



ADOPTION NETWORK
CLEVELAND™



guidance

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Established 1988



A Christmas Blessing

Network Brings Reunion after 43 Years Separated by Adoption

By Tom Dent, Adoptee, Adoption Network Cleveland Member and Board Member

As I learn more about the history of adoption in the United States, I've come to realize that I was naïve as a child about the stigma placed on it by society around the time of my birth. Having grown up always knowing I was an adoptee, I never gave it much thought. In some ways, I wore it as a badge of honor. Little did I know the anguish my birthmother went through after she gave birth to me.

In my professional life, I recently sought out an opportunity to serve on the board of a non-profit organization. That's how I found Adoption Network Cleveland. As

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ADOPTION NETWORK CLEVELAND

Support, Education, Advocacy
for adoptees, birthparents,
adoptive parents,
prospective adoptive parents,
foster youth and parents,
foster care alumni
and professionals.

Changing Lives... Creating Futures



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FROM THE DIRECTOR

By Betsie Norris, Executive Director

Ohio Access to Records - Getting Closer!



Dear Friends,

As many of you know, we have been deeply involved for a long time in working to change Ohio laws regarding access to records for adult adoptees. Although we have not had an active bill in the legislature on this topic for the last few years, there has been a lot going on behind the scenes to set the stage for a successful future bill.

I'm excited to say that our work has paid off and it looks likely that we will have a bill introduced in the Ohio legislature early in 2013! The bill will deal with allowing access upon request to original birth certificates for adoptees born and adopted in Ohio between 1964 and 1996, a period during which these records are currently closed. (In Ohio the original birth certificate is available upon request to pre-1964 adoptees and in the vast majority of cases to post-1996 adult adoptees.)

We have had legislation several times on this issue since 1989 when it was first introduced. The legislature was wary to pass these bills in the 1990s, as at that point no other state had gone back to make accessible records that had previously been closed. Now several states have done just that and things have gone well.

We will be proposing that Ohio make the original birth certificate available to the adult adoptee upon request. Birthparents will be able to file a Contact Preference Form and an updated medical history which, if present, would be released as part of the file to the adoptee.

From past experience we know that the legislative path is rocky and difficult. There are often a lot of misconceptions about the issues involved in access to records. We will need **your help** in helping our legislators in Columbus understand this very personal issue. Sharing your input and experience is critical as we educate the legislature. When the bill gets introduced, it may move quickly – it will be critical for us to know who is interested in being involved. **To be on the list to get emailed updates, please go to www.AdoptionEquityOhio.org and sign up. Together we can succeed!**

In the spirit of truth,
Betsie

P.S. DON'T FORGET ABOUT OUR ANNUAL GIFT CARD DRIVE FOR LOCAL YOUTH IN CARE

Each November, we collect funds to purchase \$25 gift cards for local youth in foster care. These youth have very few opportunities to shop for themselves and very much appreciate this opportunity. 100% of funds collected for this drive is used for gift cards. If you prefer to purchase a \$25 card, please choose from easily located stores, like Target, Kmart, Walmart, T.J. Maxx, etc. If you or your group would be interested in this effort, please contact Laura.Weber@AdoptionNetwork.org. Donations need to be submitted by Tuesday, December 4th, in time for holiday giving. *Thank you!*

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This newsletter is for you: members and friends of Adoption Network Cleveland. We welcome articles, letters, poems, announcements and other input. Thank you to everyone who contributed to this issue! The deadline for the January/February newsletter is November 10.

SELECTED UPCOMING EVENTS

November is National Adoption Awareness Month!

Join us for some of these upcoming special events during November:



Annual Meeting

Keynote Presenter: Dominique Moceanu
Olympic Gold Medalist and Author of the Best-Selling Memoir *Off Balance*

Along with her gymnastics career and extraordinary life, Dominique has a compelling story about being found by a sister whom she never knew existed. Triad Advocate of the Year Awards will be presented to David Crampton and Dominique Moceanu. The Founder's Award will be presented to Lisa Buescher.

WHEN: Thursday, November 15, 2012
5:30 to 7:30 pm
WHERE: The Breen Center for the Performing Arts
2008 West 30th Street at Lorain Avenue,
Cleveland, Ohio – Free parking
COST: Free and open to the public
RSVP: Laura Weber (216) 482-2312 by Monday, November 12

Cleveland State University Michael Schwartz Library
In Partnership with Adoption Network Cleveland, Presents:

Adoption's Hidden History

Featuring the Cleveland Debut of the Documentary Film
A Girl Like Her By Ann Fessler

About Women Who Surrendered Their Children
for Adoption in the 1950s and 1960s



After the screening, join us for a panel discussion with Ann Fessler, the filmmaker; Dennis Goulden, creator of some of the historical footage; Betsie Norris and two birthmothers from the era. Ann Fessler's book *The Girls Who Went Away* will also be available for signing by Ann.

WHEN: Thursday, November 29, 2012
7:00 to 9:00 pm, Doors Open at 6:00 pm
(Meet & Greet Ann at Elements Bistro, 2300 Euclid
from 5:00 – 6:00. Tickets \$20, includes food.)
WHERE: Cleveland State University
Main Classroom Auditorium
1899 East 22nd Street, Cleveland 44115
COST: Free and open to the public
RSVP: Laura.Weber@AdoptionNetwork.org

Join Us for
Adoption Network Cleveland's

Annual Holiday Party

Food • Games • Entertainment
Space is Limited –
RSVP Early!

DATE: Friday, December 7
TIME: 6:00 to 8:00 pm
WHERE: Center for Families
& Children
4500 Euclid Avenue
Free parking off of E. 46
COST: Free
RSVP: by December 3 to
Laura.Weber@
AdoptionNetwork.org
(216) 482-2312



Staff Update

JENNIFER WINCHESTER was hired as our new Human Resources and Finance Assistant after being a temp with the organization for several months.

Welcome, Jennifer!



BETSIENORRIS, Executive Director, received The National Center for Adoption Law & Policy **Champion Award** in its inaugural year in the INDIVIDUAL category: "Outstanding individual who has made a significant contribution to child welfare practices, systems, laws, and/or policies, especially in relation to emancipating foster youth."

Congratulations, Betsie!



JULIUS JACKSON, Adoption Navigator, received a 2012 **Bridge Builders Award** from The Cuyahoga County Division of Children and Family Services for "Excellence in Fatherhood."

Congratulations, Julius!

Adoption Awareness Coalition *Annual Workshops*

You may choose to attend one or both of the workshops:

WHEN: Friday, November 16
Morning: Medical Issues in Adopted Children
9:30 am to 12:30 pm
This training helps adoption professionals and adoptive parents learn about common medical issues within adoptive families (and differences between those in international, domestic, and public system families).
Presented by:
Dr. Elaine Schulte, Cleveland Clinic Children's Hospital

Afternoon: Panel – Sharing Professional Expertise

1:30 to 4:00 pm
This training focuses on successes and trends in working with adoptive families.

Presented by:
Pat Ameling, M.A., P.C.C.; Caring for Kids
Kathryn A. Biddle, L.I.S.W.-S, R.Y.T.; Beech Brook
Regina Kupecky, L.S.W.; Attachment and Bonding Center
Zoë Breen Wood, Ph.D., M.S.W.; CWRU
Moderated by: Dottie Klemm, M.S.S.A., L.S.W.

WHERE: Independence Branch, Cuyahoga County Library
6361 Selig Drive
Independence, Ohio 44131-4926
COST: FREE to Coalition members and their families.
\$25 each session non-members
\$10 Boxed Lunch; \$10 CEUs each session
RSVP: Register online or get form at
<http://tinyurl.com/aacoalition2012>
or mail or fax completed registration form to: Adoption
Network Cleveland, ATTN: Robert "Gib" Gibbons
Gib: (216) 482-2332 • Fax: (216) 881-7510

NAVIGATOR NOTES

Snapshot of a Few Years in the Life of a Navigator with a Family

By Holly Spencer-Trueman, Program Manager, Adoption Navigation

Do you ever find yourself wondering what an Adoption Navigator can do for you as a prospective adoptive or foster family? At this stage in the process does it all seem a bit vague? Below is a snapshot of what was done for one adoptive father in an effort to create a forever family for him and what we might do for you in the future!

An Adoption Navigator was connected to a family, a single father who already had two foster children in his home. Our Navigator first contacted the Foster Home Resource Manager (FHRM) and then the family to introduce himself to him. Over the course of three years, this represents the effort he put in, alongside this family's worker, that helped create this forever family.

Navigator:

- Stayed in constant contact with FHRM and prospective father
- Created a flier of family complete with photo to present at matching meetings between workers with children who need homes and workers who have families that want children
- Made four home visits, solo and alongside FHRM to meet family and offer support
- Researched dozens of children on AdoptUSKids Ohio Photo listing seeking a match for this family
- Made 32 phone calls; sent 20 emails; attended three team meetings over three years = extra weekly support for a waiting family
- Supported father through reunification (home going) of two foster children
- Presented flier of family at North East Ohio Adoption Resource Exchange (NEOARE) looking for potential child matches
- Shared flier of two potential child matches from NEOARE to family
- Brought family's home study for consideration at a match staffing, for the children from NEOARE, and this father was chosen to parent them
- Helped family get clarification of subsidy questions prior to the children coming home
- Connected with family at an Adoption Mixer as he was thinking of adding to his family again
- Gave advice to father after becoming interested in a sibling group of two girls at Mixer in regard to timing, as the adoption of his other two children were not yet finalized in court
- Attended first of two Probate Court adoption finalizations
- Provided continual support through post placement difficulties after two girls from Mixer moved in on foster-to-adopt status
- Invited father to attend Adoption Network Cleveland's Men's Group Outing
- Supported father through a false allegation of abuse and neglect
- Supported family through placement of an infant sibling to their home, a brother!
- Shared resources for furniture and baby supplies when father called for help
- Plans to attend next adoption finalization of recently placed sibling
- Connected and will transition adoptive family to our Adoption Network Cleveland post adoption support staff, Ayanna Abi-Kyles and Robert Gib Gibbons.

In the end, this Adoption Navigator worked with this family for three years and saw him through the placement and foster/adoption of five children.

If your family would benefit from the extra support of an Adoption Navigator, call Holly Spencer-Trueman, Program Manager, Adoption Navigation today at (216) 482-2326.

DCFS *In Recognition*

We would like to recognize the efforts of the following Cuyahoga County Division of Children and Family Services workers who go above and beyond to help children in need:

Randy Beebout - Foster Home Resource Manager - for being such a great support to his families.

Andrea Ginter - for meeting with Adoption Network Cleveland's Program Staff and clarifying procedures for adoption subsidies and Post Adoption Special Services Subsidy (PASSS).



PROGRAMS

Free Parent Trainings

Ohio Child Welfare Training Program at Adoption Network Cleveland

For adoptive parents, foster parents and caregivers. Foster Parent Training hours available. RSVP at least one week prior: Call Eddie Lebron, Cuyahoga County Division of Children and Family Services, at (216) 881-5390. For full descriptions, course IDs and competency areas, go to: <http://tinyurl.com/ocwtp-fall2012>

Running Away from Foster Care

Facilitator: Katie Terry
Thursday, November 1, 6:00 to 9:00 pm

Creating a Culturally Sensitive Environment

Facilitator: Janice Felton-Williams
Tuesday, November 13, 6:00 to 9:00 pm

Successful Trans-Cultural Parenting: Dealing with the Dynamics of Difference

Facilitator: Angela Irby
Thursday, November 15, 6:00 to 9:00 pm

Listening and Communication Skills for Families

Facilitator: Kim Langley
Monday, November 26, 6:00 to 9:00 pm

The Forgotten Ones: Through the Eyes of Teenagers

Facilitator: Jackie Jackson
Thursday, November 29, 6:00 to 9:00 pm

Keeping It in the Family: The Unique Issues of Kinship Care

Facilitator: Angela Irby
Saturday, December 1, 9:00 am to Noon

Texting, Sexting and the World of the Internet

Facilitator: John Ward
Tuesday, December 4, 6:00 to 9:00 pm

Secrets Behind the Rage: The Effects of Childhood Trauma on Children in Care

Facilitator: Cathy Tiggs-Johnson
Thursday, December 6, 6:00 to 9:00 pm

Dynamic Discipline for Kids in Care

Facilitator: Anthony President
Wednesday, December 12, 6:00 to 9:00 pm

Give Me a Break: Help for Exhausted Parents of Difficult Children

Facilitator: Katie Terry
Thursday, December 13, 6:00 to 9:00 pm

Adoption Finalization Celebration Event

If you've recently finalized an adoption, you're welcome to be a part of our event to celebrate the occasion. Everyone's invited! Please include your extended family members, too.

WHEN: Wednesday, November 14
7:00 to 8:30 pm
WHERE: Adoption Network Cleveland
COST: Free
RSVP: By Monday, November 12
Robert.Gibbons@AdoptionNetwork.org
(216) 482-2332

Adult Adoptees - Fall Series

Contact Linda Bellini about the last two sessions of Adoptee Journeys:
November 13: *Guilt and Shame* and
December 11: *Life Transitions and Triggers*. (216) 482-2323.

Mentor Spotlight: Pat Lattimore

By Amy Lomis, Youth Connections Coordinator

As Youth Connections Coordinator, I am so honored to get to know the mentors in our *Permanency Champions* Mentoring Program. They each show energy, inspiration and a caring heart to their individual mentees. Pat Lattimore, a VP with Medical Mutual and a mentor since 2007, reveals what the mentoring experience means to her:



Pat Lattimore

What inspired you to become a mentor? I saw an ad seeking mentors for children in foster care who were approaching the time when they would age out of the system. I did research on this topic and learned that many of the children are basically left on their own with minimal life skills to maneuver in the world. It was at this point that I decided to become a mentor and contacted Adoption Network Cleveland. I wanted to make a positive difference in someone's life.

Can you share a meaningful moment or experience with your mentee? I have several: During my first meeting with my mentee on April 3, 2007, there was an immediate connection between the two of us. On one of our outings, she said "adults don't think

teenagers have anything to say." I realized then that all they want sometimes is for someone to listen. I appreciated being a part of big moments in her life – her high school graduation, her prom – she was so excited about her first week at the University of Akron. We talked about going to college quite a bit. I shared with her some of my experiences when I went to college. She asked me if I could bring her some snacks and, of course, I was there the very next day.

What do you hope your mentee gets from you as a mentor? The importance of reaching back and helping others. Also, she knows that there are people who do care about her.

What has mentoring a youth in foster care brought to your life? I realized the importance of providing stability in a child's life. Knowing some of the children are placed in multiple homes can be unsettling enough, and that there may be changes in the personnel working on their case. It's critical for the child to know that there is always at least one person they know, who is in their life who they can turn to for support.

If interested in learning more about the Permanency Champions Mentoring Program, contact: Amy.Lomis@AdoptionNetwork.org or (216) 482-2339.

PROGRAMS

New Location for Summit County Meeting

The General Support and Discussion Meeting in Summit County will be moving to the Med Point Health Center in Cuyahoga Falls, beginning in November. Adoption Network Cleveland would like to thank The Akron General Health and Wellness Center for hosting The Summit County General Support and Discussion Meeting for many years.

WHEN: Wednesday, November 14, 2012
7:00 to 9:00 pm
WHERE: Med Point Health Center
650 Graham Road, Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio 44221
INFO: Contact Linda.Bellini@AdoptionNetwork.org

Congressional Angels in Adoption Award

Congratulations to Shaker Heights resident John Chapman who received the national *Angel in Adoption* recognition after being nominated by Representative Marcia L. Fudge for his volunteer activities and personal commitment to adoption. Mr. Chapman took a lead role in the creation of the Adopt Cuyahoga's Kids Initiative as co-chair of the Community Vision Council, which successfully addressed a crisis in the child welfare system by developing comprehensive and innovative programs to find homes for hundreds of youth waiting for adoption. This Initiative was instrumental in reducing the number of children available for adoption in Cuyahoga County from 1,700 in 2004 to 612 in Oct 2012. In addition, Mr. Chapman and his wife, Pat, are in the process of adopting their seventh pre-teen or teen-age boy from foster care, after having raised four biological children. Mr. Chapman is a Retired Partner and Consultant with Deloitte LLP.

Adoptee Voice

Meet Abigail McCarthy, age 5. Abigail is growing up with several older brothers who were also adopted – and her mom is an adoptee, too! Abigail has an ongoing open adoption relationship with her birthmother. Earlier this year, the McCarthy family welcomed Abigail's biological sister into their family. Abigail sat down with her mom, Lori, in September for a few minutes to talk about adoption:

So, Abigail, what does it mean to be adopted?
You get two mommies and two daddies.

What do you think about that? Pretty nice.

What do you know about your other mommy?
She couldn't take care of me. She asked you.

Do you like seeing her? Yes, she's nice.



Below: the McCarthy family before welcoming home baby Maggie



Who lives with her? My big sister, my brother and my little sister but Maggie lives with us.

What do you think about us adopting Maggie? It's GREAT!!!! (with a big kiss to baby Maggie)

I'm glad she's here and that you are too.
I love you, Mommy.

I love you too, Abigail.

Adoption 101: Where Do I Begin?

A workshop for prospective parents just beginning to consider adoption.

WHEN: Saturday, November 10, 2012
9:00 am to 1:00 pm
WHERE: Adoption Network Cleveland
INFO: For details, pricing and to register online:
<http://tinyurl.com/a101-fall2012>
(Add \$5 if paying the same day)
CONTACT: Julius.Jackson@AdoptionNetwork.org
(216) 482-2324

Adoption 201

ADOPTING INFANTS DOMESTICALLY

Expanding on the *Adoption 101: Where Do I Begin* workshop, these sessions explore more details for those interested in looking towards a path of adopting an infant domestically.

WHEN: Wednesday, November 28
6:00 to 8:00 pm
WHERE: Adoption Network Cleveland
INFO: For details, pricing and to register online:
<http://tinyurl.com/a201-fall2012>
(Add \$5 if paying the same day)
CONTACT: Julius.Jackson@AdoptionNetwork.org
or (216) 482-2324

EVENTS

Lanes for Change 2012 - Bowling, Contests, Fun and More!

5th Annual Family-Friendly Fundraiser Exceeds Expectations – Again!

By Laura Weber, Volunteer and Event Coordinator

A record-crowd of about 170 friends and supporters gathered at Freeway Lanes in Parma on Saturday, August 25th to celebrate our 5th Annual Lanes for Change Bowling Fundraiser. Thank you to everyone who came and enjoyed a morning of bowling and family fun and all who donated! Together, we raised over \$11,500 for Adoption Network Cleveland's programs and services. The family fun included a children's dance contest and bowling games.

Thank you to WEWS NewsChannel 5 for covering the event on their evening news.

Thanks to our raffle and food donors:

Akron Aeros
Akron Zoo
Arrah Salon and Spa
Artist for a Day
Boston Mills/Brandywine Ski Resort
Build-A-Bear
Bruegger's Bagels
Cleveland Botanical Gardens
Val Czerwien
Dairy Queen
Dave's Supermarket
Dick's Sporting Goods
EarthShare
Fun 'N' Stuff
Ghostly Manor Thrill Center
Ted & Colleen Grabowski
Lake Erie Crushers
Lake Metroparks Farmpark
LifeWorks
Malley's Chocolates
Nautica Queen
Playground World Inc.
Pro-Football Hall of Fame
Rinky Dink Family Fun Center
Eric Schellentrager
School of Rock
Sherri Appleton
Judith Stroup
The Toledo Mud Hens
The Wilds
Toledo Walleyes
John Zaranec

Thanks to our Special Events Committee:

Sarah Hastings, Chair
Mary Ann Arnold
Marissa Beechuk
Lisa Buescher
Monica Banks Hines
Sue Kenney-Pfalzer
Kira Karabanovs
Stephanie Niehaus

Special Thanks to Allen Clark Photography

Thanks to everyone who created a fundraising page:

John Bonfiglio
Lisa Buescher
Julie Cajigas
Val Czerwien
Tom Dent
Ryan Dobroka
Robert Gibbons
Mary Helton
Monica Banks Hines
Amy Lomis
Anne Mueller
Patti Pekar
Carmela Weber
Nicole Wilson

Congrats to John Bonfiglio (top fundraiser)!

Volunteers and Staff:

Tim Bruzelius
Leanne Dempoulis
Josh Frederick
George Graham
Mike LaGatta
Colleen Longshaw
Kathryn Mahon
Linda Schellentrager
Amy Weber
Laura Weber

Special Thanks to Volunteers from Best Buy:

Matt, Jasmine, Katie, Tina, Samantha, and Shannon



Top: Executive Director with a group of young bowling participants, wearing the bright orange Lanes for Change t-shirt; Middle Left: New board member Dan Gisser with daughter Thom; Middle: A young bowler competes in a backwards bowling contest; Bottom Left: Betsie Norris is interviewed by NewsChannel 5; Bottom Right: Volunteers from Best Buy helped in a wide variety of tasks throughout the day, including judging the dance contest.

Thanks to our Sponsors!



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Thank you to The University of Akron's students for developing a PR plan for the event: Elizabeth Murphy, Brynn Szorady, Sarah Fawkes, Tracy Steinbach and their teacher Mrs. Julie Cajigas.

HOLIDAY GIFT IDEAS



Custom-made silver or bronze jewelry in brushed or polished finish and colorful face jewelry is available for sale. (Plan for a 2 to 3-week turnaround for the silver jewelry.) To see color photos of the jewelry or to order online, go to www.AdoptionNetwork.org for a link to order online. For more information, contact Linda Schellentrager at (216) 482-2313.

OUTREACH & EVENTS



Moving Heart Gallery opening: Channel 3 anchor Robin Swoboda with Pat Rideout, Administrator, CCDCFS; Betsie Norris, Executive Director, Adoption Network Cleveland and Carolyn Neal, prospective adoptive parent.

Around Town

In the last few months, Adoption Network Cleveland participated in these community events/activities:

- NACAC – North American Council on Adoptable Children
- ESOP – Empowering and Strengthening Ohio's People
- Murtis Taylor/East End Collab "Sometimes Hope is Enough"
- Cleveland Resource Fair at St. Ignatius
- Getting SMART in the Park, Luke Easter Park
- Open Door Missionary Church Health and Career Fair
- St. Julie Billiard Catholic Church Adoption Ministry Book Club

If you have a community outreach opportunity, contact Lucille.Colden@AdoptionNetwork.org.

KUDOS TO

Judge Kristin Sweeney; Estes Turner; Beth, Justin and Owen Zabor; Melissa; Murray and Sue Van Epp; Leanne Katterheinrich; Leonard, Carl and Christopher Goins; Carla Dunlavey; Naomi; Craig, Marie and Ray Jones for taking the time to be interviewed in our new organizational video.

Estes Turner, Roxana Bell, Karen Gillooly and Nanci Stein for sharing on our blog.

Baldwin-Wallace University students who participated in the "Day of Serving" to help rearrange space for our Adoptive Family and Teen Support Group.

Christina DeAngelis, Kisha Peterson, Lori Wright and Pam Farrington for baking on an ongoing basis for programs.

Jeanne Hood and Debbie Britton for opening up and sharing their personal stories with the *Lake County News-Herald*.

Alison Wilms and Leanne Demopolous for making a delicious breakfast for the *Girls Night In* event.

Stephanie Hausmann, Heather Rule, Alia Philpot, Manola Acosta, Hilda Bowman, Amy Schumaker and Peggy Clarke for volunteering and participating at the *Girls Night In* event and to the youth who attended.

Betsy Gosnell, Estes Turner, Dr. Tom Rogat, Dottie Klemm and Zoe Breen Wood for facilitating *Adoptee Journeys* Fall Series.

Donna Wheatley Photography for staff photography.

Jeanne Hood, Debbie Britton and Nancy Rapaszky for being panelists at the Lake County General Meeting in September on *Being Found in Search*; to **Dottie Klemm** for facilitating; and to all who attended.

Jodi Babbitts for organizing an adoption ministry book club with Ann Fessler's book and promoting her event in November; and **Ann Fessler** for taking the time to participate in the book club, via Skype and to all who attended.

Stephanie Hausman, Meilssa Morano, Alison Wilms, Pam Farrington, Krizia Padron and volunteers from HandsOn NEO for providing childcare; and to **Ellen Huber** for ongoing support and planning for youth in our Adoptive Family and Teen Support Group; and to all who attended.

Bert Saltzman at Dave's Supermarket for always being so helpful.

Barbara Harris, Mary Smith, Brenda McCutcheon and Debbie Williams who attended the NACAC Conference in Washington D.C. and reported on the conference to our adoptive families in September.

Dennis and Roy of the Prospect Park Building for their hospitality.

The 25th Anniversary Committee, including **Estes Turner, Jody Babbitts, Betsy Gosnell, Lucia Hill and Lorna Linen** for their involvement.

Dottie Klemm for leading a group facilitation training and for all who attended.

Marilyn Jacobs for her ongoing support in the program area.

Kim Stevens and Lori Ross, NACAC Community Champions representatives, for hosting a focus group at Adoption Network Cleveland.

Mai Segawa for assisting in the promotion of the Adoption Network Cleveland Scholars Program and all students participating.

Jaime Hetrick and Lori McCarthy for presenting at Adoption 201 in September and all who attended.

SEARCH & REUNION

A Christmas Blessing, continued from page 1

I went through the process of joining the board, I was introduced to Adoption Network Cleveland's search program through Linda Bellini. The time had come for me to find my birthparents. I grew up with a younger sister, Tami, who was also adopted. She and I both felt that it would be uncomfortable to search for our birthparents while our adoptive parents were still alive. They couldn't have loved us more and provided a wonderful home for us to grow up in. After they passed, in 1989 and 2009, there was no longer any reason to wait.

Linda was incredibly supportive throughout the process. I also found great strength through my interactions with the attendees at the Rocky River General Support and Discussion Meeting, some of whom had recently gone through what I was about to face. Armed with the non-identifying information from the adoption agency, I got started in late September of 2011. As fortune would have it, I located my birthparents very quickly, learning my family name in mid-October. To my dismay, I found that my birthmother, Doreen, had died of cancer in 2005. However, I also learned that she had married my birthfather not long after my birth and they went on to have four more children, all girls. I now had five sisters! With Linda's guidance, I crafted a letter to my birthfather, Ross, and mailed it two days later, on a Wednesday. He received it on Friday and e-mailed me on Sunday. He was very surprised, but left the door open for further correspondence, which we continued over the next several days. We ultimately agreed to speak by phone the following weekend.

That day was one of great excitement and anxiousness. The man who had given me life, but who had never seen me, was just a phone call away. We connected and began a conversation that lasted over an hour. I was surprised and relieved by how comfortable I felt almost immediately. It was clear that we had many things in common and shared a similar view of the world. Nurture was being sternly tested by nature. I grew up in Columbus and, ironically, Ross and

three of my "new" sisters (Melissa, Angela, and Samantha) live in Central Ohio. The oldest (Jennifer) lives in northern Kentucky, just outside of Cincinnati. Then, in the ultimate turn of synchronicity, Ross and I discovered that we both worked for the same company.

The weeks went by and we stayed in touch. Not wanting to come on too strongly, I didn't push the issue, but I clearly wanted to meet in person. Right after Thanksgiving, Ross called me. He said he had pulled the girls aside at the family holiday gathering and told them about me. Doreen had told them about me as well before she died, but didn't let on to Ross. However, they were finding out for the first time that they had an older brother. When I was born, I was taken away immediately, so neither Ross nor Doreen knew whether I was a boy or a girl. In the days ahead, I would learn that Doreen would get melancholic during early February, around my birthday. She wanted so badly to know what had happened to me and never had that opportunity. I have very few regrets in life, but one is that I didn't start my search sooner. My advice to adoptees today is to search before it's too late.

One by one the girls reached out and I had four incredible conversations over the next week. It was apparent that we all were walking on eggshells unnecessarily regarding a first meeting and we quickly concluded that we should meet. We agreed on Saturday, December 10th. I remember walking up to Ross's front door, seeing the girls peeking at me through the front window. Five long hugs later, we were sitting together, sharing stories and looking at pictures. That evening, Ross and I had some time alone and got a chance to bond. The next day, I met the girls' families. Two weeks later, on Christmas Eve, my wife and kids made the trip to Columbus with me to complete the reunion. What more could you want for Christmas!

Since that wonderful day, I've had the chance to get together numerous times with my new family, and the girls regularly harass me on Facebook. My sister Tami has also begun to search for her birthparents. Thank you Adoption Network Cleveland for reuniting me with my family.

IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN GETTING STARTED IN A SEARCH

The decision for adult adoptees or birthfamily 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 to completion over 1,800 searches since 1988. A Search-Level Membership is required.

TO GET STARTED:

CALL Linda Bellini 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 at least two General Support and Discussion Meetings (if you live in the area). The General Meetings are open to anyone touched by adoption and related

professionals, and are an opportunity to learn from others' experiences and to prepare emotionally for this journey.

REGISTER with the International Soundex Reunion Registry – if interested in getting started in a search or even if willing to be found. For a registration form, go to www.issr.net or write to: I.S.S.R. PO BOX 371179 Las Vegas, NV 89137. Forms are also available at General Meetings.

RECOGNIZING THOSE WHO HAVE RECENTLY COMPLETED SEARCHES: Jim, Joan, Colleen, Marva, Katy, Joan, Mary, Carolyn, Linda and Donald

FUND DEVELOPMENT

The 34th Annual
American Adoption Congress
**International Conference
on Adoption**
Presented in Partnership with
Adoption Network Cleveland



Create the Next Wave

Cleveland, Ohio
April 10-14, 2013

Adoption Network Cleveland, in partnership with the American Adoption Congress, is co-sponsoring the 34th annual International Conference on Adoption, from Wednesday, April 10th through Sunday, April 14th, 2013 at the Cleveland Hilton Garden Inn. The conference theme, "Create the Next Wave," signifies a future vision and understanding of the lifelong impact of adoption. The conference provides a unique opportunity for professionals and non-professionals alike to learn and share information and will include keynotes from leaders in the adoption community as well as experts in adoption reform legislation including:

- **Sharon Kaplan Roszia** – Internationally known educator, presenter, and author
- **Dan Chaon** – Acclaimed author
- **Gina M. Samuels** – Associate Professor at the University of Chicago and renowned adoption scholar
- **Dominique Moceanu and Jen Bricker** – Sisters by birth: Dominique, an Olympic gold medalist and bestselling author; and Jen, a professional acrobat, aerialist and adoptee.
- **Jean Strauss and Rep. Sara Feigenholtz** – Both longtime advocates for adoptee rights: Jean, an adoptee and documentary filmmaker of *Adopted: For the life of Me*; and Illinois State Representative Feigenholtz, sponsor of a successful house bill.

This annual conference was in Orlando in 2011 and Denver in 2012, so let's give them a warm Cleveland welcome in April! If interested in volunteering, please contact Laura.Weber@AdoptionNetwork.org.



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 George Graham, Director of Development and External Relations, at (216) 482-2319 or George.Graham@AdoptionNetwork.org.

Legacy Circle members to date:

Linda Bellini and Terry Evans, Kim Donato, Margaret Kacerek, Betsie Norris, Murray and Susan Van Epp

Thank you Cleveland Browns!



**CLEVELAND
BROWNS**

Adoption Network Cleveland would like to thank the Cleveland Browns for their ongoing support of all those touched by adoption and foster care. Through the generous donations of tickets, many of our families have been able to enjoy Cleveland Browns football this year.

*Celebrate
with us
in 2013!*



You Know Someone

By Kathryn Mahon, Development Coordinator

You know someone touched by adoption or foster care. It may be your own personal story or it may be the story of your mother, father, child, sister, brother or friend.

This person's story is an amazing one that can be filled with difficult decisions; open, loving hearts; or the desire to find the love of a family. Wouldn't you like to help that person?

By making a donation to Adoption Network Cleveland you are letting all those touched by adoption or foster care know that you understand they are on a lifelong journey and you are providing the support necessary to help them on that journey. Your generous donation, no matter what the amount, will have

a lasting impact not only on that person you know, but the thousands of others who come to Adoption Network Cleveland every year looking for support and guidance.

Making a donation is easy – you can do it online at www.AdoptionNetwork.org; you can use the donation envelope in this newsletter; or you can call Kathryn Mahon at (216) 482-2311 to make your donation over the phone.

You know someone who is touched by adoption or foster care. Please let them know you support them by making a donation today to Adoption Network Cleveland.

Thank you!

*A Warm
Welcome!*

TO OUR NEW AND RENEWING MEMBERS

Anonymous (3), Ayanna, Kathy, Karen and Steven, Alanna, Natale, Mary, Asuncion and Sean, Sheila, Charita, Jennifer, Tom and Tricia, European Adoption Consultants, Peter, Jeanne, Betsy and Mark, Lauren and Willie, Carl, Lasalle, Stephanie, Holly and Joe, Laura, Sarah, Martia, Kathryn, Maureen and Blair, Ruth, Imari, Patricia, Sherry, Robin and Eric, Nancy, Penny, Carole, Nereida, Heidi, Kirsten and Eric, Rita and Alan, James, Joan, Ellen, Stephanie

Join Our Community - Become a Member

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 who understand and support you in your adoption journey, every step of the way.
- **SUBSCRIPTION** to our bi-monthly newsletter, *Guidance*.
- **DISCOUNTS** on programs and events.
- **A VOICE** in Ohio public policy issues affecting adoption and foster care.
- **MONTHLY E-NEWSLETTER**, *Pipeline*.

- **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,
call Adoption Network Cleveland
at (216) 325-1000 or visit
www.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)

BEREZIN FAMILY FUND

created by former Board Chair Alec Berezin

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

LASHUTKA FAMILY FUND

created by Ken and Luanne Lashutka

SNOWDEN FAMILY FUND

created by past Board Chair
Frederick Snowden

VAN EPP FAMILY FUND

created by Murray and Susan Van Epp

*Thank You
to Our Donors!*

Corporate/Organizations and Foundations

The George Gund Foundation, McKesson Foundation

Individual Donations

Anonymous (2), Mary Ann, Michael, Marissa, Marge and Christo, John, Meredith, Frances, Charita, Beth, Ted, George, Rebecca, Ellen, Sue, Bernie, Holly and Joe, Frances, Anita, Janice, Kristina, Rosalyn and Seymour, Erica and Mark, Judy, Elaine, Walter and Margaret, Tammy, Pamela, Jurlee

In Kind Donations

Dawn, Linda

The above reflects donations from August 1, 2012 through September 30, 2012

ALL DONATIONS ARE TAX DEDUCTIBLE

Remember that all monetary and in-kind donations are tax deductible, as provided by law. Anyone wanting more information about giving opportunities including Family Funds, or anyone wanting to get involved in Fund Development, please call George Graham at (216) 482-2319 or email him at George.Graham@AdoptionNetwork.org.

Announcements

- If you live out of state and are interested in finding an adoption search or support group in your area, go to www.americanadoptioncongress.com - 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 Kathryn Mahon at (216) 482-2311.



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

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.

November is

National Adoption Awareness Month!



Annual Meeting

Keynote Presenter: Dominique Moceanu
Olympic Gold Medalist and Author of Best-Selling Memoir *Off Balance*



Adoption's Hidden History

Featuring the Cleveland Debut of the Documentary Film *A Girl Like Her* By Ann Fessler
About Women Who Surrendered Their Children for Adoption in the 1950s and 1960s

WHEN: Thursday, November 15, 2012
5:30 to 7:30 pm
WHERE: The Breen Center for the Performing Arts
2008 West 30th Street at Lorain Avenue, Cleveland
Free parking
COST: Free and open to the public
RSVP: Laura Weber
(216) 482-2312 by Monday, November 12

Presented in partnership by Cleveland State University Michael Schwartz Library and Adoption Network Cleveland

WHEN: Thursday, November 29, 2012
7:00 to 9:00 pm, Doors Open at 6:00 pm (Meet & Greet Ann at Elements Bistro, 2300 Euclid – 5:00 to 6:00 pm
Tickets \$20, includes food)
WHERE: Cleveland State University Main Classroom Auditorium
1899 East 22nd Street, Cleveland
COST: Free and open to the public
RSVP: Laura.Weber@AdoptionNetwork.org

(216) 325-1000 F: (216) 881-7510 www.AdoptionNetwork.org