



ADOPTION NETWORK  
CLEVELAND

Educate • Support • Advocate  
AdoptionNetwork.org

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# winter guidance

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF ADOPTION NETWORK CLEVELAND

EST. 1988

## What the new Ohio adoptee law means to me ... one year later.

"I am real. I am not made up. I exist and I have the paperwork to prove it."

LYNNE / WESTERVILLE, OH

"I look forward to helping friends make the connections that I have."

PAUL / LAWRENCEBURG, IN

"I didn't get the reunification I so desperately wanted but a lot of other adoptees did and I am happy about that."

MOLLY / HAMILTON, OH

"I still have a lot of questions and I want to find her but knowing just this little bit made a huge impact on me."

GREG / MINNEAPOLIS, MN

"I know which direction I'm headed, and I will continue to embrace the challenge."

REBECCA / WICKLIFFE, OH

"She said she had always wondered if I was okay."

KELLY / PLAINFIELD, IL

"When the timing feels right, I will place my request in the mail; but, for now, I am enjoying living life, loved by many and happy."

HEATHER / LANSING, MI

"I sent a message to the person I believe is my aunt. Just a toe in the water, not a full plunge."

GREG / KABUL, AFGHANISTAN

"Perhaps most exciting, my sister was able to locate her birth family as a result of receiving her original birth certificate."

TOM / LAKEWOOD, OH





FROM THE DIRECTOR  
 BETSIE NORRIS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Please Join Us in March to Learn, Share, and Grow Together!

Dear Friends,

What a difference two years make. Two years ago – as I write this in mid-December – our adoptee records bill had just passed through the legislature and was sitting on the Governor’s desk waiting for his signature. We were continuing our efforts, asking adoptees to contact him asking for his support.

Now, this year, we are busy planning an event for March 2016 on the anniversary of “Opening Day,” which feels like it is quickly approaching. Our Annual Adoption Gathering, March 18-20, 2016, will be a weekend conference for adoptees, birth families, adoptive families, professionals, and allies. An opportunity to talk, share, get support, sort through life, and be in community with others.

In a synchronistic, almost coming full-circle kind of way, the conference is being held at the DoubleTree in Westlake – the hotel that used to be the Westlake Holiday Inn (now fully renovated and freshly opened as the DoubleTree). The Westlake Holiday Inn is a historic location for Adoption Network Cleveland in that it was the site of our founding conference in 1988. A newly reunited adoptee in my 20s, I had the inspiration to start an organization to help others through an experience that had been so personally monumental but also so isolating at the time. I dreamt of having a safe place to talk and share, opportunities to process, a community of others who “got it,” and of opening Ohio’s closed records so that others could experience the same validation that I experienced as a pre-1964 adoptee able to get my original birth certificate. Together with birthmother Kate Oatis I helped plan a conference – and the attendance, media, and success of the transformative event showed that creating an organization was an idea whose time had come. In short, I’m thrilled that this first Annual Gathering will be in that location which feels like home.

See the next page for all details, and please join us for the weekend as we learn, share, and grow together through discussion, theater, and film. I look forward to seeing you there!

In the spirit of truth,  
 Betsie

2016 Corporate Partners:



BENESCH, FRIEDLANDER, COPLAN & ARONOFF LLP

ENVIROSERVE, INC.

OCKERMAN CONSULTING

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2016 Board of Directors

|   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| Anita Miller, M.S.E., M.B.A.<br>CHAIRPERSON   | Cathy Belk, M.B.A.<br>Molly Cissell, M.H.A.            | Krysia Orlowski, M.F.A.<br>Anthony Sallah, Esq.            |
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# Annual Adoption Gathering

A Conference for Adoptees, Birth Families, Adoptive Families, Professionals, and Allies

The Ohio adoption community has experienced a transformative year since Ohio's Opening Day! Please join us in March 2016 as we continue our journey together, to celebrate, discuss, process, grieve, and commune with others.

**Early bird rate  
until  
February 5th**

**Registration:** <http://bit.ly/ancREGISTERgatheringconf>

Get an early bird rate - \$100 for Adoption Network Cleveland members and \$135 for non-members - by registering before February 5, 2016! (A one year individual membership to Adoption Network Cleveland will be included in the non-member cost of \$135.) After February 5, prices will increase by \$25. Conference registration includes Friday night reception, Saturday keynote and workshops, lunch on Saturday, and admission to theatrical presentations of *Biohazard: A Relative Comedy* on Saturday evening, and *The Good Adoptee* on Sunday.

**When:** Friday, March 18 to Sunday, March 20, 2016

**Where:** DoubleTree in Westlake  
1100 Crocker Road, Westlake, OH 44145. Rooms can be booked utilizing our group rate of \$99.00 a night, go to: <http://bit.ly/ancConf2016Hotel> – Each room has two double beds or one king-sized bed. The special room rate will be available until February 26, 2016 or until the block of rooms sells out.

**What:** A conference to facilitate conversations about adoption that will be shaped and driven by its participants. After the tremendous outpouring of interest, support, and participation surrounding the implementation of Ohio adoptees right to access their original birth records in March of 2015, Adoption Network Cleveland recognized the enormous need to continue fostering the community that organically developed among Ohio adoptees near and far. This conference is an outcropping and continuation of the conversations that originated in the aftermath of last year's monumental events.

**Membership:** <http://bit.ly/ancmember>

## Donate towards scholarships:

<http://bit.ly/ancREGISTERgatheringconf>

Donations made prior to the start of 2016 will be utilized to help people attend the 2016 conference and funds received after January 15, 2016 will be used for scholarships to the 2017 conference. If you are interested in receiving a scholarship, please contact Sarah Hastings (sarah.hastings@adoptionnetwork.org). Scholarship recipients will be randomly selected and will be notified in early 2016.



Follow us on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn for Conference Updates.

Social work and Counselor CEUs available for \$40.

## Six-Word Stories - a preview -

At the conference, we'll present "six-word stories" from searching adoptees and found birth family members.

Below is a preview. If you would like to submit one, please send it to [Betsie.Norris@AdoptionNetwork.org](mailto:Betsie.Norris@AdoptionNetwork.org).

Wait, you mean I am a sister?  
- Kay, adoptee

In reunion, she completed my life.  
- Donna, birthmother

Nature plus nurture equals integrated Erica.  
- Erica, adoptee

Heartbreak, but liberally peppered with hope.  
- Emily, adoptee

Uncovering the buried treasure of me.  
- Kevin, adoptee



## COVER STORY

## One Year Later: Nine Adoptee Stories

One year ago, these nine Ohio adoptees, who now reside in many areas around the country, wrote to us about what the new Ohio adoption records law meant to them. We asked them for a follow up on their story; recognizing that the power is within their own story and choices, and not within the outcome. Most chose to request their original birth certificates right away, some waited, and one hasn't asked at all yet. Many are pacing the process and living full lives while they wait for the right time for the next step. These nine most likely touch on the breadth of feelings held by the 400,000 Ohio adoptees affected by the law.



family, and my community. Adoption isn't a secret, it's a gift. It's a gift that touches not just one adopted person in a family but an entire community that family is a part of.

This is a pretty awesome piece of my history I hold and I am excited to have it now. It is pretty amazing to hold something that my birthmother and birthfather were involved in putting together. I didn't get the reunification I so desperately wanted, but a lot of other adoptees did and I am happy about that. Maybe someday I will, but for now I'm starting my new beginning with knowing who my birthmother is.

**Molly Abbott**

Hamilton, OH

### My journey is just beginning.

How awesome it was to be a part of something so inspirational! I have never seen or been a part of something like this in my entire life. It was truly eye opening for me and my husband and I am glad I was able to be, in a small way, involved.

Weeks after I came home from attending the opening day events, my emotions had settled down a little, and I received my letter in the mail. I remember going to the basement alone, my heart beating so fast I thought I was going to pass out, tears already pouring down my face before I even opened the letter. I opened it and was disappointed.

I found my birthmother's name several months prior to receiving my original birth certificate in the mail that day. I found her name and current address and after a year of contemplating what to do with the information I decided to write her a short letter about myself and my family and where I was now and who she had allowed me to become. I asked for a small amount of acknowledgment from her and some information on my birthfather. I never heard back from her which is why I was hoping that my original birth certificate would tell me I had the wrong name – it didn't. I had it right and so the disappointment.

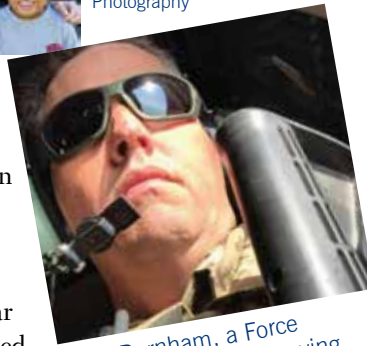
This is why my journey is just beginning. I don't really have any of the answers I was looking for originally. I don't have a happy reunification story, which I wanted. I have a name, and an address, and thanks to Facebook, a face of the person who gave birth to me. Today is my beginning without her.

I'm not sure as to what her reasons are to not want contact with me right now. There are literally a million possibilities. What I am sure of is that this process allowed me to start a dialogue. I started adoption openness talks amongst my friends, family, church



Molly Abbott and her husband Brad are living an open adoption as adoptive parents.

Photo by Suzanne York Photography



Greg Burnham, a Force Protection Officer surveying a base in Afghanistan, from a Blackhawk.

**So I now have a name.** Not just my birthmother's, but my own. I was given a name at birth. First, middle, and last. I know I'm Irish so now March 17th has more meaning than just my son's birthday. I have an address – sure she doesn't live there anymore per county records, but it was a starting point. Social media tells a lot. Facebook showed me a match for her by name and living in the same city she was when she gave birth to me. Ironically, the *Toledo Blade* ran

an article about me and the opening of the adoption records at the same time a news organization, Baynews9 in the Tampa Bay area, did a human interest piece on my story. From what I can tell I have an aunt living in St. Petersburg. It would be crazy if both parties saw the articles and never knew they might be related.

I contemplated reaching out to the lady I believe to be my birthmother, but I really have most of the answers I sought. It would have been nice to have the medical history but the original birth certificate was enough for me. Currently, I find myself in Afghanistan for a year and I start to think, what if. What if

something happens to me here; and that led to my decision to reach out. I sent a message to the person I believe is my aunt. Just a toe in the water, not the full plunge. That was three days ago and no response. And that's where this story ends, for now. The next chapter might still be written, but for now I am content with knowing I'm Irish. If I wasn't in Afghanistan I would end this with a toast and raise a Guinness.

Here's to a long life and a merry one.

A quick death and an easy one.

A pretty girl and an honest one.

A cold pint – and another one!

**Greg Burnham**

Kabul, Afghanistan

I received my original birth certificate several weeks after Opening Day. I had a happy reunion in 2011, so I gained no new information upon receiving it. However, I can honestly say it was still a very meaningful event for me. I truly feel as though my search is now officially complete. That piece of paper is the most important artifact in my personal adoption history, so having a copy of it brings that phase of my life to a close. And even though I knew I had found the right family in 2011, now I can prove it!

Perhaps most exciting, my sister was able to locate her birth family as a result of receiving her original birth certificate. After a little drama initially – she had to wait a couple of weeks longer than me before it showed up in her mailbox despite turning in the forms at the same time – she now has that all-important family name. After a little sleuthing on the Internet, she found the name of a man who she believed to be her birthfather. She sent him a letter and he responded very quickly. They met in person this summer and are now forming an ongoing relationship. As is often the case in adoption stories, coincidences abound. Like me, my sister’s birthmother passed away some years ago, but had married her father after giving her up for adoption. They went on to have more children who are full siblings to my sister – two brothers in her case. Synchronicity at work once again.

I’m absolutely thrilled for my sister, and for all of the Ohio adoptees who have already seen results from obtaining their original birth certificates. I’ve enjoyed following the Ohio Adoption Search and Reunion Facebook page and seeing all of the great stories that are posted there. I’m sure the holidays will be special for many “new families” this year, as they were for me four years ago. Thanks once again go to Betsie and the Adoption Network Cleveland staff for everything they’ve done to make this all possible. I’m sure her name came up at many Ohio Thanksgiving dinner tables this year.

**Tom Dent**

Lakewood, OH

**Life is all about choices.** March 2015 came and there was a choice to file to request my birth paperwork or not. It was a choice I previously contemplated with no reservations, but when the day came, well, other choices ranked higher on my priority list. First came my health and surgeries, then a family vacation, and finally a promotion. Pretty soon the one choice I was finally given with a right to access my original birth certificate seemed to fall behind other life priorities, goals, and family.

It was not intentional that a sheet of paper completed and notarized would remain in an addressed envelope in my briefcase for the last eight months. In fact, I have smiled when I mistakenly pulled it out at an important meeting with legislators on property tax issues, and on my daily walk past the post office. I simply am not quite ready to mail its contents.

Having the right to access is powerful. As an attorney, access to information is an important right I believe in and am so appreciative for those who fought for legislative change. However, I know with this choice comes further decisions and consequences beyond my control.

Perhaps I am not ready to open Pandora’s Box. There will never be the perfect timing in life, I just know for me, the bandwidth to tackle big life questions is not there for me to give. So, I kick the can down the road and will

continue to carry the envelope. It’s already been 36 years, so months does not seem like a very long time.

When the timing feels right, I will place my request in the mail; but for now, I am enjoying living life, loved by many and happy. I am not what happened to me, an adoptee, I am what I have chosen to become: a mother, a lawyer, an assessor, and a wife. My story is to be continued and I am perfectly content with that choice.

**Heather Frick**

Lansing, MI

**I am happy that I now know my birthmother’s name and age.** I felt

years of resentment and anger disappear when I learned she was only 15. This is just three years older than my eldest daughter who is still a baby to me.

I still have a lot of questions and I want to find her but knowing just this little bit made a huge impact on me.

**Greg Miller**

Minneapolis, MN

**I have acquired a great deal of information pertaining to my birth family, but was searching for a bit more.** I thought I would be more emotional than I was after receiving my original birth certificate. I opened it...stared at it... and my eyes immediately darted to the “birthfather” section...unfortunately that area remained completely blank. I kept staring at that little section, waiting for something to miraculously appear, but there was nothing.

The information surrounding the identity of my birthfather is extremely vague. There has been much speculation, but nothing substantial. I was hoping for something glaringly concrete to point me in the right direction.



Tom Dent with his sister showing receipts for their Ohio records.



Heather Frick: “You can take the girl out of Ohio but you can’t change that she will be a Buckeye fan.”



Greg Miller with his family.



COVER STORY

Receiving my original birth certificate prompted me to reach out in hopes of connecting with additional members of my birth family. I started with Facebook and was able to eventually locate my birth sister and birth brother. The last time I spoke with my birth sister was over the phone 13 years ago, and I was thrilled to finally speak to my birth brother for the very first time.

I was informed that my birthmother was placed in assisted living. Through my birth brother, I was able to speak with her on the phone; shockingly she knew who she was speaking to, even with her significant memory loss.

I know that I need to take prompt action and reunite in person. I know I need to do this before it's too late. I know which direction I'm headed, and I will continue to embrace the challenge.

**Rebecca Parks**  
Wickliffe, OH



Rebecca Parks, right, with her children. Photo by Kasey Samuel Adams Photography

As soon as I was able to send in for my information I did and was surprised at how fast it was returned to me. It was a little surreal to look at a copy of my original birth certificate. I went online and was able to find my birthmother's information pretty quickly. She still lived in the same area that she grew up in and to my delight had a Facebook page. I sent her a private message on Facebook but in order to do that I had to send her a friend request. She accepted my friend request but didn't answer my message, so I wasn't sure what to do so I waited and waited.

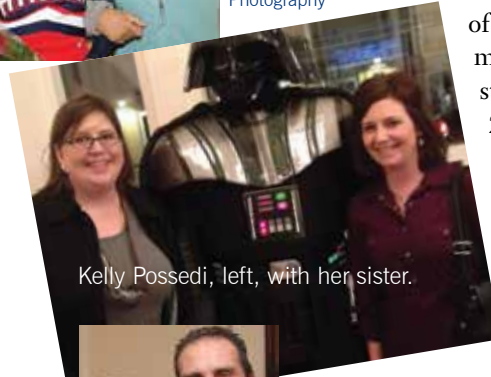
After a few months, I was able to track down a phone number for her and I called. She was really nice, said she had always wondered if I was okay and would be interested in meeting me. We have tentative plans to get together after the holidays. It was nice to talk to her and trade medical information and some general information about our lives. I am not expecting anything, but we will see how it goes.

My sister, who was also adopted, was inspired to send in for her information also. She was able to find her birthparents who, much to her surprise, had gotten married and she has two full-blood brothers. She was able to meet everyone and even spent Thanksgiving with them.

**Kelly Possedi**  
Plainfield, IL

Even though I had already found and connected with my birthmother and half-sister prior to the new law going into effect, my wife and I went to Columbus for the occasion. It was a thrill to see the look on everyone's face that morning, as they anticipated the life-changing event. My adoptive parents and I were also fortunate to be included in an article in *The Plain Dealer* that morning, complete with a huge front page picture of the three of us! That article helped open doors to conversations about adoption with people who didn't know I was adopted. I have offered assistance to friends of mine in their search, and I look forward to helping them make the connections that I have!

**Paul Soos**  
Lawrenceburg, IN



Kelly Possedi, left, with her sister.



Paul Soos with his biological sister.

opportunity to file forms indicating their contact preference or redact the release of their name. Having been in reunion since Thanksgiving 2004 I had no idea if my birthmother, Jo, would be one of those mothers. I visited her in California in early March. The subject did not come up even once as we overlooked the gray skies of Manhattan Beach and conversed poolside at my hotel. She made promises that she could not keep. I recorded them so that I would remember they were not a figment of my imagination.

I went to Vital Statistics with great anticipation to begin the process when I returned. The media was there interviewing others. I wished they could interview us all. All of our stories are unique and interesting. We had all waited for the day. When I walked back out into the sunlight after submitting my request – I felt at peace that another part of my journey as an adoptee was coming to a close. My birth certificate arrived about 30 days later. I read it. I felt a little numb as I read my documentation. I told my close friends and they celebrated with me... wished me closure. I saw that some parts were wrong. My birthfather was not listed but was stated to be white. That made me laugh. He is far from it. Some of my adoption paperwork was included – items I'm sure my adoptive mother no longer has. I plan to send a copy to her and to my biological mother. Jo and I have had a rocky reunion. It has been hot and cold, but mostly cold. Perhaps indifferent is a better word. I have come to a place of peace with our status. She sometimes sends me texts from sunny California saying "your life matters." The good news is that I already know this. The better news is that on paper – I am real. I am not made up. I exist and I have the paperwork to prove it.

**Lynne Wise**  
Westerville, OH

As it is my birthday and the first day of spring, March 20 has always been a symbolic day for me. It speaks of new beginnings, warmer temperatures, the return of sunshine and the subsequent melting of ice and snow on the streets of Columbus, Ohio. In 2015, I received yet another layer of newness – the release of original birth certificates for all adoptees born in this great state. It has been a long time coming and the excitement had been building since the announcement the year before. The waiting period was created to allow time to give birthparents an

opportunity to file forms indicating their contact preference or redact the release of their

name. Having been in reunion since Thanksgiving 2004 I had no idea if my birthmother, Jo, would be one of those mothers. I visited her in California in early March. The subject did not come up even once as we overlooked the gray skies of Manhattan Beach and conversed poolside at my hotel. She made promises that she could not keep. I recorded them so that I would remember they were not a figment of my imagination.

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Lynne Wise on Opening Day in Columbus.

# The Little Things Mean A Lot

By Cassey Fye, Youth Services Coordinator

As the Youth Services Coordinator, I feel that I get a special “behind the scenes look” into the transformations mentoring relationships can create. Each month I have the pleasure of contacting every teen to hear how the relationships are going, and more than that, how these relationships are changing lives. This month, I had the chance to speak one-on-one with Mario, who has shown me the powerful impact a single, stable relationship can create.

Mario is an artist – he loves creating and working on art. His mentor, Denise, also shares the title of “artist” and even has her own home studio. Much of their time together is spent working in her home studio, which has been a treat for Mario, in having someone support him fully as he embraces his passion. Working in that space on his school projects has been an enjoyable experience, and one that he appreciates a great deal. Another appreciated experience Mario told me of was when Denise took him to her son’s architecture firm for a day. Mario has an interest in architecture as well, and getting to see a day in the life of an architect was not only fun, but a great learning opportunity. These are important experiences he feels would not have happened without his mentor. Mario shared that his relationship with his mentor is

an important one, and his favorite thing about their relationship being, “She is always there for me.” Having someone who is always there, and to be able to trust through whatever situations life presents, is a treasured thing to these youth.

As I spoke with Mario, it became clear how much he valued the little things that I myself, and I believe many others, can so easily take for granted. Just having the opportunity to talk with Denise and know he can depend on her for advice and support, has empowered him. He shared that Denise has helped him to become more active in life, and that he really appreciates her advice when he is confused on how to feel. When asked what he would tell someone who is considering getting a mentor, he said, “Get a mentor. You might actually be putting yourself in a good situation and get lucky with a really good person.”

While Mario may never share these verbal affirmations directly with Denise, just like many of the teens in the program, my conversations with them allows me access to these beautiful sentiments, and it is clear an impact is being made.

*If you're interested in learning more about becoming a mentor, contact: [Robert.Gibbons@AdoptionNetwork.org](mailto:Robert.Gibbons@AdoptionNetwork.org) or (216) 482-2332.*

## EVENTS - 2015 ANNUAL MEETING

### 2016 Board Elected

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

**DANIELLE GADOMSKI LITTLETON, ESQ.**  
Staff Attorney, Legal Aid Society of Cleveland

**ALICIA LOVE, SPHR**  
Human Resources Professional

**KRYSIA ORLOWSKI, M.F.A.**  
Instructor, Cleveland State University

**ANTHONY SALLAH, ESQ.**  
Attorney, Benesch, Friedlander, Coplan and Aronoff LLP

They join our existing board :

Chairperson  
**ANITA MILLER, M.S.E., M.B.A.**  
Product Manager, Progressive

1st Vice Chair  
**LISA A. BUESCHER, M.S.E.**  
Community Volunteer

2nd Vice Chair  
**MARISSA BRYDLE, M.A.**  
Associate Consultant & Marketing Manager, BrownFlynn

Treasurer  
**TED GRABOWSKI**  
Corporate Business Manager & Director of Charitable Affairs, MCPC

Secretary  
**THOMAS W. DENT, JR., M.B.A., CFA**  
Senior Vice President, PNC Bank

**CATHY BELK, M.B.A.\***  
President, JumpStart Inc.

**MOLLY CISSEL, M.H.A.**  
Administrative Director, Cleveland Clinic

**GINA GAYLE, M.A.**  
Photographer/Multimedia Storyteller

**DANIEL J. GISSER, M.B.A., Ph.D.**  
Marketing Professional

**ELAINE HAGAN**  
Retired, Community Volunteer

**TONY HARRIS, M.B.A.**  
Business Systems Consultant, Progressive

**VIRGINIA MEDINA**  
Counsel, BakerHostetler

**ELAINE SCHULTE, M.D., M.P.H.**  
Chair, Department of General Pediatrics and Medical Director for the Adoption Program, Cleveland Clinic

**ELLEN M. STEPHENS, SPHR**  
Vice President, Human Resources, The Sherwin-Williams Co.

**DAVID YATES, CPA**  
Senior Manager, Audit, KPMG LLP

### Keynote Address on Youtube



Our Annual Meeting Keynote Presentation by Cuyahoga County Juvenile Court Administrative Judge Kristen Sweeney “*More than a Case Number – Creating*

*a Better Future for our Children and our Community Through Collaboration”*



is available for view on our youtube channel: [youtube.com/AdoptionNetCle](https://www.youtube.com/AdoptionNetCle)

\* Renewed board member

Special Thanks to our Outgoing Board Members for their years of service:

**ILAH ADKINS, ESQ.**  
**MONICA BANKS HINES**  
**CLAIRE SHANDS-WAAG, M.A., M.ED**  
**MAURA MICHAEL SHIBLEY**  
**NICOLE WILSON, ESQ.**



## IN THE COMMUNITY

### Adoption Network Cleveland Chosen for 2016 Leadership Action Project (LAP)

Eight LAP participants from across the business sector of Cleveland are assisting the organization in expanding our programming and services to those touched by adoption and foster care throughout the state. LAP is a program of the Cleveland Leadership Center Bridge Builders program. We look forward to updating you on this project throughout the upcoming year!

### Local Marketing Firm Selected Adoption Network Cleveland For Giving Tuesday Event

THANK YOU to shark&minnow for selecting us to receive their inaugural Giving Tuesday contest #SharkAttack to win a day of free strategy and marketing consulting services in honor of the global day dedicated to generosity through giving. Four representatives from shark&minnow spent the entire Giving Tuesday (December 1) donating their time and expertise.

## KUDOS

### Thank You to Our Volunteers

**Tony Harris** for organizing an Adoption Network Cleveland information group meeting at Progressive Insurance.

**Katie Valleau** for doing a Thirty-One fundraiser for us during the month of November.

**David Butts, Julie Coppens, Cathy Doyle, Becky Drinnen, Greg Freeman, Tamara Green, Tim Komara, Erica Curry VanEe** for working on the planning of our Annual Adoption Gathering to be held in March 2016.

**Kathy Adler** for her coordinating the November Weaving Cultures Transracial Adoptive Family Group outing.

**Krysia Orlowski, Anita Miller, Danielle Cosgrove, George Graham and Karen Gillooly** for taking on the leadership of the Weaving Cultures Transracial Adoptive Family Group.

**Judge Kristin Sweeney** for presenting the keynote address at our Annual Meeting.

**Joan Soucie, Vicky Dolinsky and Hannah Middleton** for helping at our Annual Meeting.

**HandsOn NE Ohio, Maureen Forrest and Hannah Middleton** for their help and to **The Snow Sisters: Cassey Fye and Taylor Scott** for providing entertainment for the Adoptive Family Thanksgiving Celebration.

**Jamie St. Clair, Jill Rusticelli, Felicia Pratt, Kathy McConaughy, Kaitlin**

### CCDCFS *In Recognition ...*

**Danielle Green-Welch and Joe Jackson** for all their work and coordination with the Foster Care Alumni Thanksgiving Dinner.

**Cole, Marley Wilder, and Maria Davila** for baking for our programs.

**Dottie Klemm, Estes Turner, Linda Bellini, Kim Donato and Denice Leddy** for facilitating topic discussions and to **Linda Hull, Linda Schellentrager, Jim Deskins, Estes Turner,**

**Joan Soucie, Brian Campolieti, Sue Duffy, Maureen Duffy, Tom Dent, and Eric Steele** for sharing their stories in panel discussions at our at our General Support and Discussion Meetings.

**Aviva Vincent** for joining our Special Event Committee.

**Jamie and Frank Serika, Molly and Richard Cissell, and Dionne Griffin** for presenting their stories at the November Adoption 101.

**Robbi Fryer** for her help in the office and at our Annual Holiday Party.

**Aviva Vincent, Gia and Quishann Johnson, Ben Vitron and Marsha Randle** for helping at the holiday party and to **Romitos Pizza** for giving us a discount.

**Darlene Davis** for co-facilitating *Get Real* and the Maple Hts. Library for providing space for *Get Real*.

**Julie and Scott Eccleston** for their generous gift card donation for the foster care alumni Thanksgiving Dinner.

**Mary Warnkey** for online community calendar event posting.

### PROGRAM STORY: ADOPTION NAVIGATORS

#### Testimony: Adoption 101: Where Do I Begin?

By Melissa Zagata and Athena Mericsko, Prospective Adoptive Parents

When we attended Adoption Network Cleveland's *Adoption 101: Where Do I Begin?*, there was so much information presented to us, yet we did not feel rushed or overwhelmed. Going into the workshop, we admit that we were a bit confused about what options were available. Sure, you can investigate on your own using the Internet, but many times, you can get conflicting information. The workshop aided in separating fact from fiction about various types of adoption. We have already recommended this to some of our friends who are considering adoption. When you are not sure where to start, the Adoption Network Cleveland's Adoption 101 workshop is the best choice!

For Melissa and Athena's full story go to [www.adoptionnetwork.org/blog](http://www.adoptionnetwork.org/blog)

The next *Adoption 101: Where Do I Begin* workshop will be held on Saturday, February 20, 2016. To RSVP, contact [Julius.Jackson@AdoptionNetwork.org](mailto:Julius.Jackson@AdoptionNetwork.org) or go to: <http://bit.ly/ANCa101>



### Staff Update

We welcome **CASSEY FYE, MSSA, LSW**, as our new Program Coordinator, Youth Services where she works collaboratively with youth in foster care and those who have been adopted to identify their needs while implementing

avenues of support, advocacy, and education to further permanency and healing through coordinating youth-centered programs and activities. She holds a Master's of Social Work Administration from Case Western University Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences (MSASS) and a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Mount Union. Cassey served as an MSASS graduate-level intern with our program staff in 2014. She also has had experience working with OhioGuidestone as an Early Childhood Mental Health Therapist.



## There is Room in Your Heart

By Amy Gardner, Adoptee, Adoption Network Cleveland Member

I've known that I was adopted since as far back as my memory reaches. I always looked at it as something special. I always wanted to find my roots, particularly my biological mom. I knew that she had been a teenager when she was pregnant with me. She had left me a great deal of information about herself with the adoption agency. I wanted to be able to tell my biological mom what a wonderful life I am having and what I had become. I also wanted an opportunity to just simply say thank you to her for her selfless act of love. She gave me a chance.

I waited until I was established with my career and family to start my search. I had made some attempts over the years to get my records released, but was always blocked by the legal system.

When the adoption records were released in the spring of 2015 I decided that it was time to find my biological mom. I received my original birth certificate and started searching on my own. The process was frustrating at times, but I found her. I wanted to make sure though that I had found the right person. I didn't want to initiate contact with the wrong person and completely disrupt someone's life.

It was at this time that I inquired about who could help me with my search. I was introduced to Amy Lomis at Adoption Network Cleveland. Amy verified that I had found the correct person – my biological mom, Kimberly (Koeppen) Demmitt, and also spoke with me about how to approach contacting her. She provided me with a sample letter and encouraged me to send my letter in a card. This was not something that I had ever thought of.

I was very excited and nervous at the same time. Amy also asked me what my expectations were about finding her. This was not something that I had thought much about until that

"I learned that she and I both chose careers in nursing. I graduated from the same high school as she did and we even attended the same school for nursing."

moment. The energy had been exhausted on finding Kim.

I sent my letter out in June 2015 and was rewarded less than a week later with the miraculous gift of contact for the first time with my biological mom. She even sent pictures. I learned that she and I both chose careers in nursing. I graduated from the same high school as she did and even attended the same school for nursing.

She was also able to provide me with all of the answers to questions that I have had for the majority of my life. She answered everything about my medical history. It was always so frustrating to never know my medical history. We have since exchanged countless letters and communicate almost on a daily basis since finding each other. We have a plan to meet each other next year.

Throughout this process I spoke with Amy many times about things that evolved after making contact with Kim. She was extremely supportive and offered guidance when needed. She was able to encourage me to have patience when I felt that things were taking too long. I wanted things to happen quickly and that just simply wasn't a reality.

I would encourage anyone to reach out. I would also advise patience when contact is made. We all lead busy lives and sometimes it can be a scary thought to have anything disrupt it. Thankfully, my story has a happy ending and Kim is just as excited as I am.

Set your limits. This is the first time that you are really in control about what happens and when. Most importantly do what you feel is best for you. Your adoptive family may not be capable of understanding your feelings, that's okay. You can love and respect your adoptive family and still want to find your biological family. There is room in your heart for everyone.

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### IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN GETTING STARTED IN A SEARCH

The decision for adult adoptees or birth family members to search is a very personal choice. Adoption Network Cleveland validates those who are exploring that option and provides support throughout the process for those who decide to move forward. We have successfully assisted in thousands of searches, since 1988.

#### TO GET STARTED:

**CALL** 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) to 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 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).

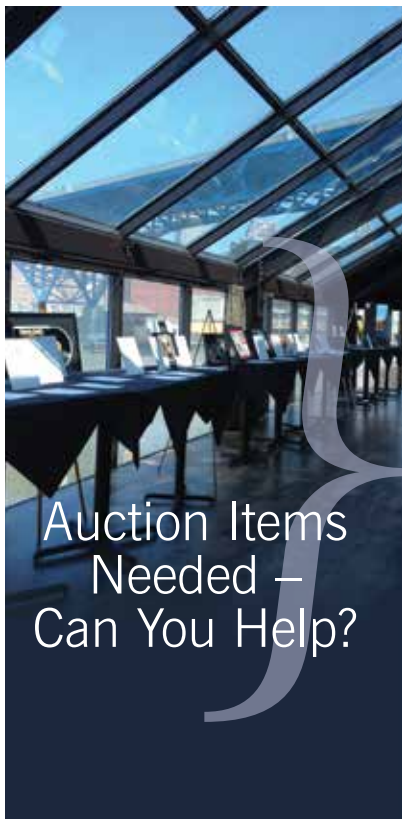
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#### RECOGNIZING MEMBERS WHO HAVE RECENTLY COMPLETED SEARCHES:

Tony, Jean, Dollie, Holly, Terry, Jacqueline, and Marilyn



## FUND DEVELOPMENT



# Auction Items Needed – Can You Help?

### *Creating Futures*

Benefit and Silent Auction:  
Friday, April 29, 2016  
Music Box Supper Club

#### SILENT AUCTION IDEAS:

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

**To make a donation of a silent auction item, contact: Sarah.Hastings@AdoptionNetwork.org**

### Guidance Newsletter Now Quarterly and Available Electronically

In our ongoing work to manage our precious donated funds, this issue is the first of a new quarterly newsletter format for *Guidance*. We are focusing more on stories from those whose lives have been impacted by our work as well as information you can use. The *Guidance* newsletter is also available in electronic format that can be emailed to you instead of arriving in the mail. If you are interested in switching to this option, please email: [Sarah.Hastings@AdoptionNetwork.org](mailto:Sarah.Hastings@AdoptionNetwork.org).

Our monthly *Pipeline* e-newsletter will continue to be emailed to you on the first of every month and will contain important program and calendar details. And, of course, our website [www.AdoptionNetwork.org](http://www.AdoptionNetwork.org) and Facebook page and groups will continue to serve as important resources for all of our work.

**If you have a story to tell – please share it!** Send an email to [info@AdoptionNetwork.org](mailto:info@AdoptionNetwork.org) or call Linda Schellentrager at (216) 482-2313.

### Other Ways to Give



Securely and safely donate online:  
[www.bit.ly/ancDonate](http://www.bit.ly/ancDonate)

Shop as you normally would online and **iGive** will donate .5% to 2% and **Amazon Smile** will donate .5% to Adoption Network Cleveland.

IGIVE: Register on [iGive.com](http://iGive.com) and start shopping!

AMAZON SMILE: Go to [smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com) and select Adoption Network Cleveland from the list of participating organizations to ensure your donation is directed to us. Remember to do all of your Amazon shopping through [smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com)!

**Books and Jewelry Sales** – check out many adoption-related books and jewelry items on [bit.ly/ANCshopnow](http://bit.ly/ANCshopnow) or in our office. Contact [Linda.Schellentrager@AdoptionNetwork.org](mailto:Linda.Schellentrager@AdoptionNetwork.org) for more information. The proceeds benefit our programs and services.

**Internet Search** – through [goodsearch](http://goodsearch.com), and they will make a donation for every search. (Powered by yahoo.) Find out how on [www.AdoptionNetwork.org](http://www.AdoptionNetwork.org)

### Our Endowment: An Investment in the Future

How do you make a dollar work hard 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*

#### 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

#### 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

Breakfast Club of America, Inc., Community Endeavors Foundation, Inc., Community Shares of Greater Cleveland, Dominion Foundation, Envirosolve, Junior League of Cleveland, Naomi G. and Edwin Z. Singer Family Fund, North Olmsted Urgent Care / Rebound Physical Therapy, St. Matthew's Episcopal Church, Thomas H. White Foundation, MCPc Family Charities

### Individual Donations

Ayanna A., Gloria A., Kathy A., Genine A. and Jeffrey B., Nancy B., Cathy B., Linda B. and Terry E., Bertha and Clinton B., Kip B., Elizabeth B., Helen B., Elizabeth B., Marissa and Edd B., Nancy and Michael B., Jim C., Molly C., Nan C., Alicia C., Julie C., Paula C., Timothy and Holly C., Valerie and Joseph C., Margot D., Sheri D., Elizabeth D., Thomas and Tricia D., Frank D., Jim and Pam D., Buffy and Brent D., Alice D., Craig D. and Sandy S., Marcy D., Rebecca D., Ann E., Kristin and Bryan E., Ray and Janet E., Sandra F., Shirley F., Jennifer F., Danielle and Jared G., Daniel and Kathleen G., Justin G., George G. and Michael F., Tanya G., Elaine H., Bradley H., Michael H., Tony H., Pamela H., Sarah H. and Katie B., Maureen and James H., Marilyn H., Louis H., Kathleen H., Dennis and Pat H., David H., Jacqueline J., William J., Rita J., Shelley J., Andy J., Harvey K., Regina K., Brian and Shelly L., Malia L. and Margot D., Matthew L., Lorna L., Alicia L., Carrie L., Talia M., Jan M., Rachel M., Gail M., Virginia M., Edward M., Charlotte M., Anita and Joseph M., Chelsea M., Moyo M., Phillip and Jennifer M., Dominic M., Sarah M., Daenelle O., Traci O., Stephanie P., Stephen P., Vicki P., Nancy R., Susan R., Marcella R., Donna R., Bill and Lila R., Jennifer R., Diahanna R., Lynn and Joe R., Karen R., Elizabeth and David R., Janet R., Anthony S., Ann S., Linda S., Elaine S. and Kim L., Tracy S., Claire S., Maura S., Kimberly S., Kirsten and Eric S., Jackie S., Dan S., Bertrand S., Rochelle S., Ellen S., Melinda S., Nanci and Earl S., Ellen S., James and Julie S., Margaret T., Althea T., John and Kelly U., Piet V. and Martha L., Robert W., Karen W., John W., Margot W., Cynthia W., Debra W., Stephen W., Jodi W., Jennifer W., Lisa Y., Justin and Beth Z., Andrea Z., John and Sara Z., Jennifer Z., Thomas Z.

### In Kind

Sims Buick GMC, Linda S.

### In Honor / Memory

Barlow Buescher in honor of Lisa Buescher / Lois Cole in honor of Betsie Norris  
Janice Kundtz in honor of Rosemarie Ludwig / Betsie Norris in memory of Paul DeLuca  
Betsie Norris in honor of Marissa Brydle / Julia Singer in honor of Ryan Singer  
Elizabeth Swenson in honor of Betsie Norris

*The above reflects donations from October 1 to November 30, 2015*

## MEMBERSHIP

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

Ayanna A., Kathy A., Linda B., Bertha B., Julie C., Sherri D., Jim D., Jennifer F., Pamela H., Dennis H., Rita J., Regina K., Malia L., Lorna L., Rachel M., Gail M., Charlotte M., Dominic M., Daenelle O., Traci O., Susan R., Donna R., Bill and Lila R., Elizabeth R., Tracy S., Kirsten S., Dan S., Nanci S., Elizabeth S., James S., Margaret T., Althea T., Debra W., Cynthia W., Jodi W., John Z.

#### Announcements

- If you do not live near or are unable to attend one of our General Support and Discussion Meetings in various locations around Ohio, check out our "virtual webcam" meeting 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 Sarah Hastings at [Sarah.Hastings@AdoptionNetwork.org](mailto:Sarah.Hastings@AdoptionNetwork.org), call (216) 325-1000 or visit our website.



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Cleveland, OH 44103

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New Law web page

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

JOIN US

# Annual Adoption Gathering

A Conference for Adoptees,  
Birth Families, Adoptive Families,  
Professionals, and Allies



**When:** Friday, March 18 to Sunday, March 20, 2016

**Registration:** <http://bit.ly/ancREGISTERgatheringconf>

**Where:** DoubleTree in Westlake  
1100 Crocker Road, Westlake, OH 44145.  
<http://bit.ly/ancConf2016Hotel>

**What:** A conference to facilitate conversations about adoption that will be shaped and driven by its participants.

**Membership:** <http://bit.ly/ancmember>

Donate towards scholarships:

<http://bit.ly/ancREGISTERgatheringconf>

See page 3 for more information.

*Early bird rate  
until  
February 5th*

Save the Date

Adoption Network Cleveland

*Creating Futures*

Benefit and Silent Auction

Friday, April 29, 2016

Music Box Supper Club

1148 Main Avenue – in the Flats

[www.musicboxcle.com](http://www.musicboxcle.com)

See page 10 for silent auction donation ideas.



#### 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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