



AWL Fall Newsletter

October 2008

Notes from the Executive Director

The good news is that we are really busy here at AWL. As of the end of the third quarter of this year, we have already placed 40 babies with their new families. This is with 39 families; one placement was with a set of twins; a girl and a boy. The not so good news is that we have not met our goal of sending out a quarterly newsletter. That is because we are so busy.

As I write this article our nation is in the midst of a financial crisis. The stock market fluctuates and we all worry about sending our children to college, paying our bills and the viability of our retirement accounts. In this line of work, in this type of economy, we find that the people suffering the most are women and children. Over the past months, we have seen an increase in the amount we help birth mothers financially double. Fortunately, we still remain financially stable and are able to meet the birth parents' needs. However, the needs of the birth parents still increase. This is where we need your help.

In these difficult economic times, we do not want to raise our placement fee and we do want to continue to subsidize adoptions for families who can provide good homes for children but cannot afford the full fee. Your generous contributions will help us to continue to provide the services on which we pride ourselves as a social service agency.

We are also working on securing your children's records in perpetuity. As many of you are aware, several years ago we established a Trust Fund to secure these records. Storage fees continue to increase and eventually we would like to have funds to convert records to discs so that they are readily available to your children when they are ready for or need more information about their birth parents. Your generous contribution to this fund are greatly appreciated.

In this newsletter you will find a few articles from different members of the adoption triad. They speak about their personal experiences living with adoption. We welcome all of you to contribute to the newsletter.

Adoption is a life-long process which includes a myriad of dimensions to our families. We at AWL are committed to assisting adoptive families in meeting their ever-changing needs. This winter, we will be offering a series of discussion groups led by Nancy and me. Please see the attachment inside for details.

Happy Holidays.

With Warm Regards,

Executive Director

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Amy S. Ober".

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*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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A letter from Nancy ...

This is my 20th year at Adoptions With Love and last week I had a wonderful “full circle” event. I checked my email and there was a picture of a couple, smiling ear to ear with their 7 month old son held up high between them. The joy in their faces was palpable. It had not been that long ago that they walked through the doors of Adoptions With Love, so downtrodden and beaten. The hope they had clung to was a mere thread. Opening this attachment and seeing their beaming faces was pure joy. The next email I opened was from an 18 year old girl, who had been struggling with a letter she wanted to write to her birthmother. Finally she had done it! She was so proud and what a beautiful letter it was. The letter brought tears to my eyes when I read it and I quickly sent it off to her birthmother who had been waiting for it for so long. Let me tell you about it.

Last March, this young lady, who had recently turned 18, along with the help of her mother, contacted Adoptions With Love to begin the process of communicating with her birthmother. She had a hunch that her birthmother would be receptive because letters and pictures had been flowing back and forth over the years. She already knew that the door would be open, but she was still scared and not quite sure where to begin.

She took the appropriate first step of contacting Adoptions With Love for assistance and, although she no longer lived locally, she emailed and spoke with me on the phone. Her mother assisted her daughter in her “search” by sending a lovely letter, along with beautiful pictures, about her daughter and how she had matured and grown. She sent this letter to Adoptions With Love and we sent it along to her birthmother, who was now in her late 30’s married with a few children.

Her birthmother wrote right back (again through the agency) with great delight! She let this young woman know that when she was ready to communicate herself and she would love to hear from her, no matter how long that process took, and she waited patiently.

The young woman struggled with how to respond, what to say. This was her chance, the

chance she had always been striving for, but now with it in her control, she felt some hesitation. She needed time to sort through all of her feelings and that was certainly understandable. She was also busy in college, living her life. Her birthmother patiently waited.

Five months later a beautiful heartfelt letter came along to be sent through Adoptions With Love to her birthmother. She had struggled and finally found her voice. She had faced her fear of not knowing what she would say. She was proud that she finally got the letter into the mail so that her birthmother would know, from her own voice, that she was comfortable with her adoption and that she always knew that her birthmother loved her and she admired her for making such a difficult decision.

I waited and finally called the birthmother to make sure she had received the letter in the mail. Yes, she received it, and how wonderful it was for her, too. She was so pleased to receive such a beautiful letter, admiring her!

Adoptions With Love is not just the name of the agency. It is a wonderful place where the seeds of love are sown and the flowers, so delicately tended to, grow and bloom. We continue to help couples realize their dream of becoming parents or enlarging their family. We continue to provide our services to birth parents with respect and compassion. We continue to provide our young adult adopted persons a place they can return to with their questions.

All of this brings me to our new program of “Search and Reunion” that Adoptions With Love is launching. Once it is formalized, you will be able to read all about it on our website www.adoptionswithlove.org. We have a wonderful subcommittee consisting of board members who are working with us to develop this program. We will keep you informed. In the meantime, always know that we are still here for you, your children and the birthparents.

Nancy Rosenhaus, LICSW
Associate Director

www.adoptionswithlove.org



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Meet the Board—Barry Wanger



Barry has been involved with AWL since he and his wife, Wendy, adopted their daughter, Sarah, in 1993. He has served on the Board for the past two years where his emphasis has been on strategic planning and public relations.

Barry is the president and founder

of Wanger Associates in Newton, one of the leading public relations agencies in New England specializing in nonprofits, particularly in education and health care.

He has won more than 30 regional and national PR awards and is the recipient of lifetime achievement awards in public relations from both the Public Relations Society of America (Boston Chapter) and the Publicity Club of New England.

Prior to starting his own agency in 1984, Barry served as director of public affairs for the National Endowment for the Humanities,

Brandeis University, Wheelock College, and the University of California at Santa Barbara.

Previously, he worked as a newspaper editor and reporter in California, Connecticut and the U.S. Virgin Islands as well as a press secretary in Presidential, Senatorial and Mayoralty campaigns.

Barry, a devout Red Sox fan, holds an M.S. in public relations from Boston University, and is a Fellow of PRSA.

The Necklace

By Christina

Searching frantically through the grass, my heart pounding and my mind racing, a sense of panic rushes through me. I keep going back to the same plot of grass, praying my necklace will magically appear before my eyes. After endless searching, I see my Dad and collapse into his arms with tears pouring down my face. I have just lost the one thing that connects me to a past that I have never known.

Being adopted is something I have always known about. When I found out in the first grade my parents were prepared with books and were ready to answer any questions that I would have. At first I questioned what being adopted meant. Now the concept has become so familiar it only crosses my mind every so often. When I became older my mom felt that I was responsible enough to finally have a necklace that my birth mother bought and engraved for me the day after I was born. The day I received it, I gazed at Saint Christopher, the patron saint of travelers, sensing my birth mother knew I would be traveling down my own path. I never took my necklace off, for years it was my prized possession.

When I lost the necklace two years ago, I was devastated, but I could not explain why I was upset to anyone, even my own parents. I felt as if I had lost a part of me that I could not get back; that I had lost a part of my identity. This necklace connected me to a heritage and family that I know nothing about. This token of love reminded me everyday, that someone who I do not know loved me enough to give me the chance to live. I know now that my necklace was not what kept me connected with my birth mother, but it is my parents who bring her alive to me. The day she and my parents signed the adoption papers all of our lives changed forever. My parents had been given the gift of their first child and I had been given the gift of life and awaiting opportunities. My parents are the ones who have instilled values of family and love into my life. They are my example of selfless love and have influenced me to love and care for others with an open heart. Now as I look back to when I was in the comfort of my dad's arms, I know not only do I have two parents supporting me but I have three that have shaped me into who I am today.

Meet the Board—Janet Giesser



Janet Giesser is currently a realtor with Rutledge Properties in Wellesley. She divides her time between caring for her young family, involvement with local organizations, volunteer work, and her real estate career.

Previously, Janet spent 10 years in non-profit fundraising both as a staff professional and as a consultant. Some of the organizations she served include the renowned 92nd Street Y in New York, the New

Israel Fund, CJP, the Two/Ten International Footwear Foundation and the Boston Center for Jewish Heritage.

Janet joined the AWL Board in 2006 and currently serves on the Search and Reunion Committee.

Janet lives in Wellesley with her husband Eric and two children, Ella & Hadley.

A letter from a child to her birth mother By Allyson

On August 9th, 2008, I met my birthmother, Karen, for the first time since I was born twenty years ago. It was an experience that changed my life forever.

I spoke to my half-brothers—Jonathan, 22, and Benjamin, 18—for five hours straight before speaking to Karen. After speaking to her on the phone, I decided to fly to Delaware with my friend to meet her and my older brother Jonathan. This was something I needed to do on my own the first time around, and my mom and dad understood and agreed it was the best way to do it. My parents have always been supportive about my desire to get to know Karen and for her to get to know me, despite how emotional we all knew it would be for everyone involved.

Karen gave me the greatest gift any woman could give her child: she gave me a life that I love. She wanted to give me a happy life with parents

who would love and care for me, and that is exactly what she did. I have had the greatest life that any child could ever desire. My parents are perfect and my sister and I continue to see their love



Allyson and Karen

for one another grow, which is an incredible example for any children to see and hope for in their own futures. I have the best sister in the world that is always there for me and I could not live without her. I have been blessed with my family. Karen told me that they were the first portfolio she looked at and she knew they were the right ones to raise me.

Karen is easy to talk to, relaxed and we were very comfortable around one another. When we all got out of the car at her house she gave me a hug before we all walked inside. For the rest of the evening she and I swapped funny stories about our lives along with many pictures from my childhood.

I needed to find Karen so that she could know what she did for me. She deserved to know how appreciative I am to her for making one of the hardest decisions of her life. She now knows how great a gift she gave me and we will hopefully stay in touch in the future so that she can continue to see me flourish in my surroundings and see me develop into the woman that she hoped I could be.

Dear Adoptions With Love,

It is with great enthusiasm that I wish to share the history of my experience as a Birth Mother and express what a wonderful partner AWL has been during this time. I could easily write a novella to describe the experiences and emotions that have been my joy to live through over the past 16+ years but I will do my best to be succinct.

When I first discovered that I was pregnant in March 1991 I was completely terrified. I was in an on again off again relationship with a man who I had already realized would not be suitable as a life partner. I came from a very blue collar family where teenage pregnancy was more the norm than the exception. However, I had decided from an early age that I wanted to create more opportunity for myself and not fall into a cycle of struggle where it would always be difficult to provide for myself and my child.

I searched the phone book (this was years before the Internet) and selected four companies to contact. The first three calls were very average and somewhat cold or insincere; my fourth call was to Adoptions With love and I never had to look back. Not only was the woman I spoke to warm, but responsive and tender with her questions and compassion. She spent an hour on the phone with me listening and never trying to make me feel as though I needed to make this heart rendering decision immediately. She asked me to call back in two or three days to speak with her again.

During my pregnancy I received information packets to complete and send back so the staff at AWL could help guide me toward the family that would receive my baby girl. I also received a generous amount of follow up phone calls just to see how I was doing and to offer continued support during those short but precious nine months.

I waited until I was six months along to share the news with my family. Thankfully, I didn't show until then (although I totally ballooned after that ☺). Most of my family, and especially my younger sister, were supportive although my grandmother's disappointment was most obvious and this was hard to accept. My mother, bless her heart, was very supportive although she certainly wished I would change my mind. It's a struggle going against the flow of those who love you most but every part of me knew I was making the right decision for the little angel growing inside me.

"The decision to place my baby for adoption still stands as the most difficult decision of my life but it was also the best, for her and for me."

I had an opportunity to meet the Adoptive Parents at the hospital when they came; I chose not to and now regret it because they have become such an important part of my life. At the time I did not feel strong enough and honestly did not want my last view of my daughter to be of her being carried away from me. That seems very selfish now because I have the hindsight to know she was being carried to a wonderful life that I would not have been able to provide.

Since that day Adoptions With Love has been a wonderful conduit between myself and my daughter's amazing parents. From my personal experience I know that they do a fantastic and detailed job of coordinating communication between birth mothers and adoptive parents. They encourage pictures and letters between the two and have been readily available over the years when I have needed them.

So now...all these years later I can look back and find myself so very grateful for AWL, the adoptive parents who have taken extraordinary care of my daughter and also for the life I have been able to map out for myself. The decision to place my baby for adoption still stands as the most difficult decision of my life but it was also the best, for her and for me. I have so much appreciation for the life my daughter has and all of the opportunity that her parents were able to provide that I know I would not have been able to.

Adoption is about being selfless and understanding how precious it is to give life but also wanting the very best life for the innocent child growing within you. I have never once regretted placing her for adoption. There have certainly been many tears shed over letters and pictures I receive but these are tears of joy that encourage me to realize that I made the right decision for both her and me.

If you are reading this you are probably considering adoption as an alternative for your baby and I want you to be encouraged by the bravery you are showing as you decide what is best for you and your child. It truly doesn't matter what type of support group you do or do not have because I promise you that in time you will be able to look back, assisted by Adoptions With Love, surrounded by photos and letters and feel so much joy for your selfless act of love. You will be stronger and wiser for your decision. Most importantly do what you think is right; this is only about you and the baby you love with every fiber of your being. Believe me, I know.

With Understanding and Love,
Carma

Building Families Through Domestic Adoption



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