



ADOPTION  
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Educate • Support • Advocate  
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spring

# guidance

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF ADOPTION NETWORK CLEVELAND

EST. 1988

## Building a Bridge to Family

– THREE-PART SERIES –  
PART ONE: NAVIGATOR AND  
POST ADOPTION SERVICES





FROM THE DIRECTOR  
 BETSIE NORRIS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

## "Family" in the Context of Adoption

Dear Friends,

**Building a Bridge to Family** is a concept that grew when we were considering the impact of the programs and services of Adoption Network Cleveland when developing a theme for our annual *Creating Futures Benefit and Silent Auction* to be held on April 29th. "Family" can mean multiple things, of course, depending on the lens. We will continue the exploration from three perspectives in our Spring, Summer and Fall issues of *Guidance*.

With this issue we begin with adoptive family stories which showcase our Adoption Navigator and award-winning Post Adoption programming. The Summer issue will explore adoptees and their sense of family from both their adoptive and (sometimes newly reconnected) birth families; and we'll also hear from teens in foster care who are waiting for a permanent family, and how the relationship with their mentors can mean family to them in many ways.

In the Fall issue, we will hear from birthparents who are recalculating family after reuniting with their adult children after decades of separation and also we will look at the world of family in open adoption from the perspective of younger birthparents of minor children being parented by others.

**Building a Bridge to Family** – by providing support, education and advocacy to all these vantage points – is what makes Adoption Network Cleveland tick. If you'd like to share your story with us, send an email to: [Betsie.Norris@AdoptionNetwork.org](mailto:Betsie.Norris@AdoptionNetwork.org).

Additionally – it is the time of year when we are recruiting new board members. If you have an interest in serving as a volunteer in this way, drop me a line at [Betsie.Norris@AdoptionNetwork.org](mailto:Betsie.Norris@AdoptionNetwork.org). If you're interested in other ways of volunteering, we have many opportunities with our committees – including Finance, Public Policy, Programs, Special Events, and Outreach and Development. If you have an expertise in any of these areas, we'd sincerely appreciate your involvement.

In the spirit of truth,  
 Betsie

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**Join us!**  
**Adoption Network Cleveland**  
**2016 Creating Futures**  
 BENEFIT & SILENT AUCTION

**BUILDING A BRIDGE TO FAMILY**

**WHEN**  
 Friday, April 29, 2016  
 6:30pm-9:30pm  
 VIP Reception begins at 5:30pm

**WHERE**  
 Music Box Supper Club  
 1148 Main Avenue  
 Cleveland, Ohio

**HIGHLIGHTS**  
 Live Music by Maura Rogers and the Bellows  
 Heavy Hors d'oeuvres  
 Signature Drink  
 Silent Auction Featuring Unique Experiences and Gifts

**RAFFLE!**  
 Enter for a chance to win a Microsoft Surface Pro 3.  
 For more info - <http://bit.ly/CFsurfaceRAFFLE>  
 Thank you to MCPc for the Surface Pro donation.

Visit <http://bit.ly/CFBSA2016> to purchase tickets.  
 Visit [www.AdoptionNetwork.org](http://www.AdoptionNetwork.org) to learn more about the programs and services of Adoption Network Cleveland.

Thank you to our Sponsors



## Family Portraits!



Gina Gayle, photojournalist and multimedia storyteller, and Adoption Network Cleveland Board Member, will be in our office on Saturday, April 30th from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm to take family photos as a fundraiser for the organization. The cost will be \$25 per family appointment (appointments last about 20 mins). The family will receive one digital photo (other photos may be available for purchase if the family wishes).

Proceeds go to support the programs and services of Adoption Network Cleveland. Go to [AdoptionNetwork.org](http://AdoptionNetwork.org) to schedule your appointment.

For more information about Gina's work, go to: [www.ginagayle.wix.com/perfectportraits](http://www.ginagayle.wix.com/perfectportraits).

## Dinner Out, Support Us

On April 7th, take your family, invite a friend, or enjoy a date night while helping out your favorite non-profit! Choolaah Indian BBQ in Beachwood will be holding a fundraiser for Adoption Network Cleveland. A portion of all sales on April 7th will go to us. *Please stop by and mention our name!*

**Thursday, April 7, 2016**

**11:00 am to 8:00 pm**



**Choolaah Indian BBQ**  
 27100 Chagrin Blvd.  
 Beachwood, OH 44122

## Adoptee Journeys Coming – Watch for Details

Our workshop series for adult adoptees will be offered in three sessions in May and June. As of press date, topic discussions are being developed by licensed, professional leaders and/or triad members, who understand the core issues of adoption who will lead the sessions. You can choose to attend one or all. Watch for details to come via email, website and social media. If you are interested in a particular topic for one of the sessions, please send an email to: [Amy.Lomis@AdoptionNetwork.org](mailto:Amy.Lomis@AdoptionNetwork.org).

## Advocacy Continues

During April, we will be traveling to Columbus to meet with Ohio legislators in the 131st General Assembly to share the needs of those impacted by adoption and foster care.

This grass-roots effort helps to educate our political leaders and it gives an opportunity to share our public policy agenda. We will be giving them each chocolate to fill the jars we delivered last year.

To see our public policy agenda, go to our website or [bit.ly/ancPublicPolicy](http://bit.ly/ancPublicPolicy).



## COVER STORY

## Building a Bridge to Family

PART ONE – NAVIGATOR AND POST ADOPTION SERVICES

## Adoption Network Cleveland's Parallel Groups Made a Huge Impact on My Son and Me!

By Cynthia Robinson, Adoptive Parent, Adoption Network Cleveland Member



I was introduced to Adoption Network Cleveland's Adoptive Family and Youth Support Group about three years ago when I was seeking some support to help in the parenting of my youngest child. I have been a foster mom and adoptive mom for many years, but parenting my son has, at times, had me stumped. The compassion of Ayanna, the group coordinator, has been a Godsend to me.

At one of the parent group meetings last summer, I learned about the upcoming *Adoptive Family Parallel Group Therapeutic Educational Series* to be held in the fall. My son has been having difficulty with the knowledge of being adopted and not understanding "why he was adopted" which brought on some angst around the house. I was anxious to explore deeper into what the adoption experience meant to him and was excited to learn about this opportunity.

The program for me was so enlightening, even as an experienced adoptive mom. In a "parallel" setting, the parents were in one class with professional and peer leaders and the children were in another class. It was a warm environment where I felt free to speak openly about the struggles of being a mom of a child with issues around adoption. I was given tools to help him and to also better understand his vantage point.

I know his questions and concerns were addressed by his group leaders, too. Maybe the biggest takeaway for him is that he learned that he is not alone. It wasn't all a heavy load – he had "fun and silly times" (as he described to me) with the other adoptees as well.

Thank you to Adoption Network Cleveland for providing the Parallel Groups series and to give us this opportunity to have such a positive, learning experience together.

For Cynthia's full story, go to [AdoptionNetwork.org/blog](http://AdoptionNetwork.org/blog)



**NEXT SERIES! Orientation: Tuesday, April 26 – 6:30 to 7:30 pm**  
**Tuesday evenings – six weeks: May 3 to June 7, 2016**

Adoption Network Cleveland  
 Adoptive Family  
**Parallel Groups**  
 A Therapeutic Educational Series  
 For pre-teen and teen adoptees and their parents

The program is designed to help adoptive families become aware of, recognize, and understand the issues and challenges experienced by many adoptive families. Parent groups and adoptee groups meet separately and simultaneously. Groups facilitated by licensed professionals and peer leaders. Topics are covered through experiential activities, group work, and discussion.

For more information and to register, contact: [Ayanna.Abi-Kyles@AdoptionNetwork.org](mailto:Ayanna.Abi-Kyles@AdoptionNetwork.org)

## Getting Personal About Our Staff

**JULIUS JACKSON** is our Adoption Navigator and Training Coordinator. He has been working with prospective adoptive families for over 10 years at Adoption Network Cleveland. Serving as an additional support to the adoption agency social worker, Julius gives personal attention to guide families and reduce barriers as they navigate through the adoption process.

Julius is also active in the work of fathering initiatives in Cleveland and understands its importance because of his personal story as a single dad raising three

children on his own. After his children became adults, he met his wife Sharonda while on the job at Adoption Network Cleveland. Together, they are the parents of six children.

**AYANNA ABI-KYLES** has been our Program Coordinator, Post Adoption for seven years. Ayanna's personal story informs her work with adoptive parents, many of whom have adopted from foster care.

At the age of 9, Ayanna was told that she was actually the foster child of her family and that she would be leaving the only family she ever knew. She was given no chance to

say goodbye or ever see that family again.

She moved into the home of her biological grandmother – a woman she had never met. She also learned she had a biological brother who had been living in other foster homes. He came to live with her and her grandmother.

As she grew, she gained confidence and solace through education. Ayanna received a Master of Divinity and Theology from Emory University in Atlanta, and a master's in counseling from Argosy University in Atlanta.

Ayanna and her husband, Lutalo, are the parents of a daughter, Kai, who recently graduated from Denison University.

## Guiding Us As New Parents

By Phil Chan and Chad Hollis, Adoptive Parents and Members

Finding Adoption Network Cleveland was the best thing that happened to us. We had decided that we wanted to adopt, but were unsure of



where to start. First, we started looking online for information then quickly got overwhelmed with all the choices.

*Adoption 101: Where Do I Begin?* really helped us figure out where to start and led us to our agency and eventually our daughter. We are now the proud parents of an amazing little girl. We feel so blessed for all the wonderful people at Adoption Network Cleveland for helping us along our adoption journey. We really appreciated the help of Julius, the Adoption Navigator, who helped us look at the situation clearly and provided guidance as we waited to be picked by a birthmother.

We have enjoyed going to the General Support and Discussion Meetings as well. It feels great to be in a room full of loving and supportive people who have all been touched by adoption in one way or another.

We learned early on in our training classes that an open adoption was the best thing for our future child as it helps the child to know who they are and where they came from. We feel extremely blessed to have an amazing open relationship with our daughter's birthmother and grandmother.

The idea of an open adoption can be scary, but once you realize that an open adoption means that more people get to know and love your child, you realize it is an amazing gift you can give to your child. Parenting is for the long haul and openness help build a grounded future for the young adoptee.

*Adoption Network Cleveland's Adoption Navigator program works with prospective adoptive parents and hosts a quarterly workshop Adoption 101: Where Do I Begin? to explore paths to adoption – the next one will be on Saturday, May 14. If you're interested in learning more, contact Adoption Navigator Julius Jackson at [Julius.Jackson@AdoptionNetwork.org](mailto:Julius.Jackson@AdoptionNetwork.org).*

## Grateful for the Transracial Connections

By Krysia Orłowski, Adoptive Mother, Transracial Adoptive Family Parent Leader, and Adoption Network Cleveland Board Member

Outside, children spin cartwheels across the lawn. Upstairs vibrates with the thuds and shouts of boys playing indoor hockey. And around the table parents snuggle fidgeting toddlers, set out snacks and trade stories.

On the surface, this seems like any other gathering of friends with kids on an unusually warm winter Saturday. But the *Weaving Cultures Transracial Adoptive Family Group* is no ordinary playgroup.

Founded in 2012 by Adoption Network Cleveland, the group is intended for adoptive families in which the child's race/ethnicity is different from the adoptive parent's race/ethnicity. The group gathers monthly in a fun social setting, usually a park or a member's home, where kids can play, parents can talk, and everyone eats.

"The Weaving Cultures Transracial Group has been a fantastic way for our family to interact with other families like ours," says Danielle Cosgrove, mom of two boys. "I love how it happens organically in a casual setting where my husband and I can connect with other parents and our kids can just hang out and play with kids like them."

There are issues and challenges unique to being a mixed-race family. The *Weaving Cultures Transracial Adoptive Family Group* aims to provide a supportive environment to help families confront these issues and challenges. Children benefit from meeting other children with similar experiences and families like their own. Adoptive parents benefit by having a space to gather and share their stories, trade resources and strategies, and sometimes vent frustrations.

George Graham initially spearheaded the group with other parents while an employee at Adoption Network Cleveland. "It was a personal passion of mine. I had talked to a number of parents who had adopted transracially and who were looking for a group that would offer peer support for their kids as well as support for themselves as parents. Those families formed the core of the group."

Adds Anne Mueller, adoptive mom of two, "The Weaving Cultures group offers me the opportunity to connect and share experiences with other parents on issues of race, adoption, and transracial adoption in a safe setting."

*Adoption Network Cleveland's Weaving Cultures Adoptive Family Group meets on the second Saturday of each month. If you're interested in learning more, contact Krysia Orłowski at [krysia\\_orlowski@hotmail.com](mailto:krysia_orlowski@hotmail.com) or Ayanna Abi-Kyles, Program Manager, Post Adoption at [Ayanna.Abi-Kyles@AdoptionNetwork.org](mailto:Ayanna.Abi-Kyles@AdoptionNetwork.org).*





## PROGRAM EVENTS

**Annual Mentor Appreciation Event**

Some people enter your life and change your whole direction.

**Saturday, April 16, 2016**  
1:00-3:00 pm**Dave & Busters**  
25735 1st Street, Westlake, OH 44145RSVP by April 8 to [Robert.Gibbons@AdoptionNetwork.org](mailto:Robert.Gibbons@AdoptionNetwork.org)**THIS IS A FREE EVENT FOR ALL OUR MENTORS AND THEIR MENTEES**

Adoption Network Cleveland's

**Annual Birthmother's Day Ceremony**

On every Mother's Day weekend, we come together to honor, support, and recognize the unique journey of birthmothers. Join us for a moving program of poetry, music, and readings on this special day of remembrance.

**Saturday, May 7, 2016**10:00 to 10:30 am – Check-In  
10:30 to 11:30 am – Ceremony  
11:30 am to 12:30 pm – Reception**The Woman's Club Pavilion (indoor)**  
at Lakewood Park

14532 Lake Road, Lakewood

RSVP by May 4 to [Amy.Lomis@AdoptionNetwork.org](mailto:Amy.Lomis@AdoptionNetwork.org)  
For more info: [bit.ly/ancbmomceremony](http://bit.ly/ancbmomceremony)**FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC**

“My husband came with me, we both felt it was one of the most moving experiences we had ever been through. I left something at that ceremony, I left my guilt and shame in that room.”

Christine Hazlinger  
See page 9

## KUDOS

## Thank You to Our Volunteers

David Butts, Julie Coppens, Cathy Doyle, Becky Drinnen, Greg Freeman, Tamara Green, Sarah Hastings, Tim Komara, and Erica Curry VanEe, for serving on our Annual Adoption Gathering conference committee all year long. Additional thank yous to Betsie Norris, Amy Lomis, Kathryn Mahon, Linda Schellentrager and Jennifer Zisk-Vitron to make the conference a success.

Linda Bellini, Jeff Costello, Amanda Reno, Dottie Klemm, Becky Drinnen, Susan Meek, Joan Soucie, Becky Drinnen, Amy Lomis, Tom Rogat, Betsie Norris, Jean Strauss, and Steve Kelly for being conference presenters and facilitators; and to Denise Barone, Maria Pettet, Sherri Appleton, Tom Dent, Adrienne Leonard, Alison Bedford-Wilson, Elaine Hagan, Jim and Pam Deskins, Nancy Rapazsky, and Nancy Soos for being conference panelists.

Jessica Forsythe of Little Hinka Design for volunteering graphic design services for our *Creating Futures Benefit and Silent Auction* invitation; and to Aviva Vincent, Shirley Schellentrager, and Anne Mueller for preparing our *Creating Futures* invitation for mailing. Cathy and Jim Belk, Marissa and Edd Brydle, Lisa and Brendan Buescher, Debbie and Matt Crawford, Kitt and Mark Rossi for being our host committee; and to Lisa Buescher, Marissa Brydle, Cathy Belk, Tony Harris and Aviva Vincent for serving on our Special Events Committee.

Linda Bellini, Dottie Klemm, Adrienne Leonard, Claire Shands-Waag, and Joan Soucie for facilitating our fall Adoptive Family Parallel Groups and the families who attended.

Aviva Vincent for joining our Outreach and Development and Special Events Committees.

Traci Onders, Krysia Orlowski, and Nancy Rapazsky for joining our Program Committee.

*CCDCFS In Recognition ...*

Laura Fox, Patrina Hollowell-Martin, Kirstin Dibbern, Jennifer Burnett, Carley Webber, Shawn Green, Sharna LeFloria-Daniels, and Erin King for referring teens to the Cooking with Cuyahoga's Kids program.

Jean McEwan for making program calls to our adoptive families.

Julie Eccleston, Sarah Jean Rieveschl, Bevin Cheyenne Mracke, Kara D'Angelos, Monica Siedler, Billie Kyriadkides, Anne Kyriadkides, and the Junior League of Cleveland for partnering with our *Cooking with Cuyahoga's Kids* event in February.

Darlene Davis and the Maple Heights Library for co-sponsoring our *Get Real* groups.

Brian Campolieti and Carol Hayward for facilitating a topic discussion at the Lake County General Support and Discussion Meeting; and to Estes Turner and Dottie Klemm facilitating a topic discussion at the Heights General Support and Discussion Meeting and all who attended.

Kay Williams for joining our search volunteer team.

Rose Curtin and Steve Kelly for expanding our General Support and Discussion Meetings to the Cincinnati area.

Monica Bornstein, Traci Onders, Jey Ebron, Nikki Locker, Modestiy Settles, Jennifer Lis, Katisha Smith, Jamie St. Clair, Catherine Pizzarro, Cassie Hollo, Kristen Hoffert, Beth Martin, and Elaine Gingerich for baking for our programs.

Aviva Vincent, Gia and Quishann Johnson, Marsha Randle, Robbi Fryer, and Hannah Middleton for helping with our Annual Holiday Party.

Hands-On Northeast Ohio for helping with childcare at our monthly Post Adoption group.

Mary Warnkey for helping with Community Calendars.

Deb Zeledonis for being our Wednesday receptionist.

## Cooking With Cuyahoga's Kids

By Cassey Fye, Program Coordinator, Youth Services

Ten local teens in foster care, at risk of aging out, spent a Saturday in February participating in a partnership program with the Junior League of Cleveland and Adoption Network Cleveland. In its fifth year, *Cooking with Cuyahoga's Kids* is a program aimed to provide youth with specific life skills, including making healthy food choices, basic cooking techniques, and etiquette to increase their social skills, self-worth, and self-sufficiency.

The teens learned about healthy food options and how to maintain a balanced diet.

This spring's activity was focused on crockpot cooking on a budget. In small groups, the teens were able to decide a meal of their choice to cook, and were given a budget to then purchase the items they needed to create that dish. Three delicious meals were made and enjoyed by the group.

Seven Junior League volunteers participated in the day's activities, including facilitating, educating, and supporting the teens through the presentation, shopping, and cooking activities.

Thank you  
to the  
Junior  
League of  
Cleveland!



*Photos: Youth shopping for ingredients for their recipes with the help from the Junior League volunteers. The next event will be Saturday, May 14th and will be at Edwins Restaurant in Shaker Heights for a cooking demonstration.*

## ALL IN!

By Lisa M. Bartlette, Social Work Graduate Student,  
Case Western Reserve University Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences

Adoption Network Cleveland was my first and, truly, only choice for my second-year field placement. I came to Adoption Network Cleveland already familiar with Betsie Norris' story, her commitment to providing advocacy, education, and support to people touched in any way by adoption, and to some degree, with the Search and Reunion Program coordinated by Amy Lomis. After interviewing with Amy last spring, I realized that Adoption Network Cleveland offered so much more and that, if accepted as an intern, I could get involved in as many aspects of the organization as I desired.

I was ALL IN! Thankfully, Amy and Adoption Network Cleveland agreed.

Fast forward one year, and it is hard to believe my internship is nearing completion. Through listening to the stories of adoptees, birthparents, adoptive parents, extended family members, or significant others at General Support and Discussion Meetings; joining newly formed families in the Post Adoption group; attending Adoption Network Cleveland-sponsored educational trainings, such as Adoption Awareness Coalition Workshops, Ohio Tier 1 Adoption Assessor Trainings, and Permanency Champions Mentoring Orientation; assisting birthparents and adoptees in searches for each other; and researching public policy related to open adoption in Ohio, my understanding of issues related to adoption has expanded exponentially. These issues include not only matters of law, policy, and programming, but more so, matters of the heart.

At the heart of Adoption Network Cleveland, I discovered genuine care, commitment, and compassion for all members of the adoption constellation and foster care community. It is gratifying to see effective and meaningful collaboration between a local nonprofit organization such as Adoption Network Cleveland and Cuyahoga County's Division of Children and Family Services. To me, this is what social work is all about: serving vulnerable populations by accessing all possible resources, working hand-in-hand with individual and corporate volunteers and public and private entities, while merging grass-roots with professional efforts. Truly, we are ALL IN this together!

Thank you, Betsie Norris, Amy Lomis, and Adoption Network Cleveland staff, board, and volunteers, for exposing me to such a wonderful organization and so many precious people.

*If you're interested in learning more about becoming an intern, contact: [Kara.Laughlin@AdoptionNetwork.org](mailto:Kara.Laughlin@AdoptionNetwork.org).*

Internship  
Reflection



## IN THE COMMUNITY

## Talking Adoption Journeys at the Workplace

*By Tony Harris, Adoption Network Cleveland Board Member*

Everyone's life is filled with twists and turns. Just when you think you know where you're headed, and what's ahead, things change. For the majority of my life being an adoptee was information that was closely guarded. While my experience was overwhelmingly positive, I just never discussed that part of my life. However, over the last several years I've continually come into contact with adoptees and adults who had grown up in foster care.

All these "chance" encounters led to joining the board of Adoption Network Cleveland, which then led to participation in "Opening Day" in Columbus. Participation in Opening Day led to a TV interview. The interview led to numerous co-workers sharing their adoption connections with me. All of that led to an Adoption Awareness event hosted by a couple of Employee Resource Groups at my place of employment – Progressive Corporation – in conjunction with Adoption Network Cleveland and Cuyahoga County Division of Children and Family Services.

Our goal was to bring awareness to our co-workers about the services available to anyone who was interested in or had a connection to adoption or foster care. Seems simple enough right? Not really. We had to engage the Human Resources and the Social Responsibility departments.

There were several twists turns and obstacles to navigate in order to pull the event together. Thankfully, the team assembled to plan the event was full of great individuals committed to achieving its goal. We were told "sounds like a great event and there is a segment of employees who could benefit greatly from this event, however, we can't provide a non-profit organization exclusive access to employees." So we had to find a partnering organization.

We were advised that our diverse population of employees really needed the services and support organization like this provided, however, they "can only share information and informational documents but couldn't solicit donations or volunteers."

Finding volunteers to participate in a panel discussion was fairly simple. Meeting the needs of the participants was another matter entirely.

The event was held in a common area of the corporate headquarters.

Some panelists were very comfortable sharing no matter who was listening. Other participants, understandably, didn't mind sharing as long as it was within the safe space of an audience they believed they could trust. Some didn't want to be photographed. Others didn't want to be quoted.

Consider your workplace Affinity Group setting to connect employees touched by adoption.



The only thing I was certain of, the event would be emotionally charged. I nailed that one. We almost ran out of tissue.

The panel was comprised of representatives of the adoption constellation and adoption professionals. Questions and comments ran the spectrum of adoption-related issues. It was an amazing time of sharing and support, and offering it at our workplace made it an easy fit into everyone's schedule.

At the end of the day, I think we achieved our goal. In the words of one of the participants, the event "provided an informative session for those interested in the impact and experiences of adoption (and foster care). It allowed for a welcoming environment for people to ask questions – either based on curiosity or interest. The ability to hear several perspectives provided well-rounded and open-minded viewpoints."

*If you're interested hosting an information session at your workplace, contact: [Kathryn.Mahon@AdoptionNetwork.org](mailto:Kathryn.Mahon@AdoptionNetwork.org).*

**Thank You for Inviting Us to Speak and Share!**

MANDEL SCHOOL OF APPLIED SOCIAL SCIENCES  
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LAKE COUNTY GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY



## A Letter to My Daughter

By Christine Hazlinger, Birthmother, Adoption Network Cleveland Member

I walked around for 27 years with a hole in my heart. The unconditional love of my husband couldn't fill it nor could the love of family and friends. When I was 22 I gave birth to you then I surrendered you for adoption.

The choice was based on threats from my parents, no support, financial worries, fear, and the lack of confidence that I was capable of raising a child when my life was so unmanageable. I had a C-section so not only did I have a scar on my heart but one on my belly to remind me of you, not that I needed any external reminders.

Back then they kept you in the hospital for five glorious days. Then the dreaded day came when they took you. When they came I screamed and cried so loud it bellowed thru the hallways. I fell in love with you in the short time we were together, I wanted to spend every minute with you.

Thirty days later when I signed the surrender papers I saw you one more time. You cried the entire time we were together and I couldn't stop your tears. I was sure it was a sign you didn't want to be with me, that I would be a terrible Mom! So I signed the papers and left with dread and heartache.

I had a tough life the last 28 years. I have had highs and lows and hit rock bottom in 1996. I could no longer drink away the loss of you. I got help and began to forgive myself for giving you away. I knew I gave you an opportunity for a better life, at least I hoped and prayed I did. I chose your parents based on a letter I received from them. They were professionals but the main reason I chose them was because they had a 5-year-old girl. I grew up with five older brothers and always wanted an older sister to teach me things and to confide in.

Throughout the years I had conflicting thoughts about contacting you, many of them were fear based.

I thought if you wanted to meet me you would look for me. I worried that barging into your life could cause more harm than good. My next thought was that if I didn't look for you then you would think I didn't care, which was far from the truth! My niece was adopted and she was named after you. Another fear was since it was a closed adoption I had no idea where you

were. Sometimes not knowing things is more comfortable than getting the information.

After 20 years of sobriety and plenty of counseling I started seeing things in a different perspective – I believe everything happens for a reason. On Easter of 2014 I was having dinner with my in-laws and my husband's cousin told me about the adoption laws being changed! Thank God I never kept you a secret, you were always part of my world. She emailed me the website and I listened to a talk show. Betsie Norris from Adoption Network of Cleveland was the guest speaker. She talked about her excitement that adoptee's birth records would soon become available to the adoptee!

She encouraged birthparents to call with updated information so if adoptees were searching they would have easy access to current information. I gathered up the courage to call and I was blessed to speak with a wonderful woman, Linda Bellini. I told her I was calling to update my records and after talking she asked if I thought about searching for you. I told her about all my fears, and that I worried you would be very angry with me. Linda assured me that many found adoptees are thrilled their birthparents looked for them. By the end of the conversation I was so comfortable with Linda that I was warming up to the idea of searching for you. She encouraged me to go to a Birthmother's Support Group meeting and told me they also had experienced counselors available, if needed. I took her up on both and was glad I did!

After that I attended the Birthmother's Day Ceremony. My husband came with me and we both felt it was one of the most moving experiences. I left my guilt and shame in that room. I was reminded of what a courageous and loving thing I had done by trying to give you a better life than the one I could provide.

Then the search was on! It didn't take long, between Linda and Amy Lomis they found you within a week! The joy and relief I felt is unexplainable to this day. I found out you were alive and recently married!

*Continued*

### 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 (if you live in NE Ohio, Columbus, NW Ohio, Dayton, or Cincinnati, please attend in person – if not, please join our online

“Virtual Webcam”). 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](http://bit.ly/ANCgenmeet)

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

#### RECOGNIZING MEMBERS WHO HAVE RECENTLY COMPLETED SEARCHES:

Kelly, Benita, Rita, Natalie, Nicole, Anne, Darren, Scott, Kendra, Rene'e, Linda, David, James, Linda, Matthew



Search and Reunion  
Continued from previous page

Then I wrote the most difficult and exciting letter I have ever written, introducing myself to you. You emailed Linda the day you received my letter, your husband wanted you to verify the information.

Then came the waiting period which felt like torture, I was stalking the mailman and had my phone close by. Six weeks after you received the letter you sent me an email. There was the letter I had been dreaming about, the letter that started to unfold the mystery of who my daughter was.

You were open with me and revealed so much of your life! I was thrilled and in a daze that you were “real.” I wanted to meet you right away. God had other plans. You were fearful about meeting in person and I understood. I was getting support and I felt prepared for the next step – you were in shock that this was happening!

We haven’t met yet, almost two years later. You have a child and I am now a grandmother. We write frequently. I know you, I feel connected to you, and I love you more than I already did which I didn’t think was possible.

You are incredible and I am so proud of the person you have become! I am awed by our similarities, our likes and dislikes. I am encouraged by the fact that I was wrong about so many things – including about you hating me. I am confident that one day I will hug you and hold my beautiful grandson.

Until then I will rejoice in the fact that you are a part of my life today, that I know how you think and feel about things and that you have shared a part of your world with me!

All my love,  
Your birthmother

*PS - A huge thank you to the staff at Adoption Network Cleveland. You all had a part in changing my life for the better, and healing that hole in my heart.*

## FUND DEVELOPMENT

# Bidding or Bowling:

## Special Events are a Fun Way to Support Adoption Network Cleveland

The generous support of our donors make sure the programs and services of Adoption Network Cleveland are here any time someone needs them. But supporting those programs and services doesn’t just happen through donations. You can also support Adoption Network Cleveland through attending a special event.

We would like to invite you to an event on April 29th you won’t want to miss – our annual *Creating Futures Benefit and Silent Auction*.

We use these valuable funds throughout the organization including providing support to our Post Adoption Program, Adult Adoptee and Birthparent Program, the Adoption Navigator Program, and the programs that support youth in foster care.

At our *Creating Futures Benefit and Silent Auction* you may want to bid on unique silent auction items, such as an autographed Bruce Springsteen guitar, spa packages, fun trips, and art from some amazing local artists. Or you can buy raffle tickets for the chance to win a Microsoft Surface Pro 3 – go to [bit.ly/CFsurfaceRAFFLE](http://bit.ly/CFsurfaceRAFFLE). For more event information, visit [bit.ly/CFBSA2016](http://bit.ly/CFBSA2016).

Later in the year you can also join us for *Lanes 4 Change*, the family-friendly bowling event held in August. And there are other small fundraising events that happen throughout the year where we’d love to see you.

Whether you bid or bowl, special events are a fun and unique way to support Adoption Network Cleveland while having a great time with other members like 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](mailto: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*

*LUANNE AND KEN LASHUTKA*

*EDIE AND BOB NELSON*

*MARIANNE NOVY*

*KAREN ROSENBERG*

*KATHLEEN AND DON SOKOLIK*

##### BUESCHER FAMILY FUND

created by Board Member Lisa A. Buescher and Brendan Buescher

*LISA AND BRENDAN BUESCHER*

*BARLOW BUESCHER*

##### KATTERHEINRICH-CRIST FAMILY FUND

created by Leanne Katterheinrich-Crist

##### LASHUTKA FAMILY FUND

created by Ken and Luanne Lashutka

*KEN AND LUANNE LASHUTKA*

##### DON E. AND KATHLEEN M. SOKOLIK FAMILY FUND

created by Don and Kathleen Sokolik

*DON AND KATHY SOKOLIK*

##### VAN EPP FAMILY FUND

created by Murray and Susan Van Epp

### Corporate/Organizations and Foundations

Anonymous, Benesch, Friedlander, Coplan & Aranoff, Bonomo Family Foundation, Citizens Bank, Episcopal Community Services Foundation, Hartzell Propeller Inc. (Matching), Lubrizol Foundation, Aaron Ockerman Consulting

### Individual Donations

Nancy and Walt A., Andrea A., Margaret A., Cathy B., Bertha and Clinton B., Gerald and Susan B., Conni B., Jennifer and Tim B., Molly C., Carol C., Craig D. and Sandy S., Donna and Jeff F., Danielle and Jared G.L., Mary G., Gina G., Frank and Debbi G., Kathleen G., Betsy and Mark G., Sheldon and Nan G., Ben G., Elaine H., Tony H., Jeanne H., Alyce and Reese J., Dottie K., Martin K., Susan M., Peggy K. and Jeff M., Kristen and Keith K., Luanne and Ken L., Malia L. and Margot D., Tracy and David L., Martha L. and Piet v., Alicia L., John and Christine M., Annie M., Virginia M., Anita M., Stephanie M., Mathew N., Daniel and Lorraine N., Betsie N., Brenda N., Margaret P., Robert P., Barbara R., Kurt R. and Kathy B., Lisa R., Elizabeth S., Elaine S., Patrick S., Fareed S., Shawn and Berry S., Catherine S., Kathleen and Don S., Ellen S., Melissa S., Beth S., Mimi T., Kaitlyn T., Claire T., Jamie T., Candi W., John W., Rona W., John W., Katharine Y., Pamela Z.

### In Kind

Anonymous, Sherri A. and Marty R., Linda B., Linda H., Employees of the Holden Arboretum and Gardens, Romito's Pizza

### In Honor / Memory

Alison Bedford-Wilson in memory of Mary Bedford  
Mary and Howard Brondfield in memory of Alan Feingold  
Carol and Robert Flexor in memory of Florence and Dave Goodman  
Rosemarie Gattozzi in memory of Beverly Ann Reid  
Robert and Helen Graham in honor of George Graham  
John Harrow in honor of Scott Crawford  
Carol and Terrance Hayward in memory of Rosella Larko  
Meaveen O'Connor in honor of Beth Degaetano  
Dale and Karen Schmauder in honor of Michael Schmauder  
Judith Stroup in honor of Laura Berendt-Alsdorf  
John and Denise Vinton in memory of Chelsea Vinton  
Magdalene Wendel & Family in honor of Linda Bellini  
Denise Ziganti in honor her mentee Mario

The above reflects donations from December 1, 2015 to February 29, 2016

## MEMBERSHIP

### A Warm Welcome to Our New and Renewing Members

Anonymous, Wendy and Shannon B., Denise B., Ken B., Debra B. and Nicole T., James B., Brian C., Candice C. and Ray R., Lois C., Julie C., Jeff C., Christopher C., Elizabeth D., Bonnie and Eugene D., Heather D. Vickie D., Rebecca D., Donna E. Elizabeth and Mike G., Bev and Rob H., Marni H., Timothy and Laura H., Louis H., Sonyika and Michael H., Janet H., Dorothy J., Natalie J., Steve K., Pam L., Jeremy L., Kathryn M., Anne M., Scott M., Kelly and Peter N., Marth and James P., Robin and Eric P., Carolyn P., Miriam R., Patricia R., George and Julie R., Ann S., David S., Kathleen and Don S., Alfredo and Shannon T., Analisa T. Estes and Diane T., Dara T., Leah and Edgar V., Dawn W.O., Deborah W., Stephanie Z.

#### 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. Participants limited to the first 10. 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](http://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) 482-2301 or [Kara.Laughlin@AdoptionNetwork.org](mailto: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](mailto:Kathryn.Mahon@AdoptionNetwork.org), call (216) 325-1000 or visit our website.



ADOPTION NETWORK CLEVELAND  
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Cleveland, OH 44103

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



**WHEN**  
Friday, April 29, 2016  
6:30 pm – 9:30 pm  
VIP Reception 5:30 pm

**WHERE**  
Music Box Supper Club  
1148 Main Avenue, Cleveland 44113

**INFO**  
[bit.ly/CFBSA2016](http://bit.ly/CFBSA2016)  
and to purchase tickets

Adoption Network Cleveland Annual  
**Summer Cookout**  
Family Fun for All Ages!

**WHEN**  
Sunday, June 12, 2016

**WHERE**  
Edgewater Park, Upper Pavilion

Join us for fun in the sun with your  
Adoption Network Cleveland friends.  
Hot dogs and hamburgers provided.  
**Please bring a side dish to share.**

RSVP:  
[Robert.Gibbons@AdoptionNetwork.org](mailto:Robert.Gibbons@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](http://www.AdoptionNetwork.org)  
(216) 325-1000

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