

BirthMom Buds Bulletin

BirthMom Buds



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Special Points of Interest

- The BirthMom Buds Retreat invitation is live! See the announcements section for the link.
- Interview with Michelle Madrid-Branch, author, in the Adoption Spotlight section
- Good ideas for open adoption visits in the Ideas and Insights Section

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Announcements

2013 BirthMom Buds Retreat and Celebration Details – The details for the 9th Annual BirthMom Buds Retreat and Celebration are now available! Please check out [this webpage](#) for more details.

Slideshow Submissions – We are now accepting submissions for the 2013 Slideshow. Please check out [this webpage](#) for details on what type of photos to submit and how to submit them.

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

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](#).

Bloggers Needed – We are looking for bloggers for the [BirthMom Buds Blog](#) who can post once a week. For more information, please email Coley at birthmombuds@gmail.com.

New Pregnant and Placing Coordinator – Please welcome Natasha to the [BirthMom Buds staff](#). Natasha is now running the Pregnant and Placing Mentoring Program.

Inspiration

Own Who You Are! By Ashley Mitchell

When people hear my entire story, they just shake their heads. They have only seen people like me in the movies, or on Jerry Springer. The truth is in my life I have done things and seen things that I am not proud of but I am **not** ashamed. There is a difference. I am not prideful and I do not condone or justify my actions just because I turned out okay. I am humble and try to share some insight to the choices that were made. I would never encourage casual sex partners, substance abuse, getting knocked up or spending time in jail, and so on. (Can you hear the audience chanting, "JERRY! JERRY!?"?)

In spite of all of that, I have to say that the greatest lesson that I have learned in my life is to own my story, own who I am, own my actions and to find the growth in each and every one of those moments that took place in my life.

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The biggest mistake that we make in our own progress is to hold on to the shame that we feel about the "inappropriate" events and paths traveled. That shame keeps us from looking to where we are from where we were. We have to love ourselves, accept ourselves and show ourselves some grace. We are not perfect! Oh my heck, do we not know by now that we make mistakes...we choose paths, we make choices that change us from day to day and it is okay! These are basic principles my friends. Don't ask me why we can't ever quite get it figured out.



I spent years looking at my past trying to figure out all the "wrong" choices I had made. I tried to put a pretty Tiffany lamp shade on my dirty red light. I tried to make my past something that it wasn't, I wanted it to be different, I wanted to see it in a different light. I wanted who I am now to reflect who I was, but the two didn't add up, and that is the beauty of my life! I am the person I am now **because** of who I was and owning that and making peace with that has made me happier, more successful and has allowed me to inspire others.

It has been absolutely mind

blowing how many people have come to me and thanked me for sharing my story. I never in a million years thought that sharing my experiences would touch anyone. I couldn't believe how many people had gone through so many of the same things I did. I had finally found the love, support and peace for which I had always been looking and I was true to who I am! When I spent all the years I did trying to hide the choices that I had made or the times I was ashamed of my story, I discovered that those were the darkest days of my life.

There is a lyric from a Sound Garden song titled *Fell on Black Days* and it reads: "...so don't you lock up something that you wanted to see fly. Hands are for shaking, no not for tying." Think about that for a moment. We lock up things about us that we are ashamed of, we try and hide, we bind ourselves, and put ourselves in prison. We need to let the person we are fly free.

If you can't love yourself, respect yourself, honor yourself, be gentle and forgiving with yourself then how do you ever expect anyone in your life to treat you the way you deserve to be treated? Think about it. You can't ask for things that you aren't willing to do yourself. As Confucius tells us, "...and remember, no matter where you

go, there you are." You can't hide from yourself. You have a divine life to live and that includes every choice and every action. Do me a favor. Sit and think about all the amazing, wonderful, incredible, magical, and miraculous things that are in your life. I am willing to bet that you would **not** have those things...all those amazing, wonderful, incredible, magical and miraculous things in your life if you did **not** make the choices that you did. If you had not traveled down those winding paths you would not be living your current bliss. Now that is powerful! I can't imagine my life without my amazing grace, my husband, my kids, my family, my faith and hope, and my business. The list goes on and on. I would live all those black days over again so my life would turn out just as it has.

I am grateful for those things from my past, they are incredible blessings. They have become a great part of my soul, and a great teaching tool. I have come to love them, understand them and appreciate them for what they were at the time that they were. I love my story. I own my story. It is who I am and I am a beautiful soul.

"I never in a million years thought that sharing my experiences would touch anyone."

Ashley Mitchell can be found at Blessings in a Basket (<http://www.blessingsinabasket.org/>)

Adoption Spotlight

Interview with Michelle Madrid-Branch, Author
conducted by Leah Outten

When my daughter, Kaylee, was turning 4 years old I looked high and low for the perfect adoption book to help her understand our adoption more as she was getting older and more curious. I finally found the book written by Michelle Madrid-Branch, "[The Tummy Mummy](#)," which for our open adoption situation was the best fit for us and it simply is a beautiful story in general! You can read the full review that I

wrote of the book [here](#) if you are interested in learning more about it. 4 years later, I still recommend this book and now my daughter's family fondly refers to me as Kaylee's Tummy Mummy at times and I love it! Recently I had the honor to interview Michelle regarding her adoption experience and inspiration for her books.

Leah: What is your personal connection to adoption? What led you to

write the book?

Michelle: I am a person of international adoption. I was born in the United Kingdom, placed in foster care there, and adopted by an American family. So, I have a deep heart on the matter of adoption.



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I was led to write The Tummy Mummy because I believe in the importance of honoring birth mothers and keeping them alive in the heart of an adopted child. Not in a way that is fantasy-driven, but in a way that teaches the real and vital life lessons of love, acceptance and forgiveness.

Leah: The owl guiding the families together was one of my favorite parts of the book, what is your inspiration for that character? What does it symbolize to you?

Michelle: Thank you for saying this, Leah! The owl is truly one of my favorite parts of the book, as well. For me, I wanted to convey the thoughtful process that so many birth mothers go through in making their decisions to give a child to adoption. I believe this aspect of delivery is often, sadly, overlooked by society. To me, the owl represents an all-knowing wisdom. I believe that our lives are guided, even when we cannot or do not see the guide. In this book, the tummy mummy converses with her heartfelt wisdom in the form of an owl. This character can and does symbolize different concepts to different readers. The owl could be, among other things, a social worker, a family member, or God.

Leah: What has been the response to the book from

adoptive parents? From birth parents? From adoption professionals?

Michelle: The response to the book has been overwhelmingly positive. Adoptive parents celebrate it as a tool to open up conversation about birth mothers. I understand and respect that this can be hard. I do stand by the belief, as an adoptee myself, that truth is the ultimate healer and that honesty about one's own adoption story is key. I have been deeply touched by the response from birthparents. Particularly, from birth mothers who stand by the book as an experience of healing along their own personal journeys. Adoption professionals have embraced the book and have referred the book, many times over, to families. The Tummy Mummy has been called "a classic" by adoption groups around the world. My wish for this book is that it is read and allowed the opportunity to be a part of the adoption conversation, for years to come.

Leah: What message do you hope children who read the book will take away from it?

Michelle: I hope that they feel the love within each page. The book is written with that intention. I want them to understand, at their own level, that adoption does mean love.

It does not mean that it won't hurt and feel confusing, at some point. But, if they hold on to the truth that they are loved and wanted, this can transform their lives.

Leah: You have another book published called Adoption Means Love: Triumph of the Heart, who is that geared for and how does it differ?

Michelle: This book is written for adults, primarily. It is a compilation of adoption stories from around the world. I believe the more we hear personal and unique adoption stories, the more we begin to change the way we store our cultural meanings of adoption. We remove stigma, myth, and media-driven influences. There can be negative within the adoption world. I cannot argue that. However, I know that the good far outweighs the bad. This book was named a "top five inspirational book" by Dolce Vita Magazine. An adoption book included under the category of "inspiration" is very telling, as to the quality of Triumph of the Heart and the uplifting message found within each page. The book has been well-received by adoptees, families, and adoption professionals.

Thank you Michelle for writing The Tummy Mummy and for answering my questions!

"I believe the more we hear personal and unique adoption stories, the more we begin to change the way we store our cultural meanings of adoption."

For more on Leah, visit her blog at <http://omommawrites.com/>

Ideas and Insights

Open Adoption Visit Ideas by Andrea Mills

Ideas for open adoption visits will vary depending on the age of your child, weather, time restraints and the willingness of the adoptive parents to agree to your ideas. Here are just a few that I have had success with over the years and some that I hope for in the future.

- Go to the playground or a nearby park
- Swim together at pool or beach
- Shop together
- The mall play land
- Have dinner together at a restaurant or each other's home
- Attend the child's sporting events
- Attend church together
- Attend child's extracurricular activities
- Go to the zoo
- Go to the local children's museum
- Offer to babysit
- Go camping together
- Go on a mini vacation together
- Go to children's story time at the library together
- Take a children's craft class together (at Michaels, etc)
- Go to a Gymboree class together
- Make a scrapbook that includes information and pictures from the child's birth family and adoptive family
- Go to a children's class or event at the local community center together

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- Trick-or-treat together
- Watch fireworks and/or light them together
- Go to a parade
- Take a ferry, catamaran or canoe ride together
- Attend the adoptive family or birth family reunions together (how awesome would that be for the child?)
- Have a professional photo shoot annually of everyone together
- Plan a party together for the child and be there together for the event. Let the child pick the theme.
- Go to the child's show and tell at school.
- Decorate the Christmas tree together or decorate together for any Holiday
- Bake, decorate and eat cookies together (yum)
- Do a service project together
- Practice a sport or hobby with your child
- Hike together
- Go on a bicycle ride and picnic
- Have a movie and popcorn night
- Have a slumber party at your house with the child or children while the adoptive parents get to have a night on the town. (Why not?)
- Go out on the lake in a motorboat together
- Do some biological and adoptive family history together
- Go to a pet store and look at all of the animals
- Go to a college or professional sports event together
- Go to a concert
- Chuck E. Cheese (I love that place.)
- Play in the snow or go sledding together

These are just a few ideas to get you started. There are many other things you can try to do. Hopefully the adoptive parents are open to the idea of you building a positive, lasting relationship with your child. And ideally the biological and adoptive parents will build a loving, caring friendship built on honesty and respect. My hope is to take the separation from the adoptive family and fear driven treatment of birthmothers out of the adoption equation. It would be in the best interest of the child to share the love and make happy memories together.

It's in the best interest of all involved!

Birthday Celebrations



January

1—Angela Norris
 4—Madisen Cook
 4—Shelby Young's son, Jonah
 5—Nicole Wright-Ellis' son, Joshua
 11—Alicia Moser's daughter
 12—Corky Vestal's son, Noah
 19—Diane Parker's daughter, Lauren Alexis
 19—Shelby Young
 24—Erin McCarthy's son
 26—Natalie Avery's daughter, Ava
 27—Alicia Sappingfield
 31—Amy Schumaker's daughter, Kaylee

February

1—Cheri Trussler's daughter, Stella
 4—Kelly Archie
 6—Sonya Banks' daughter
 13—Allison Alexander's daughter, Anastasia
 15—Corky Vestal
 16—Ashley Winsett's daughter, Emmalie
 21—Nicole Wright-Ellis
 28—Allyssa Gunn's twins, Katelyn and Kenzlee

March

1—Stephanie Dillon's daughter, Alena
 12—Lorinda Makinson
 15—Anne Bennett's son, Colin
 23—Kellie Shirek
 23—Christine Hively's daughter
 24—Kelsey Moore's son, Evan
 24—Alena Diaz' daughter, Makaela

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.

- Please continue your prayers for Nancy Nelson, who was diagnosed with cancer. She is responding to chemotherapy. Please pray that she continues to respond to chemotherapy and it is not too hard on her body.
- Keri Murphy would like prayers that she have the self-discipline to read the Bible and pray. Her desire is for a stronger faith in God this year.
- Kelsey Moore's grandmother died on January 5th, this year. She was 98. Please keep Kelsey and her family in your prayers as they deal with this loss. Kelsey feels the loss acutely because her grandmother was the first she told about her pregnancy with the son that she placed.
- Vanessa Navarro's husband left her on 12/23/12. Please pray that he decides to reconcile instead of filing for divorce.



Best of the Blog



[My "Game Face" Might Need Some Fine-Tuning:](#) written by Elizabeth, published on December 5, 2012

[Time:](#) written by Terri, published on November 16, 2012

[It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year!:](#) written by Monika, published on December 7, 2012

Founder's Corner

2012 was a great year for BirthMom Buds!

We grew and gained new members. We had a great turn out at our annual retreat and enjoyed seeing old friends and making new ones. We updated the website; it's still the same ole' URL (www.birthmombuds.com) but has a clean and fresh look. We also got a new toll free number; 1-855-4MYBBUD.

We are planning for and looking forward to the 2013 retreat and all that 2013 has to offer us!

Happy New Year!

~ Coley and Laní ~