



ADOPTION
NETWORK
CLEVELAND™

Educate • Support • Advocate
AdoptionNetwork.org

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summer guidance

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF ADOPTION NETWORK CLEVELAND

EST. 1988

Building a Bridge to Family

– THREE-PART SERIES –
PART TWO:
MENTORING AND
ADULT ADOPTEE
SERVICES





FROM THE DIRECTOR
 BETSIE NORRIS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Foster Care to 21 and Guidance newsletter news

Dear Friends,

I'm happy to report that Ohio House Bill 50, designed to serve some of Ohio's most vulnerable youth, was signed into law on June 13th. The new law creates programs to serve youth who age out of foster care, and those adopted after age 16, to age 21. The initiative was promoted by Ohio Fostering Connections (www.ohiofosteringconnections.org).

Mark Mecum, chair, Ohio Fostering Connections and executive director of the Ohio Association of Child Caring Agencies says, "Today marks an important milestone for Ohio that was three years in the making. We are grateful to the Governor and Ohio General Assembly for their overwhelming support. Together, we can now implement a program that will change the status quo and give young Ohioans better opportunities to succeed." Many thanks to Mark and his team for seeing this through to success.

Each year, more than 1,000 Ohio youth "age out" of foster care at age 18. (One such young adult who aged out of foster care in our region is Tieva – whose story is featured in this issue.) House Bill 50 includes a package of programs to help these young people prepare for college or a career, as well as transitional housing options, including apartment programs, campus housing, and foster and host homes. We are pleased to see Ohio join a growing number of states to offer these programs.

This newsletter issue is the third in our new quarterly newsletter format. In our new format we are focusing more on stories from those whose lives have been impacted by our work. If you have a story to tell – please share it. Send an email to info@AdoptionNetwork.org or call Linda Schellentrager at (216) 482-2313. We hope that you enjoy seeing our work come to life in this way! Also, please be aware that our newsletter is available in an electronic format that can be emailed to you instead of arriving in the mail if you choose. If you are interested in switching to this option, please email: Kathryn.Mahon@AdoptionNetwork.org.

As always, my gratitude goes out to each of you for being part of Adoption Network Cleveland!

In the spirit of truth,
 Betsie

A special thanks to Aharon Denton of Denton Portrait Design for the cover and inside photographs of Margot Williams and Tieva Henderson.

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Contents

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

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Join Us for our annual family-fun event!

Adoption Network Cleveland's 8th Annual Family-Friendly Fundraiser!



Here is a great way to spend the morning with family and friends and support a cause you care about at the same time. Come enjoy two hours of unlimited bowling, complete with food and a raffle to win great prizes. Registration fee is \$35 per adult/\$15 per child 5 and over (children age 4 and under are free).

GET STARTED NOW:

1. **Create a team!** Teams are made up of up to six individuals of any age and any skill level.
2. **Create a personal fundraising page** – It's easy to raise funds for your team! If you raise more than \$250, the registration fees are covered for your team (includes a reserved lane for up to six bowlers). Pledge forms are also available for you to collect donations off-line. Go to AdoptionNetwork.org to download a "How To" guide on creating your personal fundraising page.
3. **Have fun bowling!**

SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES ARE AVAILABLE.

Visit www.AdoptionNetwork.org or contact Kathryn.Mahon at (216) 482-2319.



Attention College Students!

Are you a student interested in being a helping professional? Our **Scholars Program** is an experiential learning program that promotes active learning and allows students to develop a deeper understanding of the lifelong journey of adoption. To register for or to learn more about this program, please contact Program Coordinator Amy Lomis at Amy.Lomis@AdoptionNetwork.org or call her directly at (216) 482-2323.

Nominations Wanted: 2016 Triad Advocate of the Year



We are soliciting nominations for our *Triad Advocate of the Year* awards through September 15, 2016. The awards will be presented at our Annual Meeting in November. This award recognizes individuals who have made a significant contribution to the adoption constellation through: advocacy; improving the lives of children and teens waiting for adoption; or enhancing the experiences of triad members (adoptees, adoptive parents, birthparents). For a nomination form and information go to www.AdoptionNetwork.org.

Check Out Our Board-Sponsored Bartending Fundraiser

On Friday, July 15th, invite a friend or enjoy a date night while helping out your favorite non-profit! Enjoy your favorite beverage, served by an Adoption Network Cleveland board member. All tips go to us. *Please stop by!*

Friday, July 15, 2016
5:30 to 8:30 pm

Dive Bar
1214 West 6th Street
Cleveland

Exciting News! Save the Date!



We are honored to have been the conduit on an idea to bring an important adoption-related topic to the City Club of Cleveland. Mark your calendars for Friday, November 11, 2016 for a City Club luncheon with April Dinwoodie, Chief Executive of the Donaldson Adoption Institute (DAI) in New York City. DAI's research, education, and advocacy work leads to better perceptions, policies, and practices that strengthen all families. April will be speaking on DAI's nationwide town hall tour *Let's Adopt Reform*, which aims to ignite a national conversation about private and public adoption in the 21st century. The City Club of Cleveland is a forum for citizens and thought leaders invested in understanding and discussing the issues and ideas that shape the region, nation, and the world. The City Club is the oldest continuously operating free speech forum in the United States.

For more info: cityclub.org; adoptioninstitute.org; letsadoptreform.org

Friday, November 11, 2016
12:00 pm

The City Club of Cleveland
850 Euclid Avenue
Cleveland



COVER STORY

Building a Bridge to Family

PART TWO – PERMANENCY CHAMPIONS MENTORING AND ADULT ADOPTEE SERVICES

Mentoring has expanded my family

By Margot Williams, Permanency Champions Mentor

I was drawn to Adoption Network Cleveland's *Permanency Champions Mentoring Program* because it fit everything I was looking for – it was a program for teens in foster care, and it held the expectation to create a permanent, lasting connection. As a foster care and adoption professional at Applewood Centers, I have knowledge of the challenges faced by youth who leave the system without permanent connections. Permanent connections allow us to have people to rely on for the big and little moments of life. I had thought about it for a long time, and finally when the time was right, I was anxious to get started.

I contacted Adoption Network Cleveland and began the process to be approved to become a mentor. I was excited about the prospect, but, of course, a little nervous. The next step after my approval was for a “match” to occur. In the spring of 2009, I was matched with Tieva, a 12-year-old girl who had been in foster care since she was 2 years old.

Before we met, I was filled with a nervous excitement – I was nervous if she would like me, nervous if her foster mother would be supportive, and also excited to finally become a mentor. I couldn't wait.

We hit it off right away. We planned many of our activities based on her interests and our mutual interests, such as shopping at the mall or going to the Cleveland Museum of Art. We also spent time simply hanging out and talking. Later, Tieva told me it meant a lot to her that I chose activities that matched her interests.

This mentoring experience has been successful in making a permanent connection for Tieva – she is a part of our family.



Our relationship is solid and permanent and she knows I am here for her, forever. Tieva has a room in our home for which she chose the furniture, paint color, and bedding. This came about when she was in foster care and did not like going to respite on the weekends. She and I discussed it, and she agreed that she would be more comfortable going to a respite at our house. Getting approval to become an “alternate caregiver” for her was

a process that involved making sure my home and all adults in the home were safe. The fact that our home is a second home for Tieva was a huge step to sealing our relationship.

I appreciate the *Permanency Champions* program and the way they have nurtured my relationship with Tieva. Adoption Network Cleveland staff members have provided a lot of help in this journey. There are support group meetings during which mentors receive education and also have a chance to discuss issues regarding the intricacies of mentoring youth who are in care. In addition to the support groups, Adoption Network Cleveland has organized many social activities that allow us to interact with other mentors and mentees.

Tieva aged out of foster care last year, but she knows that her future does not have to be defined by that. She has dreams to attend college, and as her mentor, friend, and “auntie,” as she calls me, I look forward to helping her achieve her goals in life.

I am a part of a large, extended family of which Tieva is an accepted, important member. Thank you Adoption Network Cleveland for bringing us together.

Margot Williams is a resident of Cleveland Heights and is the Director of Foster and Adoption at Applewood Centers. She is married to Lamont Troy Williams.

Getting Personal About Our Staff

ROBERT “GIB” GIBBONS is our Program Coordinator, Mentoring. Gib joined the staff of Adoption Network Cleveland in 2009 to work with our adoptive families, after 30 years teaching experience. In 2014, he transitioned into the *Permanency Champions Mentoring Program* where he helps find, train, and process potential mentors; helps match mentors and mentees; and provides ongoing support to mentors to best maintain matches.

Gib spent much of his childhood at the Milton Hershey School, a cost-free, private

home and school for children from families of low income, limited resources, and social needs. Because of this, Gib is sensitive to the unique needs of children who have been adopted or lived in foster care. He knows firsthand the importance of permanence and caring adults to youth living in out-of-home care.

Gib and his wife Debbie are the parents of two grown sons and in his spare time he is a singer songwriter with the band *Flipside*. Gib is also the published author of the book *Euclid Creek*, which is part of the *Images in America* series.

AMY LOMIS is our Program Coordinator, Adult Adoptees and Birthparents. Amy connected with Adoption Network Cleveland in 2007 as a volunteer. In 2008, she became a member of the staff. Since then, she has worked with youth in care and with the *Permanency Champions Mentoring Program*. Amy moved into her current position in 2014.

Amy has served the Greater Cleveland area as a Licensed Social Worker since 2005. Her experiences include working with people of varying needs and diverse populations, which has provided her with a well-balanced knowledge of community

Mentoring opened my eyes to so much more in life

By Tieva Henderson, former Permanency Champions Mentee

I first heard about mentoring when I was 12 years old. I honestly didn't know what to think. I was not used to opening up and was nervous about having another adult in my life telling me what to do. But I was convinced to be open to it and to at least give it a try.

Once I met Margot, she calmed my nerves. She was very kind and listened to what I had to say. She took the time to hear me when I needed someone to listen. Over time, our relationship has developed into a very comfortable friendship, which actually feels more like family, than a friendship. And, a few years ago, I started calling Margot "Auntie" and her husband "Uncle Troy."

Margot's big family has included me in their holiday celebrations, which feels magical because I have no biological family in my life and prior to meeting Margot, I missed out on a lot of family time.

One of my most meaningful times with Margot was celebrating my 17th birthday at her house. We went shopping, planned the meal, and she taught me how to make my favorite meal – Chicken Alfredo. Then, many of her family members and friends came over to eat the dinner and celebrate my birthday with me. Honestly, it was the first birthday in my life that I really enjoyed.

In addition to connecting me to Margot and her family, Adoption Network Cleveland's *Permanency Champions Mentoring Program* has connected me with other youth in care who also have a mentor. Doing activities together in these groups has been really fun and helped me to know that I was not alone.

I am 19 years old now and have aged out of foster care. I live at the YWCA Independence Place and hope to go to college next year. I appreciate having safe people to talk to and



it is very reassuring to know that Margot will continue to have a role in my life to help me reach my goals. Margot feels like family – I know I can call her anytime and she will answer. I know she loves me and wants the best for me when she gives me advice about my choices. I am still growing and learning and value her opinions more than I can ever say.

I hope in the next couple years to become a public advocate for youth in foster care. I know what it feels like and know what they need because I was there. I am hoping that in my college experience I can learn more about public speaking. I'd like to speak to a

group of teens in foster care about the value of mentoring and what this experience has meant to me.

Tieva Henderson spent 16 years in Cuyahoga County foster care and was never adopted. She is one of hundreds of Cuyahoga County teens who age out every year with no permanent family.

My new sense of family is creating a legacy for my kids

By David Samerdak, Adoption Network Cleveland Member, Adoptee

I was 24 years old when my mother finally told me I was adopted. This was 1992 and I can remember not being mad or upset that she was just now sharing this with me but being extremely curious to know who my birthparents were. Although that thought stuck with me for the next 23 years, I didn't dwell on being adopted. My mother simply didn't have any information. With my records being sealed I gradually let go of trying to find these family members and I moved on with my life with a sense of gratitude that at least they had given me a chance to have a life in a family that chose me and loved me.

Fast forward to March 2015 when the State of Ohio was

continued

Getting Personal About Our Staff

AMY, *continued*

needs and the associated resources. Amy earned a Master of Science in Social Administration at Case Western Reserve University Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences.

Amy understands that adoption is a lifelong journey as she is a birthmother who chose to make an open adoption plan for her birth daughter, Amanda. Amy and her son, Floyd, reside on the east side of Cleveland. Amy now enjoys the time she shares with her grandson Phillip.

CASSEY FYE serves as Program Coordinator, Youth Services where she works collaboratively with youth to identify their needs while implementing avenues of support, advocacy and education to further permanency and healing through coordinating youth centered programs and activities.

Cassey holds a bachelor's degree in Theatre from the University of Mount Union. After working as a theatre teacher and director for over five years, she decided to attend graduate school for a Master of Science in Social Administration at Case Western Reserve University Mandel School

of Applied Social Sciences and is now a licensed social worker.

Cassey lives in downtown Cleveland, with her husband, Josh, and three-legged cat, Luna. She started a small party business two years ago, where she and a fellow theatre friend dress as princesses for parties and community events around Northeast Ohio. She has a passion for empowering kids, and loves to use the magic of theatre and performance to do so. Eventually, she hopes to get certified in Drama Therapy to add to her work with young adoptees and youth in foster care.



COVER STORY

continued



Left: David meeting his biological father Stephen McCarthy in March 2016; below: David and Stephen with David's children.



about to change the laws to finally open the adoption records. All of my old curiosities returned, but I felt more guarded about my approach to finding out information about my biological parents at this point in my life. I always felt that all I needed to know were my parents' names. The reality that I wasn't prepared for was that once I saw a picture of my birthmother I realized this was never going to be enough.

In September of 2015 I received my original birth and adoption certificates. By November I knew enough about my birthmother that I was able to reach out to her to try and make a connection. As of this writing I am still trying to make that connection. She has acknowledged who I am but she is currently not able to deal with what my appearance back in her life means. I am hopeful though, that in time, she will be ready and I will be here when it happens.

The miracle of my story was overcoming all of the obstacles to find and connect with my biological father. Adoption Network Cleveland helped me with these steps and helped me send a letter to the man I thought could be him. It turns out not only did I find my birthfather but I came to learn he had been looking for me even longer.

My birthfather and I were finally reunited in March. The many discussions we've since had about our pasts and getting acquainted with each other has been more than I could have hoped for. I have been welcomed into the family not only by him but by three half siblings, four uncles, two aunts, and a number of first cousins.

I'm truly humbled and grateful for the way they have received me and for making me and my family feel so accepted. For me personally this reunion has given me a new sense of who I am. I will always be David Samerdak, son of Walter and Jean Samerdak, but now I am also David Samerdak the biological son of Stephen McCarthy.

I have a new family history to add to my adoptive family history. Not being able to answer my children's questions about my heritage always left me feeling a bit empty and alone and was a driving force to pursue this search. It was like I was isolated because I had nothing to share. I now feel like I'm creating a new legacy for them as well as filling in my own.

David Samerdak is a resident of Cuyahoga Falls.

KUDOS

Thank You to Our Volunteers

CCDCFS *In Recognition ...*

Steve Barczyk for all his work in scheduling the upcoming *Digital Me* filmings, and to **Andrea Ginter** and **staff** for meeting to discuss post adoption services.

State Senator Bill Beagle and **State Representative Nickie Antonio** for participating on a panel discussion at the Annual Adoption Gathering. (In addition to those we thanked in the last issue.)

Tieva Henderson and **Margot Williams** for speaking at *Creating Futures Benefit and Silent Auction*; **Jana Payne** for photography; **Josh Berger** for all his help with *Creating Futures* preparation and office help; **Amy Lomis**, **Aviva Vincent**, **Cassey** and **Josh Fye**, **Debbie Zeledonis**, **Jim** and **Pam Deskins**, **Joan Soucie**, **Cynthia Williams**, **Kendra Proctor**, **Linda Bellini**, **Lisa Buescher**, **Marissa Brydle**, **Mary Ann Arnold**, **Sarah Hastings** and **Pamela Schnellinger** for their help with *Creating Futures*.

Zoe Adams, **Alisha Caraballo**, **Laura Kelleher**, **Francis Fungsang**, **Paul Lepro**, **Collin Gallagher**, **Zakiyyah Ashshaheed** for serving on our **Cleveland Bridge Builders** team.

Karen Smith for exceptional accounting and administrative support.

Beth Martin, **Catherine Pizarro**, **Elizabeth Malik-Wilgus**, **Jamie St. Clair**, **Jey Ebron**, **Katisha Smith**, **Nikki Locker**, **Traci Onders**, **Modestiy Settles**, **Emma Popovich**, **Tracy McCain** for baking for our programs and events.

Dottie Klemm, **Estes Turner**, **Linda Bellini**, **Jim Deskins**, and **Denice Leddy** for facilitating topic discussions at recent **General Support and Discussion Meetings**.

Linda Bellini, **Jeanne Hood**, **Carol Hayward**, **Loretta Taus**, and **Elaine Hagan** for serving on the **Birthmother's Day Ceremony Committee**; **Cassey Fye** and **Robert "Gib" Gibbons** for providing beautiful live music; to **Printing Concepts** for donating the invitations; to **Cleveland Tea Revival** for donating ice tea; to **Diahanna Roberson** and **Bellefaire JCB**, for donating a flower arrangement; to **Monica's Flowers** for corsages; **Joan Soucie**, **Sarah Hastings**, **Kathryn Brown**, **Peg Hastings**, **Marie Lomis**, **June Taylor**, **Betsie Norris**, **Heidi Shunk**, **Nanci Stein**, **Paul Soos**, **Jody Babbitts**, **Molly Cissell**, **Margalie Belizaire**, **Jennifer Zisk-Vitron**, **Marsha Randal**, **Linda Bellini**, and the **Hagan family** for volunteering at the *Birthmother's Day Ceremony*.

The Junior League of Cleveland, **Brandon Chrostowski** and **Edwins Restaurant Staff**, **Mrs. Elle Adams**, and **Mr. Avon** for the **City Rising Farm Tour** at our recent *Cooking with Cuyahoga's Kids* event.

Debbie Zeledonis for being a loyal **Wednesday** receptionist.

Darlene Davis Teen Librarian at **Maple Heights Library** for her help with our *Get Real* group; and to **Monique Scott** our *Get Real Girl's* Co-Facilitator.

Dottie Klemm, **Cassey** and **Josh Fye**, and **Ayanna Abi-Kyles** for donating raffle items to our **Adoptive Family and Youth Support Group** ticket raffle.

Rick Pratt for donating bus tickets.

Mitchell's Ice Cream, **Western Reserve Historical Society**, **Preston's H.O.P.E. Playground Park**, the **Cleveland Play House** for offering their locations for our summer *Digital Me* filmings.

Jaime Robinson, **Jamie St. Claire**, and **Lisa Bartlette** for writing for our blog.

Kendra Proctor and **Greg Freeman** for public speaking and sharing their stories which included the impact of **Adoption Network Cleveland**.

Dr. Elizabeth Swenson of **John Carroll University** for inviting **Betsie** to speak to her class.

Lisa Bartlette, **Brenda Monroe Bermanis**, **Rebecca Drinnen**, **Traci Onders**, **Marni Hall**, **Elaine Hagan**, **Elise Hagersfield**, **Anthony Sallah**, **Jared Littleton**, and **Claudia Vercellotti** for volunteering for our **Lobby Day** in **Columbus**.

Educational Supports for the Coming School Year

As a reminder, Ayanna Abi-Kyles provides educational information, training, and resources to support adoptive parents with any school concerns throughout the school year. She can attend IEP or expulsion hearings and can facilitate referrals for legal assistance when appropriate.

Ayanna is available to meet at Adoption Network Cleveland's office, by phone, or by invitation for hearings and meetings. She can be reached directly at (216) 482-2331 or by email at Ayanna.Abi-Kyles@AdoptionNetwork.org

We're here for you to assist with any school concern.

Annual Summer Cookout

Over 200 friends and volunteers attended our Annual Summer Cookout at Edgewater Park in June. Activities included lifesize games, balloon animals, airbrush tattoos, a police canine officer, and several tables of potluck goodies from everyone. Special thank yous to all those who helped provide so many opportunities for fun during the day – including Lynn Fatika for the lifesize games; Journey Church (Fairview Park) for baking numerous desserts; Jeff Faubert and his friends for donating and cooking food; Officer Bryan Vitron and The Independence Police Department and “Argo” for the K-9 demonstration; and overall support from The Ohio Automobile Club Orphan's Outing Fund.



Parallel Groups Returns This Fall

Adoption Network Cleveland's **Adoptive Family Parallel Groups: A Therapeutic Educational Series** provides a format in which parents, pre-teens, and teens, through sharing of personal experiences, can create a sturdy base on which to build long-term health and stability for themselves and their families. It is designed to help adoptive families become aware of, recognize, and understand their unique experiences.



For pre-teen and teen adoptees and their parents

Parent groups and adoptee groups meet separately and simultaneously. Groups are facilitated by licensed professionals and peer leaders. Topics are covered through experiential activities, group work, and discussion.

Take advantage of this opportunity to learn and grow together to gain a deeper understanding of your child's adoptee experience.

- Time:** 6:30 to 8:30 pm
Tuesdays: September 20 – Orientation
 September 27 – Session 1
 October 4 – Session 2
 October 11 – Session 3
 October 18 – Session 4
 October 25 – Session 5
 November 1 – Session 6

Space is limited. Advanced registration is required. Financial assistance may be available to those who qualify. Contact Ayanna.Abi-Kyles@AdoptionNetwork.org

IN THE COMMUNITY

Betsie Norris participated in *The Evolution of Personhood and Identity* conference through the MetroHealth Pastoral Care program. Along with Kendra Proctor and Greg Freeman, Betsie shared stories of adoption and reunion on the *Adoption and Identity: Adult Adoptees Share Their Stories* workshop. Thank you to the MetroHealth Pastoral Care program for the invitation to participate.

Thank you to the Brecksville-Broadview Heights Preschool Mothers' Club for choosing Adoption Network Cleveland to be the recipient of the funds raised at their *Spring Tea 2016*.

Robert Gibbons participated in a panel discussion hosted by the *Progressive African American Network* and the *Progressive Parent Connection* on foster care and adoption topics. Over 40 people attended locally and more than 60 attended virtually from around the country. Thank you to Progressive for your support of adoption and foster care in our community!

Jennifer Zisk-Vitron was a part of a panel presentation at Bellefaire JCB: *Adoption ... Now What?* which included an information discussion on the extensive array of services in the adoption community.



EVENTS

Creating Futures Benefit and Silent Auction

By Kathryn Mahon, Director of Development and External Relations



Our Annual *Creating Futures Benefit and Silent Auction* was held on April 29th at The Music Box Supper Club in the Flats. Entertainment was provided by Maura Rogers and the Bellows and an inspiring testimonial about their mentoring experience was provided by Margot Willams and her mentee Tieva Henderson. (See Margot and Tieva's story on page 4 and 5.) Thank you to everyone who participated for their generous support of the event and helping us to raise over \$58,000 to support the programs and services of Adoption Network Cleveland.

Thank you to our Event Sponsors!



BakerHostetler



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

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Cathy and Jim Belk
Marissa and Edd Brydle
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Debbie and Matt Crawford
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ADVOCACY

Rallies, Executive Orders and Separation of Powers

by Rich Uhrlaub

A group of fired-up advocates is promoting an adoptee rights rally in D.C. [this] fall with the goal of getting the President's attention and inspiring him to sign an executive order that would grant all adoptees nationwide access to their original birth certificates in "one fell swoop." Though I confess I've never been much of a signwaver, anything that might bring national attention to the cause is, on its face, as Martha Stewart said, "a good thing."

But eight leading adoption reform legal minds all agree: no president has the power to sign such an executive order.

They point out that to do so would violate the Tenth Amendment to the Constitution, which addresses separation

of powers. Adoption law has always been a matter of state, not federal statute. The Supreme Court of the United States denied certiorari in the landmark Tennessee records law appellate case (*Doe v. Sundquist, et. al.*, 2S.W.3d 919).

Rally: good. Current message: off-target. The message needs to focus on state-level reform and leverage all the momentum created by recent multiple state victories. Part of me wants those eight attorneys to be proven wrong. But until that happens, we need both zeal and credibility rooted in legal reality.

Reprinted with permission: Coordinator's Column by Rich Uhrlaub
Colorado Adoptees in Search *Trialogue*, Q1 newsletter; <http://www.aistc.org>

A Dream Come True

By Sue Cavanaugh, Birthmother, Adoption Network Cleveland Member

Over a year ago, on a Wednesday evening, my local news station told about a celebration that was going to be held in Columbus for the opening of Ohio's sealed original birth records. It seemed like a dream come true.

In 1967, I was a young single woman who gave birth to a beautiful girl. I just saw her briefly before she was taken home by the couple who were chosen to adopt her. I thought I'd never see her again.

From that day on, for almost 50 years, I never forgot a day of those nine months and having to walk away from the daughter I would never be able to hug and love. No matter what my heart wanted, life's circumstances and finances kept me from searching for her. As the years passed I lost hope of ever finding her.

Now there was a new law. My daughter was born in Columbus and that's where her original birth certificate was filed. Could this be the miracle that I had been praying for? I found out that Betsie Norris and Adoption Network Cleveland and many others worked for 25 years to make this happen.

So I went to Columbus that weekend. I wasn't sure what to expect. I wasn't sure how people would greet me, but it didn't matter; I was blinded by the hope that my daughter might be there. Well, she wasn't. Instead, I met wonderful people, heard touching stories, felt love, hope, and joy. What a great organization! What an exciting weekend!!

I immediately went to the Ohio Birthparent Group's All Adoption Meeting co-sponsored with Adoption Network Cleveland. There I heard even more stories from people of all sides of the adoption triad. I realized then how beneficial their support groups were.

Adoption Network Cleveland offered to help me locate my daughter. No one ever cared enough to help me before. I also met a lady named Margaret Wilmeth, a search volunteer, who found my daughter, Alicia.

There is so much that I could tell about our reunion. I was so very lucky and meeting her was more than I could have ever expected. It was almost like we'd never been apart. She

thanked me for giving her life and we hugged and cried. At our first meeting we ate out and shopped (our two favorite hobbies). I gave her several pictures of my family which was now her history too. God definitely blessed that time together. She even came to my apartment, where we had even more time to share about our lives.

We have continued to keep in touch and share all that we have in common. She said we're like two peas in a pod. My birth daughter, Alicia, is a beautiful woman inside and out. I really enjoy spending time with her and her loving husband. She also seems to have a very nice extended family. Her mom and dad have provided a stable and loving home for her and have obviously been all I could ever wish for. They have encouraged our reunion and told me how blessed they've been since they brought her home.

I'm so proud of my daughter, Alicia. She's become such a fine woman. In the past, Mother's Day has been very traumatic. This year, Alicia called and wished me Happy Mother's Day and said she loved me. We try to end our calls with "I love you." And when she says "This is your daughter," it just takes my breath away.

I'll close my story now by telling you about my Christmas present. Alicia, along with her husband and her mom put together a framed collage of pictures of her entire life. It included special moments and even ones of us together. In the middle was a ten-day-old baby picture of her. That was the most perfect gift I could have received. There was my baby girl! And on the back was a note that read, "Mom, for your sacrifice I am here. I am grateful to have you in my life. I love you. Your daughter, Alicia."

Now it's time to thank Adoption Network Cleveland for all those years of persistence and love that made my dream come true and for all the lives they touched and the people they still continue to help.

And for those of you whose dreams have not yet come true, just don't give up hope and keep praying. Your miracle may be on the horizon.

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 Amy Lomis 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/ODHparent.

RECOGNIZING MEMBERS WHO HAVE RECENTLY COMPLETED SEARCHES:

Alice, Analisa, Bill, Christine, Christopher, Ellen, George, Kristine, and Mary



STAFF UPDATE

We welcome **DAN CAROLL** as our new Development Specialist. In his role, Dan will be assisting in fundraising efforts, event planning, and website updates. Dan comes to us with experience with the Philadelphia Eagles Charitable Foundation.

We say a fond farewell to **SARAH HASTINGS** who will continue as a volunteer with a variety of projects.

BOOK REVIEW

Separated Lives

by Lynn Assimacopoulos

*Book review by Lisa M. Bartlette,
CWRU MSASS Intern, Adoption Network Cleveland*

When the author's son's friend

Ryan, asked for help to search for his birthparents, the author agrees, but she wonders if the requested task lies within the realms of possibility.

Author Lynn Assimacopoulos is a retired healthcare worker and writer, with keen interests in archeology and genealogy. This book reads like pages from Lynn's private diary as she details her thoughts, feelings, actions, and interactions with Ryan before, during and after the search. Appropriately, Lynn dedicated the book to Ryan, "who had the courage and curiosity to find and get to know his birthparents and forgive them for giving him up at birth."

Without giving away the ending completely, one of the pieces I enjoyed the most in this short read was Lynn's recount of the unfolding relationship with Ryan, even though most of their interaction occurs via email or by phone during the search. Lynn details their developing care, compassion, and growing respect one for the other, as both ride their individual emotional roller coasters.

Lynn's tale is told in a direct, matter-of-fact style, providing many details specific to the search process. However, intermingled with sharing how she gained knowledge on search tactics, Lynn also informs readers how she learned to listen to her gut, process her emotions and assist Ryan in following his heart.

To read Lisa's full review, go to our blog: www.AdoptionNetwork.org/blog

FUND DEVELOPMENT

Making Good Choices

Consider Us in Your Workplace Giving Campaign

Each person makes an average of 35,000 choices every day – 226 on food alone. What if we could help make one of those choices easier for you?

Many workplaces participate in various workplace giving campaigns and by making the choice to participate you can make a gift to Adoption Network Cleveland.

Each month, you can designate a certain amount of money to go to a charity of your choice. No reminders to make the payments, no decisions on whether to write a check or use a credit card – an amount you decided is taken out of your paycheck every month (or in one lump sum if you decide to do it all and once). And we will be able to plan on those funds to support our programs and services for the adoption and foster care community.

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

Donations to United Way NON-PARTNER Agencies (such as Adoption Network Cleveland) 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 or \$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.

And if you designate Adoption Network Cleveland, please let us know so we can be on the lookout for your designation. Your support is so important to the programs and services for our community. We thank you if you have made the choice to give in the past. If you choose to designate in the future, we hope you will consider Adoption Network Cleveland when workplace giving campaigns kick off in the fall.

Thank You!

Our Endowment: An Investment in the Future

How do you make a dollar work hard and long into the future? Make a donation to the **Adoption Network Cleveland William N. Skirball Endowment Fund!** Every donation provides vital funds to support many things including programs and services that serve all those touched by adoption and foster care. You can contribute to this fund at any time through the **Cleveland Foundation**. "Adoption Network Cleveland Endowment Fund" is listed on the pull-down menu next to "Give to a Fund."

<https://www.clevelandfoundation.org/give-now/>

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

BUESCHER FAMILY FUND

created by Board Member Lisa A. Buescher
and Brendan Buescher
LISA AND JEFFREY KAPP

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

CareSource Foundation, Case Western Reserve University, Children's Guild, Citizen's Bank, Faye Kaplan Charitable Foundation, Martin D. & Mary J. Walker Charitable Foundation, MetroHealth Medical System, Sherwin-Williams Foundation; Van Epp Fund

Individual Donations

Anonymous (2), Janine A., Susan B., Bertha and Clinton B., Alice and Larry B., Marissa B., Gregg B., Chao C., Molly C., Jeffrey C., Joyce D., Cheryl D., Tom D., Buffy and Brent D., Crag D., Robert D., Ian F., Danielle G.L., George G. and Michael F., Tamara G., Elaine H., Tony H., Marc H., John H., Susan H., Susan, H., Jacquilynn H., Dell J., Alicia L., Michael M., Jackie and John M., Daniel M., Virginia M., Christine M., Sarah M., Anita M., Chelsea M., Moyo M., Cheryl M., Peter N., Theresa P., Stephen P., Rosanne P., Tammy P., Ryan R., Racael R., Darnella R., Elain S., Suzanne S., Phil T., Jennifer T., John and Kelly U., John W., Amanda W., Thomas W., David Y.

In Kind

Linda B., Printing Concepts, Linda S., Sharon T., James R.

In Honor / Memory

Carol Flexer and Dr. Robert Flexer in memory of Florence Goodman and Harriet Ratner Sheldon and Nan Gisser in honor of Dan Gisser



Mary Adler
John Brackeen

John Bathen and John Brackeen
Carolyn Riemer and John Brett
Michael and Danielle Cogrove

In honor of the marriage of George Graham and Michael Fleenor:

Barbara Dyson
Darlene English
Grace Graham
Karen Graham
Michael Lawrence
Kathryn Mahon

Ellen Armour and Barbee Majors

Betsie Norris
Wesley Riemer
Rachel Roberts
Linda Schellentrager
Misty Seal
Frederick Toms
Fred and Susan Toms

Donations through June 17, 2016

The above reflects donations from March 1, 2016 to May 31, 2016

MEMBERSHIP

A Warm Welcome to Our New and Renewing Members

Anonymous (2), Paula and Christopher A., Maria A., Gary B., Alice and Larry B., Richard B., Monica and Cory B., Catholic Charities, Alice C., Philip C., Cheryl Lynn C., Barbara C., Adrienne C., Cara C., Katrina D., Maureen D., Susan D., Penny E., Danielle G.L., Rosemarie G., Dan and Kathleen G., Ted G., Timothy and Laura H. Carol and Terrance H., Christine H., Maret H., Monica H., Jeanne H., Beth H., Ellen H., Chondra H., Marilyn J., Mary Lou J., Natalie J., Faye K., Laurene K., Holly and Joe K., Molly M., Hannah M., Betty M., Brenda M.B., Gemma M., Darren M., Barbara M., Debbie M., National Youth Advocate Program, Shirley N., Dora O., Ohio Guidestone, Nia P., Diane and James P., Kristina P., Rainbow Babies and Children's Hospital, Wendy R., Joanne S., Ellen S., Joan S., Anne and Jerry S., Stark County Job and Family Services, Bryant S., Paige S., Summit County Children's Services, Christine T., Melissa T., Deborah T., UMCH Family Services, Claudia V., Chip and Holly V., Daniel W., Pamela W., Justin and Beth Z., Jennifer Z.V.

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
4614 Prospect Avenue, Suite 550
Cleveland, OH 44103

ADOPTION
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Educate • Support • Advocate
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BEFORE JULY 1, 2016



www.AdoptionNetwork.org

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

Two Adoptive Family *Special Events* in July!

Adoptive Family and Youth **Creative Gathering**

Saturday, July 16
1:30 – 3:00 PM

Parent participants will engage in creative outlets and education on self care. Youth participants will engage in theater games to explore emotional expression, teamwork, peer connection, and confidence.
RSVP: Cassandra.Fye@AdoptionNetwork.org

Adoptive Family **Information Night**

Monday, July 25
6:00 – 7:30 PM

A chance to learn about our post adoption services and programs available to adoptive families, including our upcoming Parallel Groups. Childcare available. RSVP: Ayanna.Abi-Kyles@AdoptionNetwork.org

Save the Date!

Adoption Network Cleveland **Annual Meeting**

Thursday evening, November 10, 2016
Featuring a Keynote Presentation 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

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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