



OPEN ADOPTION & FAMILY SERVICES 2021-2022 ANNUAL REPORT



INSIDE:
*Open Adoption
Through the Eyes
of Birth Fathers*

*In tree: Adoptee Teo with his birth mother Sage,
who is also the OA&FS Board President*

RECOGNIZING MULTIFACETED EXPERIENCES

Dear Open Adoption Community:



In a year when adoption has been in the spotlight, we've been reflecting on what OA&FS contributes to the adoption narrative.

The popularized portrayal of adoption reduces it to its simplest outline: people seeking a baby for their family

meet people seeking a family for their baby. Problem solved. Everyone lives happily ever after. But it's not that simple. That narrative ignores the losses inherent to adoption and does a disservice to all involved.

Adoption is multifaceted. It can be a source of joy, and also pain. Loss is what often brings parents to adoption, such as financial or emotional barriers to parenting (for birth parents), or an inability to grow their family through pregnancy (for adoptive parents). Adoptees understandably experience complicated loss as well. All these losses can lead to painful feelings and experiences that go far beyond the happily-ever-after narrative.

Placement is just one moment in a lifelong adoption journey. As Phil Weglarz illustrates in his article "Kaleidoscopes of Kinship" on page two, the emotions surrounding adoption are not static or simple. Acknowledging this complexity doesn't diminish the experience. Quite the opposite. Recognizing difficult truths honors people's real experiences, most especially the experiences of the adoptees whose lives are unalterably changed by the adoption choices made on their behalf.

While it may not be easy, embracing the kaleidoscope of emotions involved in adoption is an act of integrity. At OA&FS we're committed to replacing the widely held simplistic adoption narrative with one that reflects the truths and complexities of the adoption experience. In this regard, our evolution at OA&FS has always depended on insights and perspectives generously shared by people living the reality of adoption. We continue to be inspired by our open adoption community and learn from them every day. ■

Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Suzie Williams'.

Suzie Williams
Executive Director

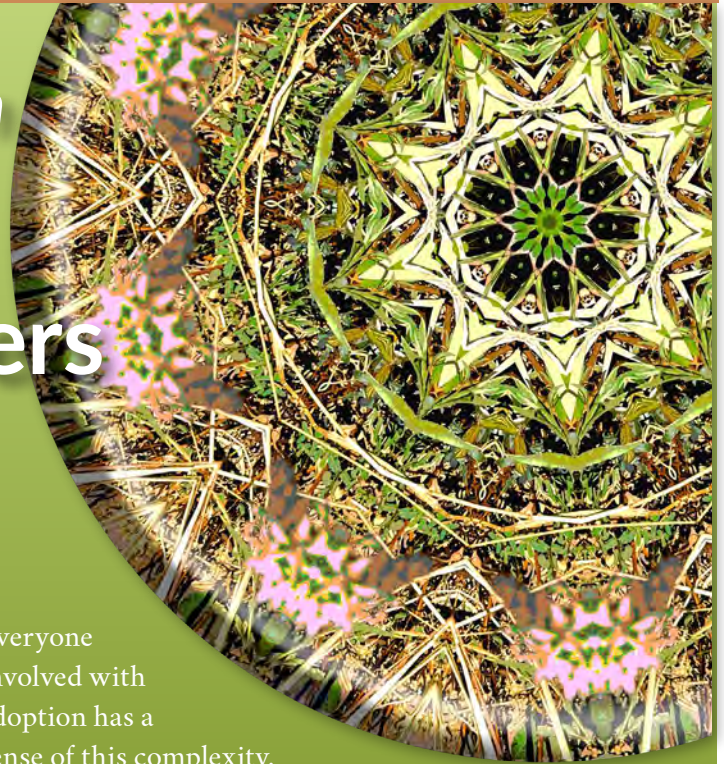
EMBRACING THE
KALEIDOSCOPE OF
EMOTIONS INVOLVED
IN ADOPTION IS AN
ACT OF INTEGRITY.



Glimpses of Open Adoption Through the Eyes of Birth Fathers

BY PHIL WEGLARZ, *PhD*

EDITED BY LEAH LUSK, *OA&FS Counselor*



As I became a first-time parent through an open adoption in 2013, I was most strongly influenced by the intimate stories shared by adopted people, birth parents, and adoptive parents. But I immediately noticed how few father voices there were – particularly birth fathers. I wanted to hear how adoptive fathers and birth fathers navigate their roles in the adoption constellation. What is it like to be a birth father in an open adoption? What kinds of relationships do other adoptive fathers have with their child's birth fathers, mothers, and other family members? How do adoptive fathers include birth fathers in their child's story in cases, like mine, where very little if anything is known about him?

This curiosity eventually led me to complete a research project involving in-depth interviews with 28 male-identified parents involved in open adoptions – five birth fathers and 23 adoptive fathers – that informed my dissertation, *Kaleidoscopes of Kinship*.

Why kaleidoscopes? Looking through a kaleidoscope reveals seemingly infinite shapes, in dynamic relationship with one other, and every change reorganizes the whole. At the same time, as the things I see are multiplied, it's also clear that there's so much more outside of view.

Everyone involved with adoption has a sense of this complexity. Each member of the adoption constellation is constantly growing and changing, and relationships shift and evolve. There is no monolith of adoptive or birth fatherhood; each story adds new facets to the picture.

I was asked by OA&FS to share my research in this publication to support the agency's goal of promoting a deeper understanding of the perspectives of those involved in open adoptions. I'll share a few small

glimpses into the kaleidoscope of birth father stories from the men I interviewed. These men shared various aspects of their open adoption processes,

from learning of the pregnancy and becoming birth fathers in open adoptions to being involved in open adoptive kinship networks, with their post-placement relationships ranging from two to 31 years.

[My full dissertation can be found here.](#) (The birth father chapter begins on Page 101, and the subsequent chapter is about the experiences of adoptive fathers.)

“THE UNIVERSE IS MADE OF
STORIES, NOT ATOMS.”

Excerpt from Muriel Rukeyser's 1968 poem entitled The Speed of Darkness

Part One: Becoming a Birth Father in an Open Adoption

First, birth fathers opened their hearts to me about what it was like responding to an unplanned pregnancy and choosing to make an adoption plan, managing disclosures and others' responses to their choosing adoption, selecting and getting to know prospective adoptive parents, and the complex thoughts and feelings of participating in their child's birth and relinquishment.

In contrast to adoptive parents, who proceed through a lengthy orientation, enrollment, and waiting process, sometimes lasting years, birth fathers described the emotional and practical demands of responding to an unexpected pregnancy over a number of weeks or a few months at most. Each father detailed his careful considerations for everyone's best interest: their child, their partner, themselves, and, in one case, the older children they and their partner were parenting. Each man also evaluated his capacity to parent this child, either as a couple or independently.

"I could give the baby the love she needed, but nothing else."

"I really considered what kind of emotional and mental impact would come to this child."

None of the birth fathers I spoke with had any prior

knowledge or contact with anyone who had placed a child for adoption or had considered adoption and chosen to parent. They also described having relatively few people with whom to discuss becoming involved, sometimes only their partner, adoption agency staff, and/or their employer to arrange time off for the birth.

"I do not think anybody was really there for me entirely. Nobody in my corner. I felt a little abandoned at that point by some people in my life."

Two men described navigating specific conflicts with their parents over the pregnancy and adoption plan. One recalled his mother said he "robbed her of her grandchild." He realized he was also contending with religious and

generational stereotypes about who places a child for adoption and his mother's lack of awareness of openness. Another man described a type of birth parent microaggression:

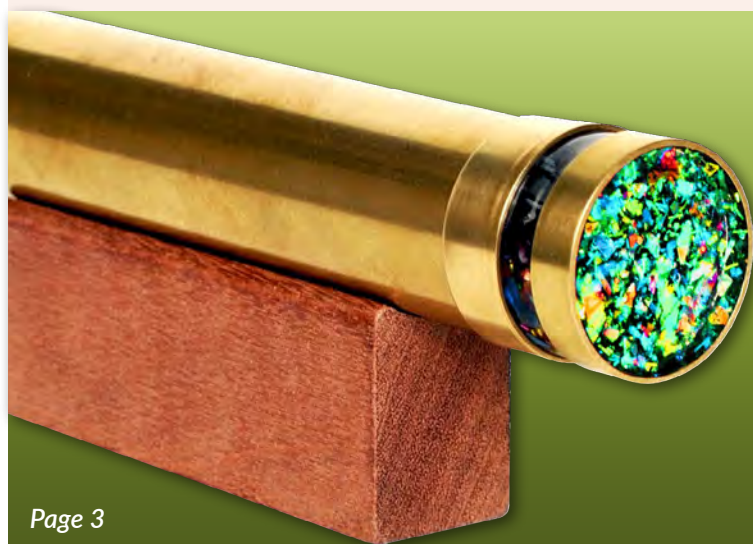
When people say, "You did the right thing," "You should be proud of yourself," or "What you're doing is amazing," these attempts to "bring me up, actually make it worse for me ... and unless you do it yourself, that was the most annoying thing someone could say to me."

Open adoption was a new concept to each of them and became an essential factor in their commitment to the process.

"I think what scared me was all the what-ifs of open adoption. It's having no idea what that's going to look like. It's hard to choose and want to be involved in that."

Continued on Page 4 ...

"I COULD GIVE THE BABY THE LOVE SHE NEEDED, BUT NOTHING ELSE."



Why a kaleidoscope?

The kaleidoscope image also expands on the historical use of the triad or triangle to imagine adoptive kinship.

Kaleidoscope toys typically create their images using a three-sided mirror housed in a tube. You can make your own kaleidoscope! Here's how.

Each man described the process of selecting and meeting prospective adoptive parents, again with a focus on placing their child in a better situation than they and their relationship with their partner might offer at the time. Emotional and practical stability were highly desired, as well as some way to relate personally, like cultural attitudes or sense of humor. Some men inquired about prospective adoptive parents' interest in having children, and a couple men also described being moved altruistically by prospective adoptive parents' stories of infertility and/or pregnancy loss. "We knew that with our help they could still fulfill their dream of a family ... My wife and I gave them a piece of us, a piece in which they needed to feel complete, a piece of our hearts to make theirs whole."

While reinforcing that the decision seemed best for everyone at the time and was positively influenced by the openness of the adoption, these men's stories of their child's birth and relinquishment convey the complexity and profundity of their feelings, particularly feelings of intense grief, loss, and shame. Four out of five of these men used evocative phrases such as "worst day of my life," "number one hardest thing I've ever had to do," "robbed of joy," and "broken, never to be fixed."

Immediate communication and visits evoked intense feelings, and each man described various strategies to manage their grief, including adjusting the degree of contact that felt right. One man recalled, "I think it's just beyond hurtful and painful and all the feelings of failure and inadequacies ... I think I really took a step back for a while. I just don't think I could deal with it." Another remembered, "I was weeping the first time when we met up. I was having a



Kintsugi, the Japanese art of pottery repair, is symbolic of how some birth fathers express their open adoption experience. "As a philosophy, it treats breakage and repair as part of the history of an object, rather than something to disguise." – Wikipedia

bad time, as one would imagine. I was having a bad time, but it was good to see [the baby] healthy and happy." A third man described how, in contrast to his wife, who initially craved pictures, videos and messages from the adoptive parents, he needed space and, briefly "went radio silent." Two years later, he said, "If I'm really getting down in the dumps, I actually just message [the adoptive parents], and without even asking I get a cute picture or video, and it makes me know that not only [were] my wife and I able to complete a family, we gave a couple that's so thankful for what we did an opportunity to be amazing parents, which they very much are."

Continued on Page 5 ...



"I just felt really alone and ashamed. I went home, and I sobbed uncontrollably by myself. It was the worst thing ever; it was so crazy. I drank, and I cried, and I took a week off from work. For some reason, I think that I didn't want anybody to know. But yeah, I kept it pretty hush-hush for a while. I thought about reaching out and getting counseling at one point because I mean, it's just pretty traumatic stuff, and I didn't. I felt a lot of support but there's also nowhere to turn to ... I've never met anybody who's given up a kid for adoption."

Part Two: Being a Birth Father in an Open Adoption

Four of the five birth fathers have been in their open adoption relationships for more than six years, (between six and 31), and they provided many insights of being involved in open adoptions over time. In

addition to talking about developing and maintaining a relationship with their child, they also described navigating changes in their relationships with the child's birth mother, transformative experiences beginning subsequent romantic relationships, and other changes in the family constellation.

Visiting, Ongoing Communication

All the birth fathers I spoke with have had ample experience visiting and communicating directly with their child who was adopted and with the adoptive family. One man, who has maintained weekly in-person visits over the six years

since his son was born, described the delight and satisfaction in being part of his child's life and watching him grow up, including going

on a recent camping trip together. Another noted the lingering sadness during and after visits with his adolescent daughter: "I feel like after every meeting for at least ten minutes there's just a

moment of just heaviness and a little bit of sadness and what-ifs and stuff like that." He added, "I'm hoping that as she gets older and as a young adult, our relationship can be whatever she wants it to be and that I'd be open to being there as a father figure if that's what she wants." Another man said that his now-adult son visits him when he's able and that his son also maintains relationships

with his other children. He described navigating cultural similarities and differences between himself and his son, which have led, for example, to his preference to communicate with his son directly rather than follow him on social media. Ultimately, he stated, "I think that having an open adoption meant that we know each other in ways that we wouldn't have," and, citing advice he received from another birth father, "In the end, nothing's more important than you and him being connected."

Relationship Changes

Firstly, except for one man who was married and made an adoption plan with his wife, the other birth fathers in this study all ended their intimate relationships with their partner within the first year or two postpartum. This led to coordinating visits with or independently of their former partner. Three out of four of these men also started new romantic relationships and got married in the years following the adoption. These men described how pivotal these relationships were for their ongoing grief work. For example, one man reflected how his partner's acceptance of his role as birth father in an open adoption convinced him he "was a loveable person." In two cases, the child who was adopted participated in their birth father's wedding ceremony.

Within these new relationships, two men separately described their experiences conceiving and then parenting subsequent children, and how their wives and younger children have become involved in communication and visits with their first-born child's adoptive families.

Both birth fathers and adoptive fathers I spoke with

consistently referred to the children as siblings, assiduously avoiding terms like 'half-brother/sister.'

Over time, the number of people involved grew, including new

partners, subsequent children, their parents, and other relatives. Over the years, adoptive parents also began parenting additional children, and one child's adoptive parents divorced. In one case, a birth father learned in his 30s that he was adopted as a child, and he included his son who was adopted in his reunion with his birth parents and other relatives.

"I'M HOPING OUR RELATIONSHIP CAN BE WHATEVER SHE WANTS."

Reflections

During the pandemic, I lost contact with my child's birth mother, and I have no information about my child's birth father. Engaging in intimate conversations with birth fathers and adoptive fathers at this time fulfilled a strong desire to connect with others who could identify with the unique experience of open adoption. Each story added new facets to the picture of contemporary adoptive family constellations. The resulting kaleidoscope of stories deepens my empathy for birth/first parents and broadens my understanding of the emotional complexity required to choose to relinquish a child for adoption and then remain connected over time.

This project also revealed specific opportunities to better support men who are considering or are already involved in open adoptions. First, reduce the sense of isolation men described during the decision-making, planning, and relinquishment process. I was especially affected by the stories of men weeping alone in the hours, days, and weeks postpartum. Following father-friendly initiatives in other social service programs, professionals working with expectant parents could examine and address gender-based bias and stereotypes that are limiting engagement of male parents. Expectant and relinquishing fathers would likely benefit from access to others who have

been there. Some men are more prone to engage in face-to-face conversations, while others prefer less-direct communication like email or online forums. At the very least, options counselors could provide men with access to print or recorded stories of other expectant and birth fathers. Given the low number of men who typically respond to birth father event invitations, perhaps online and asynchronous methods could be more useful for connecting men across time and space. Together, we can better recognize the unique and shared experiences of all members of families created through open adoption.

Openness in adoption continues to evolve. Like a kaleidoscope, these experiences are complex and ever-changing. Each family constellation created through open adoption practice is unique, intersecting the dynamic stories of an expanding network of individuals. Shedding light on birth fathers introduces new perspectives for ongoing efforts towards diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice in adoption practice. ■



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Phil Weglarz (he/him), PhD, MFT, REAT, is an adoptive father, therapist, educator, and researcher, who recently completed his dissertation titled: "Kaleidoscopes of kinship: a narrative inquiry of birth fathers' and adoptive fathers' experiences of open adoption."

LIKE A KALEIDOSCOPE, OPEN ADOPTION EXPERIENCES ARE COMPLEX AND EVER-CHANGING.

BIRTH FATHERS HOLD AN INTEGRAL ROLE

Where we come from is a central component of who we are. At OA&FS we recognize the integral role that birth fathers hold in their child's identity.

In our open adoption program, there's a path for both birth parents to know who their child will become, and also to be known to the child and their adoptive family in an ongoing way. Birth parents can respond to their child's questions with honesty from their unique perspective, helping their child have a more complete understanding of their story.

They can directly communicate the love they feel for their child, while also acknowledging other complex feelings that

may exist. They can feel strength in knowing they have played and will continue to play an integral role in meeting their child's needs in ways that only a birth parent can.

Our agency provides ongoing support to birth parents as they build a child-centered relationship with the adoptive family. In open adoption, each extended family creates and then recreates throughout their lives a sense of love, commitment, and respect for each other and, most of all, for the child who has brought them together. ■

Click on the links below to see examples of resources we offer birth fathers.

VIDEO: A BIRTH FATHER'S PERSPECTIVE



FOR BIRTH FATHERS



BIRTH PARENT EXPERIENCES

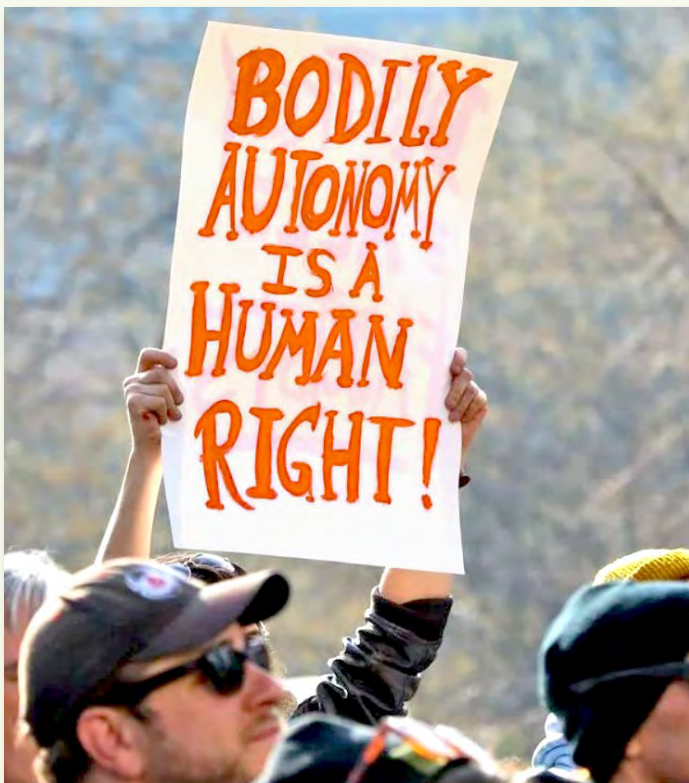


Reproductive Rights Under Assault

In an America rocked by the overturning of Roe v. Wade, adoption is in the spotlight. Those who seek to limit women's reproductive choices use an oversimplified adoption narrative to serve their anti-abortion propaganda. When U.S. Supreme Court Justice Amy Coney Barrett suggested that safe haven laws "take care of the problem" of women being forced to parent, she drew a dangerous false equivalency between adoption and abortion.

Adoption is not a simple remedy for an unplanned pregnancy. That assertion dismisses bodily autonomy and ignores the complexities of adoption. It harks back to an earlier and darker adoption era – a time when shame and secrecy prevailed, and children were treated as commodities that unfortunately continues to exist in some forms today. OA&FS unequivocally rejects this outdated view of adoption. Crisis pregnancy centers are part of the apparatus spreading this false equivalency. Their tactics must not be mistaken for ethical options counseling.

At this critical cultural moment, OA&FS stands for reproductive freedom and abortion access. We continue unbiased all-options counseling for pregnant people that supports informed choice. We leverage our long-standing credibility in the adoption world to champion the right to choose, and we use our online presence, webinars, and community outreach to educate and inform others about all-options counseling and adoption best practices.



OA&FS Statement Regarding Supreme Court Decision to Overturn Roe v. Wade

At OA&FS we continue to feel the weight of the Supreme Court's decision to overturn Roe v. Wade. The layers of impact this creates for women, children and families, immediately and in the future, is profound in ways we're still processing. We also acknowledge that barriers to accessing abortion have long been a struggle, and this decision will disproportionately affect people who already lack resources and support.

We have always been guided by our core conviction that all people should have the right to full reproductive health choices including access to safe and legal abortion. As part of the majority of Americans that believe in the right to abortion, we will continue advocating for reproductive justice, and we stand in solidarity with the individuals, organizations and providers fighting for access to safe and legal abortions.

We're appalled at the ways adoption is being presented as an easy alternative to abortion. All reproductive choices are complex and deeply personal, and no single choice should be leveraged as a solution to the needs, desires or beliefs of others. This is a disrespectful and misguided notion that ignores the complexities in adoption and the collective experiences of trauma that are often present, even in healthy open adoptions.

Because pregnant people's options are now more limited due to the overturning of Roe v. Wade, access to unbiased all-options pregnancy counseling is critical. Providing this service is central to OA&FS' mission. We will continue assisting people in making informed decisions about their pregnancy and accessing the resources they need for whichever pregnancy decision they make: abortion, parenting, or adoption. ■

2021-22 Agency Highlights

Focus on Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

With full staff participation, our organization continued forward strides on our DEI goals. This road map of goals is organized among four pillars for growth: self, organizational culture, client services, and community collaboration. These pillars will continue to guide our action steps well into the future.

- **Transracial Adoption Preparation.** Our client services committee continued the work of revamping our approach to preparing prospective adoptive parents for transracial adoption. As part of this, we retained Adoption Mosaic as a consultant to enhance the transracial education, preparation, and assessment we provide to our prospective adoptive parents.

Adoption Mosaic Executive Director Astrid Castro and Assistant Director Shelise Gieseke have begun a thorough review of our process starting with observing our Pre-Adoption Seminar. They will deliver a comprehensive assessment and recommendations for our entire transracial adoption preparation process. Astrid and Shelise's expertise and perspective as people of color, transracial adoptees, and skilled professionals within the adoption community will be invaluable.

- **DEI Training for Staff.** Our staff continued to engage in a variety of ongoing trainings and learnings from outside consultants as well as staff-led discussion groups. An all-staff training was facilitated by consultant Shauna Adams, with a particular focus on promoting an inclusive work environment and creating a framework for recognizing and addressing microaggressions.

Expanding Grants Funding

- **Grants Funding.** We were thrilled to receive a \$25,000 grant from the Marie Lamfrom Charitable Foundation and are grateful for their support and partnership. This is an exciting start to our ongoing efforts to increase grant funding. Every grant received helps advance our mission and strengthens our shared community.

We're continuing to work with A to Be Partners (ABP) to strategically pursue, secure, and manage foundation grant funding. Such funding will support and expand the vital no-fee services that are central to our mission, such as free all-options pregnancy counseling and ongoing post-placement guidance.

Evolving OA&FS Communications

- **Agency Messaging.** As stated in the introduction, we've been reflecting on what OA&FS contributes to the adoption narrative. This reflection becomes reality when we create content for our website, brochures, social media streams, and other forms of communication.

For content specific to adoption, our goal is to center the adopted person without downplaying the truth and complexities of their experience. This publication shows one way that can be done. We've intentionally reduced emphasis on candid photos of featuring babies and young children in the recognition that we cannot know how the adopted person will feel about this inclusion years down the road.

Social media provides entry into a more diverse range of adoptee voices than ever before. There's a growing universe of people who blog, tweet, host podcasts, create TikTok videos, and post about their adoption experiences. We follow and learn from them to inform how we communicate about our agency's program and services.

- **Updating Videos.** We're refreshing the library of videos that describe our program. Some will be replaced with animated videos to explain our processes, others will feature people in our community sharing their stories. Check out our first installment, "All-Options Pregnancy Counseling". These will be used in multiple

platforms such as our website, YouTube, TikTok and Instagram.

- **Website Reboot.** We're preparing our website for a reboot and relaunch. This new iteration will be ready to go live within the current fiscal year.

WE WERE THRILLED TO RECEIVE A
\$25,000 GRANT FROM THE MARIE
LAMFROM CHARITABLE FOUNDATION

Service Provider Outreach

- **Webinars.** To make it easier for service providers to plan for and access our trainings, we standardized the timing of our webinars into a fall and spring season.
- **Presentations.** In addition to webinars, we saw an uptick in individual organizations requesting OA&FS presentations for their staff compared to previous years when service providers and organizations were spread thin due to the urgency of the pandemic.
- **Conferences.** For the first time since the beginning of the pandemic, we exhibited at two in-person events in the spring: The Oregon School Nurses Conference in Ashland, and the Oregon Nurses Association Convention in Portland. Nurses are a key referral resource and are always eager to learn about our services.

These events, and our exhibitor tables, were both well attended. It felt great to network and spread the word of OA&FS services in real life once again.

- **Oregon Health Authority Contract.** We've been contracted by OHA to provide trainings for their staff. We created a webinar about open adoption for their Reproductive Health Program, plus provided three two-hour interactive trainings on All-Options Pregnancy Counseling.
- **Collaboration with Oregon Department of Human Services.** OA&FS Executive Director Suzie Williams, who is also President of the Coalition of Oregon Adoption Agencies (COAA), led efforts to finalize the COAA webinar "How Private Adoption Agencies and DHS Can Work Together." This webinar focuses on how we can jointly support parents encountering state involvement who wish to plan a private agency adoption. DHS has integrated this into their staff training for new CPS and Child Permanency workers. We're excited to be working collaboratively with DHS to support parents and families.

Agency News

- **Eugene Office.** To meet our evolving needs, we sold our Eugene office and moved to a comfortable new space in the Stellaria building in Eugene's Market District. There have been no changes to the Portland and Seattle offices.
- **Board Self-Assessment.** Our board of directors recently completed a self-assessment process with a consultant and are excited to embark on strategic planning alongside our staff beginning in the winter. This process will be facilitated by our grant consultant, Tobey Goldfarb.
- **Navigating COVID.** As we chart our agency's course through the third (!) year of the pandemic, OA&FS staff continues to creatively navigate the impacts of this changing world.

Through shifting regulations and protocols and the tight employment market, our staff has continued to put the safety of our clients and integrity of our services first. We are so grateful for this mission-driven and dedicated team of professionals. ■



Watch our new animated video!

"OA&FS All-Options Pregnancy Counseling" uses simple graphics to explain our unique services in a nutshell.

THE NUMBERS BEHIND THE MISSION

EXPECTANT PARENT SERVICES



- 218** expectant parents contacted OA&FS for initial pregnancy options counseling
- 65** expectant parents engaged in ongoing counseling services
- 4** weeks of counseling prior to adoption planning, on average, for those who chose adoption
- 37** registrations for our four virtual birth parent gatherings

ADOPTIVE PARENT SERVICES



- 24** adoption information meetings held
- 233** people attended an adoption information meeting
- 12** pre-adoption seminars held
- 163** people attended a pre-adoption seminar

WAITING FAMILIES



- 61** homestudies completed
- 29** families entered our waiting families pool
- 59** families in pool, on average
- 20** months between pool entry and placement, on average
- 255** total attendees at our 14 waiting family pool parties

THE NUMBERS BEHIND THE MISSION

ADOPTIONS



23 infant adoptions completed

48% of placements were “last minute”, when adoption planning begins at birth

Average age of birth parents **28**

Average age of adoptive parents **39**

OUTREACH FOR PROFESSIONALS



8 webinars presented by OA&FS counselors

238 service providers registered for webinars

23 outreach presentations to individual organizations

723 service providers engaged with our trainings

3,360 service providers received our promotional emails



WHY DO YOU GIVE TO OA&FS?

We're so appreciative of all of our donors, including adoptive parents Chelsea and Nick. Here are some insights into why and how they support OA&FS.

When did you first hear about OA&FS?

When we started our adoption research and were looking at agencies in the Seattle area (and beyond), but hoped to use someone local.

What attracted you to OA&FS?

We were very interested in OA&FS after reading about open adoption, watching your videos, seeing your values of welcoming ALL families, and also learning of your stance on all-options pregnancy counseling.

What do you appreciate about the OA&FS mission?

So many things! We so appreciate:

- The prioritizing of birth parents and the counseling they get while trying to make a decision (and forever!).
- The opportunities to learn and meet other waiting families via the Pool Parties while we waited.
- The built-in community of other adoptive families that will allow our child to know and connect with other adoptees.
- The ability to still reach out to OA&FS if we have any needs or questions about navigating adoption.
- The helpfulness of the social workers! And the resources they continue to share.
- Most importantly, the agency's desire to share and disseminate information about open adoption with so many other organizations and individuals – hopefully allowing more families to form in this way if adoption is their path. After learning so much, we can't imagine adopting without openness!

Why do you choose to donate to OA&FS?

Because the OA&FS mission is so important; the outreach they do matters so very much in impacting the ability to grow

healthy children and families. Also, the birthmother retreats and twice annual family gatherings (which we love!) are important for nurturing community and creating ongoing support—they require funding to keep them going.

How has your open adoption experience changed your family's life?

We are so grateful for our child. It's hard to express how much! But in addition to that we hold a place in our hearts for his birth mom Krissi, his first mom, who also loves him so much. While he's two now we think frequently of how, as he grows, he will know his story. We are hopeful that his birth mom will be a present part of that. It brings more love into his life (and ours), and that just adds to his solid foundation. Open adoption has also helped us in talking about our story and about adoption with



Open adoptee Titan with adoptive parents Chelsea and Nick, (above) and birth parent Krissi, (right).



others, including family members. So many people have old views of adoption (as did we prior to our journey) – it takes patience to correct them and/or set a different example. But we can honestly say that our families are fully on board at this point. Spending time with his birth mom on Mother's Day was priceless for our families – and beliefs and barriers broke down. We keep "openness" at the center of our communications with his first mom, and try to have that lens in how we talk about her with him, and we keep our correspondence regular. Additionally, because we share regular updates with Krissi, we have written documentation of so many milestones and memories (unexpected added bonus)! ■

THANK YOU FOR YOUR **GENEROUS SUPPORT!**

GRANTS

Google Ad Grants
The Marie Lamfrom
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Eve Ackerman
Michael & Wendy Russo
Dan Schechter
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Elaine Sobel
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MELISSA BUSCH**

Birth Parent, RN at Providence
Health & Services, Political
Candidate OR SD16

**TREASURER
STEVE STEGEMAN**

Adoptive Parent,
CPA, Partner at
Davis and Graves LLC

**SECRETARY
MICHELE GRECO**

Adoptive Parent,
Mindfulness Based
Somatic Coach

**NATHAN
FAUST**

Adoptee, Undergraduate
Admissions Counselor at
Loyola Marymount University

**GARRETT
GARFIELD**

Birth Parent, Partner at
Holland & Knight LLP

**JENNIFER
JOHNSON**

Adoptive Parent

**MARK
SPAUR**

Adoptive Parent, Vice
President at Kennedy Jenks

**APRIL
VANDERKAMP**

Adoptee, Registered Nurse at
Providence Health & Services

**SUZIE
WILLIAMS**

Executive Director at OA&FS,
Ex-Officio Board Member

LOVE OUR VOLUNTEERS!

Thank you to the following individuals and organizations who contributed their time, talents, and expertise to support the agency's mission last year. Thanks to all the OA&FS community members who shared their photographs in this year's annual report, the agency website, and other publications. If you would like to volunteer or share photographs, please contact us at info@openadopt.org.

Heather Allmain
Janna Annest
Jaimie Arcand
Joshua Bellish
Bryan Burpee
Heather Carpenter
Kelsey Cribbs
Michael Delaney
Jennifer Diehl

Molly Hayden
Joseph Hill
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Sunny Moore
Cindy Ogasawara
Victoria Petkau
Rita Rogers
Nickey Sanders
Chris Sullivan
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Geoff Wittreich
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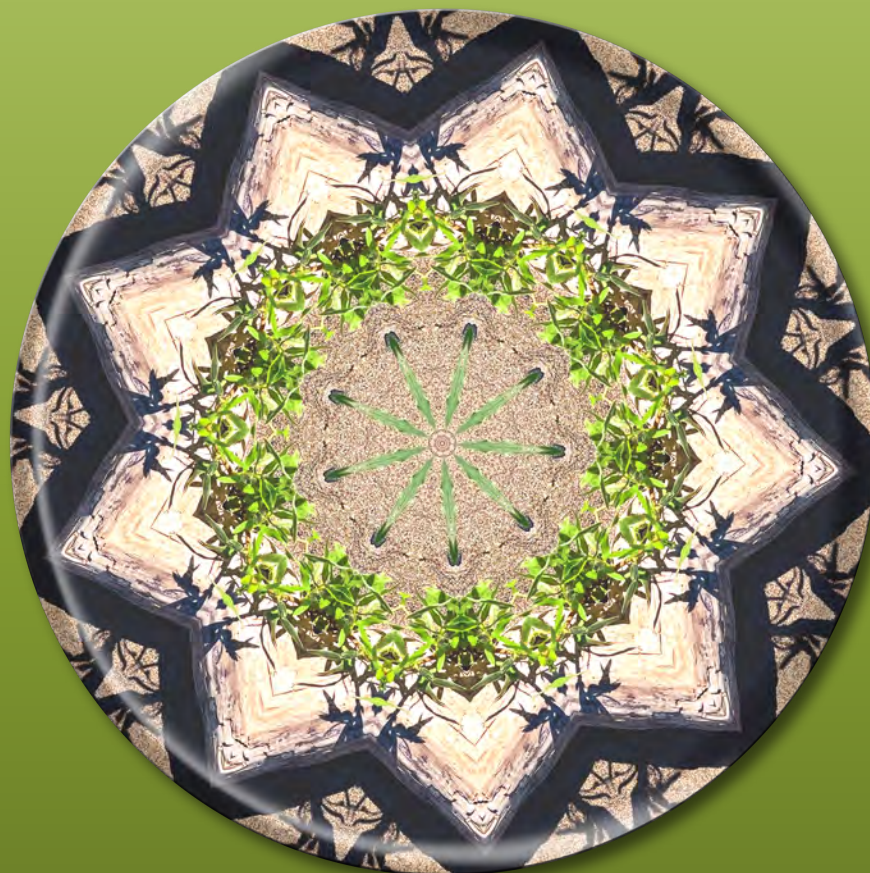


WE APPRECIATE OUR COMMUNITY PARTNERS

We're committed to educating service providers to recognize best practices in all-options pregnancy counseling and open adoption. OA&FS staff conducts outreach presentations and webinars throughout the region year-round.

In doing this, we form important relationships that benefit all who receive services from OA&FS. These logos represent the organizations who attended a presentation or webinar with us last fiscal year!





OPEN ADOPTION & FAMILY SERVICES

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