



## WINTER Newsletter 2014



Empathy is "the intellectual identification with or vicarious experiencing of the feelings, thoughts, or attitudes of another." Or the "the imaginative ascribing to an object, as a natural object or work of art, feelings or attitudes present in oneself."

Many years ago, when I was leading a Pre-adoptive group, we were discussing who the birth parents are and why they make this extremely difficult decision to place their child for adoption. We focused on the importance of developing empathy for the birth parents. In a corner of the room, a prospective adoptive father mumbled, "You're talking to the wrong people." I replied, "No, I am speaking to the RIGHT group of people."

Even 20 years later, I still know that it is imperative that adoptive families develop a sense of empathy for the birth parents of their child. There are many reasons why. First, in this era of openness, when prospective adoptive parents and expectant birth parents meet, it is important that they find common ground and are able to relate to one another. How else can birth parents entrust the life of their child to perfect strangers? I am in awe of the trust and faith expectant/birth parents put in us as an agency and with the prospective adoptive families of their child. One of the reasons expectant parents are able to place their child for adoption is the faith they have in adoptive parents to give your child the life they cannot. In order for adoptive parents to instill this in the birth parents, they must have a sense of empathy for who the birth parents are and their struggles in life.

This is a difficult task because the birth parents' lives are usually polar opposite from the adoptive parents' lives. Often members of these two parts of the adoption triad are not similar socio-economically, religiously, educationally or racially. However, they share a profound intimacy through a child. This child is the most important person in the adoption triad.

A second reason for empathizing with the birth parents relates to how adoptive parents tell their child his or her story. This story must include who their birth parents are and why they made a brave and courageous decision to make an adoption plan for him or her. If adoptive parents can tell this story with empathy, sensitivity and respect for the birth parents' decision, it will help the child during identity formation. The why's and how's of a child's story affects his/her self-image.

All members of the adoption triad become a family through their child and desire what is best for him or her. If anyone feels they have difficulty developing empathy for their child's birth parents, there are many experienced professionals who can help.

We all want our children to grow up to be well-adjusted, healthy, independent, productive members of society. They must fully understand who they are to achieve these goals.

Regards,

Executive Director



# A letter from Nancy

By Nancy Rosenhaus, Associate Director



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## Adoptions With Love

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Two weeks ago, a very nice 20 year old man walked into our office. He announced that he was ready to meet his birthmother. Unsure of his identity, I quickly checked our computer data base.

Good thing AWL modernized! Your child's initial information is readily accessible. Next came the more difficult part; we had not heard from his birthmother in over 15 years. She had requested the initial letters and pictures for the first 5 years, but we had no updated information about her. Fast forward a few weeks; he made an appointment to come in to discuss what this process might be like for him. He needed to know that we had no updated information about her and we might not be able to find her or contact her. If we did locate her, there was no information to tell us if she would be amenable to any type of contact. It was a blank slate and there were no clues to help in this search. It would be a total emotional risk. I sent him away to think it over, get permission from his parents for this process and make sure he was ready to embark on this journey. Because he was under 21 years of age, I needed permission from his parents for him to engage in this process. If your child is over 21 years of age, if we call you, it is because we need to speak to your young adult directly about this process. The outcome? We were able to locate and talk with his birthmother. They emailed through the agency for a few weeks, and now they are set to meet each other in person very soon.

This SEARCH process is just one of the multifaceted parts of **YOUR ADOPTION AGENCY**. We are here for the expectant parents now and birth parents into the future. We are here for the adoptive family hoping to become parents NOW; we are here for your questions in the future. We are here for the young adult who emails us or walks into our office. Our relationship with you does not end at the placement of your baby; we remain a lifelong partner.

When we ask you to remember us for a **donation** these are the things we ask that you think about and remember. Our fundraising dollars will go to:

**Our Records Fund** that will care for your child's records forever. Our records produce a lot of paper and we do not have the space on site for them. We pay for storage at Iron Mountain. Our records fund will make sure there is a storage place and a person assigned to the records in perpetuity. When we raise enough funds, we will digitize these records.

**Liz Quackenbush Memorial Fund** is one that was set up to assist birthmother's with bettering their prospects in life after an adoption plan is made for the baby. We can pay for a college course or online courses, a computer to go to school, beds for a birthparent who has been sleeping on the sofa or floor. There are a multitude of ways in which we can help our birth mothers. If a birthparent has gone to jail, we can assist them with these funds to rebuild their life when they return home. Some women have saved money for a car but can't afford the additional cost of registering the car, insurance and license plates. These are items we take for granted but they can present huge obstacles without this help.

**General Donation Fund** is used to subsidize adoptions. There are many families who want to adopt and will be wonderful parents, but cannot afford the fees associated with an adoption. These subsidies are often used to assist families adopt a child with medical complications or high risk for hereditary complications. We have also used this fund to assist families to adopt a birth sibling when they are unprepared to financially adopt another child. It is a priority to keep birth siblings together if that is the birth parent and family's wish.

Thank you in advance for any donation large or small. Your generosity helps us to help someone else. This is **YOUR ADOPTION AGENCY**.

We appreciate your taking part in this process. Another way you can help your agency to thrive does not cost any dollars. It takes your time. You can volunteer to work on our

## 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration

This can be a very fun and energizing process. It takes over a year to plan this celebration. If you have the time to help, email me at [nrosenhaus@awlonline.org](mailto:nrosenhaus@awlonline.org). I can tell you more.

It is the time of year that we all "give thanks" for the good in our lives. Thank you for all the ways you help us to help others.

Very Truly Yours,

Nancy



# The Latest News...



The other way to help **YOUR ADOPTION AGENCY** is to promote us on social media.

- ♦ Join and **LIKE** our **Facebook** page [www.facebook.com/adoptionwithlove](http://www.facebook.com/adoptionwithlove) and share your thoughts.
- ♦ **TWITTER**: <https://twitter.com/AdoptionsWLove>
- ♦ **INSTAGRAM**: [http://instagram.com/adoptions\\_with\\_love](http://instagram.com/adoptions_with_love)
- ♦ **GOOGLE +** : <https://plus.google.com/+AdoptionswithloveOrg/posts>

**This kind of exposure is unbelievably important to the success of Adoptions With Love.  
A good review on City Search or Yelp is also helpful.**



## State of the Agency

Thus far in 2014, as of October, we have placed 38 children into loving homes. Approximately half of the placements were with birth parents who reside in Massachusetts. By the end of this year, we expect to exceed our goal of 40 placements. We continue to deliver quality and sensitive services to all members of the adoption triad.

This year we have facilitated two (six session) new parent groups. With the help of a very talented adoptive mom, we also held a two-session group to aid parents in beginning life books for their children. We hope to begin another group like this in January 2015. Our search and reunion program remains active and strong; assisting adoptees and birth parents learn more about each other in an emotionally healthy and respectful manner.

In this ever-changing milieu of adoption in the United States, AWL remains committed to helping all members of the adoption triad who have allowed us the privilege of being part of their lives.

Our Board of Directors continues to meet on a quarterly basis. This group of diverse, committed individuals volunteers their time and expertise in assisting the staff of AWL make us the exemplary agency that we are. Recently, we have formed subcommittees to help us accomplish the goals outlined in our Strategic Plan, which was completed in December 2012. We are extremely grateful for the support of our board.

These subcommittees are:

\*Marketing \*Fundraising \*Finance \*Legislation \*Operations (including HR/Search/Legal)



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FALL/WINTER 2014 Newsletter

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