



Welcome

OUR NEW SOCIAL WORKER

Kathy Basile, CSW, has joined our Adoption Program. She is a Certified Social Worker in NJ who obtained her degree from St. Joseph's University in Philadelphia. Kathy has worked in the field of adoption, both with birthmothers and adoptive families. Her social work background also includes presenting workshops, training sessions, public speaking and outreach work.

Contact Kathy at 609.699.4110 or at kbasile@lsmnj.org

Save the Date **ANNUAL ADOPTION PROGRAM PICNIC**
 Saturday, September 11, 2010
 11:00 am to 3:00 pm
 Green Acres Park Front Pavilion,
 851 Old York Rd., Burlington Township, NJ

COME LEARN ABOUT OUR TWO DOMESTIC PROGRAMS:
OPEN INFANT PROGRAM & WAITING CHILD PROGRAM • 6:30 PM to 8:30 PM
 LSM/NJ's Central Administrative Office
 6 Terri Lane, Suite 300, Burlington, NJ 08016
TUESDAYS:
 July 6, 2010 • August 3, 2010
 September 7, 2010 • October 5, 2010
 November 2, 2010 • December 7, 2010
 Please RSVP to MaryAnn Sager at 609.699.4111.
 We also provide homestudy services for those families interested in doing independent adoptions.

ADOPTION PROGRAM NEWSLETTER

IS A PUBLICATION OF LUTHERAN SOCIAL MINISTRIES OF NEW JERSEY

Do you have a story you would like to share? Any news or announcements you would like to include in our newsletter? Would you like to be added to our mailing list or receive our quarterly eblast? Send your contact information to hkato@lsmnj.org or call 609.699.4139.



LUTHERAN SOCIAL MINISTRIES of NEW JERSEY
 6 Terri Lane, Suite 300, Burlington, NJ 08016 • 609.386.7171 • www.lsmnj.org

FREE BIRTHPARENT COUNSELING PROVIDED.
 OUR BIRTHPARENT COUNSELORS CAN BE REACHED AT OUR TOLL FREE NUMBER: 1.888.325.6621.

A very special Thank You

to the following individuals, congregations & organizations that have recently contributed to our program through donations. Their generous support enables us to continue to provide free birthparent counseling, and continue to offer our adoption services at a reasonable cost.

Donors from January 1, 2009 – May 1, 2010

- Edward Barclay
- Peter Baumann
- Frank C. Boren
- June Brittingham
- Paul F. Collins
- David Dahline
- Leonard De Oliveira
- David E. Fairbrothers
- Steven Foster
- Susan Harnos
- Dorothee A. Holmstrup
- Jean R. Hudson
- John Kunkel
- Herbert W. Scherb
- June M. Telaar
- Colette Ztanze

First Evangelical Lutheran Church
 Thrivent Financial for Lutherans
 WELCA-Bethany Lutheran Church

Your name is important to us! If your name has been omitted, misspelled or incorrectly listed, please accept our apology and bring the error to our attention so we may correct our records. Please call (609) 699-4115 to report errors.

We are also grateful to receive gifts that mark special occasions and recognize loved ones, co-workers and friends. The honoree is informed of their special tribute and the donor is thanked for his or her thoughtfulness. To make a donation online, visit www.lsmnj.org, click on "Please Donate Now," and designate your gift to the Adoption Program. Donations can be mailed to LSM/NJ 6 Terri Lane, Suite 300, Burlington, NJ 08016.



SUMMER 2010
ADOPTION
Program

A Program of Lutheran Social Ministries of New Jersey

LUTHERAN SOCIAL MINISTRIES of NEW JERSEY

Services

- COMMUNITY OUTREACH
 - Adoption Program
 - Assisted Living Program
 - Community Partnering
 - Immigration & Refugee Services
 - Lutheran Disaster Response
 - Lutherans Feeding Friends
 - Lutheran Senior LIFE
 - New Visions Homeless Day Shelter
 - Speakers Bureau
 - COMMUNITY RESIDENTIAL SERVICES
 - Lutheran Home for Children
 - Piscataway Community Residence
 - Sayreville Community Residence
 - HOUSING DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT
 - Lutheran Social Ministries of Camden
 - SPECIAL NEEDS HOUSING
 - Luther Haven
 - Project Home
 - Stepping Stones Commons
 - AFFORDABLE FAMILY HOUSING
 - Cadwalader Apartments
 - Elwood Driver Townhomes
 - Mott Centre Street Apartments
 - Peapack-Gladstone Family Housing
 - West Hanover Street Apartments
 - AFFORDABLE SENIOR HOUSING
 - Birchwood at Old Bridge Senior Apartments
 - Circle F Senior Apartments
 - Lutheran Senior Residence at Pennsauken
 - Mirolta Senior Residence
 - Mt. Olive Manor I & II
 - Roosevelt Solar Village*
 - South Plainfield Senior Residence
 - Zurbrugg Mansion*
 - SENIOR HEALTHCARE
 - Lutheran Care at Moorestown
 - CONTINUING CARE
 - RETIREMENT COMMUNITY
 - Crane's Mill
- *Professionally managed by Lutheran Social Ministries of New Jersey

MESSAGE
 FROM THE DIRECTOR



If you have been receiving our newsletters now for a time, you have become accustomed to our borders of blue and yellow and the yellow glow beneath the name of our program—Adoption Options. As you can see our current newsletter is looking a bit differently and we have simply become The Adoption Program of this great social service organization of Lutheran Social Ministries of New Jersey (LSM/NJ). Although our look has changed a bit, we still offer the same dedicated and caring services in which birth and adoptive families feel supported and honored. Since 1948, we have been an adoption agency working to serve all people regardless of faith, income, race and marital status and hold statewide recognition as being a state licensed adoption agency upholding high ethical standards.

As The Adoption Program of LSM/NJ, we have always prided ourselves in maintaining a smaller program which allows us to give each and every family extra time and support during their adoption process, which can be very challenging at times. We also do not want our families facing extensive waiting times or increasing their risk of never being placed with a child. So at times we actually have to make the difficult decision of not accepting new prospective families into one of our domestic programs. However, we can always guide families by offering them various alternatives and options for their adoption plan, or they can choose to be placed onto our waiting list.

Now, is probably a good time to briefly review all of our different services and programs. At LSM/NJ, we have two domestic adoption programs - our Open Infant Program and our Waiting (older) Child Program. Within these two programs we offer pre and post-adoption counseling and education, preparation of your family profile, matching services, arranging meetings between you and the birthparents, referrals to professionals

for assistance with education, developmental and or mental health needs and assistance to your adoption lawyer with preparation of paperwork for adoption finalization in family court. For families, who are involved in doing international or independent/identified/private adoptions, we can offer just homestudy and postplacement services. We also prepare the necessary Court reports and guidance for those families seeking a relative adoption.

If you are considering an adoption plan as a way to expand your family, this newsletter provides a general outline on how to begin your adoption process and what to consider in making an adoption plan. In the beginning stages of making that adoption decision, many families are faced with so many options which can be exciting and overwhelming all at the same time. The first step, as in making all important life decisions, is to gather as much information as you can to make the best informed decision.

Oftentimes, a family's life path leading up to an adoption can be filled with twists and turns and road blocks leading to some disappointments. However, arriving at the final destination is no less rewarding and in fact, can be filled with the most incredible gifts imaginable. In this newsletter, you will read two personal accounts written by two adoptive mothers who share a glimpse into their personal journeys.

MaryAnn Sager, Director

TWO MOTHERS...TWO HEARTS OPENED WIDE

Two mothers from LSM/NJ's Adoption Program open their journals to share entries of their experiences as new mothers.

BY HEIDI BARTON

The detours we once saw as disappointments, they turn out to be the greatest gifts life has to offer." —Regina Brett

I was thinking about this concept on Easter as I rocked my baby to sleep after a long, exciting day. The entire day was whole-hearted enjoyment. Luke, now mobile and more aware than last year, toddled around putting eggs in the basket. My husband, Jared, taught him how to open the plastic eggs and eat the candy inside. Luke swapped eggs with his cousin and pulled out newly growing flowers in an attempt to smell them. It was impossible to stop photographing his contagious smiles. He rested in my arms that night and I marveled at how long he has grown to be, how beautiful his lashes are, how dear he is. I thought of the journey that my husband and I traveled to become his parents.

I spent twenty years longing to have a child. This was a disappointment until I learned to pour myself into my students, nieces and nephews, and neighbor's children. In the end it was a wonderful detour because I could devote myself to them in ways I wouldn't have been able to if I had the large family I originally envisioned. I learned so much that I use in my parenting now. And I have the memories of holding and helping so many little ones along the way.

Infertility was another disappointment that turned into a gift. I couldn't see it after a miscarriage or when we decided to step off of the increasingly difficult infertility-go-round. The decision to adopt was not hard, but it took us a while to find LSM/NJ's Adoption Program. Then, after we were approved, I chafed at the WAITING. (I was admittedly wimpy about this- the whole process took us less than a year). When we received THE CALL on November 30, 2008, all of the difficulty was swept aside and the wonder of our journey with Luke began. Those years of longing have been filled over and over again as I am repeatedly struck by the marvel of dancing with my child, watching my child hunt for eggs, and playing peek-a-boo with my child. Jared and I can't imagine life without him and he is definitely one of the greatest gifts life has offered me.

BY ELLEN SIMON

The smartest thing I did while my husband and I waited to adopt was plant a garden. With a garden, you get results. If a seed doesn't sprout, you plant something else. If a



Heidi reflects on an exciting Easter Holiday with Luke

flower dies, you dig it up, throw it out and buy a replacement. Water your plants, fertilize them, put shade plants in the shade and sun lovers in the sun and you will succeed, a formula that seemed to me to be completely unlike adoption.

A year after we'd started the adoption process, three years after I'd been diagnosed with uterine cancer, the seed catalogs came on a frigid winter day. I dove in, folding down pages and circling possibilities. Tuscan kale, Japanese cucumbers, Armenian Tigger Melon. Would okra grow in a little container in our cemented-over city backyard? Carrots? Radishes? There was only one way to find out.

Let other waiting moms decorate a nursery, not me. When spring neared, I went to Home Depot and loaded our car with 50-pound bags of potting soil. Let others swoon over cribs; I bought modernist planters on casters. A friend said they looked like bassinets and made a joke about me pushing my little -- empty -- bassinet/planter down the sidewalk. He laughed, I cringed. They really did look like bassinets, now that I thought of it. I filled the bottoms with rocks, then 70 pounds of soil and then the largest lavender plants I could find, Latin name Grosso. They no longer looked like bassinets.

I have a friend who became fixated on a boy in a Kazakhstan orphanage while she was researching adoption. I became fixated on a Web site called Edible Architecture, which sells fruit trees.

I thought often of a colleague who'd come to adoption after years of infertility treatments. "They tell me there will be a baby at the end of this," she said, in a voice just as deadened and jaded as that sentiment.

Was I feeling sorry for myself as I spread

the seeds for microgreens, chard and cilantro, as I transplanted marigolds and trained hop vines up a string, as I weeded and watered? You bet I was. While I was being treated for cancer and talking about adoption, a friend with two kids told me about a billboard she'd seen in her hometown of Minneapolis. It said, "Hendersons WILL adopt," with a picture of the waiting parents and an 800-number. She'd had a hard time explaining it to her eight-year-old. Both of us cried as she talked about it, and I'm sure we were both thinking the same thing: It's never going to happen, not for them, not for me.

No billboards for us. No ads. No lawyers. We would do this when a birth mom walked into our agency, got counseling and picked us based on our book, the one an art-director friend had designed, the one with clear plastic sleeves that I'd obsessively scoured New York City to find. This was the only path for us, we said. In the recesses of my heart, I thought I had a better chance of riding the Space Shuttle.

I went to other extremes. I made my husband drive across the state with me on an icy spring day to visit an herb farm with the Northeast's largest variety of thyme. I bought a dwarf pomegranate tree, which I dragged inside each night until it was warmer out. Since we have no water hookup outside, I carted water from the kitchen sink to the backyard and back again, making a half-dozen runs three times a day on the hottest days of summer. The yellow flowers of the Japanese cucumbers had to be pollinated with a paintbrush, but I did it, thinking of fertility treatments all the while. I saw the irony of babying my tomatoes while waiting for a



Ellen and Gabe spend time together in the garden.

The ADOPTION Process

The adoption process begins with learning about the different types of adoption available to you. Once that adoption decision is made you will soon find out that there are hundreds of books, magazines and articles on the internet all suggesting the most successful path to your goal. Lutheran Social Ministries of New Jersey will assist you in beginning your adoption journey—helping you decide upon the type of child you would be most comfortable in parenting—helping you decide between an infant or older child, one child or a sibling group, type of race or culture and health status of that child. We will be helping you assess your parenting strengths as you proceed on your journey and helping you build strengths where there may have been some limitations.

ATTEND AN ADOPTION INFORMATION MEETING.

At LSM/NJ monthly meetings are held at our office in Burlington, NJ, where general adoption questions are answered and you can learn about our adoption programs and services. A list of 2010 meetings is on the back page or you can check our website, www.lsmnjadoption.org for meeting dates and times.

COMPLETE AN APPLICATION PACKET.

Schedule an intake interview. This is the first of three personal interviews required to complete a homestudy. At this initial meeting, we will review our services, training, policies and procedures in detail, as well as explore various adoption issues. We will talk to you about why you have decided to build your family through adoption, your specific needs, desires and concerns about adoption and what type of adoption is right for you.

COMPLETE THE ADOPTION HOMESTUDY PROCESS.

An approved homestudy report, which is a detailed report written by your Social Worker, is a requirement of the state and serves to determine the appropriateness of adoption for your family. It is a time in which you continue to acquire a more comprehensive understanding of the complex issues surrounding adoption. Your homestudy report will include autobiographical, health, financial and clearance information on you as well as information on your children and other household members.

BEGIN THE MATCHING PROCESS.

Depending on the type of adoption which you have chosen, being matched with a child proceeds accordingly. If you are enrolled in our Open Infant Program, your family profile is shown to our birthparents, whom we have counseled and who will be making the decision on which family will become the parents of their child. In our Waiting Child Program, we partner with our families helping them locate children in our nation's foster care system, who are legally freed for adoption. If you are not enrolled in any of our programs, there are a variety of ways to locate a birthparent who is considering an adoption plan. There are websites where your family profile can be posted as a way to connect to birthparents throughout the country or you can work with an attorney who can prepare the necessary legal documents involved in an adoption. If you are involved in an international adoption, you must locate a placing agency, which has an adoption program within that country where you plan to adopt your child.

CHILD PLACEMENT & SUPERVISION.

Following New Jersey State regulations, your

social worker will begin the post-placement visits with your family within 14 calendar days of initial placement. The post-placement supervision period will last a minimum of six months. The primary purpose of these visits is to ensure that everyone is adjusting well to the placement and that the infant or child is happy, healthy, and safe. At each of these visits, your social worker will continue to make note of how everyone is adjusting: how relationships and roles have changed within the family, how siblings are reacting, and how other friends and family have viewed the adoption. Your social worker will also want to see medical records, ensuring that developmental milestones and medical needs are being met. In addition, there will be questions about child care, attachment and bonding, school or day care adjustment, discipline, and the family's daily routine.

FINALIZATION.

We can provide you with a list of adoption attorneys in New Jersey. An attorney may be necessary in assisting you through the finalization step, which will involve at least one court hearing. We will work with your attorney on generating the reports and gathering the necessary documents for this hearing. In either an open infant or waiting child adoption, once the judge signs the judgment of adoption, your adoption is FINALIZED! You will receive a copy of the adoption decree and a new birth certificate will be issued.

Please remember that although your adoption is finalized, we are still available to assist you in any way possible; whether, it is a referral to an adoption support group or summer camp or contacting the birthmother. The Adoption Program of Lutheran Social Ministries of New Jersey provides all the pre- and post-placement support you need.

story continued

baby. I channeled my anger by carting around big, brimming planters, by buying hefty self-watering Earth Boxes in New York and carrying them on my head from the train to our apartment. Did I ask our next-door neighbors to pick up a sack of composted sheep manure for me when they visited a sheep farm? Yes I did.

I shared the garden with a neighbor who had her own frustrations; our unspoken rule was we didn't talk about what we didn't have, we talked about plants, and the plants were thriving. My tomatoes climbed the cinderblock wall. Purple eggplant flowers blossomed. The okra my neighbor planted grew six feet high. Yes, we had a cemented-over backyard roughly the size of half a tennis court, but we grew corn in it.

The garden needed me every day, twice a day, if it were going to live. I needed the garden just as much. When people asked how the adoption process was going, I told them about my rhubarb.

It was a warm fall and the peppers lasted into November. Around Thanksgiving, our social worker called to tell us the agency was working with two Latina birthmothers. Since we were one of two families open to a child of any race, one would be ours. "Tell me if one drops out," I said.

Our baby was born in February. My husband stayed up through the night the first two nights he was home with us, staring at him. I slept. I'd worn myself out.

Last summer, I tended the garden until

the neighbor who helped with it moved away. When she did, I let all the plants die. I was busy with the baby, who is now a smiley, babbling 15-month-old toddler. One of his dozen words is "tee!" for tree. My colleague with the deadened voice and sentiment also adopted. My friend obsessed with the boy from Kazakhstan did too. I dearly hope the Hendersons in Minnesota are telling their child about the billboard.

Despite my neglect of the garden, I see a surprising number of plants have sprouted this spring, hearty and healthy, with the promise of something you planned for, but still didn't expect.