



Bright Things

"all things bright and beautiful,
all creatures great and small, ..."

A Newsletter of Bright Futures Adoption Center,
a program of The Robert F. Kennedy Children's Action Corps, Volume XII, Winter 2012

Jose Comes Home...Forever

Below are words written by one of our families working with our Adoption and Permanency Program where we place children currently waiting in foster care. They completed their MAPP training in the spring of 2011 and brought their son home in January 2012.

When my wife and I decided to look into adoption, we had so many questions, and we didn't know where to start. There are so many agencies, and we weren't sure who to trust.

Luckily, we found Bright Futures! From the beginning, Karen and the team at Bright Futures has been there to support us. Our MAPP training was outstanding! Janet and Linda guided us through all the various scenarios we would face as adoptive parents. We had no idea what we might be up against. Between all the red tape, and behavioral challenges we might encounter, the training helped make the process clearer to us.

We also had the benefit of outstanding support from our advocates, who helped us find a match. The team really understands how important all the child's needs interact with our parenting style, in order to create a good match.

Megan did our home study, which created an open and honest relationship with the agency. She asked questions that explored our abilities to parent, and what issues we felt comfortable with in our child. Kerriann aggressively pursued the children we asked about. She accompanied us to our disclosure meetings. She was our voice, asking every question, regardless of how small the question may have been, and anticipating questions we may have. She also helped us consider information in the reports, we may not have thought about, and put us at ease in some of the most nervous moments of the process. Karen has been helpful after the placement, giving us needed advice as first time parents of an adopted child. She is always available to listen, or available to offer advice with the transition, or offer advice in some of our toughest situations.

Thanks to Bright Futures, we have been matched with a bright, humorous, and loving 4 year old boy, who just needed the right place to call home. He brings us joy every day. We are still helping him adjust to his new surroundings, and as many of you know, there are still some challenges. But we are confident, that our detailed MAPP training, plus the support from our advocates, will help give our child his best foundation for social growth and development.

We have shared our story with people that are considering adoption, and we don't hesitate to share the praise that we have for Bright Futures. They have been angels in our search for our child. All the best in your search,
-- Jonathan and Beth (...and Jose!)



THANK YOU TO ALL OF OUR 2011 DONORS!

The "We Are There For You" CAMPAIGN

continues through March 30, 2012.

We Are There for You Campaign

Terrence & Virginia
(in celebration of Tanner for being our adorable grandson and part of our family since July 2009.

He is precious!)

Ellen & Jim

Tom & Carol

Debbie & Ed

Laurie & Rick

Skippy

(in honor of all the joy you bring)

Kim

Chantal & Blaine

Mary & Michael

(in celebration of Michele's birthday!)

Trisha & Tony

Gloria

(in memory of Ralph)



Sara & Joe

Tobias & Rolanda

Megan & Steven

Michael & Mary Rose

(Thank you for all of the work you do on behalf of children and families. You have changed our lives.)

Alan

(in memory of Judy-Arin)

Jeff & David

(in honor of Aiden)

David & Suki

Paul & David

Alec & Gisele

Peter & Vicki

Picnic Fund Donations

Linda & Roger

Ellen & Jim

Mary & Bill

Lisa & John

Paul & Elena

Jennifer & Paul

Karen & Charlie

Kim

Mary Rose & Michael

Beth & Jill

Mike & Trisha

Emily & Michele

House Party Donations

John

Karen & Cal

Kerna & Jim

David & Sydney

Mary & George

Matt & Joyce

Elena & Paul

The Barons

Nancy & Kjartan

Carrie

Leila & Kevin

David

Stephen & Carol

Chantal & Blaine

Amy & David

Kim & Jim

There is still time to support Bright Futures!

Donations can be mailed to 5 Broadview Street, Acton, MA 01720 or made online by going to www.bright-futures.org and clicking on the 'Donate Now' Button.

House Party A Big Success!

On November 15, 2011, Bright Futures held its first House Party. Intended as both a friendraiser and a fundraiser, four wonderful Bright Futures' families hosted a cocktail party and invited friends, colleagues and family members who they thought might be interested in learning more about Bright Futures. The party was held at the home of Kim & Jim, our wonderful interim care family in Concord, MA. Kim & Jim went out of their way to put on an elegant party and welcome one and all to their lovely home. During the party, adoptive parents, Nancy & Kjartan, shared their experience working with Bright Futures, birth mother, Lindsay, shared her experience highlighting the support and choices that she was given, and interim care parents, Kim and Jim shared why they care short term for Bright Futures' babies and how this experience has impacted their lives and the lives of their children. Bright Futures wishes to thank Kim & Jim, Nancy & Kjartan, Chantal & Blaine, Kerna & Jim and Lindsay for making the evening such a resounding success!

NEW ARRIVALS -- BABIES AND BIG KIDS NOW!



CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR NEW ADOPTIVE FAMILIES

Emily, Michele & Mateo on the arrival of Johnny

Ashley & Kieran on the arrival of Ciara

Karen & Charlie on the arrival of Elisa and Jasmine

Mary, Bill & Liam on the arrival of Aibhlinn and Ronan

Kerna, Jim & Ben on the arrival of Ayden

Tammy, Stephen & Kaitlyn on the arrival of Anne

Amy & Malia on the arrival of Isaiah

Liz & Brian on the arrival of Jason

Beth and Jonathan on the arrival of Jose

Words from Our Families

Words from a Birth Aunt

"Hi Good morning Ms. Cheyney, It's a pleasure speaking to you. The other day I was overwhelmed with joy that my nieces called me to say Hi! Evie cheerful as always called me "titi" [which] means aunti as she always had and I could hear the happiness in her voice. I [am] so happy I cannot explain it. Evie spoke to two of her cousins and to myself and we had a great talk -- many I love you's [were] said on both ends. I informed her that her calling me was the greatest gift for Christmas anyone has ever given me. She laughed and said "really titi." Jen was doing her homework and reading. I did not get to talk to her but this is ok. I informed Evie many days will come along. I asked Evie to tell mom and dad thank you on my behalf for the wonderful gift of hearing from the girls. What wonderful parents they have. I am so happy. I would like to please send my nieces Christmas gifts. Is there an address I can send these to?

Again, I would like to thank you ...for finding my nieces a good home and giving them the chance to [have] a wonderful life and happiness with their new parents. I would like to thank you again for letting me remain a part of their life after a long struggle of always trying to stay in contact with my nieces. My heart [has] finally settled and it's in peace.

Have a wonderful Happy Holidays with your loved ones!," Sincerely, Maria

Words from Adoptive Families

"Thank you seems so lame, to say to someone that walked us through the legal, emotional and financial events awaiting us. You supported us and completed our family. We're grateful that we found you, with all your efficiency and care. Thanks for making our journey so rewarding ...and then there were three...finally!"

Love, A, K & C

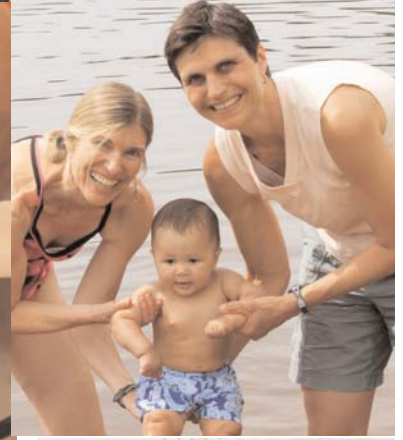
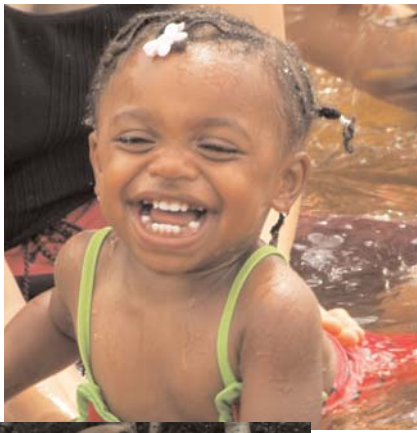


"J and I just wanted to thank you and all of the panelists for the wonderful discussion we were privileged to attend the other night. We are still digesting the many different facets of their stories but were most moved by the benefits of maintaining an open adoption for all concerned. The healing that took place in V's story between herself and her son was especially moving. We were able to take something of great value in each situation. It is our sincere hope that our new adopted child will be blessed with a loving, supportive family that will be an extension of ours. So, thank you for organizing such a wonderful discussion." -- L & J

Words from a Foster Family

"Karen, I have been meaning to sit down for a month to express my gratitude to you, Janet, Wendy, Eleanor and now Megan for how tirelessly you devote yourselves to such a worthy cause. Your hours are 24/7 and then some and yet you always seem enthused and alive at the prospect of uniting families with babies. Thank you to everyone for being advocates for all the babies that don't yet know their voices. You all give them a beginning that is clear and distinct. We know the joy of holding, smelling and caring for all the little ones, but without your part we would not be able to successfully do our part, which we love, love, love. Please accept our thanks," Fondly, S

It was another beautiful day for Bright Futures' 2011 Picnic!



Hi Karen -- We had a wonderful time at the picnic yesterday! Beautiful weather and great friends. It is so wonderful to see how all of the families continue to grow. We cannot thank you enough for all that you have done to help us make our family. -- M



Social Media & Adoption -- Opening the Door Even Wider

by Karen Cheyney

If you are active online you have probably heard unexpectedly from someone from your past. Social media sites are allowing people to connect with one another at startling speed. This ability to connect is having a tremendous impact on adopted people, birth parents, adoptive parents and extended family members. In essence, social media has made adoption more open than ever before. What does this mean for us as parents and as members of an adoption triad?

First, we must think before we act. We can not impulsively write on someone's wall or "friend" someone without thinking about the consequences for those we contact and for our children. Second, we must keep an eye on what our children are doing online to keep them safe (there are many internet sites that can help parents understand Internet safety). Third, we must talk to all of our children openly about adoption so that the door is open for them to talk to us when they need help with situations that can arise in the context of social media. Fourth, we must help children pursue ongoing contact in safe and appropriate environments so that they don't seek to make connections on their own.

I have heard many stories about adopted children locating birth family members online without their adoptive parents' knowledge and birth family members contacting the child that was placed without their parents' (birth or adoptive) knowledge or permission. When this happens, children and other family members can be placed at emotional, psychological and sometimes physical risk. Because contact can come from outside your family, the contact may be made before the child is ready, before the adults in the child's life know what is happening, and before there has been adequate emotional support and preparation for the contact. This type of contact can quickly get out of control.

Let's take the example of a 15 year old adopted girl who does not have contact with her birth mother because the court felt that this would not be safe for the 15 year old based on the birth mother's drug abuse history. This 15 year old connects on Facebook with her older birth sister who gives her contact information for her birth mother. The 15 year old then goes to meet her birth mother without anyone's knowledge. The dangers in this scenario are obvious, but often contact online can have a much more subtle impact. The ability to have a window into someone else's life can create a myriad of issues for children and teens. Sometimes, kids are exposed to inappropriate content. Sometimes they misinterpret sarcasm and humor. Other times they can be destabilized by the information they receive.

Here's another example. One day an 11 year old is on Facebook (and yes, even though Facebook says that you must be a certain age to have a Facebook page, many much younger children are online) and learns from a posting by her birth mother that her birth mother was just engaged. The child is excited at first, but then reads the comments posted by others in response to the happy announcement and sees one that says "when are you going to have another baby?" The child is not excited any more, but conflicted about the possibility that her birth mother would have another child after placing her for adoption. What happens to this feeling if no one knows that this has happened?

To keep social media a positive experience for one and all, it is simplest to harken back to what makes for a healthy relationship. Some of the key words to healthy relationships are trust, respect, honesty, good communication, time, listening, and love or caring. If you wouldn't say something to someone face to face, don't say it on Facebook or by email. If you were going to meet someone in person, make sure that you ask the appropriate people before attempting to "meet" them online. Also, the type of contact that may be appropriate post placement may not be the same as contact pre-placement or contact in the context of search and reunion. (Continued on page 8)

Florence Crittenton League Files Find a Home with Bright Futures

On July 1, 2011, Bright Futures accepted custody of 60 years worth of adoption files from the Florence Crittenton League located in Lowell, Massachusetts. The Florence Crittenton League was seeking a safe, ethical home for their records when they closed their adoption program and chose Bright Futures to care for their records. Since receiving the records we have received numerous calls from adopted persons, birth parents and adoptive parents seeking information from their record or seeking to locate another member of their adoption triad. We have helped several families search and reunite. Below are excerpts from emails with an adopted woman as she reconnected with her birth mother:

Hi Karen,

I cannot thank you enough for taking the time to go through this with me. I am excited more now than I ever initially was when I decided to make the decision to search! It's amazing how having a child can truly change your perspective on life. Until this time, it had never even crossed my mind to search for my birth mother. And now that the time has come and I have learned small bits about M, my mind continues running in a million different directions in anticipation of the possibility to learn more about each other. I can't wait to hopefully see what she looks like! With that said, per our conversation earlier, below you will find a little bit about my life and myself [for you to forward to M]. There is SO much to share in this email it would go on for pages, so I will try to keep this short and sweet, making it all the more interesting to save all of the juicy information for when we reconnect!

I grew up in Massachusetts in an incredibly, loving, supportive home. At the age of 4, my parents built an in-law apartment onto our home and my maternal grandmother lived with us until her death when I was 12 years old. I am an only child, but was lucky enough to have a cousin the same age that has always been like a sister to me. Both of my parents were teachers, my father was a science teacher, and my mother a math teacher. My father was the head baseball coach at a local college for much of my childhood and is now the head baseball coach at another college nearby. My father is Jewish and my mother is Catholic. My parents and I have always had an extremely close relationship, we had a few small hiccups my teenage years (as expected!), but to this day they are still my best friends. Growing up I was actively involved in sports and many other extra curricular activities. I was a gymnast and dancer through much of my childhood and as things naturally would progress, this translated into becoming a cheerleader my high school years. I graduated from High School in 2003 and went on to teach dance and dance professionally until 2007. When the "dance life" became a bit wearing, I decided to go to school for cosmetology and from there continued my education in Esthetics. I married my husband last May. We now live in Massachusetts with our 7-month old daughter, B, and our two dogs. I am the owner of a very successful skin care spa.

A few more things that might be interesting to know:

I am 5'2 and 110 lbs. I have blond hair (fake, of course!), green eyes, and a fair complexion.

Thank you again for being so helpful and for being so willing to listen. Your guidance means so much to me. Thank you, thank you, thank you for finding M! For that I will always be grateful. Looking forward to talking to you again soon!

Best, L

Flip to the Back of this Newsletter to see L's email 5 weeks later

Social Media and Adoption -- continued from page 6:

When you are in the matching stages of a possible adoption placement there are pitfalls to connecting through social media. One expectant mother who “friended” the prospective adoptive parents says that members of her extended family who didn’t agree with her adoption plan made negative comments on hers and the adoptive mother’s pages. After consulting with their social worker, the expectant mom and adoptive parents decided to communicate via email instead. From a practical and emotional perspective, it makes sense to have a more private way of communicating as you are getting to know one another; it is important to have face to face contact and not just be communicating on line; and it is important to consider in advance the merits of being “friends” in a public arena and how extended family and friends fit in to the adoption planning process. If the expectant parents decide to parent or the adoptive parents decide not to move forward with the adoption will you then “unfriend” each other?

Once you have gotten to know one another, the child has been placed for adoption, and you have set some clear boundaries for ongoing contact, Facebook and other social media sites can offer a wonderful tool for maintaining strong connections. These sites are easily accessible and when members of the triad move or change phone numbers and email addresses, often their Facebook remains a constant. Careful consideration must be given to the daily details and photographs that are often shared on social media sites and all parties should be comfortable with this type of exposure before social media contact is initiated.

In the context of search and reunion, it is crucial that all adoption triad members who are searching are doing so with emotional support from someone who understands the experience. The desire to connect with a birth family member or a child placed for adoption can be very strong and can cause the searcher to act impulsively. The searcher must remember that the person they are seeking may not be aware that they are being sought and may be caught completely off-guard by a “friend” request or a posting on their wall. Social media may help make the connection, but then taking the discussion off-line to a more private setting may be appropriate as a new relationship is being forged.

Adoption triad members can benefit from the new opportunities presented by social media sites as long as they are used wisely and with forethought to keep all of our children and families safe!

Are you interested in adopting a foster child?

Our next MAPP Training (the required training for pre-adoptive parents adopting children from foster care) will be held on the following dates. You must attend all of the sessions to be eligible to adopt a child.

Tuesday	March 27	6:00-9:00 p.m.
Saturday	April 7	9:00 a.m.- 4:00 p.m.
Friday	April 13	6:00-9:00 p.m.
Tuesday	April 24	6:00-9:00 p.m.
Saturday	April 28	9:00 a.m.- 4:00 p.m.
Friday	May 4	6:00-9:00 p.m.

To register, please call 978-263-5400 or email kcheyney@rfkchildren.org

Bright Futures Initiates Event for Adoptive Families of Color

On December 8, 2011, Bright Futures was thrilled to collaborate with the Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute, the Massachusetts Adoption Resource Exchange and the Department of Children and Families to welcome 22 prospective adoptive families of color to an evening event to learn about the needs of the children and the adoption process. Adopted person and Boston City Councilor, Tito Jackson, along with two panels, one of adoption professionals and one of adoptive parents and their children, shared their knowledge and experience and inspired the crowd. Bright Futures’ Karen Cheyney initiated this event and it represents a collaboration of which we are very proud. We are all working together to find forever families for children of color waiting in foster care. *Thanks to our sponsors, Ray & Joan Kroc Corps Community Center and The Baystate Banner.*

ADOPTION CALENDAR

Please note that items 1-6 are sponsored by the Adoption Community of New England. For more information or to register, please visit www.adoptioncommunityofne.org or call ACONE at 1-800-93-ADOPT.

1. THE 39TH ANNUAL NEW ENGLAND ADOPTION CONFERENCE, Saturday, April 14 2012, 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Marlborough, MA. A must for all families touched by adoption! 100's of workshops addressing all aspects of adoption. Bright Futures will be exhibiting and our staff will be presenting.

2. Baby Care for Pre-Adoptive First-Time Parents

Learn the basics of baby care, feeding, bathing, clothing and nurturing your new adoptee in the first eighteen months of life, in a friendly environment. Choose from one of the regularly scheduled classes or call to set up a private class. Saturdays, 9:00 am – 1:00 pm. Next classes March 10 and May 12, 2012.

3. A Support Group for Waiting Parents. Meet with others who are also in the "waiting" stage of their adoption process. Each session focuses on a specific issue and also allows time for open discussion. Saturdays from 10 a.m. to noon. Next meetings March 10 and May 12, 2012.

4. Triad Group, Meet with adult members of the adoption triad who are not in your immediate triad. Come share your experiences and receive support from other adoptive parents, adoptees, birth parents and other family members touched by adoption. Saturdays from 10 a.m. to noon. Next meeting March 3, 2012.

5. Birth Families Meet to Discuss Adoption

Come share, laugh, and yes even shed a few tears with other birth family members. This group will take you where you need to go to understand the complexities of living with adoption. Saturdays from 10 a.m. to noon. Next meeting March 17, 2012.

6. Other ACONE Offerings: *Making a Lifebook: A practical how to put one together; The Power of Touch: Infant and Child Massage for Pre- and Post-Adoptive Parents; The Silent Children in the Adoptive Blended Family; Adoption in the Schools; Open Adoption Group and many more.*

7. Adoptive Families Together offers monthly parent support groups in numerous communities in Massachusetts and New Hampshire and Education Sessions for those touched by adoption. Coming up: *Not in My House; Enforcing Rules and Boundaries* (February 23, 2012, 7:00 - 9:00 p.m.); *Mending the Wounded Child* (March 7, 2012, 12:00 - 1:00 p.m.); *You Will Always be Different: Celebrating Your Unique Family* (March 14, 2012, 7:30 - 9:00 p.m.). For more information, please call Lori at 617-587-1522 or visit www.mspcc.org/Page.aspx?pid=446.

8. BirthMom Buds Annual Birthmother's Day

Retreat, May 4 - 6, 2012, Charlotte, North Carolina. This FREE event is a time for birthmothers to come together to celebrate and honor their motherhood and their children. For more info call 877-790-4174 and ask for Coley or visit www.birthmombuds.com.

9. 4th Annual Rudd Adoption Research Conference: New Worlds of Adoption Conference 2012:

Navigating the Teen Years, Friday, March 30, 2012, 8:00 - 5:30. To register or for more information visit www.psych.umass.edu/ruddchair.

10. PACT Family Camp for families who are parenting children of color -- Putting It All Together: Families, Adoption & Race, July 1-5 2012 in Tahoe City, California. This camp is a rich blend of education, community-building, sharing and recreation. Connect your children with adopted and non-adopted mentors of color. For more information visit www.pactadopt.org.

SAVE THE DATE FOR
BRIGHT FUTURES
ADOPTION CENTER'S
ANNUAL SUMMER PICNIC

AUGUST 11, 2012!

Talk to your child's adoptive family or birth family now to arrange to spend some time together that day.

Florence Crittenton Files Continued:

Five weeks later:

Hi Karen,

We had a wonderful holiday season. It's such a crazy time of year, so part of me gets really excited once it has passed! Things are going really great with M and I!! She actually flew up here a week after we reconnected. Both of us couldn't stand to wait to see each other! We have kept in touch since and have already formed a strong friendship. We have a few more visits already planned for the coming months! I could not have ever imagined such a great outcome. We are truly blessed.

I can't thank you enough for your part in this reunion. M and I had a conversation when we met about how your approach and kind nature made us both so much more comfortable going into this experience. Thank you again.

Warm Regards, L



Thank you
for the
bike
I Love it.

Thanks to our generous donors, Jasmine, age 7, won a girls' bicycle at Bright Futures' 2011 Picnic after entering a raffle. Jasmine had never won anything in her whole life and could not get over the fact that she got to take the bicycle home. We needed to explain how the raffle worked before she could believe it.

Come Join the Bright Futures' Community, Share your Adoption Stories, Share Photos, Learn from Others -- Like us on Facebook!

Enter "Bright Futures Adoption Center Facebook" in your search engine and click on the link.

