



new life

ADOPTIONS

BIRTH PARENT NEWSLETTER

Spring 2019

**ONE
JOURNEY
MANY STORIES**

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Mother Brunch Details

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PLUS

The latest updates,
encouragement,
events, and more!

UPDATE YOUR INFORMATION

Even if you have ongoing contact with your birth child(ren) and the adoptive family, it is still important to keep current contact information on file with us. We would love to communicate by email, but having a current phone number and address on file is also a good idea.

Here's why:

- Sometimes an adoptive family or adopted adult reaches out to us if they can't get ahold of you. We want to be able to reach you to help get you reconnected.

- If you are working through a change in your relationship with the adoptive family, sometimes it is helpful to talk it through with us or someone else who has been there.

- We can provide you with resources that would be helpful to you on your journey.

- We are expanding our post adoption services to better capture what you are interested in. Hearing from you helps us know what direction to go in order to meet your needs.

- We want to keep you in the loop! By keeping your contact information updated we can send you information, newsletters, or invitations to birth parent events.

You can easily update your information in one of three ways:

1. Go to our website at www.newlifeadoptionsmn.org and click on "Update My Information" found under the Post Adoption tab.
2. Email your updated information to info@newlifeadoptionsmn.org.
3. Call our Post Adoption Department at 612-746-5670.



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DEAR BIRTH PARENTS,

As another year passes, I continue to be blessed by each of you as I hear your adoption stories. Each story is unique and brings me to a deeper commitment to help birth parents throughout their adoption journey. As we continue to find ways to expand our post adoption services, I want to hear how adoption has impacted you. If your journey is difficult, I want to provide support, resources, and a listening ear. If you are finding joy in your adoption story, I would love to hear about it. There are ups and downs over the years for everyone touched by adoption and our Post Adoption Department is here for you each step of the way. Give me a call today!



Rebecca Anfinrud, LSW
Post Adoption Social worker
612-746-5670
rebecca@newlifeadoptionsmn.org

P.S. I am so excited for our Birth Mother Brunch on Saturday, May 11th and the opportunity to meet you in person. I would love to see you there! (To learn more about this event, see Page 2).

CALLING ALL WRITERS!

Do you enjoy writing and want to share about how adoption has impacted your life? We have a few options just for you.

We are looking for guest bloggers who would like to write a post for the blog on our New Life Adoptions website. This can be on a topic related to adoption including: Why you share your story, grief in adoption, how to make an adoption plan, why you chose New Life, a letter to other birth parents, and more.

We would also love to share your personal adoption story on our website.

If you are interested in sharing, please write your story and send it to us! If you would prefer meeting with us to tell your story, we can write it for you. We can then post it under our Birth Parent Stories section on our website to encourage others who may be considering adoption for their child. You can also share your story on a video, panel, or other speaking opportunities.

Every adoption journey is unique and our goal is to show how different each situation can be.

Contact Rebecca to learn more about sharing your story.
612-746-5670 or rebecca@newlifeadoptionsmn.org

YOU ARE INVITED!

19TH ANNUAL BIRTH MOTHER BRUNCH

ONE JOURNEY MANY STORIES

After hosting our Annual Birth Mother Dinner for 18 years, we have decided it's time for a change. This year, we will host a Birth Mother Brunch on Saturday, May 11th, on Birth Mother's Day itself! Along with a new day and time, we will also be at a new location: Grace Church in Eden Prairie.

If you have never attended our Birth Mother Dinner before, we encourage you to consider attending this year's brunch. This is a wonderful way to connect with other birth mothers and to share about your adoption journey with people who really understand, because they chose adoption, too!

THEME

Our theme this year is One Journey, Many Stories. Birth mothers have made the brave decision to navigate the adoption journey, yet each person's story is unique. We want to recognize and celebrate that everyone's experience is different, so this year we will have a panel of birth mothers share about their unique adoption journey. We will also have a time to share with others as you are comfortable.

COST

Birth mothers are welcome to attend no matter which agency they placed through. All birth mothers attend free of charge and are encouraged to bring a guest. Each guest is kindly asked to pay \$10 upon registration online or at the door in the form of cash or check.

SATURDAY, MAY 11, 2019

10:00 A.M. - 12:00 P.M.

GRACE CHURCH

9301 Eden Prairie Rd.
Eden Prairie, MN 55347

RSVP

newlifeadoptionsmn.org/birth-mother-brunch/

ADVICE *for* BIRTH PARENTS

The adoption journey is so unique to each person, but many birth parents can relate to similar thoughts and feelings along the way. We asked birth parents, who worked with New Life Adoptions, what advice they would share with others on this journey. This is what they said:



Sandi pictured with her birth daughter.

SANDI

Adoption is a beautiful thing, but many people have a bad view or idea about adoption. When someone doesn't understand your decision, remember you made this decision for you and your child. Not for your mom, dad, sister, brother, or your friends. You made the best decision for you and your baby. Don't listen to the negativity that comes from other people who didn't walk a day in your shoes!

There will be bad days, very bad days. You will cry so much you will think you will never stop crying. You will feel physical pain, like your heart is broken and nothing will ever put it back together again. You will feel like you made the wrong decision. All these feelings are okay. Find a support system and lean on them. Tell them everything you are feeling and don't bottle it up. Be okay with not being okay.

Don't be afraid to share your story. You should not feel shame or guilt. Your story is unique and beautiful. It shows a mother's selfless love and the decision to make a plan for her child. It shows heart break, yet at the same time it shows happiness. It shows grief and loss, yet again at the same time shows a new family coming together. Your story shows YOU, and that is a beautiful thing.

KELSEY

Share your story! God calls us to "rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn."- Romans 12:15. Find trusted people who will rejoice in the new life God has given you and your baby and trusted people to mourn with you when the grief and loss are overwhelming. God is sovereign over all, including our grief, "But you, God, see the trouble of the afflicted; you consider their grief and take it in hand." -Psalm 10:14. God will restore and so often provides restoration through the people He places in our lives.



Kelsey pictured with her sister.



Bailey pictured with her birth daughter.

BAILEY

Be honest... be honest with your family, be honest with your friends, and with your child's adoptive family. Be honest about your emotions and what you feel inside. The more openness you have with the people closest to you, the better you will heal. You will have a closer connection to yourself, your child, your family, friends, and the family that you have blessed with a life.

from BIRTH PARENTS



BRITTANY

Just remember because of your selfless gift, you were an answer to prayer for a couple who had been waiting to become a mom and a dad, or a child becoming a brother or sister. Never be ashamed of your story, it is a beautiful, loving thing and you are a beautiful, loving person.

What advice would you share? Email your advice to Rebecca at rebecca@newlifeadoptionsmn.org. You may even see it shared on our New Life Adoptions blog or social media pages.



MARY

Be you! You are allowed to be vulnerable and emotional. You are allowed to be angry and hurt. The decision to place a child for adoption is the most selfless decision anyone can make. You did not make this decision in haste, nor out of selfishness. You are selfless and amazing!



Christina pictured with her birth mother, Louise.

the time to ask me about my feelings. It really sparked something in me and I couldn't stop thinking about my birth mother. The question about how I was feeling made me think about everything my birth mother must have felt at the time of placing me. Although it was a closed adoption, we were blessed to be able to reunite a few years later.

CHRISTINA'S POEM

The love between a parent and child is so strong - it transcends time. When I wrote this poem, (to the right) I was 14 years old and had recently stayed at my aunt and uncle's house. My uncle had taken me on a fun outing and during our time together he asked about my birth mother. He wondered if I'd like to meet her someday. I had never been asked that before.

Our family talked openly about the fact that my sister and I were adopted, but no one had ever taken



AN ANGEL'S LOVE

Written by Christina, age 14, after reflecting on her birth mother, Valentine's Day 1999.

I felt her kiss my face
So warm was her embrace

As she clasp my little hand
She held on at my command

And she whispered in my ear,
"Sweet dreams my little dear,

My little girl with soft blonde hair,
A golden halo hidden there,

And beautiful blue eyes."
She said she thought I was an angel in disguise.

Or else her little dove,
Sent to her from arms above

White and pure and perfect.

She said,
"You must fly where angels tread.

If only I could keep you forever and ever.
Yes, this is my plan, my lofty endeavor,

My beautiful dream that can't seem to
come true.

Soon you'll be with another family,
And they will give you everything,
Maybe a halo, to go with those wings."

I think then I understood,

As I looked up from her warm hold,
As the story her heart told,

And as her many tears fell
I wished that I could have told her

That she was the angel in disguise
For giving me life she didn't realize

Is the greatest gift of all.

Better yet is that she gave me love.

Yes, she is my angel,
And I am her dove.

INTRODUCING NEW LIFE ADOPTIONS

Something that has always made New Life unique is the comprehensive nature of our services, specifically our adoption services. In the past 39 years, New Life has been a part of providing adoption services to women and men who decide adoption is the best option for their child and building hundreds of families through adoption. As we look ahead, we are excited to solidify our commitment to offering adoption as a program of New Life Family Services with expanded services and a new brand.



by Jennifer Patrick, LICSW
Director of Adoption

A CHANGING LANDSCAPE

Since 1980, a lot has changed both in the adoption services offered through New Life and within the culture as a whole. Most adoptions have moved from being closed to having some level of openness. There is less stigma surrounding unplanned pregnancies in general and adoption plans are less of a secret as a result. In addition, there has been a decline in domestic infant adoption nationwide over the past 10 years. Local agencies are making difficult and strategic decisions in order to adapt. Some agencies are merging or partnering together, while others have closed. In addition, the internet has become an integral part of how birth parents find adoptive parents, sometimes with little or no assistance from an agency.

At New Life, here are just a few of the changes we have made since 1980:

- We have moved from providing closed adoptions to primarily open adoptions.
- A post-adoption department was created in the 2000's to meet the ongoing needs of our birth parents, adoptive families, and adoptees as requests from birth parents and adoptees looking to open their closed adoptions began increasing.
- Within the last decade, we have added embryo adoption to our growing list of services as the number of embryos available for adoption from IVF treatments continues to increase.
- We have increased our utilization of technology to help birth parents find adoptive families with the addition of a website which provides waiting family profiles online, helping to facilitate connections more easily.

LOOKING AHEAD

As we continue to respond to the changing landscape of adoption, we have adapted to meet the needs of birth parents and adoptive families while ensuring our services are relevant and competitive. Over the past few years, we have restructured the way our adoption team is staffed, hiring social workers who are solely dedicated to work with expectant parents (previously these social workers were also serving pregnant and parenting clients in our First Care Pregnancy Centers). Now with a dedicated adoption team of two Expectant Parent Social Workers and two Adoptive Family Social Workers, we are able to meet the needs of both birth parents and adoptive families very well. The next natural step was to focus on our branding and marketing to encourage growth in the adoption program.

As a result of the next step, we changed our program name to New Life Adoptions! New Life Adoptions will continue to operate as a program of New Life Family Services, alongside two existing programs: First Care Pregnancy Center and Conquerors.

We have also launched a new website dedicated solely to our adoption services. Birth parents will find information and support along with approved waiting families to choose from. Adoptive families will find resources, training and support as they prepare for adoption. Post adoption resources are available for all members of the adoption triad in the years following placement.

In addition to our new website, we have a new Facebook Page and Instagram account. Check them out and don't forget to like and follow New Life Adoptions! If our adoption services have impacted your life, please take a moment to leave us a review on our Facebook Page.

 /newlifeadoptionsofmn

 @newlifeadoptionsofmn





MY RESOURCE RECOMMENDATION: BELLIS

By Melanie Waller, LSW, Expectant Parent Social Worker

As an Expectant Parent Social Worker at New Life Adoptions, I love that Bellis strongly values and recognizes the need for birth mother support. Below are three ways they offer support:

1. As a local organization, “Bellis is a community of people who care about adoption and work to provide education and support in a way that uplifts, inspires and heals.” I first became involved with Bellis through their **Evening of Adoption Connection** group. Although I started out by going to observe, I quickly moved into helping facilitate some of these groups. It was amazing to watch everyone support and teach each other through their own unique perspectives. Many of the birth families I have worked with have support from friends and family, but there is nothing like getting support from people who truly “get it” and from people who truly understand your experience.

2. One of the events that makes Bellis unique is their annual **Stronger Together Birth Mother Retreat** that takes place in September (See details to the right.) This event is a wonderful balance of reflection, peer and professional support, rest and self-care. The setting allows for self-care activities that appeal to many such as walking, canoeing, resting, eating good food, and spending time in nature. Along with restful activities, there are workshops facilitated by adoption professionals, like myself, that invite birth mothers to work through emotions that society does not otherwise seem to allow for. It is truly an honor to be part of such a sacred space, as women from many different walks of life come together to support one another and share in the joy and challenges that come with being a birth mother.

This year, in addition to their annual Birth Mother Retreat, Bellis is introducing a **Stronger Together One-Day Retreat** for birth parents, both men and women, closer to the Twin Cities (See details to the right.)

3. I began speaking in schools with Bellis to educate youth about adoption. Not only does Bellis seek to help those involved in adoption to eliminate the stigma around their decision, but they are working to redefine it in communities. Birth parents, adoptees, adoptive parents and adoption professionals make up different teams that speak in high schools throughout the Twin Cities. These teams are sharing their adoption stories and answering questions about adoption, allowing students the opportunity to hear real stories about what adoption looks like in 2019. Many of these speakers are passionate about educating youth on adoption, and they find it both empowering and healing to share from their own experience. This gives students an incredible opportunity to hear about adoption with a safe space to ask some personal questions and hear the truth, which many students will tell you, is different than what they have heard on TV, movies, and the internet. Because of the multiple ways kids are hearing inaccurate information about adoption these days, sharing in the schools is an important piece of Bellis’ outreach. Many are able to see the selflessness and bravery that is involved in adoption. This is one effective way of eliminating the stigma around adoption.

I have enjoyed my experiences with Bellis and am privileged to know the people I have met along the way. Each story is unique, but selflessness and love are a theme consistent among them all. There are few places to find support like this from people who truly understand. If you are interested in connecting with Bellis in any of these ways, I would recommend checking it out for yourself! What I hope you will find is support and encouragement, knowing that you are cared for and are not alone.

Learn more at www.mybellis.org.
Contact Bellis at 952-944-0866 or info@mybellis.org

EVENINGS OF ADOPTION CONNECTION

Evening of Adoption Connection meetings are for adoptive parents, birth parents, adopted persons, birth or adoptive grandparents, family and friends. The mix of participants has included adoption experiences ranging from infant domestic, international, foster care, open, closed, recent and decades ago, etc. Across a wide spectrum of adoption backgrounds, conversations bring a sense of commonality that is affirming and encouraging. They start with a large group format, then break into small group discussions. The event is free for attendees. To find the upcoming dates and RSVP go to their Adoption Support page at: www.mybellis.org/adoption-support/

STRONGER TOGETHER WEEKEND RETREAT

Our ‘Stronger Together’ weekend retreat offers peer-based support in a nurturing setting. One participant reflected: “This retreat...woke me up and grounded me back to find myself again. I leave with tools to weave all pieces of my identity back into my life, a way to be more positive, and loving and giving myself permission to be okay...” It is the only weekend retreat for birth mothers in Minnesota, and one of only a few in the country. Contact Bellis for information about the annual retreat, which takes place in September. While space at the retreat is limited, retreat guests continue to network throughout the year and attend Evening of Adoption Connection meetings every other month.

STRONGER TOGETHER ONE-DAY RETREAT

Birth parents are invited to a daylong retreat hosted by Bellis at a beautiful lakeside location in the western suburbs of the Twin Cities on Sunday, June 30, from 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. This one-day retreat is intended to serve those who are not able (or eligible) to attend our full weekend retreat in September. Please attend the one-day retreat if any of the circumstances below apply to you:

- You cannot leave home for a weekend because of child care or work obligations.
 - The distance to the weekend retreat is too far for you to drive.
 - Your baby was born within the past year (though there are no time restrictions, birth mothers of all ages are welcome).
 - You have not attended the weekend retreat in the past five years.
 - You are a birth mother or birth father.
- If you meet the above requirements, please proceed with registration through the Bellis website.

RECOMMENDED ADOPTION RESOURCES



LOCAL RESOURCES

MN ADOPT HELP LINE

MN ADOPT provides services to support all members of adoption relationships. They have up-to-date information about support groups and resources available by phone and on their website. The HELP phone line is an excellent resource for birth parents and adoptive parents who are looking for resources including therapists who understand adoption. www.mnadopt.org 612-746-5137

NATIONAL RESOURCES

BRAVELOVE

New Life Adoptions is proud to be a partner agency of BraveLove, a non-profit, pro-adoption movement seeking to change the perception of adoption through honest, informative, and hopeful communication that conveys the heroism and bravery of birth moms. Read BraveLove's blog or check out their many video testimonies for encouragement in your own journey. www.bravelove.org

NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR ADOPTION

The National Council for Adoption's mission is to meet the diverse needs of children, birth parents, adopted individuals, adoptive families, and all those touched by adoption through global advocacy, education, research, legislative action, and collaboration. The National Council for Adoption provides a resource list for birth parents to connect with other birth parents on a national level.

www.adoptioncouncil.org

RECOMMEND A RESOURCE

Do you have a favorite book, event, or resource that has helped you on your adoption journey? Share your favorite adoption resource with us and we will include a few of your favorite resources on our website and in our next newsletter. Email your resources to Rebecca at rebecca@newlifeadoptionsmn.org.

www.newlifeadoptionsmn.org



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POST ADOPTION SERVICES

At New Life Adoptions, we realize that adoption is a lifelong journey and different adoption related needs may arise throughout the years. New Life Adoptions is committed to offering as much support as possible to assist you in seeking answers to your questions, searching for the child you placed, reconnecting after you have lost contact, or exploring opportunities for new levels of openness.

Here are some of the many services we can offer:

- Search and reunion services
- Resources and support
- Obtaining information from your file
- Passing letters, pictures, and updates between birth family and adoptive family
- Coordination of in-person contact
- Ongoing assistance with an adoptive relationship

To learn more about any of these services, call or email our Post Adoption Department today!

612-746-5670
rebecca@newlifeadoptionsmn.org