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ADOPTEE'S BIRTHRIGHT ACT UPDATE



Starting January 1, 2017, adopted persons who were born in NJ, and subsequently adopted or who were born elsewhere and adopted in NJ will be able to obtain a copy of their original birth certificate (OBC) upon request to the State Registrar.

The Department of Health (DOH) and Office of Vital Statistics have been working on regulations for implementing the Adoptees' Birthright Act, Public Law 2014, c. 9, which was enacted on May 27, 2014.

Currently, birth parents of NJ adoptees may indicate their preference regarding contact with their daughter or son by filing a form with the Office of Vital Statistics. The document of "Contact Preference" – whether direct contact, contact through an intermediary whom the parent may name, or no contact at this time – may be filed at *any time in the future*. A birth parent may change her/his

mind at any time by filing a new form reflecting that change, and the adopted person will be notified. A birth parent may request a "Redaction" of her or his personal information from the copy of the OBC. Such request must be filed by December 31, 2016 or the opportunity to redact is lost. At any time, a birth parent may rescind the request for redaction and authorize the Registrar to release an unabridged copy of the OBC to the adoptee.

Birth parents filing their preference regarding contact or a request for redaction are strongly encouraged to simultaneously submit a completed "Family History" document (medical, cultural and social history) to the Office of Vital Statistics. Birth parents indicating a preference for no contact will be requested to update the family history information every 10 years until the birth parent reaches age 40 and every five years thereafter. It is important for birth parents to be aware that the court gave many

adoptive parents copies of the Order of Adoption ("decree") when the adoption was finalized. These documents contained the names of the child and the birth parent(s). Therefore, identifying information may be available to the adoptee through his or her adoptive parents or by other means.

Adopted persons may now submit their paperwork to request an uncertified copy of their original birth certificate (OBC); however, OBC's will not be sent out until January 2017. To review and download these forms, please visit the NJ Department of Health and Vital Statistics, "New Records System for Birth Parents, Adopted Adults" page at <http://www.nj.gov/health/vital/adoption>. This site includes forms, directions, identification, fee requirements, as well as answers to Frequently Asked Questions.

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OUR NJ'S ANGELS:



Ginny Ballard



Erica Fischer-Kaslander



Kaysie Getty



ANGELS IN ADOPTION AWARDS

NEW JERSEY "ANGELS" RECOGNIZED

The Congressional Coalition on Adoption (CCAI's) Angels in Adoption® Program honors a wide spectrum of individuals and organizations making extraordinary contributions in adoption, permanency and child welfare. Each year, the Angels in Adoption® awardees travel to Washington, D.C., to celebrate both their hard work and dedication to the issues and participate in special events designed to engage them in using their personal experience to effect change on behalf of children in need of families. Since the program's inception in 1999, over 2,500 Angels have received this honor. *Here are our NJ Angels:*

Ginny Bayard

Constituent of Rep.

Rodney Frelinghuysen

Ginny Bayard has been helping adult adoptees with their journeys of search and reunion with birth family members for over fifteen years. In the early 2000s, under a closed records system and against insurmountable odds, Ginny searched for and contacted her own birth mother. She wrote a warm, sincere, and witty twelve-page letter to her telling her why, at fifty-something, she wished to know the truth about her birth. To Ginny's dismay, her birth mother chose not to reu-

nite. However, Ginny did get to speak with her on the phone for twelve minutes, which brought Ginny peace. During this time, Ginny, a member of the Morristown Post-Adoption Support Group, became its co-facilitator and began assisting other adoptees in their quest for answers about the circumstances of their births. The support group, which includes birth parents, adoptees, and adoptive parents meets monthly. In the past sixteen years, almost 400 people have attended meetings. Ginny mentors adult adoptees and keeps in touch with adoptees, to support their endeavors.

Erica Fischer-Kaslander

Constituent of Rep.

Bill Pascrell, Jr.

Erica Fischer-Kaslander, is the Executive Director of Passaic County for Casa Children, and she worked at Bethany Christian Services Adoption Agency prior to working at Passaic County for CASA Children. Even before being employed in the field of adoption, Erica had a passion for advocating for children's rights. Her youngest brother was adopted from the Ivory Coast, and she has many members of the adoption triad in her extended family. Erica is passionate about her work—she feels that every child deserves to grow up in a loving

and supportive environment in which the child can flourish. Over 600 children go through foster care each year in Passaic County, and the CASA program provides advocacy for them until they reach safe and permanent homes. She has helped guide over sixty children unable to be reunified with family into safe, adoptive homes.

Kaysie Getty

Constituent of Senator
Cory A. Booker

Kaysie Getty, a 24 year-old student at Rutgers University-Camden, was adopted at age two but placed back into foster care at age fourteen. She bounced from placement to placement until, at age eighteen, she found herself at the Center for Family Services. Kaysie served as the president of the Center for Family Services Internal Youth Advisory Board and Camden County Youth Advisory Board for four years. In 2012, she was named Youth Leader of the Year by the New Jersey Alliance of Children, Youth and Families and received the same honor in 2014 from the Rutgers School of Social Work Transitions for Youth. Kaysie was also named a Spark Action Top 24 Youth Change Maker in America and a Foster Club

ANGELS IN ADOPTION AWARDS

Outstanding Leader. She is also a member of the National Foster Youth and Alumni Policy Council and a National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) Young Adult reviewer through JBS International. She currently works at the Rutgers School of Social Work as a Youth Advisory Board Ambassador and is committed to improving the lives of young people in foster care.

Alison Graf

Constituent of Rep.

Donald Norcross

Alison Graf's journey as an adoptive mother began with her biological son, Ethan. With two older sisters, Ethan did not want to be the youngest child and the only boy in the family.

Making good on a promise to Ethan, Alison began a mission to fulfill her son's wish of having a brother—a wish that would come true many times over. Since 2002, Alison's family has grown from her three biological children to fourteen children. Many of those who now call Alison "Mom" are biological siblings, and most hail from Texas. Alison was driven by a determination to keep the siblings together, some with special needs.

Jane Hoffman

Constituent of Senator

Robert Menendez

In 2011, Jane and Christian Hoffman became adoptive parents, and it forever opened their hearts to vulnerable children around the world. They were

immediately struck by the human capacity to love, the transformative power of family, and each person's ability to make a difference in the lives of others. In 2014, Jane Hoffman founded *A Birthday Wish* (www.ABirthdayWish.org) in partnership with CASA of Union County, New Jersey. Born from a simple conversation with her three young daughters about how to help children in foster care, *A Birthday Wish* has become an opportunity to acknowledge the birthdays of foster children in New Jersey and to celebrate each child's inherent worth. It annually grants the birthday wishes of over 1,000 children in foster care across New Jersey.

Kyla and Bobby Mitchell

Constituent of Rep.

Scott Garrett

Kyla and Bobby Mitchell adopted all four of their children from Ethiopia. At the time, Ethiopia was a new program for Holt International Adoption Agency, and the Mitchells were ready to step out in faith. The adoption journey began in April 2008. David, then 21 months old, came home in February 2009. After spending two weeks in Ethiopia, Kyla and Bobby fell in love with the people and the culture. Six months later, they began the process again and were matched with a beautiful little girl from the Waiting Child list. Six months later, they began

the process again. Each trip to Ethiopia was special, and during one trip, the Mitchells had the unique opportunity of meeting with the birth families of their two oldest children.

Vicki Weiss

Constituent of Rep.

Tom MacArthur

Vicki Weiss, a survivor of abuse and neglect who lived in the foster care system as a child, has been the Executive Director for CASA of Ocean County, New Jersey, for the past five years. Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) of Ocean County, an affiliate of a State and National CASA Network, is a nonprofit, volunteer-driven program that exists to recruit, train, and supervise concerned citizens to speak on behalf of the best interests of abused and neglected children who have been removed from their homes and are living in out-of-home Placements. In Ocean County alone, there are over 750 children living in foster care. Ms. Weiss has successfully led this organization to raise awareness of the serious issues of child abuse in the Ocean County community, and works diligently to raise the critical funding required to sustain and grow the program's mission.

Congratulations to all our NJ Angels!!

OUR NJ'S

ANGELS:



Alison Graf



Jane Hoffman



Kyla and Bobby Mitchell



Vicki Weiss

DID YOU KNOW?

There are over 500 Books
and Articles in our
NJ ARCH Library.

Contact NJ ARCH or log onto
our website to see our list!



THE GIRLS WHO WENT AWAY
BY ANN FESSLER



BIRTHMOTHERS
BY MERRY BLOCH JONES



ADOPTION REUNIONS
BY MICHELLE MCCOLM

NATALIE'S LIBRARY CORNER

Hello, Readers! Welcome to
Natalie's Library Corner!

With the passing of the "NJ Adoptees' Birthright Act" and the ability for birth parents to offer medical history, contact information as well as adult adoptees having the ability to request and obtain their Original Birth Certificates starting January 1, 2017, I thought I would review some books that may be helpful from the birth parent's point of view.

A great read about birth parents is a book by Ann Fessler titled, *The Girls Who Went Away: The Hidden History of Women Who Surrendered Children for Adoption in the Decades Before Roe v. Wade*. This book brings to light the untold stories of the 1.5 million women who surrendered their babies for adoption rather than raising them alone. The stigma and shame rendered by society was too great to bear for both mother and child in the post-World War II era. Often it was the parents of these young, unmarried, pregnant women who pressured them into giving up their babies. They were given no other options. Society's punishment exacted a mighty toll on all of its

victims, sparing no mercy. Little if any attention was paid to the lifelong effects of forcing a mother to give up her child. No compassion was offered to these young women. Ann Fessler traveled throughout the United States and interviewed over 100 women who, for the first time, bared their souls in the telling of the shocking details of their experiences.

The inequality of the sexes was never more apparent. For young men who engaged in premarital sex, their status was often elevated. For young women, the opposite was true. Abortion was illegal in most states and was cost prohibitive as well as life threatening. Young women were expelled from school, shunned by family and friends and sent away to maternity homes to bear their children alone. The advice given by the medical community was, "Have your baby!" "Go home!" "Resume your life!" "Forget!"

It has since been realized that surrendering a child is not a thing that one can ever forget. It bears no resemblance to the natural order of things. This is a life-altering experience which leaves in its wake a haunting, gnawing feeling that does not go away. Some professionals feel that healing

can only occur with the finding of the lost child.

An adoptee herself, the author begins and ends her book with her own personal account of search and reunion.

I found this book to be a timely addition to adoption literature. We, as a society, are trying to understand the human condition and to "right the wrongs" of years of injustice and cruelty. National debate continues about reproductive rights as well as search and reunion.

Other books on this subject include:

Birthmothers
by Merry Bloch Jones

Adoption Reunions
by Michelle McColm

Birth Bond
by J.S. Gediman and L.P. Brown

Birthright
by Jean A. Strauss

Beneath A Tall Tree
by Jean A. Struass

Mom, Dad, I'm Pregnant
by Jayne E. Schooler

Mother, Can You Hear Me?
by Elizabeth Cooper Allen

ORIGINAL BIRTHRIGHT ACT (CONT FROM PAGE 1)

Once an adult adoptee submits the request form, the required fee and proof of identity, it will take four to six weeks to process. Please note that OBC's for births that occurred prior to November 19, 1940 are available to adult adoptees at any time and they do not have to wait until

January 2017 to request or obtain their OBC. To request these forms by mail, call 609-292-4087 extension 582. For more information, visit NJ Coalition for Adoption Reform and Education (NJ CARE) at nj-care.org or find NJ CARE on Facebook. NJ ARCH will have a special resource page to

download forms, resources, book lists and more. To view our information, please visit www.njarch.org or feel free to contact our warm line at 877-427-2465.

Article written by Pam Hasegawa and Judy Foster of NJ CARE.

NATIONAL ADOPTION DAY AND MONTH

National Adoption Month is an initiative of the Children's Bureau with the goal to increase national awareness and bring attention to the need for permanent families for children and youth in the U.S foster care system. The initiative is supported through a partnership with Child Welfare Information Gateway and AdoptUSKids. This year, Nation-

al Adoption Month focused on the importance of identifying permanent families for thousands of 15- 18 year olds in foster care who are currently less likely to be adopted, often because of their age, and who all too often "age out" of the system without a stable place to call home. Securing lifelong connections for older youth, legally and emotionally, is a

critical component of their future achievement and overall well being. This year's theme was *"We Never Out-grow the Need for Family- Just Ask Us."* Visit www.childwelfare.gov for information about older child adoption, or call our NJ ARCH Warm Line for more information.

DCP&P FEATURED CHILDREN



Amina Born 6/2007

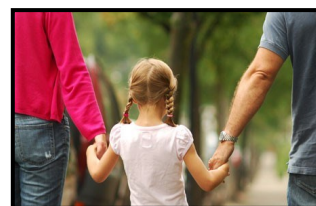


Giavanna Born 5/2008

Meet these spirited girls, Amina and Giavanna, who are very friendly and outgoing. They are very imaginative girls who enjoy coloring, drawing and creating new songs to sing together. Amina and Giavanna are very active and love the outdoors, which is a great outlet for their energy. They share similar interests in Hello Kitty and Disney characters but are uniquely different too. Amina is very social and has many school friends. A lover of jokes, games and laughter, Amina always has a smile. Her teachers describe her as an affectionate girl who is easily

redirected and who tries very hard to please. Giavanna assumes a leadership role within her peer group. She does well in school and tries very hard to remain focused. A very insightful little girl, she watches and learns from others and the world around her. Amina and Giavanna are very bonded to their brother, so they will need ongoing contact with him to maintain their sibling bonds. Both girls are responsive to a loving and nurturing home that provides structure and consistency in daily routines.

DID YOU KNOW?



NATIONAL ADOPTION DAY WAS SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 19TH

OVER 200 NEW JERSEY CHILDREN AND THOUSANDS OF CHILDREN THROUGHOUT THE U.S. HAD THEIR ADOPTIONS FINALIZED IN NOVEMBER.

OVER 1,000 DCP&P CHILDREN WERE ADOPTED IN 2016!

CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL THESE FAMILIES WHO CHOSE TO GIVE THESE CHILDREN PERMANENT LOVING HOMES!

For more information on Amina and Giavanna, please call 1-800-99-ADOPT.

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resource
for those
touched
by adoption.*

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“A HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS” AND MORE

The 18th Annual “A Home for the Holidays,” an entertainment special celebrating the joys of adoption, will be broadcast on Friday, December 23rd on CBS at 8 pm EST. Each year, the Dave Thomas Foundation works with CBS to offer a heart-warming hour-long television show spotlighting waiting older children. This year Grammy award winner Miranda Lambert will headline this entertainment special with other artists celebrating families whose lives have been changed through adoption. AHFTH features uplifting stories of adoption from foster care and raises awareness of this important social issue. Dave Thomas, the



Founder of Wendy's, who was adopted, began the Foundation. Through this, thousands of families have obtained information on adoption, especially older child adoptions. For information, log onto www.davethomasfoundation.org

Are you a parent of a child born overseas? With National Adoption Month, it's a good time to be sure your child/adult adoptee's paperwork is in order, including their Final Adoption Decree, Birth Certificate, Current Passport and Nationalization/Citizenship

papers. Those adopted prior to 2000 and children who were 18 or older on February 27, 2001, did NOT automatically acquire U.S. citizenship under the Child Citizenship Act when adopted. For more information visit: <https://travel.state.gov/content/adoptionsabroad/en/us-visa-for-your-child/acquiring-us-citizenship-for-your-child.html>

Saturday, April 1, 2017: “Let's Talk Adoption” Annual Conference, sponsored by Rutgers University and coordinated by Concerned Persons for Adoption. See www.cpfanjanj.org for details.

*Happy Holidays to all from
your friends at NJ ARCH!*