



In this issue...

- 1 How Friends present the adoption option
- 2 Tips for presenting adoption
- 3 Birthmothers launches team in CO
- 4 A message from the President
- 5 What's happening at Birthmothers

● **How Birthmothers Friends present the adoption option**

Women who face an unplanned pregnancy have three options: abort the baby, have the baby and parent, or have the baby and choose adoption.

Many mistakenly believe they have just two choices rather than three. Nationwide, half choose abortion. Nearly that many choose to parent.

Just 2% of unmarried women choose the adoption option.

Birthmothers Friends are trained to identify a woman's unique needs and provide support in her particular set of circumstances. Where appropriate, Friends present adoption.

We asked Birthmothers Friends about opportunities they have had to share the adoption option. How do they know when to bring up adoption ... and how do they go about it?

"Adoption came up naturally."

Jackie was matched with a pregnant woman who already had a toddler. The birth dad was not supportive. The birth mom lived with her own father but was uncertain whether he would allow her to stay in the home once he discovered she was pregnant again.

"She was in shock and needed to talk," said Jackie. "Our conversations allowed her to process the situation." It was natural for the topic of adoption to surface. Jackie acted as a sounding board as the birth mom discussed her feelings about placing for adoption versus parenting, and was prepared with materials if the birth mom chose to pursue adoption further.

Through those discussions, the birth mom was able to assess her situation. She got a new job. Her father accepted the

pregnancy and offered to help babysit in the evenings. "Ultimately, my birth mom chose to parent – which deep down was what she really wanted to do," said Jackie. "I was glad I could be there for her as she worked through her decision."

The topic of adoption came up naturally when Lisa was matched with a teenage birth mom who had some mental challenges. "Have you ever considered adoption?" Lisa asked early on. The conversation moved quickly. The birth mom explained her feelings about why she wanted to parent rather than place for adoption.

"She had thought about adoption and was able to articulate how she felt," said Lisa. Ironically, because of the birth mom's medical limitations, the grandmother has taken on an adoptive parent's role in the baby's life while coaching her daughter to be the caregiver.

"Adoption was not an option."

Jennifer was matched with a Hispanic teenager who had a large extended family. "Right from the start, she indicated that she planned to parent the child," said Jennifer. "It would have been intrusive to suggest adoption." Jennifer concentrated instead on helping meet some of the girl's material needs and connecting her with information about returning to school – painting a beautiful picture of unconditional love to the birth mom and her family.

Mel, on the other hand, provided support to a pregnant woman pressured by her boyfriend to abort. "The stress was overwhelming," says Mel, who focused on emotionally supporting the birth mom in her fight to choose life.

Story Continues on Page 2...

How our Friends present the adoption option

● **Save The Date!**



www.leezell.com

A Mother's Love: An Evening to Remember

Celebrate our special one-on-one, life-affirming, adoption-informing ministry to women

With keynote speaker Lee Ezell

Thursday, September 24, 2009

Sheraton Premiere at Tysons Corner

Mark your calendar now!

● **We've updated our website.**

Visit us at www.birthmotherministries.org!

Pregnant? Need Help?
Call Birthmothers' confidential,
24-hour toll-free helpline:
1 - (877) 77-BIRTH

How Birthmothers Friends present the adoption option

...Continued from Page 1

"Adoption was not an option for her," said Mel. "In her struggle to choose life, she'd fallen in love with her baby. I felt strongly that I needed to respect that."



"Adoption was a serious option."

Susan learned her matched birth mom's pregnancy was the result of an extra-marital affair. The birth mom had a previous abortion. She was not planning to parent. Two older children were being raised by relatives.

Lengthy conversations and emails between Susan and the pregnant woman centered on the benefits of adoption versus abortion. "I encouraged her to talk about her feelings," said Susan. The young woman felt placing a child for adoption would be too difficult because she wouldn't know what

happened to him, so Susan offered information about open adoption. She also shared her experience as an adoptive parent and the joy her adopted children have brought to her family. "As hard as you think adoption might be, don't you think abortion is harder?" Susan asked her. In the end, Susan mourned the woman's choice to terminate her pregnancy.

Brenda's matched birth mom was separated and facing divorce when she discovered she was pregnant. "Adoption was an option she considered seriously," said Brenda. Together the two women spent significant time discussing the pros and cons of adoption, including placing with a family member or placing with a third party.

The birth mom's fear was that her child would feel abandoned. "I thought it was important that she hear different perspectives as she made her decision," said Brenda, who shared her story as an adoptee brought up in a loving home. Brenda also made arrangements for her birth mom to talk with a woman who had successfully placed a child for adoption. In the end, Brenda's matched birth mom chose to parent and is now successfully raising her child.

"Adoption was the choice."

Perhaps it is Martha's match as a Friend that demonstrates our volunteer Friends' versatility and adaptability even in the midst of struggle. The birth mom had recently moved to the U.S. from Africa and though married, had been forced by her husband to place their baby for adoption. The young woman was college-educated, but knew very little English and had no friends. Martha helped her find conversational English classes and taught her to navigate the public library. "She had placed her child for adoption and was processing that choice," said Martha. "We had a language barrier. But I was still able to be a Friend when she needed one."

Find out how you can become a Birthmothers Friend when you call (703) 261-6370.

TIPS FOR PRESENTING THE ADOPTION OPTION

If someone you know faces an unplanned pregnancy, consider presenting the benefits of adoption. These tips may help.

- **Express compassion.** Tell her you care. Demonstrate your concern in concrete ways, such as spending time with her or by providing a meal.
- **Listen for cues.** Is she ready to look at her options? Or is she overwhelmed at the moment?
- **Share information.** When you sense the timing is right, explain your desire for her to make the most informed decision. Provide information about today's adoption options. Tell her about open adoption, a birth mom's right to choose and interview adoptive parents, and opportunities open adoption provides to be a part of her child's life.
- **Choose accurate language.** Acknowledge that children are a gift rather than a possession. Refer to her pregnancy as "unplanned" rather than "unwanted." Discuss "making an adoption plan" or "placing" rather than "giving up" or "putting up" her child for adoption. Talk about "biological parents" and "adoptive parents" rather than "real parents."

- **Dispel myths.** Address the truth about adoption: it's a choice that requires tremendous, sacrificial love. It's a responsible choice. Many lives will benefit from the courageous choice of adoption. Use tools such as Birthmother, Good Mother and A Case For Adoption (both available at www.adoptioncouncil.org).

- **Look into the future.** Ask, "What kind of life do you want for your child?" and "What do you think your life and your child's life will be like in 5 years? In 10 years?"

- **Give her a firsthand experience.** Connect her with a birth parent who placed, an adoptive parent, or an adoptee – or all three – so she can hear about the benefits of the adoption option from those who have experienced it.

Birthmothers staff will help equip you with more tools to present the adoption option when you call (703) 261-6370.

Birthmothers launches Church Team in Colorado

Eleven years ago church leaders asked Lorraine Meyer to mentor a young, single pregnant woman. "That experience was a gift," says Lorraine. "God told me He'd later give me a ministry to pregnant women."

That ministry turned out to be Birthmothers. Lorraine, an adoptive parent, and her family moved to Colorado a couple of years ago and joined Timberline Church, a 5,000+ member congregation in Fort Collins. One Sunday, Lorraine noticed a display for Timberline's orphan care ministry and asked if anyone was ministering to birth moms. "We're praying for someone to take on that ministry," the volunteer answered. That's when Lorraine remembered God's promise so many years earlier.

She found Birthmothers online (www.birthmotherministries.org) and discovered that our ministry serves pregnant women one-on-one, so similar to the way she'd ministered to that young birth mom years before. God's call had come full circle.

Last November, Lorraine traveled to Virginia for Birthmothers Friends Certification Training, returned home, introduced the ministry to Timberline's leadership, and enlisted their 100% support to launch a Birthmothers Team. In June, she trained 25 new Friends at Timberline. They now form the nucleus of the new Timberline Church Team, and 25 more who have expressed interest in training this fall.

Team members are investing the summer putting together a local resource manual and planning their strategy to reach local pregnant women. "One-on-one mentoring in a friendship format outside the four walls of an organization is a whole new concept here," says Lorraine. She's already begun meeting with adoption agencies and local pregnancy care centers, communicating how Birthmothers' services are distinctive and complementary to what they offer, and explaining how organizations can partner with Birthmothers to help women who face an unplanned pregnancy.

"God went before to prepare us for this ministry here," says Lorraine. "I'm excited to be a part of what He's doing through Birthmothers in Colorado."

Find out how you can start a Birthmothers team at your church when you call (703) 261-6370.



Thank you for joining Birthmothers in a Celebration of Life

On Saturday, June 27, participants joined Birthmothers in a special **Celebration of Life** Worship Service at The Falls Church, featuring a compelling message from Rev. Johnny Kurcina and inspiring testimony from birth mom Rachel Dendiu.

Worship wove together themes of God's provision and protection from the book of Ruth, describing how God works through His people to defend the lonely, hurting, and defenseless ... and challenging participants to be the wings of God to those in need.

Birthmothers extends heartfelt thanks to The Falls Church, Rev. Kurcina, TFC Worship Team, and Rachel Dendiu for their powerful ministry.



What's Happening at Birthmothers

BIRTHMOTHERS WELCOMES ANNETTE MENDOZA AS MINISTRY ASSISTANT

Annette joined Birthmothers in June 2009 as Ministry Assistant. She identifies and recruits local congregations to develop a ministry to pregnant women, trains church team coordinators, and oversees our valued church teams. In addition, Annette reaches out to hospitals, pregnancy care centers, doctors, and clinics to share about Birthmothers services and cultivate referrals for birth moms.



Annette brings significant social work and health care industry experience to Birthmothers. She served as a caseload manager for Family Support Services and later as intake coordinator with Extended Home Care, both in New York City. In the D.C. metro area, she has most recently used her administrative and organizational skills as office manager for a busy medical practice in Chantilly, VA.

Annette is bilingual and serves as Birthmothers' interface with Spanish-speaking clients. "I first became connected with Birthmothers when I trained and served as a Friend," says Annette. "Now I'm even more excited to work on staff. It has been a privilege to connect with clients and provide them with a listening ear, support and services."

Birthmothers Welcomes New Partnering Church

Timberline Church, Fort Collins, CO www.timberlinechurch.net



Your prayers bring results!

- we thank God for allowing us to serve 79 pregnant women this spring
- we praise God for our new Partnering Church, Timberline Church in Colorado
- we're grateful for new staff, intern, professional partners and the skills they bring to the ministry
- we're thankful for increasing inquiries from churches about developing a Birthmothers ministry
- we praise God for our new Friends and their commitment to hurting women



Pray with us

- for pregnant women to find out about our services and call us
- for our clients to choose life – and when appropriate, choose to place for adoption
- for birth moms to find salvation in Christ and grow deeper in their walk with God
- for more financial resources to allow the ministry to grow
- for God's people to give time and resources to help meet our growing needs

BIRTHMOTHERS WELCOMES NEW FRIENDS

DC Metro area

Amelia Beatty
The Falls Church, Falls Church, VA

Felita Bolden
Word of Life International Church, Springfield, VA

Francine Cooke
Word of Life International Church, Springfield, VA

Dawn Dietrich
McLean Bible Church, McLean, VA

Audra Doyle
McLean Bible Church, McLean, VA

Fatima Garnacho-Engelke
Word of Life International Church, Springfield, VA

Emily Hunt
The Falls Church, Falls Church, VA

Colorado

Timberline Church
- Fort Collins, CO

Stephanie Benson

Tiffany Cherry

Joni Cleaver

Connie Cook

Linda Cummings

Suzanne Dowd

Cindy Fuquá

Jennifer Gilbert

Lynn Gombos

Julie Grenrod

Cathi Jacobs

Dinka Leskanich

Diane Miller

Lana Mondragon

Melanne Mondragon

Joan Peterson

Kimberly Peterson

Kimberly Powers

Ana Sanchez

Alison Schwartzkopf

Karen Schwarze

Marcia Smeester

Sheila Smith

Judy Smith

Kimberly Sturgeon

Thank you for your ministry to hurting women and families.

A Message from the President

IF THEY DON'T HEAR, THERE'S NO WAY TO CHOOSE

Recently, I've met mothers who have been blessed because they have chosen to place their children for adoption – rather than abort – after an unplanned pregnancy.

In each instance, someone took the time to present the adoption option. The decision to place was agonizing and required tremendous courage. But now, years down the road, these women have peace and satisfaction. When I talk to them, I see joy in their eyes. Some have even had the opportunity to be reunited with their birth children.

The decision to place a child for adoption has far-reaching impact. In May, I spoke at the Birth Mother's Day Brunch to a room full of birth moms. These women had chosen life and placed their children in the loving arms of an adoptive family. I shared how my mother chose life for me, in spite of the possibility I'd have hemophilia. I'm so glad she allowed me the chance to live. Because of her choice, I'm able to write this to you today! (view my remarks when you go to www.birthmotherministries.org and click on "Watch our videos".)

In this newsletter, you'll read stories of how Birthmothers Friends present the adoption option as they walk alongside a pregnant woman. These precious volunteers don't push adoption or Christ. Rather, our Friends serve as the hands and feet of Jesus to these women – Jesus, the giver of life. If a pregnant woman doesn't hear about God's love or the adoption option, then how can she choose?

On Thursday, September 24, 2009 you'll have the opportunity to hear the story of adoption come alive when Lee Ezell shares her testimony at Birthmothers' Annual Evening To Remember. Please save the date and plan now to join us for this incredible evening of inspiration at the Sheraton Premiere at Tysons Corner.

And please consider who you can invite. If people don't hear, there's no way to choose.

Jim Wright, Founder, President & Volunteer

Did you know? Americans are eager to adopt. An estimated 10 million couples would attempt to adopt a child domestically if they felt they had a realistic opportunity to do so, according to a recent study by the National Council For Adoption.

Your change is helping change lives

Birthmothers extends deep appreciation to Partnering Churches, Friends, and volunteers who filled and donated dozens of baby bottles with loose change to Birthmothers during our Change For Life campaign May 10 (Mother's Day) through June 21 (Father's Day). You helped provide significant financial support for the ministry. Thank you for helping us change lives!



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