

CCDCFS In Recognition ...

Cuyahoga County Division of Children and Family Services

Patrina Hollowell-Martin, Sonya Russell, Ronnetta Spencer, Nicole Chimo Erin King, Lynetta Hood-Taylor for referring teens to our *Get Real* program.

Mary Blue, Michelle Shears, Lisa Rumes for referring teens to our mentoring program.

Bev Torres, Mary Mitchell, and Jackie McCray for continuous collaboration.

2017 BOARD

These individuals were elected as new members of our Board of Directors at our Annual Meeting in November:

DENISE SANELLI BARONE

Community Volunteer

MIMI DATTA, JD MBA

Attorney, Honeywell International

JULIA DEAN, CPA

Audit Professional, Ernst & Young LLP

THOMAS NYKAMP

Vice President – Executive Compensation, Eaton

They join our existing board:

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LISA BUESCHER, MSE*

Community Volunteer

1st Vice Chair

MARISSA BRYDLE, MA

Associate Consultant & Marketing Manager, BrownFlynn

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TONY HARRIS, MBA

Business Systems Consultant, Progressive

DANIELLE GADOMSKI LITTLETON, ESQ.

Staff Attorney, Legal Aid Society of Cleveland

ALICIA LOVE, SPHR

Human Resources Professional

VIRGINIA MEDINA

Counsel, BakerHostetler

ANITA MILLER, MSE MBA

Product Manager, Progressive

KRYSIA ORŁOWSKI, MFA*

Instructor, Cleveland State University

ROSANNE S. POTTER, MBA

Senior Vice President & Chief Financial Officer, The Cleveland Foundation

ANTHONY SALLAH, ESQ.

Associate Attorney, Benesch, Friedlander, Coplan & Aronoff LLP

ELLEN M. STEPHENS, SPHR*

Vice President, Human Resources, The Sherwin-Williams Co.

* Renewed term at Annual Meeting

Special thanks to our outgoing board:

ELAINE HAGAN**ELAINE SCHULTE, MD, MPH****DAVID YATES, CPA**

EVENTS

Annual Meeting

By Dan Carroll, Development Specialist

About 60 members and supporters joined us at our Annual Meeting in November, where we welcomed April Dinwoodie, Chief Executive of the Donaldson Adoption Institute, as our keynote presenter.

Our Annual Meeting Keynote Presentation *Let's Adopt Reform: Moving Adoption from Transaction to Transformation* by April Dinwoodie is available for view on our YouTube channel: [youtube.com/AdoptionNetCle](https://www.youtube.com/AdoptionNetCle).

At every Annual Meeting, we spend some time recognizing several people with awards. This year's awards and winners:

THE FOUNDER'S AWARD

recognizes outstanding volunteer service, the spirit by which this organization was founded 28 years ago and which is still critical today.

This year's recipient for the Founder's Award is Kay Williams.

THE TRIAD ADVOCATE OF THE YEAR AWARD

recognizes individuals who have made a significant contribution to the adoption field as demonstrated by a specific accomplishment, project, program, or milestone.

This year's awardees are Becky Drinnen, April Dinwoodie, The George Gund Foundation, and Tara Shook.

See our website adoptionnetwork.org and our Facebook page for more information on each of our winners.



*Thank You to all
who came
and supported –
and Congrats to
our winners!*



AS A RESOURCE

We have a new and revised **Recommended Reading List** on our website. Go to: adoptionnetwork.org

In addition, remember we have **Books for Sale** and a **Lending Library** of adoption-related topics for our members to borrow at any time. For more information, send a note to: info@adoptionnetwork.org

IN THE COMMUNITY

Adoption Network Cleveland was honored to be a Community Partner for a City Club of Cleveland Forum. The forum featured April Dinwoodie, Chief Executive of the Donaldson Adoption Institute. Her presentation, *Adoption in America Today: The Good, The Bad, and the Path to Reform*, was simulcast on WCPN 90.3 Ideastream, was shown on WVIZ/PBS, and was taped for a later broadcast on C-SPAN.

We participated with other social justice nonprofits in the Greater Cleveland Community Shares Kick-Off Event at City Hall in October.

We were involved with a series of stories on Adoption and Adolescence in *Your Teen Magazine for Parents*. Ayanna Abi-Kyles and Betsie Norris provided advice for parents, Reilly Spencer-Trueman offered a teen adoptee perspective, and George Graham shared his adoptive parent perspective.

Betsie Norris and genetic genealogist Amanda Reno presented two topics – *Adoptee Access to Records: Ohio's New Law*, and *Solving for Unknown Parentage: DNA Basics* – at the Akron-Summit County Public Library in October. Amanda is also co-owner of DNA Finding U.

Betsie Norris was a keynote presenter in Austin, Texas at the Adoption Knowledge Affiliates Annual Conference in November – *Changing the Face of Adoption*.

Betsie Norris and Zoe Breen Wood appeared on WCPN's *Sound of Ideas* with a group of families who have adopted from foster care and on WKYC Channel 3's *Live on Lakeside*.

Ayanna Abi-Kyles celebrated with families who had finalized their adoptions at a National Adoption Awareness Month event at Probate Court, hosted by Cuyahoga County Division of Children and Family Services.



BOOK REVIEW

Garbage Bag Suitcase: A Memoir by Shenandoah Chefalo

Book review by Erin Cardis, MSASS Intern, Adoption Network Cleveland



In this memoir, Shenandoah (Shen) Chefalo tells the story of her dysfunctional childhood riddled with abuse and neglect at the hands of those who were supposed to care for her. Constantly on the move at the whim of her drug- and men-addicted mother, and ill-tempered father, Shen faced consistent upheavals, taking her few belongings with her in her “garbage bag suitcase,” as she coined it.

Years of instability, abuse, and neglect left Shen angry and ashamed, causing her to lie in attempts to hide the realities of her family. Seeking her own fairytale ending, Shen eventually placed herself in foster care at the age of 13 – only to find that removal from the chaotic home of her parents brought its own challenges.

Shen demonstrates admirable resiliency throughout her childhood experiences, ultimately leading to her overcoming her adversities and becoming a successful businesswoman, wife, and mother. However, her success does not signify a lack of continuing hardship and emotional turmoil. Shen divulges the struggles she continues to face as a result of the trauma she experienced throughout childhood.

Shen shares the realities of children who have endured abuse and neglect and its long-term impacts on development and functioning. She provides her own insight into possible solutions for the future.

Shen’s story is an eye-opening tale of the realities of vulnerable children placed into foster care, and how these experiences shape their lives mentally, emotionally, relationally, and otherwise.

As a social worker in training, this story has special significance for my work and learning. Shen expresses her moment of realization that she has been labeled and boxed into a category her whole life, but these labels do not define her. She made the decision that she would not succumb to the limited potential expected of her by virtually everyone else, but would choose her own destiny. As a social worker, I hope to dispel negativity from the lives of those I encounter, instilling in others that they are more than how the world may see them, regardless of their circumstances. Shen’s honest and raw story is inspiring; and it’s a story that everyone should experience.

30TH ANNIVERSARY

Time flies. In September 2017, we will begin our 30th year and we want to include YOU in the planning for the celebration. We’re looking for volunteers to get involved in any way. If you’ve been along with us on this journey, please consider helping us put together a plan for the year and/or sharing your story, videos, or anthologies. We’d like this to be a meaningful, fun experience and a great time to reconnect! If you’d like to put your name on a list to be contacted in the future, send an email to: info@adoptionnetwork.org and put “30th Anniversary” in the subject line.

Thank You!

STAFF

The FlipSide of Gib

By Linda M. Schellentrager, Communications Manager

In this issue, we’ll begin a series to share some interesting facts about our diverse staff. We begin with a personal history on Robert Gibbons, our Program Coordinator, Mentoring.

There were too many Bobbys when Robert Gibbons was growing up in the Milton Hershey School, so soon the name “Gib” stuck as something to distinguish him from the other boys.

Hershey, at the time, was a boarding school just for males who had lost one or both parents. Gib’s mother, a musician, passed away when he was 8. One year later Gib and his brothers arrived at Hershey where they lived until their high school graduations. Importantly, Gib would never live “with” his siblings again. The boys were separated by age group. His sister was sent to live with an aunt.

While in junior high, Gib received the gift of a lifetime – his mother’s guitar. That guitar launched Gib into decades of self-learning to hone his craft. In college, he met “Flip” and they began writing songs and performing together.

Time brought careers and families – for Gib, he married Debbie, a pastor, and raised two sons while devoting his career to education. About 10 years ago, a group of friends joined Gib and Flip to create “The FlipSide,” a five-person classic and original contemporary folk rock band. The FlipSide was a part of the Cleveland Foundation’s University Circle Uptown Saturday Nights in the fall.



As a staff member with Adoption Network Cleveland since early 2009, Gib has inspired many of our programs and events with an often unexpected musical element.

Gib’s mother’s beloved guitar still remains in his care and has a prominent spot in his home in Akron.

Finding Alice

By Rita Jefferson, Birth Sibling

My siblings and I had always known about our baby sister, “Alice.” We also understood why our parents decided to place her for adoption. Our mother, bless her heart, was stricken with a disease that was eventually diagnosed as Parkinson’s Disease. It already directly affected her ability to care for the six children she was raising. On January 26, 1949, Alice was born in Columbus, Ohio and was never brought home from the hospital.

By all accounts both of my parents were considered older people. My father had been married previously and had six children from that marriage. My mother gave birth to seven children. So it was understandable that my parents were in a difficult situation when Alice was born. I know that my mother lived with much regret and pain for needing to place her baby girl for adoption.

Over the years my sister, Barbara, had expressed a desire to search for Alice. She was so passionate about it that I decided to help. Over the last 31 years there were many attempts to find Alice. The search was difficult as our parents never shared details with us about the adoption process itself. Was she placed with a family they knew? Did they work with an adoption agency? My parents never spoke about Alice and it was not until my mother died that we made an attempt to ask my father about our baby sister. He became very upset and refused to share any information.

In 1985 when my father was 88 years old, I was helping him with some personal matters and I discovered documents regarding Alice’s adoption. It was the actual Permanent Surrender of Child Form! My sister and I began to write letters to the agency involved, but their records showed no correspondence from the adoptee requesting contact with her birth family. We were reassured that it didn’t mean that

“Even though I live in Nevada, the search was focused in Ohio, so the organization was there to assist me with the search. This was a turning point for me and my family.”

Alice would never request contact and so we completed forms with our contact information to be placed in her file should she decide to contact the agency and reach out to us. She never did.

Sadly, my sister, Barbara, passed away in 2005. I made a promise to her and to myself to keep on searching. In 2015 I happened to read a news story online, “Ohio Set to Open Sealed Adoption Records.” This is what I had been praying for ... to finally know Alice’s adopted name! After reading the article a few times, I realized that the open records allowed the adoptee to get their Original Birth Certificate, not the birth family. I decided that this was a sign for me to get back in the game and try to find my sister!

I went online in November 2015 and found Adoption Network Cleveland, which proved to be most valuable! Even though I live in Nevada and

the search was focused in Ohio, the organization was there to assist me with the search. This was a turning point for me and for my family after I made contact with Amy Lomis, who was both a blessing and a peacemaker. Due to Amy’s work and that of her volunteers, I am now at peace!

In February 2016, Amy contacted me to inform me that she believed they had found Alice, who was renamed Ramona. Sadly, Ramona had passed away in 2013. The information shared and sent to me by Amy left no doubt that Ramona was my baby sister. The good news was that she had married and had three children with families of their own. In July 2016 we all met for the first time at a meet and greet that I coordinated, followed by a family picnic the following day. My family created a Facebook group designed to keep an open forum. Through Ramona’s children and grandchildren, I am getting to know my sister even though she is no longer here.

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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:

Victoria, Paul, Robyn, Susan, Lori, Shirley, Gina, Lisa, Karen



FUND DEVELOPMENT

Planned Giving is an Opportunity for Everyone

By Kathryn Mahon, Director, Fund Development and External Relations

It is no secret that today we have too many demands on our time and our resources. That is why we are so grateful for your financial support as well as the many other ways you support Adoption Network Cleveland – because of that you are essential to the organization’s ongoing strength and future growth.

What is planned giving? Basically, planned giving means you make a plan to support the organization through a variety of means. For some, that is a plan for future funding of the organization. For others, it may mean support for the organization in the present but through means that require a little more planning than a cash gift.

And did you know planned giving isn’t just for the wealthy? Planned giving is something that everyone should consider if they have a cause close to their heart that they want to help sustain.

While there are many ways to make planned gifts, here are some of the easiest ways to participate in planned giving:

BEQUEST: Include a bequest to Adoption Network Cleveland in your will.

INSURANCE POLICY: Unused life insurance policies make excellent charitable gifts.

IRA and 401(k): Due to the tax consequences, these assets make excellent choices for benefiting nonprofit organizations.

STAFF UPDATE



We welcome **TRACI ONDERS** as our new Program Coordinator, Adult Adoptees and Birthparents. She was previously working in an interim role, but has now accepted the job as a permanent position.

Two staff members moved on to new endeavors: We say a fond farewell to **CASSEY FYE** and **KARA DENNIS**.

For an interim period, if you need to correspond with us about Youth Services, please contact Jennifer Zisk-Vitron at jennifer.ziskvitron@AdoptionNetwork.org or (216) 482-2320. If you need to correspond with us about Volunteer Coordination, please contact Kathryn Mahon at kathryn.mahon@adoptionnetwork.org or (216) 482-2319.

Finding Alice, continued from page 9

For anyone searching for loved ones lost to adoption, never give up! There are so many more resources and tools available now as well as the support and search expertise of Adoption Network Cleveland. The support provided to emotionally prepare for what is found when the search is completed is hard to put into words. I admit that I was devastated and heartbroken to learn that I would never have an opportunity to meet or talk to my sister. However, Amy and her team led me to my new nieces and nephews, who are helping me get to know my sister and to know about the wonderful life she had.

It is important to note that if you are interested in planned giving you should talk to a financial advisor. Please let us know if you include Adoption Network Cleveland in your plans. If you are interested in learning more about how you can help Adoption Network Cleveland through planned giving, please contact Kathryn Mahon at (216) 325-1000.

Thank You!

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

Jeremy’s Mitzvah



Jeremy Galin used the occasion of becoming a Bar Mitzvah to donate sports equipment to children and teens utilizing the programs and services of Adoption Network Cleveland. Jeremy asked his friends and family to make donations of extra sports equipment. The response was overwhelming. In October, Jeremy and his mom came to our office, filling one of our rooms with all of the donations. He also presented an envelope with cash and gift cards, which were also donated.

For more info on how you can use a special event in your life to give back, contact: daniel.carroll@adoptionnetwork.org.

Thank you, Jeremy!

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

BUESCHER FAMILY FUND
created by Board Member Lisa A. Buescher
and Brendan Buescher
LISA 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

Akron-Summit County Public Library, Case Western Reserve University, Charles R. Jelm Charitable Foundation Inc., Dominion Foundation, Eaton Corporation, Envirosolve, KPMG LLP, MCPc Inc., Mutual of Omaha, Naomi G. and Edwin Z. Singer Family Fund, Nurenberg Paris, Ockerman Consulting, Saint Luke's Foundation, St. Matthew's Episcopal Church Brecksville, The Edward & Catherine Lozick Foundation

Individual Donations

Anonymous, Michael A., Rose A., Sherri A., Michael B., Cathy B., Linda B., Bertha and Clinton B., Conni B., Gregg B., Robert C., Molly C., Lois C., Cheryl D., Buffy and Brent D., Craig D., Edward D., Keven E., Carole and Ken E., Ray and Janet E., Carol and Robert F., Wendie F., Danielle G.-L., Jeremy G., Melvyn and Eleanor G., Mary G.-B., Sheldon and Nan G., Ted G., Robert and Helen G., George G. and Michael F., Robin G., Elaine H., Tony H., Brian H., Gary H., Douglas H., Rita F., James K., Maila L., Alicia L., Jennifer M., Daniel M., Virginia M., Amanda M., Anita M., Chelsea M., Moyo M., Peter N., Krysia O., Denisse P., Stephen P., James P., Nancy R., Darnell R., Karen R., Anthony S., Dale S., Elaine S., Claire S.-W., Nancy and Glenn S., Elizabeth S., Stacey T., Christine T., John and Kelly U., James V., Deborah W., Jed W., John W., David Y., Jennifer Z.-V.

In Kind

Alex and Ani, Sherri A., Denton Portrait Design, Jeremy G., Elaine H., Souper Market

The above reflects donations from September 1, 2016 to November 30, 2016

CORPORATE PARTNERS PROGRAM

Maximize your company's marketing, advertising, and philanthropic dollars with Adoption Network Cleveland's Annual Corporate Partners Program.

With a one-time annual investment, your company will receive valuable promotional benefits for our events and initiatives throughout the year and help to strengthen our community by creating and connecting families. Partnerships are still available! Contact Dan Carroll at daniel.carroll@adoptionnetwork.org or (216) 482-2311 to reserve your spot or for additional information.

MEMBERSHIP

A Warm Welcome to Our New and Renewing Members

Anonymous, Linda B. and Terry E., Bertha B., Carol B., Coleen B., Colleen B., Elizabeth B., Dan C., Walter C., Candice C. and Ray R., Sheri D., Paul D., Kim D., Mike D., Kelly and Ryan F., Denise F., Donna F., Neil and Christina F., Melissa G., Betsy and Mark G., Virginia G., Elise H., Laureen and Willie H., Dennis and Pat H., Laura K., Manesia K., Michelle K.-N., Regina K., Gail M., Susan M., Jasmine M., Dominic M., Gina O., Traci O., Sandra O., Lisa P., Mary P., Julia P., Nancy R., Brenda R., Elizabeth and David R., Carole S., Heidi S., Nancy and Glenn S., Nanci and Earl S., Elizabeth S., Margaret V., Norma W., Michael W., Magdalene W., Cynthia W.

Announcements

- Everyone has a story. Please share yours. To have it be considered for an upcoming issue of *Guidance* send it to: info@adoptionnetwork.org.
- Please check your mailing address on this newsletter. If any corrections are needed, let us know. If you have a change in your mailing address or email address, contact Kathryn Mahon at (216) 482-2319 or kathryn.mahon@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
Creating Futures
Benefit and Silent Auction

Friday, April 28, 2017
Music Box Supper Club



Silent Auction Items Needed

IDEAS:

- Tickets to sporting events
- Unique behind-the-scenes tours or experiences
- Airline miles (round trip ticket)
- Vacation packages
- Gift certificates to area restaurants
- Designer purses and wallets
- Fine art or sculpture
- Tickets to performing arts venues
- Gourmet gift baskets
- Golf outings or lessons with a pro
- Jewelry or other luxuries
- Health & wellness / spa services

Volunteer Help Needed

- Planning Committee
- Basket Planning and Assembly
- Event Registration
- Set-Up or Clean-Up

To learn more, contact:

kathryn.mahon@adoptionnetwork.org

To make a donation of a silent auction item, contact:
daniel.carroll@adoptionnetwork.org

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

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