



BRIGHT THINGS

A Newsletter of Bright Futures Adoption Center,
a program of Robert F. Kennedy Children's Action Corps, Volume XVII, Winter 2018

HOW I BECAME A MOM

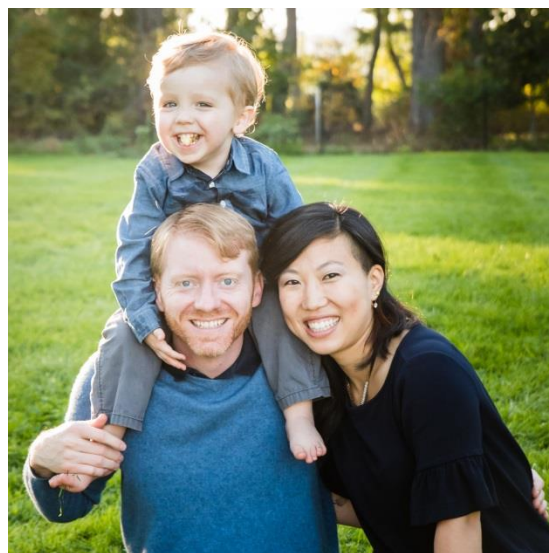
Right now, James is asleep in his crib. There are toys all over the floor and another load of laundry is chugging away. We have been a family for just over a year, even if only in our hearts as we await hearing when our finalization court date will be. Though James is already two years old, our journey to meeting him started before he was even born.

Early in our relationship, Jason and I had talked about adoption. We were young, healthy, and considered adoption a choice we would make after growing our family biologically. After years of failed infertility procedures and multiple late miscarriages, I was physically and emotionally exhausted. We wondered if we would ever grow our family. I wondered if I wasn't meant to be a mother.

When we discussed adoption again, this time with a different mindset, we asked ourselves why did we need to wait? After looking at a lot of pictures of waiting children online and completing a fair amount of research, we met with Karen and Bright Futures in March 2015 to discuss our hope to adopt through the state. Though we had to rent a car for each visit to Acton, we knew after meeting Karen that Bright Futures was the right agency for us. We completed the pre-adoptive parent training in June 2015 and I started a two year graduate program in August. We worked away at our home study and completed it in January 2016. By the end of the month, our social worker had emailed us with a name.

Through March 2016, there were four children who were presented to us and four times we discussed together that we would put our names in the running. Four times we were told that we wouldn't be matched, not even moved on to a disclosure meeting. As I started to get ready for my summer internship in Chicago, we put a halt on our search, waiting to start again when Jason and I would be back in the same city. Right before I left, Jodi took over as our social worker. Then I was away for three months. More waiting, but now it wasn't waiting for the phone to ring; it was waiting for time to pass.

Upon returning to Boston, in September 2016 we learned about another child. There were so many reasons to believe that this time we had a match! I remember where I was, at a



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Thank You to All of Our Donors!
The "Each One Unique" Campaign
Continues through June 30, 2018 (see below)

Each One Unique Donations

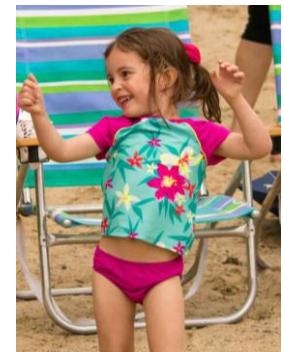
Alan
 Beth & Jill
 Cathia & Jean
 Deanna & Rob
 Ellen & Jim
 Grandparents in honor of R & K
 Jeffrey & David
 Joyce
 Kathleen
 Kerri & Jim
 Kim
 Laurie & Rick

Lesia & De'Porres
 Linda & Roger
 Marilyn & Raymond
 Mary & Michael
 Mary Rose & Michael
 Meagan & Tommy
 Megan & Steven
 Mindy & Greg
 Nancy & Kjartan
 Olga
 Robert
 Sara & Joe
 Shari & Mimir
 Stephanie

Sue
 Suzanne & Todd

Picnic Fund Donations

Jen & Paul
 Kelley & Jim
 Kerri & Jim
 Kim
 Kim & Jim
 Laurie & Robert
 Linda & Roger
 Matt & Dave
 Nancy & Kjartan
 Sally



*There is still time to help!
 Donations can be mailed to
 2352 Main Street,
 Suite 206,
 Concord, MA
 01742
 or
 made online at
[rfkchildren.org/
 bright-futures](http://rfkchildren.org/bright-futures)
 click on the
 'Donate' button*

Special Thank You to Maddie's Mission!

On January 6, 2018, Maddie's Mission and the Geller family hosted a simply incredible benefit event that raised \$20,000 for Bright Futures Adoption Center and RFK Children's Action Corps and gave us the opportunity to share with 200 friends and community members information about the needs of foster and adopted children. They spent hours organizing this event that included a silent auction, raffle baskets, a DJ and a cappella performances, all to help others understand the importance of helping children in need and the services that we provide. They are truly living the legacy of Robert F. Kennedy and we were honored to be part of this event. For more information visit maddiesmission.com.

OFFICE WISH LIST

- ♥ Gift Certificates to www.canvasworld.com so that we can decorate our office with canvas mounted photos of our children and families
- ♥ High Capacity Scanner -- Fujitsu ScanSnap iX500
- ♥ Light colored wood sideboard or countertop
- ♥ Coat Rack
- ♥ Adhesive Flip Chart Paper for Pre-Adoptive Parent Training

WELCOME HOME – NEW ARRIVALS!

Congratulations to our New Adoptive Families

*Alyssa & Guy
on the arrival of Aaron*

*Amber & Jeremy
on the arrival of Canaan*

*Cathia, Jean & Family
on the arrival of Cynthia*

*Charles, Suzanne & Family
on the arrival of Ita*

*Jackie & Bill
on the arrival of Noah*

*Janet & David
on the arrival of Glory Rose*

*Jenn & Tony
on the arrival of Ellie*

*Kathryn, Thomas & Charlie
on the arrival of Aniyah & Adriean*

*Kerri, Jim & Jameson
on the arrival of Fiona*

*Leah, Craig & Micah
on the arrival of Cami*

*Lydia, Aaron, Evey & Dietrich
on the arrival of Aleigha*

*Matt, Dave, Miles & Avalyn
on the arrival of Finn*

*Meagan & Tommy
on the arrival of Robbie & Kaydense*

*Melanie, Bob & Simon
on the arrival of Lala & Driss*

*Olga
on the arrival of James*

*Sally, Paul & Hannah
on the arrival of Jacob*

*Sarah & Mark
on the arrival of Luna*

*Sharon & Anthony
on the arrival of J.P.*

*Shauna, Jay & Jameson
on the arrival of Patricia*

*Stephen
on the arrival of Marcus*



A Slow but Worthy Path to Reunion

In my purse is a small, plastic-encased baby picture of my daughter, whom I named Sarah. I have transferred the picture to each new purse or wallet since I gave her up for adoption in 1964. From the time when I felt I could be more help than burden to her, I tried to find a way to locate her. For years I hit nothing but brick walls. Closed records. Closed facilities. Private investigators who would charge a fortune with no guarantee. Every now and then, a new lead or organization would surface and I would feel a spark of hope that would be quickly extinguished. Two years ago, a friend who is an adoptee visited and inspired me with her story of finding her birth father after 50 years. She urged me not to give up, saying it was important to the adopted person to know his/her roots or at least have the option of knowing.

I had my DNA done by Ancestry. I registered on some adoption databases. No hits. I realized that in order for those options to succeed, both birth parent and birth child would have to be registered and looking at the same time. Finally in 2017 a hint from a registry prompted me to search Florence Crittenton, the home where I spent my pregnancy and that managed the adoption, one more time. That search brought me to Bright Futures and I was astounded to learn that that is where the Florence Crittenton files now reside and are managed.

I emailed the contact address and filled out requests for information about my daughter and release forms for my own information. Sooner than I even hoped, Marissa from Bright Futures called me and said she had a current address for Sarah, whose name had of course been changed. One of my fears had been that she had died and I would never get to know her or she me. Marissa, adopted herself, has been tremendously helpful during the whole process. She sent a letter reaching out to my daughter. "Sarah" when she saw the return address, almost threw it away, thinking it was a solicitation, but curiosity stopped her, thank goodness. With Bright Futures acting as intermediary, we began emailing and eventually met and talked for three hours. We continue to learn about each other through email and we plan another get together at the end of the month, this one with my granddaughter, who loves animals as I do. I have seen pictures of my grandson, who I hope to meet soon as well. The whole process was uncomplicated, inexpensive and successful—after all these years! Thank you, Bright Futures.

DNA Testing Brings Changes to Adoption Search and Reunion

DNA tests have become a powerful and effective adoption search tool. There are several popular DNA kits on the market that are easy to use and linked to databases which help you connect with biological family members based on shared genetics.

In the past month, we have heard from several adopted people, who after receiving non-identifying information about their adoption from Bright Futures, decided to take their search a step further and spit into a tube hoping to find birth family members. Jonathan decided to use AncestryDNA.com. (Bright Futures does not endorse any specific DNA company.) Within months of receiving his DNA results, Jonathan made contact with his birth father and six half siblings and has developed wonderful relationships. "We are all in touch and see each other regularly, some more than others, and they treat me like and consider me a brother," stated Jonathan. He has also made contact with his birth mother's (continued on page 7)

BUILDING AND MAINTAINING CONNECTIONS THROUGH OUR ANNUAL EVENTS

Bright Futures' 2017 Annual Summer Picnic was a big hit despite the threatening forecast, especially with the addition of an ice cream truck! The picnic brings together children, adoptive parents, birth parents, birth grandparents, aunts, uncles, siblings and friends and gives families the opportunity to talk about adoption with their children and deepen their relationships for the benefit of the children. Children need to grow up knowing all of those who love them and having access to ongoing information about themselves and their families whenever possible!



Bright Futures' Mid-Winter Social allows adoptive families to come together at One Stop Fun, an indoor playspace in Westford, MA that is fun for children (and adults) of all ages, and exchange information, advice and adoption resources. Children and adoptive parents who met at the picnic have the opportunity to meet again and solidify their connections. There is typically an adoption related theme for the event. This year's Mid-Winter Social drew the biggest crowd yet and had a theme of adoption traditions. Fun was had by one and all! Special thanks to our wonderful alumni adoptive families who donated to this event!



WORDS FROM OUR FAMILIES

Adoption is Beautiful (from a Birth Mom)

As the new family [is] happy and joyful, the birth parents are left to go home emotionally empty and in an indescribable pain, with anger and questioning if they made the right decision. I can't even begin to explain to you the feeling of giving birth to your baby, to only spend 48 hours in the hospital with [the baby] and then give [the baby] a kiss goodbye and walk down the hallway, press the elevator button glancing over to get one more peek with tear filled eyes, while you leave your newborn with a new family you have met only a few times. For my adoption I chose to have my son's parents in the room when I delivered him so they could have an IMMEDIATE bond with him. And his mom even cut his umbilical cord.

Today, I have an AMAZING relationship with his family and they have become my family. I couldn't imagine him NOT having them as his parents. I am not that sad person I was in the hospital 10 years ago when I pressed that elevator button and gave that last glance. I am POSITIVE that God used me to carry their gift to them and deliver their son right to their door step. He's a beautiful little boy. And this wasn't a one-sided decision. His birth father prayed on it [and] we did [it] together to make sure we were making the right decision. Even if we knew we couldn't raise our baby, it's just an instinct that naturally we WANTED TO, but we just couldn't!

This was a decision that I made on my own with the child's father because I knew at the time I could not raise the baby due to personal circumstances at that time. Depending on the circumstances, eventually the pain turns into acceptance of the decisions that were made out of unconditional love and selflessness. The beautiful life that was given to the child -- to a new family -- to know that the love that the child is receiving is UNCONDITIONAL is enough to heal any wounds or doubts I had from the beginning. And to know that I have blessed a whole entire family is something that makes my heart whole. ADOPTION IS BEAUTIFUL!

Words from a Dad who Adopted a 6 year old from Foster Care

Things are going well. We are all settling in and Josh and Kim (a school teacher) are both excited for the school year to end. We are expecting the final adoption to be done in June so that will be a great milestone to hit. In all Josh is adjusting well, and even starting to call Kim and I Mom and Dad. He is currently playing t-ball and appears to be a natural. School wise he is doing well, though still behind a little bit in his reading. However we are planning to work hard on that over the summer.

In all, a lot of the growing pains are settling down. The end of the school year will bring some much needed relief to Kim....There are still the ups and down as Kim and I learn to be parents. However every week seems to be filled with more ups than downs.

Thank you for reaching out and all the help with this process. It has been trying at times however, being able to hear Josh say at baseball practice, "At home my Dad throws the ball real high and I catch it" makes it all easily worth it. Thanks again. - M

(Continued from front)

classmate's house working on a group project, when I got the call that we were not chosen. We have a dog and even though the child did not have a dog allergy, there were other allergies involved and the team thought the risk was too high. Once again, I wondered if motherhood just wasn't meant for me.

Then in October I was at school when Jodi called me about a one-year-old. He was in a foster home that was always meant to be temporary though he had spent most of his life there. There was legal risk, but we had learned that there always seems to be risk of one kind or another, and we moved along with the disclosure meeting before the month was over. We met our son in November, and he came home in December 2016, right in the middle of finals week.

As with other legal risk cases, biological relatives were involved and investigations were completed. Legal risk in a case like this is bittersweet—James was in our hearts now, but we could understand his biological family fighting to get him back. We met his biological mother in May and in June 2017, six months after placement, we took a breath, went to court, and James was legally freed for adoption.

Now here we are, at the start of 2018. In just over a year, we have traveled across the country three times to see extended family, James has attended two different daycare centers, and Jason and I are still figuring out this whole first-time parent thing. This March will mark the three-year point from when we officially "started" this journey with Bright Futures, and we may still not be finalized by then. But at this point, we are at peace with that. We have been patient, moving through disappointment and fear as well as excitement and joy. While we still have worry of what could happen, we know that the time we have had with James is a gift. I still question my mothering skills, especially when James is bawling on the floor (likely because he can't have an endless supply of fruit snacks), but in these moments, I take a deep breath and smile. I may not have a piece of paper to say it, but **I am a mom.**

(continued from page 4)

side of the family, including his three half siblings. Unfortunately, he learned that his birth mother had passed away.

Another client, Andrew, just received his AncestryDNA profile last week and has already connected with biological first and second cousins, as well as a biological uncle on his birth mother's side of the family. Through these connections, he hopes to learn more about his biological family history.

DNA testing is significantly changing adoption search and reunions. A process that often took years, can now unfold in months, weeks, even days. There are many things to be considered before embarking on a search, including being prepared for whatever you may find and how it may impact you, and having support from family, friends and a therapist or counselor.

ADOPTION CALENDAR & EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Baby Care for First-Time Prospective Adopters,

Learn the basics of baby care, including feeding, changing, dressing, and bathing in an adoption friendly environment. To register, call 978-440-0422 or email acone@rfkchildren.org (classes offered regularly).

Adoptive Families Together offers monthly parent support groups in numerous communities in MA and NH, education sessions for those touched by adoption, and an online discussion group which provides a 24-hour support forum, focusing on children with challenging behaviors and complex needs. Visit mspcc.org/aft for more information or call 800-277-5387.

Adoption Learning Partners offers meaningful, timely, web-based educational adoption resources for professionals, parents, adopted individuals, and the families that love them. ALP offers an array of interactive, e-learning courses that are designed to increase each person's understanding of the joys and challenges of adoption, as well as adoption related articles and papers, and a community forum that allows you to interact with others who are on this journey as well. Visit adoptionlearningpartners.org.

Rudd Adoption Research Conference, New Worlds of Adoption 2018: The Future of Adoption: Moving Beyond Safety to Well-Being: April 13, 2018, UMass Amherst, Amherst, MA, 9:00 – 5:00, morning keynote address by Gary Mallon, panel discussion, poster presentations and workshops in the afternoon. For more information or to register visit: umass.edu/ruddchair/adoption-conference/conference-2018.

Beanstalk Adoption Party: March 25, 2018, 8:30 – 11:00, Jordan's Furniture, Reading, MA. An event for foster children and pre-adoptive families at the ropes course, sporting 30 exciting activities. For more information, visit mareinc.org. Registration required. Pre-party informational event

Bright Futures Adoption Center's Birth Mother's Day Brunch

Saturday, May 12, 2018, Acton, MA

Come and join other birth mothers who placed their children through Bright Futures or the Florence Crittenton League to share, learn, give and get support, and celebrate your incredible journey of motherhood. Pre-registration required. Please call 978-263-5400 or email kcheyney@rfkchildren.org.

SAVE THE DATE!!!

**BRIGHT FUTURES'
ANNUAL SUMMER PICNIC**

AUGUST 11, 2018

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

for families to meet social workers and learn about waiting children March 22, 2018, 6:00 – 8:00 p.m., Framingham DCF office.

Birthmom Buds Annual Birthmother's Day Retreat, May 4-6, 2018 in Charlotte, NC. This free retreat is a time for birthmothers to come together to celebrate and honor their motherhood and their children. For more information, call 864-205-7387 or visit birthmombuds.com. Birthmom Buds also offers mentorship programs for those who have placed a child for adoption and for those who are pregnant and considering adoption.

PACT Family Camp East: August 5 – 10, 2018 in Stowe, Vermont. Pact Family Camp East is a six-night/five-day event that brings together families with adopted children of color from across the country to share experiences, learn from experts, and build community. This camp has been held on the west coast for many years and has a profound effect on those families who attend and offers a community that these families have not found anywhere else. For more information visit www.pactadopt.org.

You can contact Bright Futures by calling 978-263-5400 or visiting www.rfkchildren.org/bright-futures

Friend us on Facebook and get updates about what's happening in the Bright Futures Family!