

BIRTH PARENT NEWSLETTER

Spring 2018



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The latest updates,
encouragement, events,
and more!

POST ADOPTION SERVICES

At New Life Family Services, we realize that adoption is a lifelong journey and different adoption related needs can arise throughout the years. New Life Family Services is committed to offering you as much support as possible to assist you in seeking answers to your questions, searching for your child's birth family, reconnecting after you have lost contact, or exploring opportunities for new levels of openness. Here are some of the many services we can offer:

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

To learn more about any of these services, call or email Rebecca at 612-746-5670 or anfinrud.rebecca@nlfs.org.

newlife
family services

and its programs



MINNEAPOLIS
University Campus
2900 University Ave SE
Minneapolis, MN 55414
612.623.8378

SAINT PAUL
Sun Ray Shopping Center
2109 Old Hudson Road
Saint Paul, MN 55119
651.730.4342

RICHFIELD
6517 Nicollet Ave. S.
Richfield, MN 55423
612.866.7643

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE
1515 East 66th Street
Richfield, MN 55423
612.866.7643

ROCHESTER
902 North Broadway
Rochester, MN 55906
507.282.3377

WWW.NLFS.ORG

Dear Birth Parents,

I placed my daughter for adoption almost 9 years ago. When I found out I was pregnant I was 22 years old and a sophomore in college. I never thought that this would happen to me, and I was terrified about what the next year of my life would bring. After I gave birth to my daughter, watching another couple walk out of the hospital room with my baby was one of the hardest things I have ever had to do. Despite the immense grief I was feeling I knew I would eventually find healing.



Kelsey gave birth to her daughter, Ava, in July 2009.

Over the years I have learned that we are not meant to carry our burdens alone. We are created to be in community with each other.

One way that I have found this community is by sharing my story of adoption. New Life first asked me to share my story at their annual banquet in the fall of 2009, the fall after my daughter was born. That was 8 years ago now, and I have been sharing my story with New Life ever since. I have shared my story at events, churches, youth groups, and public schools and have found it to be a healing experience.

One of the most memorable experiences I had when sharing my story was at a women's shelter. When I arrived there to speak, I was so afraid I would not be able to connect with these women. In the back of my head I was worried about all I had to do at work and school, while I knew these women were worried about where their next meal would come from and where they would sleep that night. Despite my fear, these women were receptive to my story. Grief and loss are a human experience, no matter what the situation. They were encouraged to hear about how God worked in my story and the many blessings that came from a difficult situation.

I may never know while I am on this earth the impact my story will have on someone, but I trust that God is working. He is in control of all things, and has carefully planned who is going to hear me speak and when.

My story is about my life, but ultimately, it is a beautiful example of God and how he works in the lives of his children. He is graceful, loving, compassionate, and full of mercy. He will stop at nothing to rescue his children. God's power is often seen best in the stories we share. You may never know who needs to hear your story and why, but God knows, and will continue to work through our stories.

Sincerely,

Kelsey

P.S. Check out page 5 for more information on how to share your story with New Life Family Services!



Through an open adoption relationship, Kelsey has been able to maintain regular contact with Ava and the adoptive family.



You are invited!

18TH ANNUAL BIRTH MOTHER DINNER

ABOUT BIRTH MOTHER'S DAY

In 1990, a group of birth mothers in the Seattle, WA area wanted to remember and honor the decision that they made to place their children for adoption. They decided to create what is now known as Birth Mother's Day, which is celebrated the Saturday before Mother's Day. This is a day to recognize the courageous love that birth mothers have shown through their decision to place their child(ren) for adoption.

THEME

This year's theme is "Courageous Love: Then, Now, and Forever." This special evening will encourage and uplift you as we reflect together on the love involved in adoption from the initial decision to place your child(ren) for adoption, the courage to follow through with the decision, and the grace to continue on your journey as you trust another family to raise your birth child(ren).

"I have been fortunate enough to attend the Birth Mother Dinner that New Life hosts for the last three years. My daughter and her mom have attended with me and our relationship has been enriched because of the dinner. Thanks to New Life for supporting many birth moms."

COST

All birth mothers are welcome to attend regardless of the agency they placed through. Birth Mothers attend for free 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.

FRIDAY, MAY 11, 2018

6:00 P.M. Registration

6:30 P.M. Dinner & Program

CALVARY CHURCH

2120 Lexington Ave. N.

Roseville, MN 55113

RSVP: www.nlfs.org



MEET BRITTANY

AN ADOPTEE STORY



My Gotcha Day

April 24, 1990 was my Gotcha Day (a term used to describe the anniversary of the day a new member joins a family through adoption). A quick 55 days after I was born, my world changed in the best possible way. I never could have imagined all that life would bring me and let me experience.

I was adopted through New Life by my parents Lee and June in 1990, but before my adoption was fully finalized, my adoptive dad, Lee, died of a heart attack. My adoptive mother had to then fight to keep me as a single mother, which was not readily allowed at that time. By the grace of God, she was able to legally adopt me on October 4th, 1990.



In 1992, my mother remarried to a man named Mark, who I had already viewed as my dad. On June 13, 1993, he legally adopted me and my older brother Brandon, who had also been adopted through New Life Family Services.

“Chosen,” not Adopted

I grew up knowing I was adopted. It was no secret. I mean, I looked like Pocahontas compared to the rest of my family, so it's not like they could hide it! Having another sibling that was adopted too made the sibling bond closer, since we had that in common.

My brother Brandon and I were proud of being adopted, (we preferred the word, “chosen”), yet still were also proud to bear the last name of our mommy and daddy. I remember in court when my dad adopted us that my brother and I were over the moon excited to become one of the “Scott’s.”

I understood what adoption meant at a young age. I was taught how Jesus cared for all people, especially those who didn't have a place to go or needed love. I always viewed adoption as such a selfless act versus a selfish act. To be able to put your child ahead of your needs, feelings, and plans is beautiful, selfless, and sacrificing. I think because my parents taught me this, my whole outlook on adoption was so positive and I was never angry or hurt by the notion of being “given up.”

I never once questioned my adoptive parents love for me (except for those few times during my teen angst years, but I digress). I always felt loved and accepted no matter what I did. No matter what I said. No matter what.

A Heart of Empathy

I had a closed adoption up until I was eighteen. That was honestly okay with me, as I was always told that my birth mother was very young and not quite ready to be a momma yet. I understood at an early age why I was placed for adoption and my parents did a phenomenal job in explaining all the limited information they knew.

My birth mother was just 15-years-old at the time, and was contemplating having an abortion. I can't even fathom trying to raise a child at fifteen. Today, at age 27 even I am uncertain if I am raising my child correctly half the time! It would have been so much “easier” for her to abort me versus going through nine months of pregnancy and then giving me to another family to raise.

“It would have been so much easier for my birth mom to abort me versus going through nine months of pregnancy and then giving me to another family to raise.”

At that time, everyone in my birth mother's life told her they didn't think she could handle being pregnant. New Life helped change her mind, to realize she can do this, she can choose life and place her child for adoption.

A Family Reunited

I was fortunate enough to meet both my birth mother, Jennifer, and her family, and my birth father, Chhoeum, and his family shortly after I turned eighteen. My adoptive parents were so very supportive of this and selfless in encouraging me to meet them.

I was pretty scared to open myself up to the possibility that my birth parents might choose not to meet me. I have seen the devastation of that happening first hand, so I went in guarded and apprehensive. After notifying my birth parents that I wanted to meet them, I quickly heard back that both sides of my birth family wanted to meet me. I cried and felt both nervous and excited at the prospect of meeting them.

I met my birth mother, Jennifer, and her family first, then my birth father's family a few weeks later. It's funny because my parents kept pointing out how similar our personality traits, expressions, and physical appearances are. I never had that kind of comparison growing up, so it was fun to find out "whose eyes I had", etc.



Brittany and her husband, Andrew, puff painted t-shirts to wear at New Life Family Services' Walk for Life declaring the biggest truth in her life, "I wouldn't be alive if not for New Life."

I went from having two siblings to having eight. Yep, eight. I have so many aunts, uncles, grandmas, grandpas, and cousins. It is just the best. Thank goodness for social media, because although we all live in the same state, we are hours apart. Through technology, we can stay connected with each other, which is such a blessing.

I married my elementary school sweetheart, Andrew, (cue the awes) in 2013 and it was amazing to have my entire birth mom's family, birth dad's family, and my foster parents present at my wedding. I cried seeing them all stand when the parents were honored. It took each and every one of them for me to get to where I am today. We also recently found out that the social worker who facilitated by adoption in 1990 attends the same church as my mom! The way God orchestrates things is amazing, isn't it?

Flash forward a couple years to 2016. I was told in my early teen years that I probably wouldn't be able to have kids. Did you hear that? That was God laughing. I had that hanging

over me for years and was intent on adopting as many children as legally possible since I just wanted to be a mommy. Well, when we were looking into becoming foster parents, I found out I was pregnant. My miracle baby!

Only by the grace of God were we able to

have a feisty son named Aiden in February 2016. Both my birth mother and adoptive mother were able to be with me that day, which was incredibly special.



Brittany invited her birth mother to join her at the hospital for the delivery of her son.

"If it hadn't been for New Life Family Services, it is quite possible I would not be alive."

Although our plans for fostering have been postponed, that is still our vision. We will adopt. However and whenever



Brittany's son, Aiden, today.

that opportunity comes about, we are ready for it. Babies and kids of all ages need love, and we have plenty to go around. If we can change the course of a life like my parents did with me, that is a challenge I am so willing to accept.

If it hadn't been for New Life Family Services, it is quite possible I would not be alive. I am so thankful for their outreach to expectant mothers in crisis.

Had they not been listening and obedient to what God had called them to do all those years ago, I probably wouldn't be here, and that is a sobering thought. They are helping so many women, children and families. I am thankful and proud to be able to share my story with and through them. To God be the glory. •

FROM THE POST-ADOPTION SOCIAL WORKER

I am honored to work with such amazing people at so many different stages of the adoption journey. My favorite part about working with birth parents, adoptive families, and adopted adults is the stories that I get to hear.

Throughout my years at New Life, I have heard many remarkable stories, and I am always amazed at how different each story is. No matter how similar the circumstances, there are no two stories that are alike; each person has a unique perspective. I am also encouraged by the impact that sharing a story can have. It is both healing for the one sharing their story as well as inspiring for those who hear the story.

As an agency we are working towards sharing more of these stories in a variety of settings to help encourage others. Many people are fearful of sharing their story, but once they take the first step it is often empowering and healing.

If you are interested in sharing your story, but aren't sure of what capacity you're comfortable sharing, I would love to talk to you about the different opportunities available.

Rebecca Anfinrud, LSW
612-746-5670
adoption@nlfs.org

TAKE OUR SURVEY

Here at New Life we are exploring more options to support birth parents throughout their adoption journey.

We have created a quick survey to help us learn about how you would like to be supported. We would love your input!

www.surveymonkey.com/r/NLFS-birthparents

DO YOU SHOP AMAZON.COM?

When you sign up for Amazon Smile, and select New Life Family Services as your non-profit of choice, a portion of your Amazon purchases will benefit New Life.



SHARE YOUR STORY

Ready to share your adoption story with others?

Our Adoption Unit is looking for birth parents who are willing to share their adoption stories. Your story is unique and may be just the encouragement another person needs. If you are interested in sharing your adoption story, consider one of the following:

1. Public Speaking

Share your story with groups (small or large) ranging from high school classrooms, adoption event panels, church congregations or small groups, or New Life fundraising events.



Bailey placed her daughter for adoption in 2012, and has been using her story ever since to educate others and share about adoption as a loving option for those facing unplanned pregnancies. Bailey (above) bravely shared her story at our 2017 Gala, has been a part of birth parent panels, and on marketing materials (below).

2. Printed Marketing Materials

Allow your story to be used in our printed marketing materials to help educate and inform the community about our services. Marketing materials may include brochures, newsletters, annual reports, etc.



3. Online Articles

New Life regularly publishes stories on our website and shares them through social media and email marketing. These online stories allow your story to have a greater reach and impact.

4. One-on-one

Use your experience to help someone in the midst of the decision making process for their pregnancy. It can be helpful for those in the middle of the process to hear from others who have been through what they are experiencing. Meet over coffee or in one of our pregnancy centers as you share your personal experience.

I might be interested.

Now what? Contact the Post Adoption Department at 612-746-5670 or adoption@nlfs.org. We will arrange a time to meet to hear your story and discuss opportunities for sharing with others. Our Marketing team will then help in writing your story and present opportunities to you throughout the year.



Thank you to Nicholas and Sandi, two brave birth parents, who spent an afternoon with us this past summer sharing their adoption stories by video. We have been able to use this adoption awareness piece to increase awareness of our adoption services within the community. Find this video and more at www.vimeo.com/newlife-familyservices

RECOMMENDED ADOPTION RESOURCES

Articles, books, websites, and more



HIGHLIGHTED RESOURCE: **ADOPTION CONNECTION, BELLIS**

Are you interested in connecting with other members of the adoption community? Do you want to meet other birth parents who have also made a courageous choice to place their child(ren) for adoption?

Bellis hosts an evening of Adoption Connection once every other month. These meetings are open to birth parents, adoptive parents, adopted persons, and birth or adoptive grandparents to have dedicated time for in-depth conversation and support. The gathering starts with a large group format, then breaks into facilitated small group discussions.



Bellis

Next Adoption Connection Gathering: Sunday, May 20

FREE to attend. RSVP requested.

www.mybellis.org/adoption-support

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 is proud to be a partner agency of BraveLove, a non-profit pro-adoption movement that seeks 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 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

ADOPTION RESEARCH

THE DONALDSON ADOPTION INSTITUTE (DAI)

The Donaldson Adoption Institute has made the difficult decision to close after more than 20 years of providing adoption research, education, and advocacy. They have added greatly to the world of adoption over the years and we are sad to see them go. Luckily, their research and educational materials will still be available online. You can still take advantage of their "groundbreaking research, world-class education, and passionate advocacy."

www.adoptioninstitute.org



WEEKEND RETREAT

Stronger Together is a weekend retreat hosted by Bellis in September that offers birth mothers an opportunity to talk, reflect and learn together.

Retreat programming is designed to offer new skills and perspectives that can be helpful on the journey as a birth mother. Along with classroom-type sessions, the agenda includes free time, activities, miles of walking trails, access to a beautiful dock in a quiet bay, canoes, etc., and home-cooked meals. Several social workers assist in guiding the programs.

Of course, perhaps the greatest benefit is simply time with others who can relate to your unique experiences. This creates long-lasting friendships and a much-needed network of support.

For those interested in attending the retreat, please contact Bellis in the spring and early summer to learn more. Space is limited. The retreat fee is typically \$55 for shared rooms. Most of the costs related to this program are covered by donations received primarily at the spring women's brunch.

Learn more at www.mybellis.org.

RECOMMEND A RESOURCE

Do you have a favorite book or resource that has helped you in your adoption journey? Share your favorite adoption resource with us and we will include a few of your favorite resources in our next newsletter. Email your resources to adoption@nlfs.org.



and its programs



First Care Pregnancy Center

Our four pregnancy center locations offer free pregnancy testing, ultrasounds, STD testing, decision making counseling, and parenting education classes.

Learn More:

www.firstcaremn.com



Conquerors

The Conquerors program provides support for women who have had at least one abortion and are struggling with the pain of that experience. The program provides a safe, non-judgmental atmosphere where one can receive support while gaining freedom from the issues their past abortions may be causing.

Learn more:

www.conquerorsafterabortion.org



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UPCOMING EVENTS

Birth Mother Dinner

Friday, May 11

Calvary Church, Roseville, MN

Theme: 'Courageous Love: Then, Now, Forever'

Registration at 6:00 p.m.

Dinner & Program at 6:30 p.m.

More details at www.nlfs.org.



Walk & Run for Life

Rochester: Saturday, June 2nd

Twin Cities: Saturday, June 9th

This family-friendly event includes a Fun Run, Kid's Race, and a 2 mile walk. It's a great way to support New Life and adoption!



Gala & Silent Auction

Rochester: Friday, October 5

Twin Cities: Friday, October 12

Registration at 6:00 p.m.

Dinner & Program at 7:00 p.m.



STAY IN TOUCH!

Even if you correspond with the adoptive family directly, 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 birth parents and adoptive families are interested in. Hearing from you helps us know what direction to go in order to meeting 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 the birth mother dinner.

You can easily update your information:

1. Visit the post adoption area of our website and click on "Update My Information."
2. Email your updated information to adoption@nlfs.org or call (612) 746-5670.

CONNECT WITH US:



vimeo