



# AWL Fall Newsletter

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 1

NOVEMBER 2007

## Notes from the Executive Director

By Amy S. Cohen, LICSW

*It is my pleasure to introduce Adoptions With Love's first newsletter. We are hopeful that this will become a quarterly update for all of you whose lives have been touched by AWL.*



Back: Karen Strem, Office Manager, Meghan DeSanta, Birth Coordinator Front: Nancy Rosenhaus, Associate Director, Amy S. Cohen, Executive Director

Since Nancy and I took the helm at AWL six years ago, we have grown and changed as does the arena of building families through adoption. We are pleased to have a dynamic, engaged and enthusiastic Board of Directors. We will be featuring profiles of our board members in this and upcoming newsletters. In addition to overseeing our financial stability, the BOD has been engaged in conversations regarding market research, marketing and strategic planning. We have been discussing both short and long term goals that we can implement to best meet the needs of all members of the adoption triad. For example, we are developing a formal policy regarding helping with search and reunion and reinstating the post-adoption groups.

This Fall, for the first time in the history of AWL, we have an intern MSW candidate from Simmons College. Jennifer brings sensitivity, insight and a fresh perspective to AWL. Nancy and I are both supervising her and taking a course at Simmons. Jennifer has started a New Mother's Group, after a hiatus of many years. This gives us an opportunity to give back to the Social Work Community.

It is hard for me to believe that I have now been at AWL for over 21 years. When I graduated with my MSW, I never dreamed that this is what I would be doing 26 years later. As we all learn, life always brings us different twists and turns. I am very happy and professionally fulfilled to be doing this important work every day. I love working with people and helping all of you fulfill your dreams. We have all been through so much together and will touch each other's lives continually. I am grateful that all of you are part of the AWL family.

### STAY IN TOUCH...

Send your email address to [kstrem@awlonline.org](mailto:kstrem@awlonline.org)

or visit

[adoptionswithlove.org](http://adoptionswithlove.org) and click on "Adoptive Family Contact Updates."

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Visit us online at [www.adoptionswithlove.org](http://www.adoptionswithlove.org)



## A letter from the Board of Directors

Perhaps it's been years since you had a successful adoption through AWL or perhaps you are a new family completely mesmerized by the miracle of building a family through adoption. Either way—you've experienced something unique. Even if a friend or family member has fulfilled the dreams of having a family through adoption—every story is different. We all remember the shared experience of “getting the call,” meeting our child or children for the first time, possibly meeting the birth parents, and the joy of coming home fulfilled. This experience is our common bond and AWL is the thread.

Nevertheless, it seems like the process has come and gone and we all move on to managing bottles and naps, soccer games and school, ballet carpool and piano lessons. You may not think about it on a daily basis, but AWL has played a major role in your life and that of your family. After 20+ years in business, AWL has a history of success in “making matches” and creating loving families.

Over 600 AWL parents and children attended the agency's 20th anniversary celebration last year in Concord, MA. It was an amazing day filled with fun, sports, music, food and play. AWL families came from near

and far to rekindle old friendships and make new ones.

*So now what?* You're busy raising your children, and life moves on... but for your benefit and that of your children, there are **SO** many reasons to stay connected.

Please take a look at your children. Remember the role AWL played in building *your* family. Consider a gift to honor your child on his or her birthday. Consider a gift large or small. Consider the gift of family. We need your support today.

*Our mission is to provide prospective adoptive parents and birth parents with professional, sensitive and confidential services to facilitate successful placements that meet the individual needs of all members of the adoption triad.*

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### Meet the Board: Deborah Goldberg - President



**Deborah Goldberg—AWL Board of Directors President**

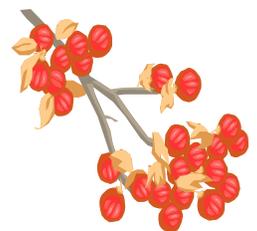
Deborah Goldberg is a consultant, former retail executive, and attorney, who spent the last twenty years focused on public service and the non-profit world. She received her B.A. from Boston University in 1975, a law degree from Boston College Law School in 1983, and an M.B.A. from Harvard Business School in 1985.

A candidate for Lt. Governor in 2006, Ms. Goldberg was the Chairman of the Brookline Board of Selectman. In 2001, she briefly became Acting Executive Director for Adoptions With Love, where she presently serves as President of the Board.

Ms. Goldberg is a member of The Commonwealth Covenant Fund, the Advisory Boards of The Kennedy School's A. Alfred Taubman Center, The Brookline Music School, The Kids Clothes Club, and the American Society of the University of Haifa. She is a member of the Board of Directors of Harvard Hillel and a Trustee at Beth Israel Deaconess Hospital. Deb has also been actively involved with numerous philanthropic activities, includ-

ing The Grow Clinic, the 100 Club, Planned Parenthood League of Massachusetts, and the Combined Jewish Philanthropies.

Ms. Goldberg lives in Brookline, MA with her husband, Michael Winter and their two children, Evan and Meredith.



## Notes from the Associate Director

By Nancy Rosenhaus, LICSW

As I come up on my 19<sup>th</sup> year at Adoptions With Love, I have had many opportunities to see things from different perspectives. This summer I had an awesome experience. I facilitated a meeting between an 18 year old young adult whom I placed for adoption and her birth parents. Also in attendance were her wonderful and supportive parents.

This meeting brought tears, loud laughter that could be heard outside, resolution and more questions. It brought the adoption triad: birth parents, adoptive parents and the mature adoptee all together. It answered questions and provoked more questions. It introduced a mature adopted young woman to her birth parents and reintroduced adoptive parents to the birth parents whom they had met 18 years earlier. It was carefully planned and everyone who participated did so with a great deal of thought and preparation.

The 18 years of letters and pictures between the two families, made the possibility of this meeting a reality. The letter and picture program at Adoptions With Love benefits everyone. Early in the adoption, adoptive parents may feel that this intrudes on the bonding process and may even make new parents wonder if they are the “authentic parent.” It can bring joy and heartache to the birth parents who want to see that the child is healthy and happy. It also brings peace of mind to them. They don’t have to wonder at 3AM if the child is comfortable, safe and happy. It can bring reso-

lution to the birth parents 5 or 10 years later to see how well adjusted the child is in their family. It can keep the lines of communication open so that some day the meeting that took place in the office this past summer can happen again for another young adult, their parents and birth parents. It can keep open the lines of communication to transmit vital information if necessary.

Now that AWL is 21 years old, our letter and picture program can assist us in locating birth parents with more ease if the need arises. We can provide valuable medical information to families for their children that may not have been known at the time of placement. As professionals, we now realize that there are secondary gains from our letter and picture program that we did not even envision at the time it was created. Some of the gains may not be realized for many years to come. Your children will thank you for sending these wonderful and informative letters to their birth parents. The birth parents who entrusted their child to you will also thank you.

Whether you have recently adopted or it has been many years, please send in your letters and pictures. Of course we don’t mind calling you. Everyone can use a reminder now and then. If we call you, and the birth parent is **waiting** for you to send in the letter and pictures, please do so quickly. It is so hard for them to wait.

## Why I Write

By Donna Horn

***I write for my children, I write for myself, I write to reflect, I write to record history.***

Twice a year, around the times of my children’s birthdays, I somehow find the time between our numerous family activities and work obligations to create a chronological, historical account of the past year’s events in the life of our children, in the life of our family. I begin by gathering photos, either ones I had time to print or ones that are still in the camera or computer. Of course the first picture is always the obligatory ‘school picture’ and then I add my own-photos of holidays, vacations, school and extracurricular activities. The photos are then put in chronological order to help me

remember what we did as a family and what, specifically our children accomplished in the past year. Next I gather school work, report cards, art work and drawings (the ones I hate to throw away yet really don’t have the room to keep).

Pictures may say a thousand words, but unless accompanied by the ‘true story’ I am afraid they can be misinterpreted. So I write two stories to two women, one I met briefly, one I never met, but both of whom I owe a tremendous gratitude. I write to tell them the ‘rest of the story’ behind the pictures. I venture to say my children may have a different perspective, but my thoughts are the way I, the Mother, behind the scenes, remember them.

Many mothers, both biological and

adoptive, have high ambitions to record the first year in the life of their baby and every month they add thoughts and pictures to the baby album. Subsequent children may have fewer thoughts recorded and fewer pictures, and rarely do many mothers have the time or fortitude to continue past the first year of life. Oh, there are some who make yearly photo albums, some who make elaborate scrapbooks and some who print the pictures and save them in a photo box which might have the annual date written on it. I find myself in that latter category. We are just too busy to actually sit down and reflect on what we are doing and have done.

(Continued on page 5)

## Mother's Group Ten Year Reunion

By Norma McCluskey

A group of mothers recently had a 10-year reunion of their AWL adoptive mother's group. The group initially consisted of about 8 mothers with their babies and met weekly during the winter of 1997-1998. The babies were all born between July and September 1997. We formed great friendships during the mother's group meeting 10 years ago. While distance and other commitments have kept us apart for many years, seeing a few people at the AWL 20th reunion last summer sparked an interest in getting the group back together.

Seven of the eight mothers recently met for a 10-year reunion over dinner at one of the family homes. Amy Cohen, our group leader 10 years ago, also joined us for the reunion. It was great to get together with everyone and hard to believe that it had been so long since we had seen each other. We picked back up like our weekly mother's group meetings were yesterday! While some families have one child, others subsequently had biological children, and still other families have other adopted children. Some families have regular contact with other families formed by adoption, while others don't.



Mothers in attendance at a recent Mother's Group Reunion.

Each mother shared a brief update on her 10-year-old. It seemed like everyone agreed that parenting was much harder and also much more rewarding than we ever anticipated. Everyone candidly shared the joys and challenges of being a parent. There were lots of funny stories! We all have so many things in common because of the ties of being adoptive parents. While I find most mothers enjoy talking about their kids, it was great to have people that are also dealing with their child's interest in hearing about his/her adoption story.

Amy Davis, who hosted the reunion commented, "There really IS a special bond there, being adoptive par-

ents. After all this time, it was so easy to jump right in and talk about ourselves and our families, just as we had done 10 years ago. We all agreed that we want to get together again, and include the 'couch babies.' I can't wait to see them all grown up."

Crystal felt like it had only been several months since we last met, not almost ten years. We seemed to pick up where

we had left off. Everyone was very comfortable and happy to see each other. "I have run into other adoptive parents over the years, but not in a group I know like this, where I feel comfortable asking about how other ten-year-olds are talking about their adoptions."

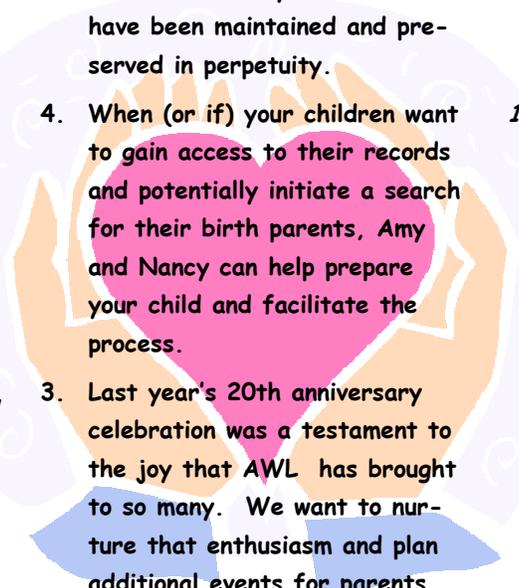
*"We all have so many things in common because of the ties of being adoptive parents."*

We were thrilled to have Amy Cohen join our group. She shared her perspective on how typical our experiences are as well as what to expect as our children approach their teenage years, including questions about adoption. It was also wonderful to get an update on what has been happening at AWL and we were all delighted that the agency is doing so well. We are so grateful to Amy and Nancy for their commitment to AWL, and the hard work to guide the agency back to a stable place.

The group is excited about another reunion in a few months ... this time with the kids, siblings and spouses.

The "Couch Babies"

## Top Ten Reasons to Stay Connected

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10. AWL is located (virtually) across the street from Filene's Basement.
  9. AWL is a constant resource for parents and children with questions concerning adoption, adoptive parenting and being an adoptee.
  8. Amy and Nancy make themselves available 24/7.
  7. AWL continues to thrive as New England's premiere, domestic adoption agency.
  6. The office's crystal bowl is usually filled with M & M's.
  5. The records of your children have been maintained and preserved in perpetuity.
  4. When (or if) your children want to gain access to their records and potentially initiate a search for their birth parents, Amy and Nancy can help prepare your child and facilitate the process.
  3. Last year's 20th anniversary celebration was a testament to the joy that AWL has brought to so many. We want to nurture that enthusiasm and plan additional events for parents and children.
  2. AWL is more than an agency, it is a *community* of adoptive families.
  1. *Adoptions with Love is not a social service agency that receives charitable contributions from the general public—it is a non-profit organization that has given us—EACH OF US—a family. There is no other institution to which we can feel a greater debt.*

***WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT***  
*for the long-term benefit of the agency, future families and the security of our children's records.*

### Meet the Board: Drew Zalkind

**D**rew brings 20 years of experience starting and growing small companies to AWL. He has helped improve the financial management of the agency so as to ensure sustainability and build long-term growth.

Drew is currently the CFO at Liquid Machines, Inc., a software company with a leading data security solution for large corporations and government agencies. As the first employee there, he helped secure initial and subsequent financings, build the team, and scale the

operations. Prior to joining Liquid Machines, Drew was a partner at Chestnut Partners, a Boston-based merchant bank, where he assisted firms with initial public offerings, mergers and acquisitions, joint ventures, capital structures, and start-up activities. Drew was also a consultant at the MAC Group, a subsidiary of Gemini Consulting, where he advised top U.S. banks and other Fortune 100 Companies on strategies to maximize their market values.

Drew has a B.S. in Marketing from

the Wharton School of Business and a B.A. in Psychology from the University of Pennsylvania.

Drew and his wife Lauren have adopted two children through AWL. Drew and Lauren are strong supporters of the agency's mission and volunteer at agency events.



### Why I write—continued from page three

But twice a year I have an excuse, a job, an obligation to do just that. I find it cathartic and rewarding. After completing the project, I feel a sense of accomplishment not just in what I am sending to the agency but also in my role as a mother. I realize that I am not doing so badly raising these children. They have a great life, whether they know it or not.

Through these glimpses into our children's lives, I want my children's birth mothers to grow comfortable with their

placement decision. In each and every letter I thank them for their courage and selflessness and let them know in no uncertain terms how much we love our children and love being a family.

It is my dream that some day, my children will sit down with their birth mothers and they will bring out the volumes of albums, letters, school work and artwork that I have sent them over the years and show them to my children. I dream that they will reflect on these together, get-

ting to know one another. My children will realize that I cared for them so much, that I was willing to take the time and courage to share their lives, through virtual story telling, with the women who brought them into this world and into my life.

**AWL BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

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**To:**

