

# Birth Mom Buds Bulletin

BirthMom Buds



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## Announcements

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.

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

Adoption Events - November is National Adoption Awareness Month and there are some adoption events happening across the United States. Check out [this webpage](#) to see a list of events.

### Special Points of Interest

- Honoring the child you placed through Christmas traditions, in Ideas and Insights
- Read about Adoption Network Cleveland in Adoption Spotlight
- Holidays lost and regained, in Inspiration

Birthmom Blogs - Do you have a personal blog where you write about your experiences as a birthmom? If so, we'd love to spotlight you as a part of our blog's Weekend Spotlight feature. Please [email us](#) for more information.

Mentors Needed - We are currently in need of mentors for our [Pregnant and Placing program](#). For more information about this program and how to become a mentor, please visit [this webpage](#).

Newsletter Writers - Though we appreciate our current writers, we're always looking for new recruits to join our newsletter article writing team. If you're interested, please [email Monika](#).

## Ideas and Insights

### Holiday Traditions By Sarah Noelle

The holidays, for me, have always been about traditions. My family always had lots of them growing up: for Halloween, which was right before my birthday-we'd always have a costume party, for Thanksgiving we would always go to the beach and have touch football games & lots of food and for Christmas, the traditions were endless & awesome! It was always a happy time of celebration and excitement and I always thought how fun it would be to include my future family in traditions with us.

When I became a birth mom, I wasn't entirely sure how those traditions would or could fit in to my life with the adoptive family's life. My mama has really been instrumental in helping this become a reality and bridging the gap in my honor. She began to send pajamas for Christmas Eve and ornaments for them to open every year to hang on their tree, just like she's done for my brothers and I every year. I couldn't have been happier to have them "in on" some of our family tradition and celebrating with us.

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**“Developing ongoing holiday traditions not only solidifies the bond but it helps remind them that you love them and think of them.”**

I would strongly suggest finding a little something, whether it is a family tradition or a new tradition that you start just for them, that will brighten the holidays for all of you & allow you to celebrate the other family that is now a part of yours. Whether it be sending Halloween candy and crafts to do or a letter detailing what you are thankful for about them each year for Thanksgiving or a certain collectible to give them each Christmas so that they have something tangible to think about in association to you. It will be something they will begin to look forward to on a yearly basis. If you don't have an open adoption and cannot

directly send things to your child, save the items in hopes of reunion.

Developing ongoing holiday traditions not only solidifies the bond but it helps remind them that you love them and think of them. I think often times the love we have for our children and the want for amazing things for them can get a little lost in translation over the years of growing up with their adoptive family and getting lost in the events of life, so having this annual tradition to look forward to will be something to express to them just how happy you are that you are their birth mom.



Sarah Noelle's adoption story can be found at [www.sunshine-in-a-bottle.com](http://www.sunshine-in-a-bottle.com) under “a little story sunshine.”

## Adoption Spotlight

### Interning at Adoption Network Cleveland

By Amy Schumaker

With November being [National Adoption Awareness](#) month, I wanted to reflect on my amazing internship placement. As part of my last year in the Social Work under-graduate program at Cleveland State University, I am required to have an internship. Ever since I started my journey down the adoption path, I knew that I wanted to work in the world of adoption. This year, I am interning at [Adoption Network Cleveland](#). When I first applied for an internship at Adoption Network Cleveland, I thought I would be working in an actual agency. What I quickly learned though, is that Adoption Network Cleveland is an organization which provides support for all areas of adoption and the adoption triad. Their mission statement states: “We connect and empower



*individuals, organizations and communities impacted by adoption and foster care, and we provide a source of healing for those in need* (<http://adoptionnetwork.org/mission-and-values.aspx>).” They accomplish this mission through their practice and in their values. Adoption Network Cleveland, practices this mission through empowerment to their clients, support and education, advocacy through practice, policy and law, creation of programs and services, promoting social change, promoting public awareness about adoption and social change, and lastly creating possibilities through openness in adoption and foster care.

I absolutely love my internship as there are many different things to do. Over the course of my senior year, I will get a general view of how all of the programs at Adoption Network Cleveland fit together, but my

main focus though will be to work with my supervisor, Linda Bellini, who oversees the Adult Adoptees and Birthparent Support. She facilitates and co-facilitates groups for both birthparents and adoptees, in addition to attending different General Support & Discussion Meetings. Over time, I will help with the co-facilitating in the birthmother support group which is held bi-monthly on the first Wednesday in the evening from 6pm – 8pm. I will also be working to see if there is a need for a birthmother support group for women who are involved in an open adoption. The General Support and Discussion Meetings are held once a month in four different locations around the Cleveland Metro area. In addition to the group support, Linda also helps members of the triad do searches to locate their placed children or birth parents.

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I have attended the Birthparent meetings and the General Support and Discussion Meetings, and found that they were both supportive in different ways.

The birthmother support meeting is open to any birthmother who wants to have a face-to-face type of support. The birthmothers who come to this meeting are in all walks of life. Some recently have started their post-placement adoption journey, some have searched and are in reunification with their placed children, some have searched but have not made contact yet, and some have not had positive results in having contact with their placed children. While the birthmother support group is great, I have really enjoyed the General Support and Discussion Meetings as well. These meetings are open to anyone who has been touched by adoption in some way (such as birthparents, adult adoptees, adoptive parents, prospective adoptive parents). They provide a setting where anyone can learn from other's perspectives. As a birthmother who has in-depth contact with only other birthmothers, I find these meetings quite eye-opening. I learn how the other parts of the adoption triad or constellation feel about their situation. I have walked away twice now with a wider eye in all areas, and I look forward to the next meeting! I as a birthparent have been able to give my own feelings about different areas of adoption a voice and see how that can help others along in their process.

In addition to working with my supervisor, I will also be working with the Executive Director, Betsie Norris, on one of her committees which will hopefully make the Post Adoption Contract Agreements (PACA) here in the state of Ohio be legally binding. I am looking forward to this portion of the internship as I will get to see the process of how a research survey is developed, completed, analyzed, and how the results go from to publication and written out into a proposal to take to the state legislature. I have told Betsie, that even after I move away from Ohio, I am still wanting to help with this project as it is important to me that all birthmothers who have some type of post adoption agreement to be protected. If you are in an open adoption and have a legally binding contract, and would like to possibly testify to the Ohio legislation, I would like to hear from you. This portion may possibly be down the

road, but the more of us that Ohio sees, hopefully the more they will see how important it the issue is.

Adoption Network Cleveland offers many different programs for all parties involved with adoption, not just the birthparents. For adoptive parents, the organization provides programs such as Adoption Navigation, adoption informational classes (such as Adoption 101, 201, 202), support groups, educational liaison and post adoption services. The Adoption Navigation is a program which provides services by trained staff to help families navigate through the adoption process. This could be from helping a prospective adoptive parent fill out any agency or county forms, know who to contact to complete a home-study, and even for just general questions about the entire process before and after a placement has been made. If a family is working to adopt through the public system, the navigators will help match the families with a child or children that would best fit everyone's needs. Adoption informational classes such as Adoption 101 helps inform the prospective adoptive parents on how to choose an agency and what to expect. The following classes then build on top of each other. If a family needs assistance with school aged children who have been adopted, a family can request for an educational liaison to help be an advocate for the family at the school. For adoptees, programs such as mentoring and support groups are provided. Adoptees can be those who are in both public and private systems. The mentoring program is designed to find long term mentor relationships for youth in foster care, in which the mentors act as a permanent role in the foster child's life, even if the foster child moves between several different homes. The mentor is there to provide support, expose them to meaningful activities and help them gain life skills as the child begins to age out of the system.

All of these programs are rewarding in some way or the other. I am learning quite a bit and I look forward to learning even more over the next year. If you are in the Ohio area and are in need or looking for support or ser-

vices, please do not hesitate to contact Adoption Network Cleveland.

My goal is to go onto graduate school in the Fall of 2013 at Southern Connecticut State University and achieve a Masters in Social Work. According to the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) I will also have to complete another year or two of internship while in grad school. If I have to do two more years of internship with each year being in a different setting, I am looking to work on more of a micro level since Adoption Network Cleveland operates on more of a mezzo/macro level. I would like to work one year in the public system such as Department of Children and Family Services (aka "County") and then one year in a private agency such as a local adoption agency. By the time I graduate with my masters, I will have a very good idea on what level and work setting I will prefer due to the fact that all three years of internship will be a bit different. I though, always thought I would like to work one on one with clients which is a micro setting, but Adoption Network Cleveland is showing me how much I can learn on the larger scale.

**"Adoption Network Cleveland offers many different programs for all parties involved with adoption, not just the birthparents."**

# Inspiration

## Holidays Lost and Regained

By Kelsey Stewart

After placing my daughter for adoption, I had no idea just how hard Holidays would be in the years to come. You do not think about these types of things when you are considering adoption. You think about many other things ... will they understand what I did? Will they ever know just how much I truly love them? Will they be happy in life? Will they accept me in their lives years from now when they are adults, older, and wiser than they are now? How will I cope with out being able to love them, hug them and just tell them I love them? Oh yes, there are many factors that come into play after placement ... factors that one would never consider before such a life changing decision.

Holidays. The thought of them make some people cringe while it makes others unbelievably happy, humming bars of "Jingle Bells" before Halloween decorations are taken down. When we are young, holidays represent innocence; a time in our lives when the magic and wonder of the season fill our hearts with happiness and our heads with visions of all the useless toys we have scoured the catalogs to find, promptly circling with a big red marker and arrows pointing to the object of our desire. (of course you had to make sure your parents knew exactly what to get and the brighter the marker the better the chance they would know what you wanted!) And when you are a kid you do not realize that the Holiday season really lasts for two months because Thanksgiving is not nearly as exciting as Christmas, and who in their right mind would consider a day of eating turkey a holiday?

But as we get older, the Holidays change so much through our eyes. My innocence was gone and it became a time of year filled with dread and depression. There are many reasons why this happened because life has many seasons ... and with those seasons there will be change.

That first Christmas after relinquishing my daughter for adoption was absolute torture for me. I tried very hard to keep it together, not allowing anyone to see the hurt and pain I was feeling inside. It is a time for families to gather and relish in the

generations of love, and be thankful for what it is that we have in our lives. But it was hard for me to be thankful, or feel love. I was sure no one would understand how my heart was breaking. I felt guilty, for reasons I am still unsure of. I felt lost, because a part of me was missing. I felt frightened, because I was sure each and every Holiday after that would be worse than the year before. I felt sad, because no matter the amount of understanding and support I received from my family and friends, no one would ever know that just getting out of bed was a monumental chore that split my heart in half. I fought through it and had moments of genuine joy. But overall the entire season, from the week of Thanksgiving to New Year's Day, was overwhelming, so much so it was to the point that I carried that weight with me clear through spring.

As we grow, the seasons are filled with memories. Memories that we recount, time and time again, that transport us to a time when life was good, simple, and happy. This is why so many people LOVE the Holidays. Generations have passed down traditions in order to make the best of a season for their loved ones, especially celebrated are the young. Whatever the religion or belief, Holidays are a tradition that become a mainstay in each of our lives. So when it comes time for us to have our children we can pass on the customs that brought us so much joy. I am sure that every little girl, at sometime in her life, has daydreamed about when she will be a mom ... when she will be the one wrapping the secret presents ... when she will be the one to tell the tales of Christmas' past ... when she will be the mom who helps her children believe in the magic of the season. A daydream that lingers in childhood and follows her through life until eventually she has her own child, her chance to share a lifetime of wisdom.



It took until spring for me to figure out that I had robbed myself of passing on what Christmas meant to me. You can never see it up close, like back on December 20th when I had to call into work because the Hallmark commercial sent me to my knees, sobbing and unable to gather myself the entire day. If only I had known there, on my living room floor, that my mind was torturing me out of selfishness. In the moment of the Holidays, the weeks of pine tree scent stuffed in my nose, Bing

Crosby crooning in the background and happy shoppers weighing down their arms with trinkets of love, I watched it all in a daze. I knew something was bothering me but I could not put my finger on it. One moment I would smile seeing a mother and son share a cinnamon bun as they sauntered past the windows. Ten minutes later I am shaking, trying not to loose it as I read a plaque about family and love and blah blah blah. My clarity did not come until the leaves grew back, dresses more common and the smell of freshly cut grass filled the air. I realized that I could not pass on my life. My traditions, traditions that were so near and dear to my heart would not be so near and dear to hers. I waited a lifetime to share, and now would never be able to do so with my first born child.

I know, heavy stuff to ponder.

But that clarity made it much easier the second year around, I knew the feeling, I knew how to relax and let it happen, and I knew that I would get through it. Better prepared, wiser from before and finding a little more peace each and every passing year.

Then, the day came when I had my own family. Two little boys who looked at me with wonder on those days when I said, "ready for lunch?" and then surprised them by making snicker doodle cookies with a side of candy cane. It came around, that celebration of tradition which I thought was lost forever ... it all came around full circle. Now when Christmas comes around, I relish in the small things that I know I did not see the first time around. The joy of seeing Santa up close and personal for a child will help you relive all your life in a second. I have passed on my love of pins that was instilled by my Aunt who would give me a holiday pin every year. Since I do not have daughters, I chose to pass along that custom to my nieces. To my delight they love to see which one I have chosen for them from year to year, because there is always meaning and I look for them all season long. I take my boys out of school, separately, and make them think they have a dentist appointment but really we are playing hooky from everything and we shop, eat lunch, get goodies from the candy boutiques ... and it is our little secret. I have been blessed with these amazing little guys to remind me what it is that I have now, what I can pass along now that



## Inspiration continued from page 4...

gives me back that innocence. I feel it. I believe again, and I hear the bells all season long.

But the bonus of this incredible transition is that I see and feel what it must have been like for the families of my adopted children. To experience that love, that caravan of customs that they too longed to pass on in their families. It takes my breath away sometimes to be honest. I am completely aware of all the happy people around me ... in stores, in cafes, in Starbucks. They all seem to be so comfortable in expressing their love for life, and how amazing it must have been for my adoptive parents to realize their purpose; their own happiness was in front of them. In their here and now, only way back then, they had their own bliss and joy in passing their lives onto their children.

There is now way to convey to you what kind of peace this brings to my soul, and stays with me through all the Holidays and beyond. I did miss so much in my daughter and twins lives. But what I have learned since then has been incredible. To raise a child is to love you all over again. You have to forgive yourself for your mistakes, accept that you will continue to make mistakes, but it is also what you take from those mishaps that give us the strength to keep striving to be the best we can be for our kids.

There are children that I brought into this world who, in turn, ushered joys, laughter, love and wonder into their parents and families lives. And when I see it up close in my life, I gain a little more peace in my heart that what I did was right. Right for

me at that time. Right for them at that time. Nothing should be a total defeat in life. Instead those former defeats should wind into quiet triumphs that lift our souls at times when we need it the most.

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

## Founders Corner



## Birthday Celebrations

### October

4—Charlene's son, D  
30—Heather Sabin's daughter,  
Haley

### November

10—Monika Zimmerman's  
daughter, Mack  
12—Amanda Moody  
16—Kristin Rushing's son,  
Paul Matthew

### December

7—Caitlin Karalus  
11—Mandy Mueller's daughter,  
Isabella  
14—Heather Sabin and Mandy  
Mueller



If you or the child you placed has a birthday in January, February, or March and you'd like it included in the newsletter, please email the info to [bmbulletin@gmail.com](mailto:bmbulletin@gmail.com).



## Best of the Blog

**Sisterhood:** <http://birthmom-buds.blogspot.com/2012/09/sisterhood.html> written by Terri, published on September 20, 2012

**Misplaced Anger:** <http://birthmom-buds.blogspot.com/2012/09/misplaced-anger.html> written by Elizabeth, published on September 21, 2012

**Choosing Open Adoption:** <http://birthmom-buds.blogspot.com/2012/09/choosing-open-adoption.html> written by Monika, published on September 14, 2012

## Prayer Requests

*By including the prayer requests section it is not our intent to force religion on anyone. We've had multiple requests to include this section. If you don't pray, simply skip this section. If you have a prayer request for a future newsletter, please email it to [bmbulletin@gmail.com](mailto:bmbulletin@gmail.com).*

One of our members, Nancy Nelson, was recently diagnosed with Stage Four Ovarian Cancer. She will be having surgery soon and then begin chemo. Please pray for Nancy's recovery.

"Please pray that I find a roommate as my husband and I are currently living apart due to his job and my schooling. We are having financial issues because of this. Also, my stress level for school is high so please pray that I can juggle everything." – Amy Schumaker

