

Birth Mom Buds Bulletin

BirthMom Buds



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Special Points of Interest

- Learn how to educate people outside of adoption in our Adoption Spotlight, page 3
- See which posts made our Best of the Blog list this quarter, page 4
- Read our Founders Reflections on being a birthmom for a decade, page 4

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Announcements

Website Makeover - You may have noticed things looking a little different at www.birthmombuds.com. It's still the same website you love, but it got a makeover! (If you are not noticing any changes, try clearing your cookies or refreshing the page!) We hope that you'll find the new format easier to navigate. We are still working to transfer the showcase pages, articles, and poems from the old site to the new site so please bear with us while we complete the transition.

New Newsletter Manager- Monika Zimmerman recently became our newsletter manager. If you are interested in writing for future

newsletters, please email Monika at bmbbulletin@gmail.com. She will also be taking over the Birthday Section so if you or your placed child will be celebrating a birthday during October, November, or December please email it to Monika for inclusion in the 4th quarter newsletter.

Save the Date - The 9th annual BirthMom Buds retreat is planned for May 3-5, 2013 in Charlotte, North Carolina. More details to come in early 2013.

Birthmom Blogs - Do you have a personal blog where you write about your experiences as a

birthmother? If so, we'd love to spotlight it for our Weekend Spotlight feature on our blog. Please email Monika for more information at bmbbulletin@gmail.com

Weekly Hosted Chats - Don't forget about our weekly chats in the private chat room on Monday nights at 10 pm eastern. You can find the chat room under "live chat" in the [forums](#).

Inspiration

Some Things Never Leave You

By Kelsey Stewart

I have known my daughter all her life. Her parents were such kind and compassionate people that they never hid the fact that she was adopted nor did they ever try to squash the need she might have to see me, or vice versa. Mind you, it was a distance relationship. Nothing like the texting and emails of today's high speed world. I saw her a handful of times by the time she was 10, most notably when she gave me comfort after my mother passed away. But that is another story entirely....

When she was about five, I had the opportunity to hang out with her while her parents went to a Cardinals game downtown. She was at my uncle's house, he was a friend of the family and the one who introduced me to them, and for this time her brothers were with her.

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I had seen them from time to time, but it had been a while and they were much older than I remembered. (I know now the astounding rate that boys change within a 4 year radius!) As always, she was just exuberance at its best bounding from one end of the room to the other. She had a million things to show me, and I was front row for every single one of them.



Relaxing on the couch, I was seated next to her older brother. We began to chat about things ... life, school, sports. He asked me a lot of questions and with each answer he pondered and smiled. It was a great talk, very comfortable and open. She was still all over the place doing her gymnastics and entertaining all of us in the room. In a small moment he said to me, "Thank you." I smiled and asked him what for. Turning to look at me as she rolled around he said,

"Thank you for my sister." I had to try and push back the swelling of tears. I was speechless. He was not very old, maybe 10. But I could see his genuine, kind comment came from his heart.

I was reeling from that comment for days, and even now I can see his face and recount exactly how much it filled me with peace. His simple words meant the world to me, and I have carried them with me all of these years. I saw him several years ago at a family wedding and I told him how much his words affected me that day ... how often I think of him and what he said. I expressed how impressed I was that he was so compassionate at such a young age, and how his demeanor comforted me at a time when I least expected it, but more than welcomed it. He smiled that same smile and told me that he is still

thankful, and added that he was happy to see that his sister turned into just as beautiful of a woman as I was. Well, that just about put the cherry on top of an already beautiful memory!

There are some words that never leave you, but from time to time help lift you up even decades after they have been said. Those five words have helped me, healed me, filled me with strength and continue to comfort me many days when I need them the most. All because a brother was happy to watch his sister grow, who says love has boundaries?

And yes, I do count my blessings. Every. Single. Day.

"I started opening my ears and heart to the good people had to say, the stories they also had to share about how adoption had affected their life or the lives of the people they knew."

Kelsey Stewart can be found on her blog, A Birth Mother Voice: <http://thebestforyoubook.blogspot.com/>

Adoption Spotlight

Creating a Local Community

By Sarah Noelle

I wasn't always so vocal about my birthmama story, at least not in the way I am now. I used to tell people purposefully, with the intention of scaring them away, that I had already had two kids by 21 and that I placed them with the same family...19 months apart. The look on people's faces was usually one of confusion, not knowing what to say and possibly a little embarrassment and mortification at my full disclosure so casually as if I was talking about going to lunch with a friend. On what became more frequent occa-

sions though, I was not met with disdain or judgment. My story began to be met with love, compassion, heartfelt gratitude even, for my "unselfishness" and my willingness to share with people who maybe didn't know much about birthmamas. I started opening my ears and heart to the **good** people had to say, the stories they also had to share about how adoption had affected their life or the lives of people they knew. I began to start focusing on the positivity instead of the negativity I had accepted as my truth about myself.



Then, something changed. I started to look at myself differently in the mirror. I **saw** my story in my eyes and my smile. And it wasn't the shameful, guilt ridden, shoulda-woulda-coulda, oh-I'm-**so**-different-no-one-understands story. I saw

the sacrifice, the grace and the genuine unconditional love that I had missed being blinded by belittling myself for my choices. I had bypassed

that **beauty** exuded from my story: a story of the making of a beautiful family and the healing of my broken heart.

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Only then did I feel the deep sense of pull calling to me for community with other birthparents. I had let myself believe for so long that I was fine dealing with it myself without reaching out to others like me, that I hadn't taken the time to understand how unbelievably powerful birthparent and adoption true life stories are when they are shared, vocalized, made known, not hidden and shouted from the rooftops as loving truth amongst the negative, the lies and the stigma that is often placed on birthparents.

Creating birthparent community is becoming the beat of my heart on a daily basis. To be able to come together with a common ground and share our stories together, to me, is the definition of healing. Only when we stay silent are we stifled by the paths we have taken. I want to create not only

an online community but an in person, face-to-face, heart-to-heart, story sharing, local, at-least-monthly meeting group so that we may encourage each other and lift each other up in support and love but also do fun activities and make new memories with new friends. Though BirthMom Buds is a great and needed resource there's definitely a need for more in-person, local support.

I am currently residing in Orange County, California and have started a support page on Facebook (www.facebook.com/OCBirthparents). I created this not just for OC birthparents but for all birthparents and those who support them, as well as organizations who support birthparents and open adoption. I have also set up a group on meetup.com, which is a free site where people can

find commonality and shared interest in order to establish new friendships and networking opportunities, (www.meetup.com/Birthparents-Support-Group-OC/) and am awaiting setting up the first meeting once I find other birthparents in my area who are interested in getting together.

Now comes the patiently waiting, praying and hoping phase for this community to rise up and for people to come forward, out of the woodwork, with courage, even if it's for the first time and be embraced by other individuals who know what it's like to be in their shoes. I will never stop longing and questing after community because I truly believe the only way to find it is to speak out and share how much my life has changed for the amazing better as a result of my birthmama story, and to encourage others to share theirs as well.

Together we can make a beautiful noise in the name of adoption and birthparent support. Won't you join me?

“The key here is to educate the people who aren't related to adoption in any way.”

Sarah Noelle's adoption story can be found at www.sunshine-in-a-bottle.com under “a little story sunshine.”

Ideas and Insights

Educating People About Adoption

Brooke Bergman, Author

Many times we encounter people who are not related to adoption in any way. When they hear about an adoption taking place conversations can get awkward and people say things that might throw us off guard. For example, when I was still pregnant and I had not made a decision if I was going to parent or make an adoption plan I always was asked, “Are you going to keep her?” Often I would stammer because I didn't know how to respond. Sometimes I'd get angry and respond sharply with, “As opposed to getting rid of her?” Other things I have heard are “I could never do that!” or “giving her up for

adoption.” However, I have learned that there is hardly ever any harm intended when people inquire about adoption or say things in ways that might be offensive. Before I became a part of adoption I was unaware of what positive adoption language was and probably used these terms as well. The key here is to educate the people who aren't related to adoption in any way.

- Make a flyer to pass out to friends and family. Since the issue is lack of understanding, teach them! Make a list of what not to say versus what to say. Include questions that are inappropriate and should be avoided.
- Write a note on Facebook. If you are comfortable with it, you can always attach an article about adoption etiquette.

- Learn polite ways to respond to people so when the time comes you won't be fishing for an answer.
- Put special emphasis on what is appropriate when answering questions, i.e. “Why did you give your child up for adoption?” “I **placed** him/her with his/her adoptive parents because...”
- Other examples:
 - **Parenting** instead of ‘keeping’
 - **Making an adoption plan** instead of ‘giving him/her away’

Hopefully, this will give some insight on making adoption conversation less painful or frustrating to talk about and easier for others to understand.



Best of the Blog

Expected Grief: <http://birthmom-buds.blogspot.com/2012/08/expected-grief.html>

written by Terri, published on August 2, 2012

Birth Dads: <http://birthmom-buds.blogspot.com/2012/07/birth-dads.html> written

by Lisa, published on July 3, 2012

What Would You Have Asked?: <http://birthmom-buds.blogspot.com/2012/07/what-would-you-have-asked.html> written by Elizabeth, published on July 25, 2012



Birthday Celebrations

July

5—Caitlin Karalus' son
20—Desha Wood's son
21—Jenifer Tyndall
25—Erica Johnson
27—Britney O'Connor's daughter

August

16—Monika Zimmerman

September

11—Leah Outten
15—Debbie Logan's son
16—Coley Strickland;
LeiLani Wood's daughter
20—Coley Strickland's son
27—Kari Brynne

Founder's Corner

Both Coley and LeiLani's children turn 11 this month so this quarter they are reflecting back on how they've changed after a decade of being birthmoms. Ironically, both Coley and LeiLani chose to write about the same thing despite not coordinating beforehand.

Coley's Thoughts:

Sometimes it seems hard to believe that I have now been a birthmom for ten years; a whole decade! It makes me feel really old saying it as a decade. A lot changes in ten years. I have grown and learned a lot not only as just a birthmom but as a woman in general.

In the beginning of my adoption journey when I was a new birthmom, I don't think I realized that I would still feel the loss of parenting my son years later. But I have come to realize that the loss of parenting my son will always be present in my life. Sometimes it is more prominent than others.

I also don't think I was aware of the stigmas society has toward birthmoms. I find myself more hesitant to share my story at times with others outside of the adoption community but I push myself to continue. I know that sharing my story is a tiny way I can help educate others and negate the stigmas of birthmoms.

The things that haven't changed in the past decade are my love for my son and my desire to connect with and help other birthmoms.

LeiLani's Thoughts:

Wow, it's been over 10 years (a whole decade!) of being a birthmom. My views of adoption have changed over these past ten years.

I still love and appreciate all adoption is for so many reasons. However, at one point I would tell anyone I met about adoption, my daughter, and my dreams and goals surrounding adoption and my daughter. But

over the years this has changed. I've become more of an adoption hermit, scared to talk about it with many people.

I think of it like being in a head on collision: at first all I could do was think of everyone else involved and their well being. I even wondered about things that were less important like the condition of the car. Worrying about job, bills, and other insignificant people's thoughts is like wondering about the condition of the car after that head on collision. It wasn't until later that I realized I was wounded too. It's great to put others first but sometimes you put yourself so far in the back that you forget that you matter too. I was left with a wound that I found out would never completely heal.

So now after a decade of being a birthmom, I continue to try and find me again and challenge myself to tell others about our very special member of the family.