

Friends in Adoption Connections

ADOPTION OUTREACH AND EDUCATION 1-800-98-ADOPT FALL 2018

The following essay is taken from a college application of a young woman who was adopted through Friends in Adoption

Hailey's Personal Statement

1. Some students have a background, identity, interest, or talent that is so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story.

I can see the other patrons looking at our table, trying to figure out the relationship between me and the three other women I'm sitting with. I'm calling my mother "mom", but there are two other women at the table who look exactly like me, and my mom isn't one of them. They are my birth mother and biological grandmother. My birth mother is calling me, "my Hailey", and my biological grandmother "my granddaughter", which I know looks confusing from outside. It can be confusing from the inside too, and I have asked myself the same questions I see others asking: How am I connected to each of these women? Where do I belong, and who am I?

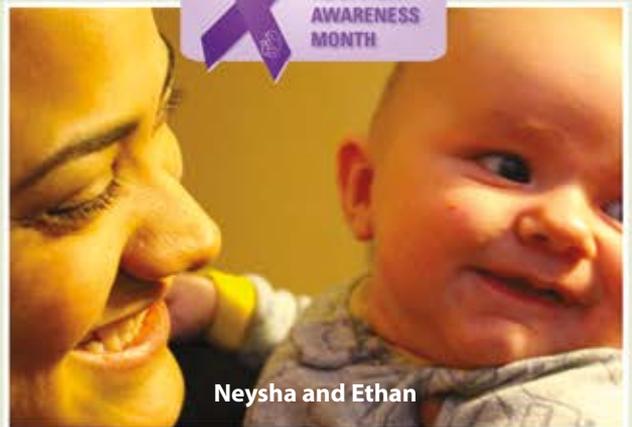
My birth mother's name is Rainbow. She never raised me; my parents were my parents even before I was born. They set up my nursery, they planned for my future, they were even there when I was born. My mother was the first person to hold me, which is why when people asked me questions about my "real mom" as I was growing up, I would get angry. It felt like they were insinuating that my mom wasn't as real as theirs, that there was something missing in our relationship. Other moments brought up this worry as well. At doctors check-ups, I could never give a full medical history; I never knew my birth father, so at best, I could only answer a small portion of the questions. In school, an assignment to create a family tree sent me home crying. My mother asked my teacher if I could create a family orchard instead, to encompass all of my families. At the top of one tree was Rainbow, and the tree seemed so different from my others.

I felt pressure to feel a bond with Rainbow that didn't seem to exist. She was the person people were insisting was my "real" mother. Rainbow was just 20 years older than me, but seemed worlds away, and definitely not like my mother. I struggled with what her place in my life should be, what to call her, how to feel about her. On my eleventh birthday, Rainbow and I were watching a movie. There was a scene where one character winked at another. I learned that I cannot wink- I kept trying, but couldn't. Rainbow saw my attempts and gasped. Immediately,

continued on page 3



Hailey and her birth mother



Neysha and Ethan

Life's Greatest Gift

FIA Alumni Neysha, Tommy, and Ethan are grateful for their friend Sofia, who wrote the following for a school project: "The connection of family is not necessarily formed through genetic makeup or other biological rules, it is made up of shared love between human beings for one another. This image truly reflects the happiness experienced by two individuals who are not united by blood, but by a deep affection for each other. A mother's love has no boundaries, no matter who conceived the child she has chosen to raise as her own. In the dictionary, adoption is defined as "to take voluntarily (a child of other parents) as one's own child," yet it is truly just another form of birth-of starting a family. Families come in an endless number of shapes and sizes, but they all share a common ground; LOVE". —Sofia



A Time to be Thankful



Helen, Reena & Mateo

DAWN'S DESK

Hi All, 😊

Recently Reena Karani, a Friends in Adoption adoptive mom, a doctor and Senior Associate Dean for Undergraduate Medical Education and Curricular Affairs at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai in New York posted on Facebook the student oath that her first year medical students proudly presented to their family, friends and school community. Reading it brought chills to my soul. It resonated so strongly of FIA's mission to the commitment our staff and Board make to all impacted by the work of FIA. With permission I have printed the oath here.

We, the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai Class of 2022, recognize our privilege and responsibility as future physicians and so pledge:

To care for our own emotional, physical, and spiritual wellbeing and encourage our colleagues (families) to do the same;

To consciously promote diversity and inclusion as activists and advocates for equitable care and shared wellbeing;

To not only be healers, but also educators committed to empowering our patients (families) to be agents of their own care;

To respect and collaborate with the entire healthcare (FIA professional) team, recognizing our limits and their strengths;

To acknowledge and appraise tradition and not be afraid to change it;

To be lifelong learners dedicated to furthering public knowledge through research and innovation;

To provide non-judgmental, thoughtful, and personalized care with the highest level of integrity to protect against harm, bias, and injustice.

And above all, to always be guided by compassion for our patients (families) and love for our profession.

While much has changed since FIA was founded in 1982 what has stayed consistent through all of the ups and downs of the roller coaster ride of adoption is our commitment to Compassionate Adoption and Kindness to all.

Friends in Adoption is thriving because of YOU. Thank you Reena and thank you all who are a part of the FIA Family. 

Dawn

If you feel our services may be helpful to you or someone you know or are working with, we may be contacted via e-mail: info@friendsinadoption.org. We welcome hearing from you.

Mother's Day Reflection

**By Michael and Michael,
FIA Alumni**

Since the beginning of our relationship my husband and I talked about our desire to become fathers. Through Friends in Adoption that dream was made a reality, and to this day we cherish all that comes with the enormous responsibility of being dads. So, when May came along and we were both wished a Happy Mother's Day, we were confused. Of course we smiled and thanked our friends and family, but to those closest to us, we asked what prompted the greeting. The most common response was, "you guys are filling the role of a mother and a father, so we wanted to wish you a Happy Mother's Day." Well, no, not really. We are both fathers (dada and papa at the moment) and we are both parents. We are not mothers, nor do we feel there is a need to fill that role.

The more we were wished a Happy Mother's Day, the more we thought about the relationship we have with our daughter's birth mother. We have so much respect for her and our lives are irreversibly better because of her. It is hard to believe that at one point in our adoption journey we actually preferred a closed adoption. We had no idea just how much we would end up seeing our birth mother and how connected she would become to our family. We are so grateful (and lucky!) to be able to see our daughter and birth mother together.

This is not to say our birth mother fills the role of "mother" to our daughter. She is her birth mother and we harmoniously understand what that means for our family: she is the selfless, courageous, strong woman who made the enormously difficult decision to give her child a life she could not provide; she is the thoughtful young woman who periodically reaches out to see how we are doing, and travels hours to see us; she is the friendly face behind FaceTime chats and



Camilla and her birth mother

the bearer of gifts. She is the woman we choose to celebrate on Mother's Day.

We do not hold it against our friends and family for wishing us a Happy Mother's Day – these kind gestures became the catalysts for important reflection on the meaning of that day and how it should be celebrated in our family. It has also given us an opportunity to share the beauty of open adoption and encourage others to consider the varying emotions birth mothers experience on this day.

Friends in Adoption said this would be a journey, and it is. It continues, it evolves, and it challenges you, but it is such an extraordinary experience. We look forward to more opportunities to learn and grow, and to celebrate our birth mother. ♥

Hailey's Personal Statement

continued from page 1

she made a horrible, exaggerated grimace, using all the muscles in her face. She was trying to wink as well, but couldn't. In this small moment, I realized we were connected. This connection did not look like what others expected, it was a connection completely our own. It didn't take away from my connection with my family, it added to it. I realized I did have a family orchard like my mom had insisted when I was young.

Now, if someone asks me a question

about my family, I'm eager to answer it. I work to educate others about adoption. I don't see their questions as an attack or their lack of understanding as a comment on me; I know that asking questions when you don't understand something is normal. I consider the whole person and their intent, while trying to gently explain how much it can hurt to have your identity questioned. This experience allows me to keep an open mind when meeting people with different experiences. I work to educate myself to ask the right questions, approach difference compassionately, and change my language when needed.

In this process, I have become secure in my relationship with my mother and with Rainbow. My mother is my mom, and Rainbow is my Rainbow. I am combination of both, but identical to neither, a richer person because of the many women in my life.

At FIA, we believe it is of the utmost importance to listen to and hear the important voices of the adoption circle.

Thank you so much for sharing your story Hailey.



What is Adoption *Really* About?

Adoption, and all that it encompasses is **COMPLEX**. It's about love. It's about trust. It's about permanence and safety. It's about informed choices. Adoption is beautiful, and also certainly challenging. There is loss in adoption, and grief too. And thankfully, there is lifelong support from the always growing adoption community.

This year's newsletter we will explore together: **What Adoption Really Is All About**. We want to bring Adoption Awareness & Education into our communities in a meaningful, safe, and powerful way.

**We asked Friends in Adoption Alumni Families:
~How do we define family? What can the adoption community teach the world? What does adoption mean to YOU?~**

We believe it is so important to listen to the voices of the adoption circle. We hope you enjoy!

What Family is Really About

I was recently asked about "blood" relations by a nephew. He said he wasn't "really" related to my father. My reply was, "It doesn't matter how we [find] people. We keep them!" Our extended family is created biologically, through marriage, step relations, foster children, honorary designations and adoption. What family really is about is a loving, forever connection. We just don't let go! —**Timothy and Mary**

What Adoption is Really About

"I am honored and privileged to be part of the Friends in Adoption Family. FIA recently asked us *"how do you define family? What does adoption mean to you?"* When we decided to adopt it wasn't until after years of struggling with infertility and the discussion of "Are we even meant to have a family?" we finally came to the realization, "Yes, we were meant to have a family!" and we started our path to adoption. My wife and I adopted a baby boy a little over a year ago. I'm still learning about what Adoption means and I have a feeling that I'm going to keep learning and adding to my answer forever. I guess the most important thing that adoption has taught me, is that I am capable of so much more than I thought, so much more love, so much more compassion, more trust and understanding and patience. To me, adoption is about learning- learning about people, about children, about helping others, and most of all learning about yourself. FIA asked, "How do I define family?" I absolutely felt that my wife and I were a family, and we lived a very happy and fulfilled life, but the adoption of our son, defined our family. With love and best wishes for the future,

—**Jon, Christine & Jake**

Our Adoption Experience - The First Years

As newly adoptive parents, we have settled into our roles as Muh Muh Muh and Ya Ya Ya quite nicely. It has been a year since we first met Jake on the day he was born and although there are spotty memories of the adoption process as a whole and of the whirlwind of events that followed getting the "call," the feelings and emotions of that time are still just as vivid today.

Full of contradictory feelings, choices and goals, Adoption is hard, unnerving and necessary work that can only be accomplished through Love. The Love for simply the "idea" of a child and what they represent- to protect them, putting their safety and well-being above all else.

It is difficult to explain these complex and layered emotional extremes that Adoption introduces into a family- especially as a continuation of a journey already filled with so much want and loss.

At first we tried to protect ourselves from being hurt- we had been through so much already. We wanted our experience with Adoption to be as painless as possible. We did our homework. We attended Adoption conferences, local support groups, were invited into the homes and made phone calls to adoptive parents

who shared their stories. You listen, you learn, you're petrified, you're encouraged —you are not alone!

With all of our research we were by no means experts and we needed help. We chose FIA to provide an easiness that would keep us moving forward — and through FIA, a birth mother chose us.

She **CHOSE** us!

She chose our family, our story, our history and especially our future.

Adoption is difficult and easy, joyous and heart wrenching, invasive and anonymous, careful and carefree, hopeful and unattached, serious and silly. You try to remain true to who you are, yet open to accept change.

Amazingly, we have found comfort in these contradictions. By recognizing the essential balance in these emotions we were (and are) able to welcome what Adoption encompasses.

It is extremely challenging to capture all of the above in a bedtime story for Jake, but we think he really likes his story so far!

With love and best wishes for the future,

—**Christine, Jon & Jake**

Destiny's Story

Birth family names have been changed.

We anchor down for three weeks in East Texas, 1580 miles from home. Destiny's sister and I hold one another as we watch her give birth. I stroke her hair, place wet cloths on her forehead and speak soothing words of encouragement through my tears. Tears of excitement and anxiety. This is my baby, I love him already...but this is HER baby too.

Whose baby is this? That is a sticky point. Even the nurses walk into the room and don't know who the mother is, or will be, or whom they need to address when asking something.

"She's the birth mother." I insist, relinquishing my negligible status. I want people to give Destiny the respect she deserves as the birth mother, a wonderful mother, to MY child. I have no legal claim on this baby. Wouldn't it be weird for me to barge in and direct everyone around, and ignore the birth mom and her rights and wishes? She hasn't signed a single paper yet to relinquish custody....it's all wispy intent.

I loved his birth mom the moment she chose us. Her sister saw our Adoption Profile and knew we were the faces to raise Destiny's baby. We skype in the weeks before the birth.

Margo, the social worker in the hospital, has never seen the likes of Destiny and me, sharing feedings, me watching her nurse my/HER baby. I encourage Destiny to hold, love, snuggle, kiss, and breastfeed our child. And this requires much reassurance to my inner self and to every medical professional we meet.

"Really, you don't want to be doing that," says Margo, who comes in daily and corners Destiny and me separately. To Destiny, Margo talks about separation and a time to cut ties...and with me Margo, warns of the dangers of mother/baby bonding. "The more contact she has with the baby," she says, "the greater the chance she will not want to give him up. In all my 36 years of social work, Ilyse, I can honestly say I have never seen anyone do what you are doing. And so you know, I think you are making a bad mistake," Margo chides.

There are moments when I see Destiny as an enemy of sorts. I do not want to hate her, I remind myself. I love her. I love Destiny because she does want to do everything right by the baby. She is giving me my/her baby. She won't sign the release papers...or she says she will, but hasn't yet. I get all confused and forget to love her, trust the universe, trust that if he is meant to be ours...he will be.

I admire Destiny. When I hear the reasons she chooses adoption I think, "Wow. Maybe I'm not qualified. May we can't handle a second child when we are already challenged with our first." Like am I stupid for not knowing what she recognizes for herself?

He is born and she holds him. People congratulate ...me. "HELLO!" I want to scream. "Destiny's the one who just went through labor! Not me." I congratulate her. For the next few days, different family members come and bring me gifts for the baby. I bring a gift for Destiny. She is still, will always be, one of his mothers.

We have grown close, as only family can. I love Destiny kinda like a daughter. I spend countless hours in the hospital reviewing genealogy with her great grandma. Hours in the waiting room with Destiny's sisters gently prodding for family stories. My daughter plays games with Destiny's 10-year-old son. "Mom," she asks, "Is Timmy kinda like my brother because I'm the baby's brother and so is he?" "Yes sweetie. Kinda like that." The more love the better.

"Destiny," I say. "We just got a call from our lawyer. The paperwork went through today and we can go home... to New York. We need to get to Dallas tonight."

Destiny says. "My mom wants to know if y'all want to come over on your way out for family dinner? All my sisters and brother will be here and my grandma has some presents for y'all."

"Of Course," I say.

The family home where we sit and laugh and I take photos I will never be able to capture again. Important moments for my baby's Life Book:

Here is your other Mother. This is your Great Grandmother. Here your Grandma is holding you. These are your Aunts and Uncle. Here is your brother. These are the people who love you with their whole heart—like we do.

Whole heart. Hebrew translation: Calev. Our son's name.

Destiny gets her favorite plush blanket. The one she snuggled with when pregnant. Her mom gets scissors. Like rending one's clothes for a Jewish funeral, to mark finality and the tear in the mourner's heart, she cuts the blanket. "This half is for your Calev. And this half is for me. You will always be with me."

—Ilyse and Cameron

Isn't She lovely!

Dearest FIA, March 6, 1984, our amazing daughter Liza, was placed in our arms. We had the privilege to meet her birth parents and through the years have told Liza of their strength and compassion. She certainly has their love of travel! This year she has done solo trips to Australia, Mexico, Columbia and Greece. With short dashes to Montreal.

She works hard doing marketing for an architecture firm in Cambridge, MA. Only a bus ride away she'll come home or we'll go down to visit.

Oh, by the way, she recently called to ask me what I was doing September 1st. I chuckled that I didn't have plans yet and asked why? She replied, "Do you want to go see Stevie Wonder?" Yes, you know what I replied as I danced around the house! ISN'T SHE LOVELY playing through my head.

Thank you FIA.

We feel incredibly lucky!

—Jon and Judi



Friends in Adoption

Friends in Adoption, licensed since 1982, is a not-for-profit, pro-choice, child-placing agency with a focus on helping people make informed decisions regarding adoption.

Call **1-800-982-3678**

for 24/7 immediate assistance

Text (M-F 9am-4pm EST)

for confidential help: **518-350-4581**

www.friendsinadoption.org



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WE BRING THE WORKSHOP TO YOU

Our workshops are open to any professional who may come in contact with women and couples who may be considering adoption as an option—nurses, social workers, hospital ministry and many others.

ALL WORKSHOPS ARE FREE

We present a fabulous, free and informative workshop at any facility located in the northeast. We educate about adoption and its process to help your staff become more comfortable in raising adoption as an option to women/couples. Workshops are a great opportunity for your staff!

YOU CHOOSE THE DATE, PLACE AND TOPIC

Some workshop topics include: Presenting Options, Legal Issues in Adoption, Adoption Process: Hospital and Delivery, Adoption Language/Effective Communication, The Process from a Birth Parent Perspective, Post-Adoption Contact Agreements, and, Adoption—Then and Now.

Email info@friendsinadoption.org to learn more!

THANK YOU.

FIA is eternally grateful for your generosity!
www.friendsinadoption.org/give

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In honor of Jake's first birthday!

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*In honor
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*In honor of Meredith
for Mother's Day!*

Nicholas & Helen

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In loving memory of Jon

Paul & Christa

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daughter, Alexandra*

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in Adoption & Dawn
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Lisa & Karisa*

Joan

Dave & Becky

In memory of Deb

Elizabeth

Jay & Diane

Linley & Nora

In memory of Peter

Friends in Adoption CORE VALUES

Licensed since 1982, Friends in Adoption is a not-for-profit, pro-choice, domestic, child-placing agency. Our approach as an agency is founded in empowerment and informed choices: we believe in meeting people “where they’re at” and supporting them through whatever decisions they make for themselves.

These are our core values:

- Empowerment: We are passionately dedicated to empowering the unique individuals we work with to make informed decisions that feel truly right for them. We pledge to offer factual, unbiased information, and a safe, confidential space for individuals to consider their options without pressure or judgement.

- Inclusiveness: FIA is proudly a fully inclusive adoption agency. We have always welcomed and honored all families and individuals. We value

diversity and recognize that it enriches our communities. FIA is Human Rights Campaign 2018 Certified.

- Openness: We provide adoption services that best fit the needs of the specific individuals involved, including open adoption. FIA believes in openness, honesty, communication and trust in all our adoptions. In fully open adoptions a child is safely connected to BOTH their biological and adoptive family—silently or vocally.

- Lifelong Support: FIA acknowledges that adoption is a lifelong journey and therefore is available to offer lifelong support to all members of the adoption family.

Thank you for everything you provide the community. We could not do what we do without your expertise and hardworking team! To learn more about our approach, services, or ways we can directly support your community: contact FIA today! ♥

FIA is part of our world

Dear Dawn,

It’s hard to believe how fast time flies by ! Ariel turned 5 a few weeks ago. She will be finishing pre school next week and starting kindergarten in the fall. She had a wonderful year full of exciting field trips , lots of dramatic play, new friends and even baby chicks in her classroom which she absolutely loved. We send our warmest regards to you and the whole family at FIA. You are in our thoughts always and its amazing this many years later how often we tell people on a regular basis about the wonderful experience we had going through FIA. It truly is a forever bond and we will always be grateful to you and the entire FIA family for the work you continue to do. Hope to see you at the picnic this summer.

With warmest regards,

Eric, Ivan, and Ariel



Welcome Home

Henry & Sebastiaan	<i>Liv</i>
Jorge & Tricia	<i>Jackson</i>
Carl & Kara	<i>Lucia</i>
Greg & Jeff	<i>Leo</i>
Lauren	<i>Jon</i>
Nathan & Sky	<i>Sailor</i>
Trish & Lucy	<i>Sofia</i>
Andy & Daniel	<i>Francesca</i>
Piotr & Jennifer	<i>Zoe</i>
Neysa & Tommy	<i>Ethan</i>
Andrew & German	<i>Emma</i>
Konstantin & Marina	<i>Daniel</i>
Andy & Ginny	<i>Zander</i>
Dan & Julie-Ann	<i>Elloise</i>
Nicki & Wendi	<i>Maia</i>
Jennifer & Renzo	<i>Quinn</i>
Lisa	<i>Penelope and Athena</i>
Jeff & AJ	<i>Hayden</i>
Felice & Joeann	<i>Harriet</i>
Dan & Jen	<i>Holden & Henry</i>
Tricia & Tommy	<i>Ava</i>
Amy & Scott	<i>Elizabeth</i>
Kathleen & Rick	<i>Spencer</i>
Tim & Emily	<i>Ella</i>
Matt & Renee	<i>Sadie</i>
Jordan & Travis	<i>Theodore</i>
Bailey & Corey	<i>William</i>
Brian & Skye	<i>Zachary</i>

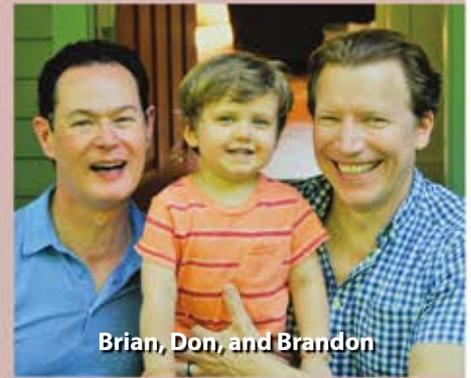
The Blessings of Open Adoption

Open Adoption is a blessing that comes along with all the trials and challenges you would expect from having a relationship with another extension of your family. In our case, we have a very open relationship with our birth family and their extended family and close friends. Our yearly visit is truly a celebration but it also comes with the stresses and concerns that you would expect from dealing with the love for this wonderful little boy of ours. We would never want it any other way as we feel strongly that our little Brandon knows his adoption story and has positive relationships with them. He is now 3 ½ and just starting to get it! We know this will be a roller coaster ride of questions and discussions throughout the years but we are prepared to support him always as he grows up in openness. We, of course, are his emotional shield and guard these relationships with extreme care. His best interests are always the basis for every decision we make.

We are always sharing the world of Open Adoption with people we meet as we feel it is important for them to know and understand this important choice we made for our son. In general, we would say that most people are in awe of such openness and support the idea of Brandon knowing his story. Thank you to **Friends in Adoption** for always being there for us as a family. It is such a comfort to know that you are continuing this journey with us and we are grateful for your advice and support as we move through this journey of parenthood through open adoption.

There is not a day that goes by that we don't feel gratitude for our birth mother and the most beautiful gift of love that someone could give. Brandon is a blessing to our lives and we could not imagine our lives without him in it. We look forward to sharing our journey with you in the future. Best of luck with your journey!

—Brian, Don, and Brandon



Brian, Don, and Brandon

Susan & Jenny's Journey

After 28 years of being an adoptive parent it's a whirlwind of life to share! Jenny came into our lives after Dawn called and said, "Go for It!" We were presently living in New Hampshire and were on our own in our initial contact and gathering with her biological parents.

Our journey began thirteen years earlier when we decided we would start a family only to discover that infertility was going to block that dream. Social workers at several adoption agencies in Massachusetts weren't any more help in their judgmental attitudes. We looked at adopting out of the country and went to PA to begin paperwork to adopt a child from Chile. My sister called and said, "No one in the family would love a dark skinned child." Despite the odds against us we persevered. Then we met FIA.

When you think of the cliché that it takes a village to raise a child, Jenny is that. Due to adoption she had four parents. We were thrilled to have a baby and family! Like any parents the love was extreme and instant. We made her an adoption baby book and constantly shared her adoption story so she would know she had a biological family and siblings that in her adoptive family we couldn't provide. Then we divorced. Jenny's family expanded with a step mom, and new women in my life. More grandparents and a growing extended family.

Now we're waiting for the call that our second granddaughter is arriving. In all the excitement of life her birth certificate says I'm her mom but I share her with a growing number of other women who she is also connected with: biological family, step family, in-law family, former lovers. It isn't always easy to accept that reality, but what I know is I wouldn't change a moment of being Jenny's mom.

—Susan

What adoption means to us!

Adoption to us means having a family. It means filling a void. It's loving a child unconditionally. It's watching your child grow and laugh and learning the true joy of being a parent. It's the satisfaction that your love is making a difference in a child's life. It's the true happiness of all the little things that your child does and learns that you don't take for granted. It's being totally grateful for each day with your miracle. It is so life changing. It's what life is all about. There is nothing better in the world.

—Julie, Mark, and John

