



BRIGHT THINGS

A Newsletter of Bright Futures Adoption Center,
a program of Robert F. Kennedy Children's Action Corps, Volume XVIII, Winter 2019

Four Bright Futures Families Finalized Their Adoptions On National Adoption Day!

Stephen's Reflection

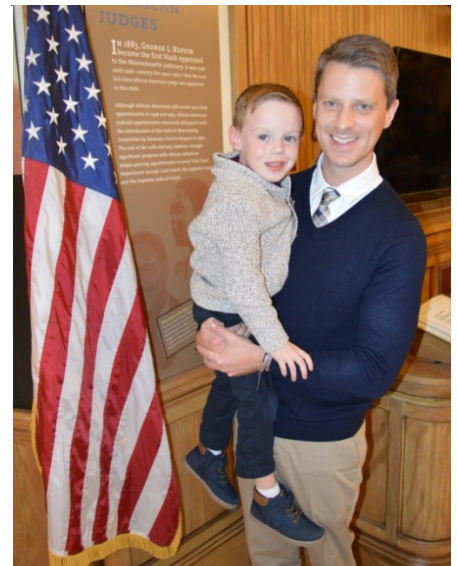
"I don't know what you will have seen, or what you will have heard. I don't know what your laughter will sound like or what will make you sad. I don't know how long you have been waiting nor do I know where you are. All I know right now, is that I want to know" (An entry from my letters to my future child)

It was a three year process for me, beginning on a ride to my local YMCA. As I waited for the red light to turn green an unexplained question came to my mind, *Why have you never thought about adoption?* The thought was unprompted, and unexpected. The thought turned into another thought later that night and then became a prayer. The prayer turned into an internet inquiry: "Adoption as a single dad". The online search turned into a conversation with a friend and my family. Those conversations took me to a network where I discovered a path that was very much laid out before me.

September 2016, almost one year since that thought, I found myself sitting in Bright Futures learning about adoption and the plethora of intricate pieces that go along with it. Feelings of excitement coupled with fear and self-doubt. Is this crazy? Should I really do this? Despite these necessarily intrusive questions, my conviction was formidable enough to acknowledge and honor the fear, and to let it fall away.



My life changed that February, 2 years ago. As I left work on a Friday I received a profile of a boy, smiling with rosy cheeks and Olaf pajamas. His arms were crossed on the table in front of him as he leaned forward looking into the camera. This sweet three year old boy, I was informed, needed a home. Having envisioned the child who I would adopt countless times, I had always foreseen an older child. I had told myself that raising a toddler as a single person was far too difficult so should not even be considered. However, the moment I saw this photograph, those preoccupations ceased and the feelings of curiosity and joy arose in my heart. Could I do this? I found my answer once again in prayer, reflection and conversation. I can do this, and I will do this. (cont. page 5)



Thank You to All of Our Donors!
The Personal Connections Campaign
Continues through June 30, 2019 (see below)

**Bright Futures'
Sustaining
Supporters**

Beth & Jill
 Deanna & Rob
 Jeff & David
 Karen & Charlie
 Kathleen
 Kerri & Jim
 Laurie & Rick
 Mary & Michael
 Mary Rose &
Michael
 Megan & Steven
 Nancy & Kjartan
 Shari & Mimir
 Stephanie

**Personal
Connections
Donations**

Amy & Larry
 Belinda & Andrew
 Brian & Matt
 Carol & Peter
 Elena & Paul
 Ellen & Jim
 Janet & David
 Jenn & Jed
 Kristen & Mark
 Laura & Neil
 Laurie & Rick
 Lesia & De'Porres
 Maria & Jon

Mary & Glen
 Meaghan & Tommy
 Michelle & Eric
 Patricia
 Peter & Vicki
 Sara & Joe

**Picnic Fund
Donations**

Carol
 Carol & Peter
 Elena & Paul
 Ellen & John
 Janet & David
 Jason & Shauna
 Jenn & Tony



Kelley & Jim
 Kim
 Kim & Jim
 Laurie
 Pam & Eddie
 Patty & Ken
 The R Family
 Sarah

*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
 click on the 'Donate' button*

THE CONNECTED CHILD by Wendy Lyon Sunshine & Karyn Rand Purvis – A must read for foster and adoptive parents! Written by two research psychologists specializing in adoption and attachment, this book is a hope-filled resource for parents who have welcomed children from traumatic backgrounds and with special behavioral or emotional needs. This book will help you: build bonds of affection and trust with your adopted child, learn how to address learning and behavioral issues, and discipline your child with love without making him or her feel threatened.

"The Connected Child is the literary equivalent of an airline oxygen mask and instructions: place the mask over your own face first, then over the nose of your child. This book first assists the parent, saying, in effect, 'Calm down, you're not the first mom or dad in the world to face this hurdle, breathe deeply, then follow these simple steps.' The sense of not facing these issues alone -- the relief that your child's behavior is not off the charts -- is hugely comforting. Other children have behaved this way; other parents have responded thusly; welcome to the community of therapeutic and joyful adoptive families." --- Melissa Fay Greene, Author of There is No Me Without You

"A must-read not only for adoptive parents but for all families striving to correct and connect with their children." --Carol S. Kranowitz, M.A., author of The Out-of-Sync Child

Congratulations to Our New Adoptive Families

Anne, John & Aubrey on the arrival of Harper

Anne, Tom, Menderina & Lydia on the arrival of Neamiyah

Brian & Matt on the arrival of Christopher

Cheryl & Tom on the arrival of Lexie & Julius

Coni, Tom & Liam on the arrival of Atreyu

Denise on the arrival of Randy

Denise, David, Diego & Esai on the arrival of Elena

Emily, Brian, Ben & Oliver on the arrival of Aaliyah

Gaby & Jimmy on the arrival of Samuel

Heather, Rob & Harper on the arrival of James

Jenn & Jed on the arrival of Elena

Lacy & Loretta on the arrival of Ruby

Maria & Jon on the arrival of Bryleigh, Emi & Zoie

Melissa, Dan & Jack on the arrival of David

Melissa, Jason & James on the arrival of Paul

Pam & Eddie on the arrival of Edward

Rachel & Thom on the arrival of Ira

Rose & Ulisses on the arrival of Valentina

Sarah on the arrival of Aidan & Anna

Sarah & Stephen on the arrival of Sanaa & Mikeiya

Susie & John on the arrival of Janeliz & Elia

Tarah, Jason, Sophia and Harper on the arrival of Jessenia



FINDING FAMILY

Joseph's birth was anything but uneventful. When his birth mother went into labor, a friend gave her a ride to the hospital. On the way, the car broke down. In a panic, the friend called an ambulance to his birth mother's dismay as she felt strongly that they could have just called a cab. Joseph was born within 90 minutes of their arrival.

Several weeks prior, Joseph's birth mother had contacted the Florence Crittenton League (FCL) to make an adoption plan. Joseph was joined with his adoptive parents and grew up in a town not far from where he was born. He always knew he was adopted. Like many adoptees, he was curious and thought about searching, but never did. Eventually, it was having a child of his own and no known familial medical history that motivated Joseph to search. His wife gave him a DNA kit as a gift and the journey began. To Joseph's surprise and disappointment, the results from Ancestry.com did not produce any direct matches. As guaranteed, it provided him with a pie chart of his Ethnicity Estimate and several matches: fourth to sixth cousins. He then turned

Being with family at Christmas
is always special.

Finding new family to share it with is
tree-mendous!

Wishing you and yours a
Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

About the concept: What does the 'ōhi'a lehua — the legendary plant of Hawai'i — have to do with Christmas? Let's start at the beginning. I was adopted as an infant and had no information about my biological parents. Although I will always consider Mary & Bill to be my true mom and dad, I wanted to know my medical history and to be able to pass on to our daughter her ancestral lineage. Earlier this year I submitted my DNA to Ancestry.com and I obtained a "Non-Identifying" adoption report from Massachusetts. My wife used her great detective skills, along with the clues from the reports, and we were able to determine the names of my biological family. Although my birth parents are deceased, I have met *three* sisters (two of them reside less than 35 miles away!) as well as cousins, nieces, and nephews. The entire experience has been captivating and positively life-changing. And the stories I could tell! So what about the tree on this card? It's a tough plant, well-adapted to difficult (or almost no) soils, such as former lava flows. It survives in what seem to be impossible conditions. This plant inspired a beautiful legend of steadfast lovers. Beyond the legend, the wood from the tree is used for building houses and canoes; the flowers are used for traditional leis; and it is one of the few honey plants native to Hawai'i. Areas of the Big Island were devastated by volcanic eruptions this past year — including the Leilani Estates — where our family stayed in 2013. So all in all, it seemed a fitting way to illustrate this year's theme.

Here's to overcoming the odds...



*Life and love can bloom
from the most
improbable beginnings*

to Bright Futures Adoption Center, the agency that manages the FCL adoption records, to request a non-identifying adoption information report. This type of written report includes physical descriptions of birth parents, any siblings, their ages, medical information, and if available, a written narrative about the events that led to the birth parents' decision to make an adoption plan. Joseph learned that his birth mother was thirty-six when he was born, of French descent and had three other children at the time. The report provided just enough clues, along with his DNA test, to conduct his own research online with the help of his wife. This information led him to find two half-sisters on his maternal side. Unfortunately, he discovered that his oldest sister, a younger sibling and his birth mother had already passed. Locating his paternal side of the family was more challenging. No information had been provided or documented at the time of his birth. Returning to Ancestry.com with newly found information, Joseph eventually located siblings on his biological paternal side. Unfortunately, for Joseph, he learned that his birth father had died 10 years ago.

Connecting with his two maternal half-sisters has been a wonderful experience. They make efforts to see each other and have developed close friendships. "When I first met my sisters and we were saying goodbye...we really felt very connected to each other," noted Joseph. One of his sisters lives only 35 minutes away. It has been through his birth sisters' memories and stories that Joseph has become familiar with who his birth mother was and some of the traits they share: eyes, forehead and arthritis. His sisters have commented to Joseph that their mother would have loved him. Joseph finds comfort in hearing this and noted, "I would have loved for her to have met my daughter, and I would have loved to have told her how I turned out."

From the beginning, Joseph had been hopeful that he would find at least one of his biological parents still living. "It has been hard to do the search and find out that neither of my birth parents are still here," Joseph stated. "Searching and then having the story of how your life began, however, is monumental," he added. All these new connections have brought him happiness and a broader sense of family. He has truly enjoyed sharing these sentiments with family and friends during the recent holiday season with a card he designed. Joseph's card and message are depicted on the opposite page.

(cont. from front) Marcus came to me on April 1st of 2016. Our two-year journey has been rooted in discovery of who the other is, while growing together as a new family. Adoption Day, November 16, 2018 was a day of confirmation. It was confirmation that the thought I had at the red light three years ago was divine. It was confirmation that the swell of my heart when I saw his photograph for the first time meant I was looking at my future son.



Congrats to O & J!



Congrats to C & her big bros!



Congrats to C & her family!

BUILDING AND MAINTAINING CONNECTIONS THROUGH OUR ANNUAL EVENTS

Bright Futures' 2018 Annual Summer Picnic was a big hit despite the rain. Nearly all of the families who had rsvp'd came and either stayed dry under the big tent or just decided it was a summer day to be wet, underscoring the importance of this event each year. 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 play space in Westford, Massachusetts 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. This year's Mid-Winter Social drew the biggest crowd yet and fun was had by all! Special thanks to our wonderful alumni adoptive families who donated to this event!



Our Adoption Journey (by Heather)

From early in our relationship Bob and I knew we wanted to be parents. I had experience with adoption and knew I had medical issues that may make pregnancy difficult, so the idea was something I had thought a lot about. Bob took a little longer to get there, but after 5 years and 8 failed IVF cycles and countless procedures and tests, we were both ready. We just wanted to love a child and be parents.

Our first child came to us late one Sunday night through “the call” from Bright Futures. Harper had been born already and her birth mother had chosen us. This was after a long weekend with Bob’s high school friends and about 12 children in our house with so much chaos that we joked we could wait a little longer for kids. We met Harper’s birthmother a few days later and she introduced us to the baby. We went the following morning to pick her up after a dizzying trip to Babies R Us where we walked around like zombies having no idea what we needed for this new little one. As soon as we saw her, she was ours in every sense and our family fell in love as quickly as we did. There was some legal risk in the situation, but we never questioned having her home with us from day one and having that bonding time with her.



When Harper was around a year, we began to explore adopting a second child. We started the process because we were told a second child could take longer than the first. We had waited 14 months for Harper and we didn’t want the kids to be too far apart in age. Little did we know our wait would be much shorter than we thought! Just five months after submitting our paperwork, we got the call again from Bright Futures late on Saturday night that a birthmother had chosen us and she was being induced that night. At this point we did not know much else, not even if the baby was a boy or a girl. James was born the next day. His birth mother had used drugs throughout her pregnancy so he had to medically withdraw. We live an hour and half from where he was born and drove back and forth from the hospital every day so that we could spend time with both children. This was by far the hardest month of our lives. It was so hard to be away from both of them and to watch this poor innocent little boy endure the difficult withdrawal process. We were so happy when we finally got to bring him home and have our family of four under one roof and the children could begin to bond with one another. We were fortunate enough to meet James’ birth mother too and both children have pictures of their birth mothers holding them displayed in their rooms. James’ birth mother is not ready to have direct ongoing contact with us and Harper’s birth mother communicates through social media for now. It is important to us that Harper and James have access to and know their birth families, but right now this is where everyone is comfortable with contact and we’ll have to see how it evolves.

We have never looked back after making the decision to adopt and feel that both of these children were meant to be ours. Harper was born on Bob’s dad’s birthday and James was born the day after Heather’s grandfather’s birthday, who he’s named after. They are the absolute joy of our lives and no question 100% ours. We wouldn’t change a thing.

ADOPTION CALENDAR, EDUCATIONAL & SUPPORT 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 Massachusetts and New Hampshire, 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.

Post Adoption Support from Adoption Journeys:

Adoption Journeys offers an array of post adoption services for adoptive families, including the Regional Response Team which offers families joint problem-solving, advocacy, coordination of services and home-based counseling, Parent and Youth Support Groups, and Parent and Young Adult Liaisons who offer families a one-to-one relationship with an experienced adoptive parent, family or young adult adoptee. Visit child-familyservices.org.

Workshop on Evaluating Medical Risk in Infant Adoption

with Dr. Lisa Prock, developmental-behavioral pediatric specialist and Director of the Adoption Program at Boston Children's Hospital, March 27, 2019, 6:30 – 8:30 p in Waltham, MA. Learn what specific prenatal factors may impact future developmental, medical, or mental health issues. RSVP to Neile at 617-332-2218.

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

Saturday, May 11, 2019, 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 10, 2019

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

Beanstalk Adoption Party: March 24, 2019, 8:30 – 11:00, Jordan's Furniture, Reading, MA. An event for foster children and pre-adoptive families. Visit mareinc.org. Registration required.

Birthmom Buds Annual Birthmother's Day Retreat, May 3-5, 2019 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 2-7, 2019 in Pine Mountain, Georgia. 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, has a profound effect on those families who attend and offers a community that these families have not found anywhere else. Visit www.dactadopt.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!**