



ADOPTION  
NETWORK  
CLEVELAND™

Educate • Support • Advocate  
AdoptionNetwork.org

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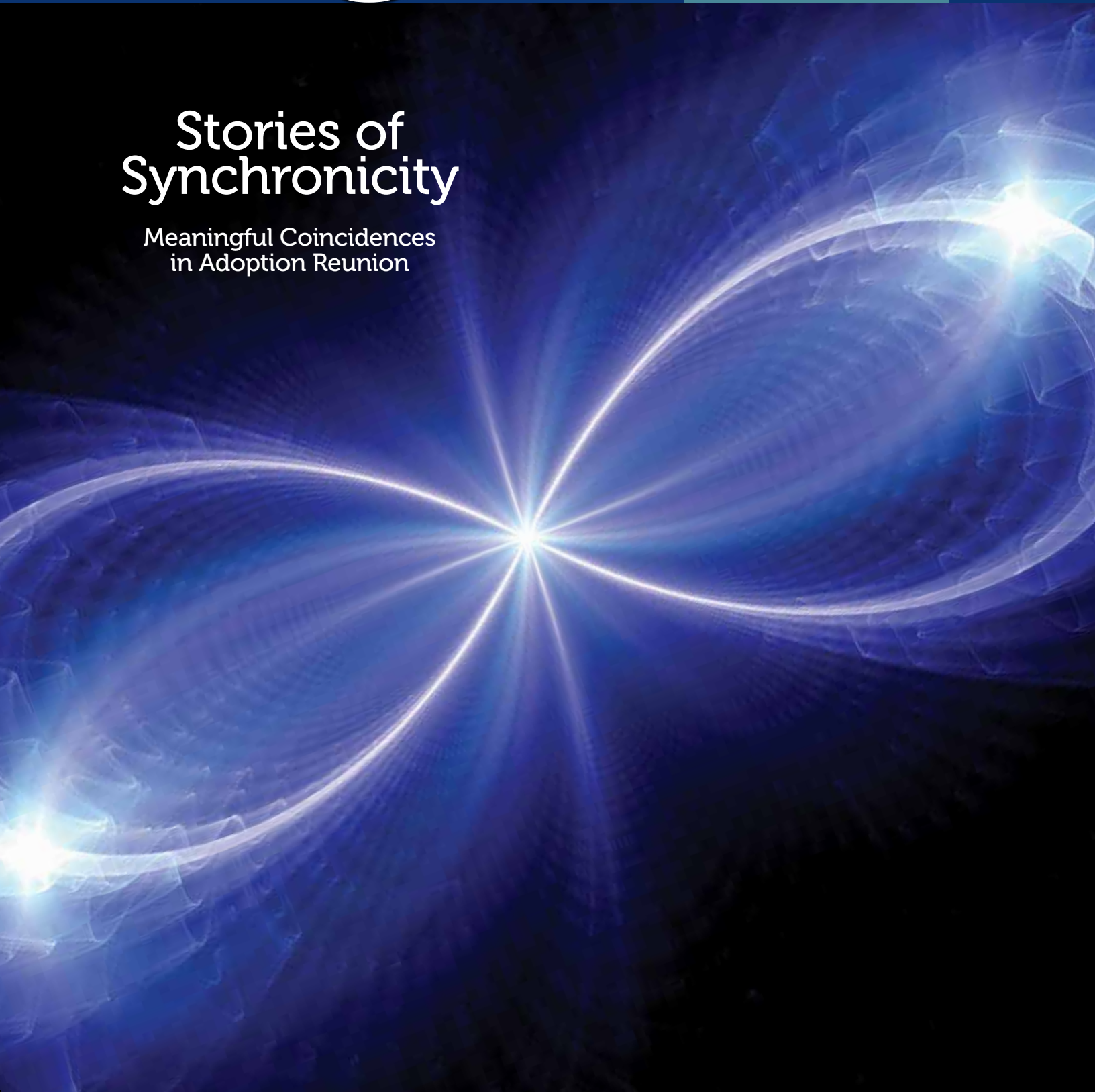
# spring guidance

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF ADOPTION NETWORK CLEVELAND

EST. 1988

## Stories of Synchronicity

Meaningful Coincidences  
in Adoption Reunion





FROM THE DIRECTOR  
 BETSIE NORRIS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

## Surprising Coincidences in Reunion

Dear Friends,

You'll see in this issue that we are highlighting synchronicities in reunion – fun and surprising “coincidences” that often seem too uncanny to be coincidence. I have several synchronicities in my own reunion so I'll share some of them.

At the time of my placement my adoptive parents lived in Warrensville Heights and my birthmother lived outside Philadelphia (having come to Cleveland for a stay in the unwed mother's home). A year later my adoptive family moved to Shaker Heights and soon after that my birthparents married and bought a house in Cleveland Heights just over a mile away from us. Upon reunion and my “moms” comparing notes, we all shopped at the same stores and ate at the same restaurants until my birthparents moved out of town when I was 12 years old. Before moving out of town they considered purchasing a house located on the street where I lived. My birthmother and I also had similar career paths – after finishing college she was one of the first Child Life Workers at University Hospitals, I became a Registered Nurse and specialized in pediatrics, and then child psychiatry. Shortly before my reunion I traveled to more than one place where I later found close birth family members lived. There are more, but I'll stop here for now.

In addition, I'd like to express my personal thanks for the way the community has embraced us during this period of funding uncertainties. While life is rarely easy for a small nonprofit, we've never faced anything near this type of situation before. We chose early in the year to continue our programs largely unchanged through this difficult period, as that was the right thing to do for the children and adults we serve; and to have faith that it would all work out despite almost 40% of our budget being in limbo due to a lapsed contract. So many of you have come forward to help and it has been heartening. I'm grateful to our staff who has stuck by – doing even more with even less – and to see how much you all value what we have built together. Thank you.

In the spirit of truth,  
 Betsie

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### Contents

From the Director	2	Programs / Staff / Volunteer	8
The Latest News	3	Search and Reunion	9
Cover Story	4	Fund Development	10
Programs	7	Membership / Donors	11
Kudos	7		

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## Join us!

# 25th Annual Birthmother's Day Ceremony

Saturday, May 13, 2017

Adoption Network Cleveland has held a Birthmother's Day Ceremony annually on the day before Mother's Day since 1993. The inspiration for the ceremony came from a group of Seattle birthmothers and it honors and recognizes the journey of women whose children were placed for adoption.



Birthmothers lead the event and share poetry, music, and other readings. Others connected to adoption also participate. The event is open to the public. Many family and friends of birthmothers, as well as adoptive families, attend. Birthmothers sit in a center half circle with their supporters sitting behind them. Following the ceremony there is a reception and social hour.

*From the Statement of Welcome ...*

*"In a quiet part of ourselves, we remember that we too are mothers, and we wonder, do our children think about us as we think of them? We wonder if the adoptive parents remember us, we wonder if our family and friends remember we are mothers, and we wonder if there is room anywhere in the annual celebration of mothers and motherhood to include birthmothers and our experiences. We are the ones who lived through the pregnancy, the ones who gave birth, and then had to experience the loss of our children. No matter how far the physical distance, or how hidden the emotional pain, the heart and spirit never forget."*

### WHEN

11:00 to 11:30 am – Check-in  
11:30 am to 12:30 pm – Ceremony  
12:30 to 1:30 pm – Reception

### WHERE

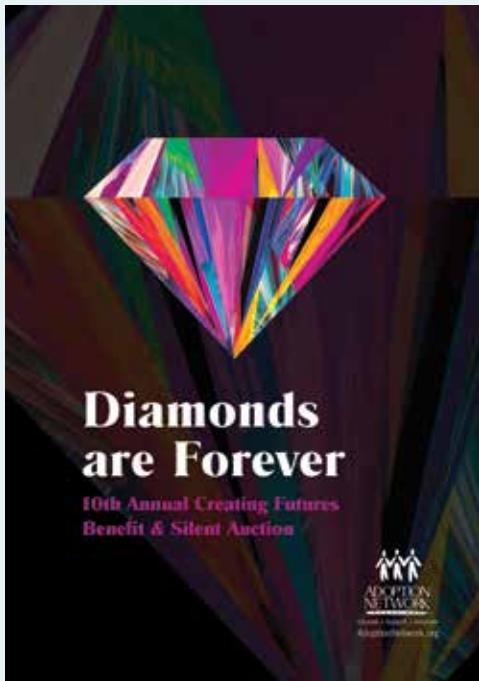
Lakewood Women's Pavilion in Lakewood Park  
14532 Lake Avenue, Lakewood, Ohio 44107

### RSVP BY MONDAY, MAY 8

Call Traci Onders at (216) 482-2323  
or Email: [traci.onders@adoptionnetwork.org](mailto:traci.onders@adoptionnetwork.org)

### TO VOLUNTEER AT THE EVENT

Call Kathryn Mahon at (216) 482-2319  
or Email: [kathryn.mahon@adoptionnetwork.org](mailto:kathryn.mahon@adoptionnetwork.org)



## Creating Futures

Benefit and Silent Auction

Friday night  
April 28, 2017  
6:30 pm

Music Box  
Supper Club

To RSVP:

[bit.ly/CFBSA2017](http://bit.ly/CFBSA2017)

## Mother's Day Gift Ideas

**As Mother's Day approaches here are some creative ways to honor the mothers in your life.**

### Make an Honor or Memorial Gift

Recognize the woman in your life with a gift to Adoption Network Cleveland that is *In Honor Of* or *In Memory Of* your loved one. These gifts are recognized in each quarterly *Guidance* newsletter, and in our Annual Report. We will notify your loved one of the gift. To donate online and designate your gift, go to: <http://bit.ly/ancDONATE>, use the donation envelope in the newsletter, or call Dan Carroll at (216) 482-2311.

### Handcrafted Jewelry by Annabelle Fisher

Colorful handmade beads by Annabelle Fisher, a local artisan and adoptee, are strung together to form beautiful necklaces and bracelets as well as earrings. The larger beads are an assortment of faces and the Adoption Network Cleveland logo. To order online, go to: <http://bit.ly/ancJewelry> or call: (216) 482-2313.



### A Night Out at Creating Futures Benefit and Silent Auction

A couple weeks prior to Mother's Day, on Friday, April 28th, we welcome you to bring that special woman in your life to our *Creating Futures* Benefit and Silent Auction. A few select silent auction items will also be available for online bidding on the night of the event – even for those who are not attending. Watch for details about auction items during the week of April 24 to 28, 2017.



COVER STORY

# Stories of Synchronicity

Meaningful Coincidences in Adoption Reunion

By Linda M. Schellentrager, Communications Manager

**Synchronicity is a concept** that describes a meaningful coincidence. In “Catching the Bug of Synchronicity,” Paul Levy explains “Synchronistic moments feel like grace, as they induce in us the feeling that we are right where we are supposed to be.”

Sometimes extraordinary discoveries are uncovered among people who reunite after decades apart because of relinquishment and adoption – and many find that there are some uncanny coincidences in their life stories. I first became aware of this phenomenon in the 1990s when I read and then purchased the book *Synchronicity & Reunion: The Genetic Connection of Adoptees and Birthparents* by LaVonne Harper Stiffler. I still recommend it often.

In our Facebook group *Ohio Adoption Search and Reunion*, my interest in these synchronicities has been piqued again and again. Some fascinating coincidences have been shared as many are reuniting since Adoption Network Cleveland’s successful legislation opening original birth certificates two years ago. Here we’ve gathered some stories of synchronicity to share a variety of powerful and fun coincidences that were found in reunions, long ago or recent, among our members.

## TALENTS



### That’s Freaky by Marni Hall

Before I met my birthmother Karen, I sent her some pictures of me with my ventriloquist dummy. She responded with a picture of her own. My children said, “She’s into puppets too? That’s freaky.” Truth be told, I am a ventriloquist. Karen did a skit lip syncing to the song *Sisters* from *White Christmas* for a Miss America Pageant party. It makes a great side by side picture when we share our reunion story.

### Lefties by Jamie Tuss

I grew up loving basketball and as a left-handed person, taught myself how to shoot just as well with my right hand. I just found out that my birthfather, a top-ranked college basketball player, was also left-handed and also taught himself how to shoot with his right hand so that he could switch it up on his opponents.



## PLACES

### My Homeland Felt Like Home by Erica Curry VanEe

One of the coolest things that happened in my reunion was discovering that my biological mother had me when she was 23 years old. She had come from Germany at the age of five but returned to Europe throughout her formative years, including high school.



When I was 23 and my birthmother was in her 46th year of life, I was working at a Girl Scout summer camp in Germany. In fact, I celebrated my 23rd birthday there. I ended up staying for two years and working as a nanny during the school year. I remember arriving in Heidelberg and having a very deep sense that I was “home.”

Twenty-three years later, during my 46th year of life, my birthmother and I reunited and met for the very first time. I applied for my original birth certificate when I was 45 years and six months old, to the day. Two months after I turned 46, we took a trip together to Nuremberg, Germany to meet my maternal birth family and see the home where she, her mother, and her grandmother were born. We realized that I worked in the same region (Bavaria), just 3 hours from Coburg, the place my entire maternal family (grandparents, great-grandparents and, great-great-grandparents) originated. I don’t know what drew me to Germany of all places, but I realize now a part of me really was home all those years ago.

### From Ohio to Kentucky and Back by Linda Bradford

First of all, my birth grandmother’s family lived in the same tiny Kentucky town as my adoptive mom’s family. There were only 200 or so people in the entire town so they had to have

known each other. Granted, it was over 70 years ago but what are the odds that I would be adopted out of Columbus (MANY miles away from that small town!) and wind up with a family that once upon a time may have lived next door.

Secondly, in my search for my birthfather I made a list of possibilities based on the little information I had from my adoption record and images from a yearbook with the correct year. One name stood out, not of my birthfather, but of a classmate of my mother. Only one person in the entire USA had that name and he is a member of my church! The answer I'd been seeking for 45 years was literally sitting three pews away.

### Down the Road

by Elizabeth Brougher

My biological parents and sisters moved from Ohio to Georgia, which I also did after college. We all lived in Decatur and for some of the time, just a few miles down the road from each other. Revisiting the area with them, during my reunion, showed how many of the same places we all frequented ... possibly at the same time.



### NYC and Tattoos

by Jamie Tuss

Although I was born in Ohio, I never felt at home there. I always had an attraction to New York City, and as soon as I graduated college (majoring in something that would surely get me to NYC – theatre) I moved there without knowing a single soul. I saved every penny I had earned since my first job in 8th grade. After living here for over 10 years and building a wonderful, strong community of my own, I found my birthfather's family. That's when I found out that my birthfather was born in Brooklyn, and his father was born in Harlem a few blocks from where I now live. In another twist, my birthfather's mother (Grandma BJ) was born in the same city I was, Dayton, but moved to Brooklyn with her family when she was six. I now know why I was compelled to be in New York; it's because this is where my people are from and calling this city my "home" has an entirely new meaning. I know why I'm here and I feel like I truly belong now!



My grandma BJ and I have similar tattoos, we both collect elephants, and I've inherited her smile, freckles, and love of photo albums.

### Around the Corner

by Tammy Evans

Synchronicity #1 - I grew up in Grove City, Ohio. My birth aunt's in-laws lived one street

over from me the whole time and I never knew it. I cannot tell you how many times I walked my dog or rode my bike by that house.

Synchronicity #2 - When I reunited with my birthfather I learned that I had a half-sister, Amanda. Amanda just happened to be living, where else ... in Grove City, where I grew up. She also happened to have worked with me 14 years ago, same salon, as a massage therapist. We knew each other! I remember her saying to me years ago, "You laugh just like my aunt and I swear you could be my cousin on the Keller side." My response? "You never know ... I'm adopted!"



### Right by My Sister

by Lori McCarthy

I was born in Euclid. My birthparents always lived on the East side, as far as Lake County. My birth sister (birthmother's daughter who was two years older than me) died at age two and was buried in Parma, the city where I grew up.

### Haircuts

by Rose Gattozzi

Amazingly, my birthmother Beverly and I both went to the same hairdresser for years. She would get her hair done weekly and I would just go periodically for a cut. After our reunion everyone in the shop went crazy since they knew both of us.



### FAMILIES

#### Merged Families

by Mark Cardwell

My birth sister and I married into the same family ... and only found out while going through photo albums! (The brother of my first wife's sister-in-law married my birth sister.) We realized we attended the same wedding – it was my birth sister's sister-in-law marrying my first wife's brother. And in another twist we learned that my kids were at the last minute replaced by her kids as the ring bearer and flower girl. We had to have met ... we just didn't know it was us. That left us with our jaws open for a while. We yearned for each other for 40 plus years ... how on earth did this even happen? We still don't know.



### Sixth Cousin

by Ronda Jarrell

My maternal, biological sixth great-grandparents are my fifth great-grandparents on my maternal, adoptive grandfather's side. I'm my own 6th cousin, once removed! I ended up in the same family, just rerouted a little bit!



## COVER STORY

**SMALL WORLD****Mutual Friends**

by Mary Ann Arnold

My birth half-brother and I met through a mutual friend about 20 years ago, not knowing we were biologically related. My friend and birth brother were actually dating at the time. This photo shows both of us at a party from that time. Small world – imagine our surprise when we reunited 20 years later!

**Cake Coincidence**

by Paige Strickland

Around the time I was 9 years old or so, (circa 1970), my adoptive mother used to frequent a local bakery called Barton's Bakery in Cincinnati. A lot of the time she would call and place an order and then later drive there with her kids in the car. She would hand me the money and send me in to pick up the orders of donuts, party cakes, etc. The nice ladies who worked there in white bakery uniforms would give kids a free cookie all the time.



Little did I know until I searched for my birthmother that she worked in this very same bakery for a few years! Our paths probably crossed. She probably gave me free cookies and baked or decorated my birthday cakes a few times!

**NAMES****Little Dot**

by Dorothy Jacobs

What is in a name? When I was adopted, my mother named me after my grandmother and after finding my birth family I learned that I shared the same first name as my birth grandmother "Dorothy." I always hated my name growing up because I was teased a lot about it (The Wizard of Oz jokes). I got over it and now I love it. We are known as "Big Dot" and "Little Dot."

**Kris and Chris**

by Kristina Camp Musil

I was named "Christian Marie" on my original birth certificate, and my adoptive parents named me "Kristina Lynn" not knowing what my original name was.

My first choices of a daughter's name (and the names I gave my dolls when I was a kid) were Katherine or Samantha. My

birthmother was Katherine and my birthfather was Samuel. As a matter of fact, I was upset when my adoptive brother and sister-in-law named their daughter Katherine, because then the name was "taken." On top of that, my best friend is Kathleen whom we call Kate, I have a half-sister on my birthmother's side who is Kathleen and a half-sister on my birthfather side who is Katie.

**Cabbage Patch**

by Ronda Jarrell

I found in my biological maternal grandmother's line a child named Katie Kleo who was born dead in February 1883. For Christmas 1983 (100 years later) my adoptive maternal grandmother got me a Cabbage Patch doll because of the adoption symbolism ... her name ... drumroll please ... Katy Cleo! Here is the doll and her original clothes, adoption papers, etc.

**Amanda and Evy**

by Amanda Reno

My older sister was placed for adoption. Upon reunion, we discovered: 1. her life-long best friend's name is Amanda Nicole; I am Amanda Nicole. Her best friend and I are both blondes. They've always referred to each other as sisters. My sister now has two blonde sisters named Amanda Nicole. 2. My daughter's name is Evy; my sister had always hoped to have a daughter and name her Evelyn (call her Evy). She would have been named after her parent's attorney/friend that organized her adoption. She was shocked when I told her my daughter's name. 3. My sister grew up a few roads over from my husband. Both her adoptive parents and his parents still live there.

**Kim Possible**

by Lori McCarthy

My (adoptive) sister, Kim (name chosen by our adoptive parents), searched for and found her birthmother in 2015. Kim's email address includes "kimposs" for the cartoon character "Kim Possible." Kim's birthmother is Cheryl Poss. Cheryl named a daughter she raised, Kim. So my sister Kim (with the email of kimposs) has a biological sister with an actual name of Kim Poss.

**Elizabeth**

by Elizabeth Brouger

My biological parents had their second child 15 months after I was born and gave her the middle name Elizabeth, which was the first name my adoptive parents gave to me. Maybe this was why I felt it was important for me to be Elizabeth, instead of Beth, at our Open Record Day gathering, even though I didn't know her yet at the time.

*continued*

## COVER STORY

*continued from page 6*

She and I also share many characteristics, idiosyncrasies, and life experiences, beyond our shared name. Who really is the better athlete, with the legendary tennis serve?! We also discovered her best childhood friend and I attended the same university. I knew her through our common intramural sports and social activities. My biological sister visited her several times. Were we ever in the same place at the same time? Did we catch each other's eye or even speak to one another? Or did she go home deflated one time, after being aced by her older sister in an intramural guest tennis tournament?

## PROGRAMS

### Cooking With Cuyahoga's Kids



The 6th annual *Cooking with Cuyahoga's Kids* life-skills workshop was held in conjunction with the Junior League of Greater Cleveland on Saturday, February 11th at St. Paul's Episcopal Church.

Each youth participant is in permanent custody of Cuyahoga County foster care. It was great to see the kids reconnect with each other and the volunteers and take some time to catch up. Six teens had a fun afternoon learning about healthy and nutritious food choices as they were challenged with "Food Feud" where teams faced off answering questions about the nutrition value of foods.

The teens were paired off into teams with Junior League volunteers for the cooking challenge. The teams prepared three delicious and healthy soups (along with grilled cheese sandwiches): Baked Potato soup, Chicken Enchilada soup, and Mini Turkey Meatball Vegetable soup. The soups were then judged and a winner was announced – Baked Potato Soup!

The teens finished off the afternoon tasting five healthy snacks and were tasked with determining the healthy ingredients in each.

The winners of the cooking and nutrition challenge took home a donated \$25 gift card. Each youth in attendance also left with a bag of goodies prepared by the Junior League.

## PROGRAMS



### Weaving Cultures Transracial Adoptive Family Group

About 20 parents and children, who are a part of our Weaving Cultures group, gathered at SkyZone in Westlake for their March social outing. Pictured here is: Maggie McCarthy, daughter of Lori and Bob. Thanks to Anne Mueller for coordinating the activity.

## KUDOS

**Ohio Department of Job and Family Services** for seeking to create regional Post Adoption Services throughout the state of Ohio for adoptive families, and for appointing Executive Director **Betsie Norris** to serve on this task force.

**Beth Cherryholms Miller and Ellen Henderson** for arranging a meeting location for **Betsie Norris** to meet with **Cathleen Trigg Jones**; and to **Theresa Buttafuocco**, Producer, for coordinating the filming of the meeting by **CatScape Productions** for *We Are the Joneses*, which will air on BET in 2018.

**Lori and Bob McCarthy** for hosting the January Weaving Cultures Transracial Adoptive Family Group social gathering and to **Krysia Orłowski and Brian Harte** for hosting in February.

**Ronetta Spencer**, from SAFY, for her referrals to the *Cooking with Cuyahoga's Kids* event.

**Erin Cardis** for assistance in our program department, including reports and interviews.

**Ashley Bevins** for help with our upcoming special event planning and social media.

**Alex McMillian** for assistance on communications projects.

**Jim Czarnecki** for office and administrative support.

**Joe Purton and CycleBar Beachwood** for inviting us and hosting such a wonderful special fundraising event, and to all who participated.

**Readers Digest** for printing a lengthy article on an Ohio adoptee's search, including coverage of our events the day the records opened. This article originally appeared in *Cleveland* magazine.

**John Wiedemann and Earl Pike** for offering consultation and advice.

**Anne Mueller** for picking up a printing project and delivering it to our office.

**Royal Blue Inc.** for providing transportation for the Cooking event at a discounted rate.

**Deborah Dulaney** for dancing instruction, **Kai Kyles** for child care assistance, **Sarah Greywitt** for event assistance, **The Flip-Side** for providing music, and **Carolyn Spath** for overall assistance at our Adoptive Family Creative Gathering.

Thanks to our

### Parent Teams

To the Adoptive Family Parent Advisory Team: **Carol Blauman, Debra Dulaney, Roy Gay, Cynthia Robinson, Althea Townsend, and Jodie Wyatt** for assistance and support with the Adoptive Family and Youth Support Group.

To the Weaving Cultures Adoptive Family Group Parent Advisory Team: **Krysia Orłowski, Danielle Cosgrove, George Graham, and Anita Miller** for assistance, planning and support.

**Kathy Christensen, Amy Kennedy, Katisha Smith, Tanya Reynolds, Brittany Leighty** for baking for our programs.

**Sarah Greywitt** for help with Google Hangouts.

### CCDCFS In Recognition ...

Cuyahoga County Division of Children and Family Services

**Ineka Davis, Shawn Green, Pamela Hillebrecht, Deirdre Love, Lisa Rumes Tanya Spraggins, Rebecca Spidalieri** for referrals to the *Cooking with Cuyahoga's Kids* event.

**Jackie McCray, Beverly Torres and Mary Mitchell** for their continued collaboration and support.



## PROGRAMS

## Intern Reflection

By Erin Cardis, MSASS Intern

My interest was piqued by Adoption Network Cleveland for my second year social work field placement due to my own personal interest in possibly adopting in the future. I thought Adoption Network Cleveland would give me both professional experience working within the adoption and foster care community, as well as insight and knowledge to benefit my own personal goals and journey.

I have been moved by the opportunity to engage with and learn from all of the beautiful people served by Adoption Network Cleveland, and in addition, I have benefited professionally and personally from my experiences with members of this community, and have been encouraged in my own personal and professional journey.

I have also been extremely touched by the staff at Adoption Network Cleveland, as the passion, commitment, and care for the community are so evident in everything that the staff accomplishes. It has been inspiring to work alongside such a dedicated and compassionate staff, working together towards the mission and vision of the organization that is so clearly dear to the hearts of every employee.

I have learned about the journey of adoption, and the reality of life in foster care. I have also learned about myself from the staff at Adoption Network Cleveland and the community this organization serves. I have witnessed through my work here what it looks like to work as a team to passionately pursue a vision. Thank you to all of the staff for making this experience so educational and so personally and professionally enriching.

## STAFF

## A Heart for Children and Animals

By Linda M. Schellentrager, Communications Manager

*This continues a series to share some interesting facts about our diverse staff. Below, we share a little on the personal history of Julius Jackson, our Adoption Navigator.*

Julius Jackson started in our Adoption Navigator program when it was launched in 2004. "I was volunteering at Adoption Network Cleveland after a work injury, and I got inspired to work with people by sitting next to Linda Bellini. Her caring spirit made me consider a career change and apply to be an Adoption Navigator," says Julius, who has helped many hundreds in their adoption process.

Even though it was technically a career change, he actually had spent a lifetime in a nurturing mode: caring for children and animals. When Julius was in the second grade he nurtured a baby bird back to life by feeding it worms until it could fly away. Julius had three children by the time he was in his early twenties and within a few years, he was a single dad, raising them by himself into successful adults. While raising his children, he wanted to teach them empathy, so he felt strongly about having animals around the house that needed caregiving.

In 2005 Julius met Sharonda, another staff member of Adoption Network Cleveland, and five years later they were married. Together they have gathered a menagerie of animals that were all rescued out of a harsher life. Their combined six children, three dogs, one cat, and one large turtle make up the Jackson family. Julius' 24-hour-a-day caring regimen of their cat as a newborn involved bringing her into our office every day in a shoe box.

For more of Julius' story, go to our blog – [www.adoptionnetwork.org/blog](http://www.adoptionnetwork.org/blog)

## VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT



## Ashley Bevins

Special Events Intern

Nonprofit Administration Major, CSU

**1. How long have you been volunteering with Adoption Network Cleveland?** I have been volunteering as the Special Events Intern since the end of December and will continue to volunteer until I graduate in May. I am at Adoption Network Cleveland around 15 hours a week.

**2. Why did you choose to give your time to us versus another organization?** I found this opportunity through the wonderful internship program at Cleveland State University. They work to match students with internships that align with their desired career fields, and they did just that with my placement. This internship has given me great experience in the non-profit sector and also linked me with a fantastic organization that does wonderful things in the community.

**3. What has surprised you the most about working here?** It has been awesome to see just how many people are touched by adoption and foster care. It is also amazing to be amongst a staff that works so hard to keep their mission moving. They are there for the children and families every step of the way.

**4. What do you wish other people knew about Adoption Network Cleveland?** I wish that people knew more about the programs and services offered through Adoption Network Cleveland. When I tell people about my internship, most are not familiar with the organization or their offerings. I wish people were more educated on adoption and foster care and how many people are affected.

**5. Overall, how has your experience as a volunteer been here?** My experience has been great! I am gaining experience and knowledge every day working with Dan Carroll, Development Specialist. He is very supportive along with the rest of the staff who have made me feel extremely welcome.

**6. What might someone be surprised to know about you?** Hmmmm.... I went skydiving about 4 1/2 years ago, which was the scariest and most exciting thing I have ever done. It was on my bucket list and made me appreciate having my feet planted back on the ground.

If you are interested in volunteering in any capacity, contact: [kathryn.mahon@adoptionnetwork.org](mailto:kathryn.mahon@adoptionnetwork.org) - or check out: [www.adoptionnetwork.org/volunteer.aspx](http://www.adoptionnetwork.org/volunteer.aspx)



## Mama Byrd

By Mike Holley, Adoptee, Member

I was born and adopted in Ohio in the 1970s and now live and work in California as an actor. In 2015, my dad and step-mom emailed me at least three times to tell me that Ohio opened their adoption records. I received my original birth certificate at the end of 2015 and didn't know where to go from there. Ohio Vital Statistics pointed me to Adoption Network Cleveland and I finally became a member in December 2016. On Monday, December 12th I emailed Traci Onders, who assists people in search, copies of the information I had.

Traci called me the next morning with news – she found my birthmother, Martha Byrd. I was given two landline phone numbers and two home addresses, one of each in Kentucky and Ohio. Traci also shared that I may have two brothers or half-brothers. It was fuzzy if the oldest son and I had the same dad. Traci even had my birth grandfather's name.

Traci explained that the next step was for me to make initial contact and we discussed that process at length. I was even provided with phone scripts and was completely blown away. I, of course, had all of this bouncing around in my brain for years and more clearly for the past few days. But less than 24 hours later upon receiving my information, I was given all this! I mean, come on....

It was a lot to process. A friend of mine challenged me to make the call before the week was up, although I thought I would wait until after Christmas. The next day though I just decided to reach out. My heart was racing. I went over the scripts until I could say the words pretty much without my voice cracking and tears forming. My original birth certificate was on my computer screen, scripts laid out in front of me and a pillow nearby to cry into, if need be. I was ready!

I called both numbers on Wednesday morning, December 13th. One number was disconnected and the other had an automated answering machine. Knowing that I needed to

The Alpha Bull  
in me came out.  
I thought this guy  
was trying to get  
between Martha  
and me.

leave a thoughtful message I called Traci again and she guided me on how to handle it. Her advice was very helpful and could elicit a response while at the same time maintaining my birthmother's privacy. I was super amped up and with my heart still racing, I left a message.

A few minutes later an Ohio number that I didn't recognize called me and left a voicemail. I listened to it and it went something like this:

"Hi. This is Martha's husband. You called just a

bit ago and I'm curious as to who you are and why you called us. You may call again and talk to me if you'd like. Bye-Bye."

The alpha bull in me came out. I thought this guy was trying to get between Martha and me. This was not in my plans! I spoke to a friend of mine who talked me down. She said that neither of us was doing anything wrong and this could be a great conversation. I knew that I had to be nice to Mr. Byrd or I'd lose the chance to talk to my birthmother. My friend and I said some prayers and she said that after she and I hung up, she would say a rosary for me, I'd take a few breaths and call back. So I did.

I called and Mr. Byrd picked up. I said, "This is Mike Holley. I just called you and would like to talk with Martha about something private, if I could, please." He said that he understood that it was a private matter, but he'd ask her if she wanted to speak to me as they didn't recognize my name or number. I said, "No sir, you don't know who I am, but I'd really like to talk to Martha." I knew then that I was in! I was now sliding down an ice tunnel! He then called out, "Marty! Marty! Pick up the phone." All I could think of was "Awwwww, he calls my birthmom, Marty." She picked up the phone and it went something like this:

*Me: Is this Martha?*

*Her: Yes, it is.*

*Me: Do you have time to chat about a private matter?*

*continued*

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

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

TO GET STARTED:

**CALL** Traci Onders at (216) 482-2323 to discuss the process, including becoming a member and steps along the way.

**JOIN** us as a member at the Search Level.

**ATTEND** (strongly encouraged) at least two General Support and Discussion Meetings. These General Meetings are open to anyone touched by adoption, or related professionals, and are an opportunity to learn from others'

experiences and to prepare emotionally for this journey. [bit.ly/ANCgenmeet](http://bit.ly/ANCgenmeet) – Locations: NE Ohio, Columbus, NW Ohio, Dayton, or Cincinnati, and online via the Virtual Webcam meeting.

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

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

David, Richard, Sheila, Walter, Joey, Mike, Greg, Charlotte, Manesia, Sandra, Dolores, and Nathaniel.



Mama Byrd, continued from page 9

Her: Yes, I do. Who is this?

Me: My name is Mike Holley. I was born on January 25, 1972 at St. Thomas Hospital in Akron, Ohio and placed for adoption. Does this mean anything to you?

Her: I'm sorry. Can you repeat that? I repeated it.

Her (crying): Are you my son?

Me (sobbing): Yes, I am.

Her: I've prayed for you every day since then.

Me: You have no idea!

We spoke for about 40 minutes and agreed to chat more, email, and meet up sometime. I sent Marty and her husband an email that night with photos of me and links to some commercials and TV stuff that I've done as an actor in Los Angeles. It took a while for me to hear back. I texted Bob, Martha's husband, a few days later and he finally got back to me. Bob and I texted for a few days. The day before Christmas I got a text from Martha (Marty) or Mama Byrd, as I call her, saying that this was the first text she'd ever sent, and that this Christmas was so special for her because we reconnected and she wanted to wish me a Merry Christmas, but didn't want to interrupt anyone. I then called her on Christmas Day and we talked for about an hour.

Since then, Mama Byrd gave me her phone number and we've texted almost daily. She saw my *Grey's Anatomy* episode and told her sister to watch it. Her sister told her husband, "That's Martha's son!" It's been an absolute love fest. I still cannot believe it! Mama Byrd asked me if we can text every day. I said yes, of course, and we've done just that. We plan to meet in a few months after they move back to the Akron area from Kentucky.

After 44 years, I found my Mama Byrd.

### Cycle for Adoption Fundraising Results!

- 40 riders
- 2,000 minutes biked total
- 13,000 calories burned
- \$975 raised

**Thank You!**

## FUND DEVELOPMENT

### Help Us Fill the Gap

By Kathryn Mahon, Director, Fund Development and External Relations

Thank you to everyone who donated, clicked, and shared our call to help us fill the temporary funding gap Adoption Network Cleveland is facing. We are humbled and feel energized by the amazing response from our Adoption Network Cleveland friends and supporters.

To date, you have helped us raise over \$57,000.

**Thank You!**

But the job is not done – we still need your help to raise a total of \$105,000 to help fund our anticipated 6-month gap caused by a temporary lapse in funding.

So, if you haven't yet, please donate and keep spreading the word to those you know who want to ensure the programs and services are here when you or anyone with a connection to adoption or foster care need them.

As you know, due to issues beyond our control, 39 percent of our budget has temporarily dried up – threatening our ability to maintain all of the important programs you expect us to provide to those we serve.

To learn more about the specifics of the situation we are in, please read the letter to our supporters, which can be found on our website: <http://bit.ly/fillthegapLETTER>

We simply cannot continue to maintain our programs near anything resembling current levels without a gift from you.

Please – go to our GoFundMe page and make a contribution today to help fill in this gap caused by a temporary lapse in funding. No gift is too small to save our programs.

Sincerely,

Betsie Norris, Executive Director and Lisa Buescher, Board President

### Our Endowment: An Investment in the Future

The Adoption Network Cleveland *William N. Skirball Endowment Fund* is an opportunity for you to make a gift now that will mean many more dollars of support far into the future.

What a return on your investment - thousands of people helped along in their adoption journey! With oversight from our board, the Cleveland Foundation stewards our fund and ensures that each dollar multiplies over time to generate revenues earmarked for Adoption Network Cleveland. You can contribute through the Cleveland Foundation (<https://www.clevelandfoundation.org/give-now/>). Choose "Adoption Network Cleveland Endowment Fund" next to Choose a Fund.

### Legacy Circle

Making a planned gift via a bequest, charitable gift annuity, trust or other vehicle ensures a stable future for Adoption Network Cleveland's programs and services. Planned gifts may be directed to support our endowment, programs or overall operations. By including Adoption Network Cleveland in your estate plans, you will become a member of our Legacy Circle. If you have already included Adoption Network Cleveland in your estate plans, please let us know so that we can add your name to the Legacy Circle. For more information, please contact Kathryn Mahon, Director of Development and External Relations, at (216) 482-2319 or [kathryn.mahon@adoptionnetwork.org](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](mailto: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*

*TODD AND MINDA NORRIS*

##### BUESCHER FAMILY FUND

created by Board Member Lisa A. Buescher and Brendan Buescher

*BARLOW BUESCHER*

*BRENDAN AND LISA BUESCHER*

*MADELINE BUESCHER*

*TW BUESCHER*

##### KATTERHEINRICH-CRIST FAMILY FUND

created by Leanne Katterheinrich-Crist  
*MURRAY AND SUSAN VAN EPP*

##### 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

*MURRAY AND SUSAN VAN EPP*

#### Corporate/Organizations and Foundations

Anonymous, Beskind-Robinau Family Fund, Bonomo Family Foundation, Episcopal Community Services Foundation, KPMG LLP, Lubrizol Foundation, Roy A. Hunt Foundation, The Thatcher Family Fund, The Edward & Catherine Lozick Foundation, Zazik/Gale Family Charitable Fund

#### Individual Donations

Anonymous (5), Nancy and Walt A., Sherri A., and Marty R., Margaret A., Susanne B. and Bob B., Christine and Mike B., Maria B., Wendy B., Linda B., Berta and Clinton B., Emily B., Alice and Larry B., Gerald B. and Susan K., Margery B., Richard B., Carole and John B., Zoe B.-W. and Robert W., Mary and Howard B., Ira B., Stacy C., Nicole C., Peter and Rita C., Dan C., Gail and Frank C., Carolyn C., Molly C., Tracy, C., Staci C., Ann C., Sally C.-O., Jeff C., Jody and Scott C., Carlin and Megan C., Beth D., Cheryl D., Tom and Tricia D., Elizabeth D., Buffy and Brent D., Marcy D., Becky D., Fran D., Howard D., Leo D., Keven E., Marjorie F., Lynn F., Thom F., Danielle G.-L., Hope G., George and Jeanne G., Rosemarie G., Kathleen and Jeff G., Sheldon and Non G., Dan and Kathleen G., Jennifer G., Nancy G., Kevin G., James G. and David D., William G., George G. and Michael F., Mark G. and Diane S., Anna G.-L. and Russell L., Dori H., John and Robyne H., Elaine H., Marni H., Tony H., Jennifer H., Carol and Terrance H., Maret H., Brian H., Margaret H., Chlondra H., Alyce and Reese J., James and Jackie J., Barb J., Karen K., Paul K., Annette K., Sharon K., Benjamin L., Alicia L., Gil and Carol L., John and Christine M., Anne M., Karen M., Dan M., Virginia M., Greg M., Anita M., Beth M., Chelsea M., Moyo M., Brenda M.B., Mike M., Cheryl M.-W. and Bobbette M., Kristin M., Peter N., Daniel and Lorraine N., Lori N., Thomas N. and Judith R., Art and Cheryl N., Tessa N., Marianne N., Thom and Celeste N., Traci and Raymond O., Krysia O., Stephen P., Diane and James P., Karen P., Robert P., Rosanne P., Louis P., Katy P., Nancy R., Betsy and Terry R., Barbara R., Darnella R., Amy and Ken R., Lynn and Joe R., Peter R., Kurt R. and Kathy B., Anthony S., Robin S., Craig S., Judy and Stephen S., Elaine S. and Kim L., Robert S., Heidi S., Fareed S., Karen S., Catherine S.J., Lawrence S., Ellen S., Desiree S., Jean S., Judith S., Steve S., Cynthia T. and Louis G., Mimi T., Lucy T., John and Kelly U., Sue Ellen U., Lynn V., John and Denise V., Karen V., Rona W., Noelle and Tony W., John W., David and Catherine Y., Justin and Beth Z.

#### In Kind

Anonymous (2), *Cleveland Zoological Society, Elaine H., Junior League of Cleveland, Faye K., Betsie N., Mershona P, Richard P., Romito's Pizza, Linda S.*

*The above reflects donations from December 1, 2016 to February 28, 2017*

## MEMBERSHIP

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

Anonymous, Kathy A., Sherri A., Celeste B., Denise B., Alice and Larry B., Anthony B., Elizabeth and Ken B., Deborah G. and Nicole T., Brian C., Nicole C., Emily C., Travis C and Caitlin F., Christopher C. and Nicholas K. Jeff C., Heather C., Carlin and Megan C., Chad and Charmaine C., Deborah D.W., Bette D., Tom and Tricia D., Bernadette D., Bonnie and Eugene D., Vicky D., Becky D., Susan D., Maureen D., Family and Community Services, Inc., Jennifer F., Frank and Debbi G., Dan and Kathleen G., Elizabeth and Mike G., George G. and Michael F., Mark G. and Diane S., Bryony G., Bev and Rob H., Marni H., Kris H., Valerie H-E., Stephanie H., Mike H., Ebony H., Ellen H., Marie J., Steve K., Gayle K., Brian L., Michelle L., Kathryn M., Lori N., Thom and Celeste N., Robin and Erin P., Kendra P., Miriam R., Kirsten and Eric S., Anne and Jerry S., Stark County Job and Family Services, James and Julie S., Estes and Diane T., Jamie T., John T., Claudia V., Karen V., Jean W., Chris W., Jennifer Y.

#### Announcements

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

### Join Our Community

Our members help ensure that there is a place where people can be empowered in the adoption process, where families can reconnect, and where youth in foster care can find a place to call home. Together we can change lives and create futures for all those touched by adoption and foster care throughout their journey. We ask you to become a member of Adoption Network Cleveland in order to utilize our programs and services. No one will be turned away for inability to pay.

BENEFITS of membership include:

- CONNECTION to a community of caring people like you who understand and support you in your adoption journey;
- SUBSCRIPTION to our quarterly newsletter, *Guidance* and monthly e-newsletter *Pipeline*;
- DISCOUNTS and advanced notice on programs and events;
- A VOICE in Ohio public policy issues affecting adoption and foster care;
- BORROWING PRIVILEGES to our Resource Library of books and movies;
- SEARCH AND REUNION support assistance at search membership level; UNLIMITED ATTENDANCE at support and discussion meetings including General Meetings and Post Adoption Groups.

To join, contact [kathryn.mahon@adoptionnetwork.org](mailto:kathryn.mahon@adoptionnetwork.org), call (216) 325-1000 or visit our website.



ADOPTION NETWORK CLEVELAND: EDUCATE • SUPPORT • ADVOCATE

## Join Us!

Adoption Network Cleveland 10th Annual

# Creating Futures

## Benefit and Silent Auction

**Diamonds are Forever**

Friday, April 28, 2017

6:30 pm

Music Box Supper Club

**Enter for your chance to win a 2017 Cleveland  
Indians regular season suite for ten guests  
with food & beverages included!**

Raffle tickets for \$5 each, 5 tickets for \$20, or 15 tickets for \$50. Winner will be announced on Friday, April 28 at our 10th Annual Creating Futures Benefit & Silent Auction. Purchase your winning tickets at [bit.ly/ancINDIANSraffle](http://bit.ly/ancINDIANSraffle).

Thank you to  
**FOX Sports Ohio/SportsTime Ohio for donating!**



### 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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Executive Director for reprint requests.

SAVE THE DATES



## Mini-Golf Outing

Saturday, July 29, 2017

Rain Date: Sunday, July 30, 2017

Sweeties Golfland  
6770 Brookpark Road  
Cleveland, Ohio 44129



## Annual Cookout

Sunday, August 27, 2017

2:00 to 5:00 pm

Cleveland Metroparks, Keystone Shelter  
Parma, Ohio 44134