



Summer Newsletter 2014

Baby Safe Haven Laws in each state allows parents to anonymously leave their unharmed infant with designated authorities without fear of prosecution. Since 1999, all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico have enacted such laws. The infant can be left at a hospital, fire station, police station or at a religious institution as long as there is a provider that can care for the child, no questions asked. These laws were enacted to save the lives of children, while protecting the parents from prosecution. The details of laws in each state vary.

Why would a parent choose to do leave their infant at a Baby Safe Haven facility? Desperation and being in a state of crisis in one way or another is an answer. Lack of support and finances and are other reasons. Fear is another reason why a woman or man would choose to leave their infant with a stranger.

These are also some of the same reasons that a parent would choose to make an adoption plan for their infant. Why would a parent choose the Baby Safe Haven over making an adoption plan? I believe one of the answers to this question is lack of information regarding the option of adoption. Baby Safe Haven gets a lot of press; whereas positive adoption education is lacking in our society. Those of us who have been touched by adoption need to educate the general public that adoption is a positive, loving choice that biological parents make for their child. Making an adoption plan is the most difficult decision a parent can make for their baby; yet it is one of the bravest and most courageous acts.

Recently we received a call from a hospital about a young woman who was going to leave her baby under the Baby Safe Haven Law. She had planned to give birth at home and then bring the baby somewhere. She ended up in the hospital talking to a social worker who encouraged her to explore adoption; just to talk to someone about adoption. After some very intensive counseling, this young couple decided to make an adoption plan for their baby. They chose a family for their baby. They felt good that they have the option of receiving letters and pictures over the years and opening up the adoption in the future. In the meantime, they have a picture in their mind of the safe and loving home where their child is being raised. Their wishes were respected and everything was handled with discretion and in complete privacy.

For this child's sake, there is now a history which will follow him. This child will grow up knowing that his parents made a loving choice for him; to give him parents who could give him the life he deserves. This will be the life that his birth parents felt that they could not give him at this point in their lives. The birth parents will continue to have choices regarding exchange of information and openness. These are options not available with choosing the Baby Safe Haven Law.

We need to let couples or individuals who are facing parenthood for which they are unprepared, know that adoption is a positive option for them. Adoptions can be happen in total privacy, while respecting the wishes of both birth parents.

Best regards,

Executive Director

We're only two years away from reaching the 30th year anniversary of Adoptions With Love, and we would love to celebrate with a big event! If you are interested in the helping of planning, please contact Claudia Goldman at cgoldman@awlonline.org



A letter from Nancy By Nancy Rosenhaus, Associate Director



In this issue:

From Amy	1
From Nancy	2
Letter from Michele	3
Foster Care from Karen & Geneva	4
From Hannah & Jackson	5

Adoptions With Love
246 Walnut St.
Suite 103
Newton, MA 02460
tel (617) 964-4357
www.adoptionswithlove.org
info@awlonline.org

18 is not a magic number. I say this is because we get requests all the time; I am turning 18 and I want to meet my birthmother or my son/daughter is turning 18 and they have asked about getting more information about their birthmother /birthfather or I have waited 18 years and now I want to contact my birth child.

18 may seem like a reasonable age to engage in this process but we have learned, from experience and other professionals in the field, that in many circumstance it is better to wait a few more years. It is recommended that young adults wait until after 21 to engage in this process. Part of the reason is that young people's brains are not fully developed at 18. Another, more important reason, is that this process can be an emotional rollercoaster and it is best to take this ride when one is more mature.

This is not to say that teens should not request to get more information about their birth families. This is totally reasonable. In fact, we recommend that your child has all the information you have regarding their birth family by the time they reach adolescence. However, searching for birth families or meeting them may be more beneficial a few years down the road. AWL offers our families a search and reunion program. Before the age of 21, the young adult/older teen needs to have permission from parents to participate in our program. When the young adult is over 21 years old, we need to speak directly with them. However, we encourage parents to participate with their children even when they are older than 21. Here are some of the important points we like to share with you before going forward:

Search is an exciting and complicated process. Whether you are an adopted person or a birthparent you have probably been thinking about this for many years. This is an unpredictable process and one that takes time and patience. Some young adults have begun the search and decide to stop; just knowing it is available to them. They may come back to it later. Some decide to pursue finding out more information or they read their documents for the first time. Some decide to contact their birthparent(s) and meet. These are your choices which you will decide about along the way. It is a journey.

Some birth parents are very excited and agreeable to participating in this process. They themselves may have been waiting for this time to come. However, sometimes when birth parents are located they are not agreeable to participating and this may feel like a rejection. At other times, birth parents reach out to the adopted person who is not in a place at that time to accept this overture. It is very important to know that all these things can occur so that you prepare for them as best as you can. We will help you with this process.

We have encountered many situations in this journey. In one instance, a young woman started this process with AWL and it took over a year to locate her birthmother. Then there was much work that needed to be done for her to accept this overture. Finally they connected. It took a lot of patience and persistence on the part of the young adult. Last week a birth mother from 17 years ago wrote a letter for the very first time to her birth child who had been in touch with other family members, but the birth mother herself had not been in contact with AWL since placement. Recently, after 17 years she wrote a beautiful letter explaining why it took her so long to participate in this process. We have had young adults enter this process but the birth parent does not want to be part of it. This can be devastating and feel like a rejection. We have had birth parents want to contact the birth child but the child does not wish to be contacted. We are here for everyone, no matter the outcome. We have a referral network of therapists for support and guidance.

Last week I was invited to participate with a family and their 5 year old who were having lunch with the birth mother and her parents, brother and sister. They were seeing each other for the first time since birth. It was an amazing experience for everyone and it was surprisingly comfortable for everyone. Here is what the parents said about this experience:

"We were a little anxious going into the meeting because we didn't know what to expect, but as soon as we saw the birth mother and her family it was like seeing old friends we hadn't seen in a while. The

family was amazing and they had the perfect balance of enthusiasm in interacting with our daughter and letting her get comfortable and just be who she is. We are so thankful that our daughter has another family that loves her as much as we do. We wouldn't be the family we are today if it wasn't for the selfless and loving decision the birthmother made when she chose us to parent our daughter."

The number 18 does not officially mean it is time to meet. It may happen sooner, later, or maybe not at all. It is most important to remember it is a process and a journey, not a magic number. Adoptions With Love is here to guide you no matter what the number. If you have taken this journey or are thinking about it, we would like to hear from you. Contact us at info@adoptionswithlove.org and tell us your experience or desire. And don't forget to please **LIKE** us on Facebook!!

WHY WE CHOSE ADOPTION FOR MATT

I have always been very aware and supportive of adoption, myself being adopted and raised with an adopted sibling. Therefore, when I found myself facing an unplanned pregnancy during my final semester of college, adoption seemed the natural choice. Though I had only been dating my boyfriend, Adam, for five months, he was incredibly supportive and understanding of the situation. Both of us were, however, extremely nervous about the reactions of our parents. To delay this confrontation, we decided to keep the pregnancy a secret from all of our friends and family until my graduation, when I was five months along.

Before I could muster the courage to tell my parents, my mother confronted me and asked if I was pregnant. I hesitantly responded with a "yes," and couldn't believe how positively she responded. When I explained that I was considering adoption my parents were delighted, and my mother recounted how incredibly happy my adoption had made them. She said that giving a child to an adoptive family was the greatest gift, and that both of my parents would stand by me through the pregnancy. This was a huge relief to both Adam and me, and it started to seem like everything was going to be okay.

A week later Adam and I visited his parents and told them that I was pregnant. Although we had prepared for the worst, we were again surprised by the compassion and understanding they showed us, as they too voiced that they would support whatever decision we made. My older sister and Adam's younger sister were equally shocked by the news, but were just as supportive as our parents had been about our choice to pursue adoption.

We then began our search for an agency, and received a recommendation from a family member for *Adoptions With Love*. Adam and I knew right away that this was the right agency for us, and were greatly comforted by their accepting and sympathetic mission to help us make the best choice. Before long we were looking at prospective families, and after a few weeks had chosen a couple that we wished to meet. Adam and I agreed early on that we wanted our adoption to be very open, and felt confident in our decision with the love and support from our families and *Adoptions With Love*. Our first meeting with the adoptive family was easier and more comfortable than I ever could have imagined, and yet another affirmation that we had made the right choice.

Adam and I continued our conversation with the adoptive family through email, and even helped choose our child's name. Through getting to know our adoptive couple, we truly felt that they were exactly the people we would want to raise our child. Even on the day of Matt's birth, we knew that he was their child as much as he was our own.

Although the process of making an adoption plan for our child was not without affliction, it was an overwhelmingly affirmative experience. With the full support of our families, the consolation of each other, and the reassurance of *Adoptions With Love*, Adam and I were able to give the best life to our child. We could not have done this alone, and give our unending thanks to all those who encouraged and helped us along the way.

Michele



<<Geneva with most recent foster baby

Karen with one of many foster babies >>



Our Journey into becoming a Foster Family

I was first introduced to the world of foster care and adoption when I was 10 years old. My mother placed my siblings and I into the home daycare run by a remarkable woman named Betty. Betty was a widow with a family of 3 children she adopted. Her girls at time I met them were 16 & 17 and a 9 year old with intellectual disabilities. Betty was also a foster mom to New York State infants in the adoption process. Newborns were placed in foster care until they were eligible for adoption at 6 months of age. I loved helping care for these babies, feeding, changing and becoming proficient at calming them at nap times. Back then babies were placed on their stomachs so they would not choke if they spit up. I learned to ease the babies into dreamland by rubbing their back in a circular motion. I was there when the babies met their adoptive parents, allowed to give my parenting advice. The whole household cried our tears of loss after the newly created family left to begin their life together. Betty and her parenting style made a huge impact on my life and I included her wisdom in my Adoptions With Love home study report.

My husband and I were blessed to adopt 3 children through AWL. Our oldest, Geneva, we brought home from the hospital. Our 2 sons, Jack & Ben started their journeys into our lives after a week's foster care in Louisiana. The foster Mom was amazing and her family included school age children, with a young teenage daughter who was an integral part of our babies' care. When I learned our Ben was to stay with the same foster family that Jack had, I felt great comfort because I knew he was well cared for and I could and did call and check on his progress. I even introduced him to my voice over the phone! This was the first time I thought about foster parenting, perhaps when my children were older.

Years later when my children were all in school, I began to contemplate foster care as a way to give back for all the blessings my family received. I contacted AWL and began the foster care home study in 2005. Since 2006 I have foster parented 35 babies, mostly for AWL, but some for other MA agencies when their foster parents were busy. I knew that I would find great personal reward, but I couldn't have predicted the positive impact on my children. Our pediatrician had said that it would be great for them, but I couldn't comprehend how much at the beginning. Each baby arrived in our home with their own birth story, which the children questioned, especially my daughter. It opened up so many conversations about why Moms needed to make adoption plans for their much loved babies. Over and over it was reinforced that these babies, like my children were given the gift of an adoptive forever family because they were loved so very much. Their birth Moms wanted to give them the best childhood and family life they could. A tremendously loving sacrifice.

Over the years I have been further blessed to meet many birthmothers. I'm compelled by their sorrow to reach out to hug them and praise them on the care they've taken to bring a healthy child into the world and tell them how brave they are for their loving sacrifice and foresight in making adoption plans for their precious baby. I doubt they'll ever find people in their lives that would celebrate their mature, responsible, loving act. I have tremendous empathy for their sorrowful journey.

I have also been present at the beginning of many new families. I've had the privilege of placing a much anticipated baby into the loving arms of their forever families. Witnessing this tremendous joy is infinitely rewarding. Yes, I have sorrow with the send off of each baby that I've "loved up" for a few days, but understanding first hand how much each child forever transforms their adoptive family far outweighs my sadness. I know I've left a little bit of my heart with each, but it outweighs my grief. If I'm lucky I hear from my babies parents, either a short email or a holiday card with adorable smiling faces. I'm so glad to be even a small part in these precious babies life stories. —Karen

I was in the fifth grade when my mother decided that she wanted to become a foster family and being a ten year old girl, I was thrilled. Every young girl fantasizes about the day that she will have a family and her own baby; but this was a dream come true. I loved every minute of it, I held these small babies every minute that I could; begged to feed them and play with them. At ten years old, I didn't realize the impact my family was actually making on these infant's lives. When I got a little older, my mom started bringing me to meet the baby's adoptive family. That is when I began to truly understand the importance and the significance of caring for these infants.

I distinctly remember one time I was able to meet with an adoptive family; they were adopting their first child and they were absolutely glowing with excitement. Their little boy was wrapped tight and snuggly in his blanket as we handed the newborn to his mother. Quiet tears rolled down her face with her husband's arm wrapped around her and their new son. There was silence, then a simple "Thank you." Just then I realized how important the past week had been. I had never been more happy for someone in my life. The gratification that I felt at this moment was enormous as I realized that I am able to give back to the agency that once took such great care of me, but also, to begin a positive and healthy life path for this fortunate newborn.

Being a foster sister has only ever had a positive impact on my life. Still to this day, I love taking care of the babies, nurturing and loving them until they are placed with their forever families. Now a sophomore in college, I realize the huge responsibility babies truly are. From financial to mental, emotional and physical well-being, babies are a lot of work! But this opportunity to care for numerous newborns has ensured my decision to someday wanting to have children of my own. It has provided me with life skills that not many people can say they have received. There is never a day when I resent my mother's decision to become a foster family, rather, it has made me proud to be a part of the selfless decision that she made to care for these innocent, adorable babies. — Geneva

My name is Hannah Fisher and I joined the staff of Adoptions With Love just under one month ago as the new Expectant/Birth Parent Coordinator. I have a BA in Economics and National Security from Connecticut College, where I graduated in 2008. I also have my JD from Northeastern University School of Law. Before coming to AWL, I volunteered in Israel at a women's legal aid clinic, and worked at a plaintiff's side employment law firm in New York City. Sadly, New York just didn't do it for me, and I missed Boston too much to stay away. I moved back to the area with the intention of transitioning into the non-profit world. I specifically wanted to work with AWL because I was adopted at birth, so I thought I could provide a unique perspective for both birth parents and adoptive couples alike. On a more personal level, I love sports (hockey in particular), I'm a caffeine junkie, and I don't have the self-control to resist the sweets and goodies that end up in our conference room.



Post your cute baby pictures on our Facebook page! Update your email address with us at:

info@awlonline.org

If you are over 21, email us your address, phone, email for our records



Current new parent's group; so much fun!

My name is Jackson Compere and I assist AWL in general accounting, and finance. Besides working at AWL, I work as a business and tax consultant in my own accounting and finance practice. I have a dual MBA and MS degrees in International Economic Development from Southern New Hampshire University and BS at the State University of Haiti with a major in Accounting. Additionally, I earned a Certificate in International Relations from the Fletcher School at Tufts University.

I joined AWL in May 2013 with big enthusiasm. My background in community development and finance always triggers me to work for organizations that are devoted to help others. I always think working is not only a way of making a living but also a way of contributing to society. In that capacity, AWL meets my expectations with their mission to support and help newborns and young mothers. They are innocent, they must be loved. AWL makes a big difference as an institution that has a mission to cherish kids, birth mothers and adoptive parents. AWL has a long history of helping families and I am proud to be part of the team.



Building Families Through Domestic Adoption

AWL STAFF

Amy S. Cohen, LICSW, Executive Director

Nancy Rosenhaus, LICSW, Associate Director

Nuala Sullivan Wall, LSW, Social Worker

Debra N. Olshever, M.Ed., LCSW

Claudia Goldman, Office Manager

Hannah Fisher, Expectant/ Birth Parent Coordinator

Jackson Compere, Bookkeeper

Geneva D'Agostino, Newsletter Editor

AWL Board of Directors

Deborah Goldberg, President

Mark Blecher

Chris Counihan

Janet Giesser

Susan Heffron

Michael Krupa

Ray Levy

Michael Winter

Drew Zalkind

NONPROFIT ORG
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
BOSTON MA
PERMIT NO. 56500

Adoptions With Love, Inc.
246 Walnut Street
Suite 103
Newton, MA 02460