

Family Connections

"Every child deserves a good home." - Sister Catherine Louise

FALL 2010 NEWSLETTER

A Family's Networking Success Story



Jason and Sybil built their family through different approaches to identifying birth mothers.

In an effort to reach more pregnant women considering adoption, St. Mary's is encouraging adoptive families to network within their communities. In addition to St. Mary's advertising and marketing efforts, families are using social media channels to share their adoption hopes with others. Here is the story of a St. Mary's family who successfully networked to identify a birth mother.

Jason and Sybil's Story

We adopted our daughter, Zoey, in 2004. Our adoption journey from home study to placement took about eight months. We knew that we were extremely lucky to have Zoey placed with us in such a short amount of time. It all came down to being in the right place at the right time.

In 2008, we started our next adoption journey. We knew this adoption would not happen as quickly. In the back of our minds we were hoping we would beat the odds, and a second adoption would just kind of happen, much like our first. After about six months, reality set in, and we knew this would not be the case.

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Dear Friends,

Several days ago, when I began thinking about my first letter to you all as St. Mary's Services' new Executive Director, my first

thought rested on the hour I got to spend my 2nd week here with a beautiful, 3-day-old baby girl as we waited for her adoptive parents to come and meet her for the first time. Following her birth, she had stayed a couple of days with one of our amazing interim housing provider volunteers until the surrenders were signed by her birth parents. To then watch her be united with her adoptive parents was a sight to behold. This tiny, amazing, miracle of a baby brought light into the faces of her new parents, who could only utter over and over again, "She's so beautiful! She's so beautiful!"

While I am so glad that I get to share this joyous story with you, my heart is heavy for

also having to share with you that we have lost one of St. Mary's strongest advocates at far too young an age. We learned on the morning of Wednesday, October 6th, that our Board President, William (Bill) Cook had passed away very unexpectedly. He was only 57 and leaves behind his wife, Ellen, and their two sons, Joe and Jack. Bill had tirelessly worked to raise awareness of the important work that St. Mary's does each day with birth and adoptive families. His leadership on the Board of Directors and his friendship is deeply missed by all of the St. Mary's family. Please join us as we continue to pray for Bill's loved ones, that they will know the peace and comfort of God.

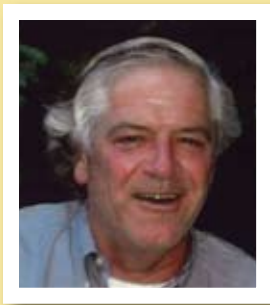
It is for the sake of that beautiful baby girl, her birth mother, and her new family that Bill Cook and so many others have continued to provide their ongoing support to St. Mary's over the years. Activities such as volunteering on our Board, coordinating events with our

adoptive families, speaking publicly about St. Mary's, or connecting us with funders and in-kind donations are critical to our agency if we are to continue - and hopefully expand - the work that we do for families in a very vulnerable time in their lives. If you have been one of those faithful supporters of St. Mary's, I cannot possibly thank you enough for all you have done and I hope you will continue to partner with us. If you are new to St. Mary's, I hope that you will learn more about us and consider ways you might be able to support this important work.

Peace,



Heather Fitzpatrick
Executive Director,
St. Mary's Services



IN MEMORY OF WILLIAM J. COOK

It is with great sadness that we share that St. Mary's Board President, William (Bill) J. Cook, passed away suddenly on October 6.

St. Mary's Board of Trustees and staff had the distinct honor and privilege of working with Bill. He volunteered his time as a member of the Board of Trustees since 2003.

During his tenure on the board, he dedicated much time and spirit to leadership positions that included treasurer, vice president and president. Without a doubt, Bill was an exceptional advocate for adoption and believed strongly in the mission of St. Mary's that every child deserves a good home.

Bill's leadership and passion will be deeply missed by our Board of Directors and all the staff of St. Mary's Services. Nothing can compare, however, to the loss experienced by his wife, Ellen, and their two children, Joseph and Jack. Please join us all in supporting them and their loved ones in prayer during this difficult time. It is particularly during painful times like this that God's promise to "never leave us or forsake us" acts as an anchor to hold us steady during the storm. We pray that this promise that has sustained so many who have walked through St. Mary's doors over the years will bring comfort and hope to the family and loved ones of a man who will be missed tremendously, Bill Cook. 💜

JACKIE AND JOHN WELCOME OWEN



Welcome New St. Mary's Staff

Heather Fitzpatrick, MPH, Executive Director

Heather Fitzpatrick joined St. Mary's Services as Executive Director in September 2010. In this position she will focus on increasing the number of birth families the agency serves and lead development initiatives. Before joining St. Mary's, Heather was a manager focusing on children's healthcare issues at the American Academy of Pediatrics. She and her husband, Tony, are parents to a 2-year-old son, Stephen, who they adopted in 2008 and is the joy of their lives.

Susan Baker, Adoption/Maternity Counselor

Sue has returned to St. Mary's Services after almost 17 years. She works with parents looking to adopt, counsels maternity clients and handles post adoption services. Sue earned her degree from Illinois State University and has always loved the adoption field and being able to unite families through the process of adoption. She now lives with her husband, two children and her dog.

Christina Buck, MSW, Adoption/Maternity Counselor

Christina joined St. Mary's after working as a foster care case manager with another social service agency. In this role she worked with foster children and their families to help them achieve reunification through the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). She also worked directly at DCFS, where she worked with the investigative team to assess child abuse and neglect and act in the best interest of the children. Christina received her Bachelor's Degree in Human Services from Millikin University. She earned her Master's Degree in Social Work, with an emphasis on Child Welfare, at the University of Illinois in Champaign. She is licensed by the state of Illinois as a direct child welfare services employee.

ADOPTIVE PARENT GROUP

Ohana is an African-American adoptive family support and play group that meets on the second Sunday of each month at the Village Church of Bartlett. Ohana means family, and the group welcomes all families who have adopted domestically or internationally. Ohana is open to pre-adoptive and post-adoptive families. Each meeting is something new: guest speakers, demonstrations or crafts for the kids. Currently, participating kids range in age from 6 months to 8 years old. And, there always is plenty of food, coffee and conversation for parents.



UPCOMING OHANA EVENTS

(All events held at the Village Church of Bartlett, 601 W. Bartlett Road, Bartlett, IL)

- **November 14:** Ohana Open House & Stranger Danger Demonstration from Dustin Kook of National Karate
- **December 5:** Holiday Party & Kwanzaa Celebration

For questions, contact Eileen Hadfield, St. Mary's adoptive parent, at ohanaafg@gmail.com.

*Stay tuned to www.stmaryservices.com or visit the "St. Mary's Parents" Facebook page for additional events.

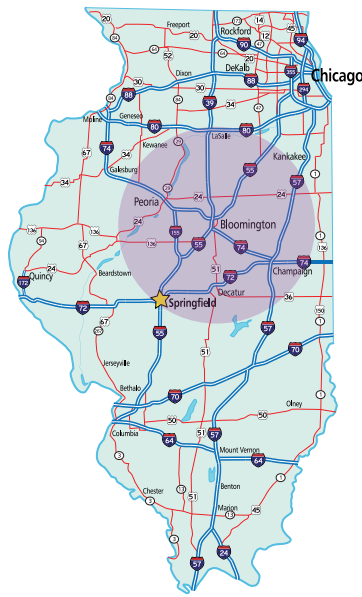


BEN AND DIANE WELCOME ANAND

St. Mary's Explores Central Illinois

St. Mary's leadership is looking to grow the agency, and one approach being explored is to expand geographically. The Bloomington-Normal area has been identified as an area of potential need for maternity and adoption services. With this in mind, St. Mary's has partnered with a seasoned maternity/adoption counselor, Jan Holmes, to serve maternity clients and adoptive families within a 120-mile radius of Bloomington-Normal.

Jan has more than 25 years of maternity counseling and adoption experience and a true passion for what she does. She is focusing on counseling pregnant women considering adoption, and also will work with adoptive families in need of home studies. The agency has begun marketing and outreach efforts to make Central Illinois communities aware of St. Mary's work. This pilot program will run through March 2011, and hopefully far beyond!



For more information, call St. Mary's at 1-888-ST-MARYS. ♡

St. Mary's Coordinates Program to Bring Russian Orphans to Chicagoland



For the fifth consecutive year, St. Mary's Services, in partnership with the national Cradle of Hope Adoption Center, coordinated the Midwest Bridge of Hope for Russian Children (BOHRC) program. The program brought 28 Russian orphans, ages 5 to 12, to the United States for three weeks in July 2010 for an opportunity to learn the basics about living in a family and to experience a summer camp. Four children, including a sibling group (brother and sister) were hosted by Chicago area families and are currently in the process of being adopted by their host families.

During the day, the children attended local day camps near their host families' homes so they could swim, play games and have typical American summer experiences. Host families and the children also came together with former host families and the children they adopted for a "Sunday picnic" midway through the program.

In December 2010, a new hosting format will bring school-aged children from orphanages in Ukraine and Russia into American families for two weeks. St. Mary's currently is looking for families interested in hosting one of these children or a sibling group.

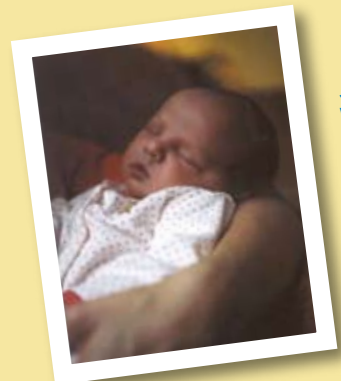
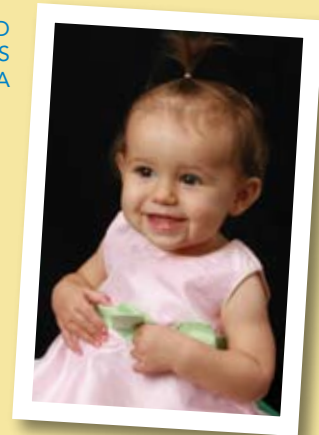
For more information about host programs, contact Michaelyn Sloan, St. Mary's international adoption coordinator, at msloan@stmaryservices.com or 847-870-8181. ♡

AMY AND JEFF
WELCOME THOMAS



DEB AND GREG
WELCOME JACK

MAUREEN AND
NICHOLAS
WELCOME ANNA



JOHN AND LIZ
WELCOME LUEVA

Adoption Tax Credit News

Below is a press release issued by the Internal Revenue Service on September 29, 2010.

IRS Issues Guidance on Expanded Adoption Credit Available for Tax-Year 2010

WASHINGTON — The Internal Revenue Service today issued guidance on the expanded adoption credit included in the Affordable Care Act. The IRS also released a draft version of the form that eligible taxpayers will use to claim the newly-expanded adoption credit on 2010 tax returns filed next year.

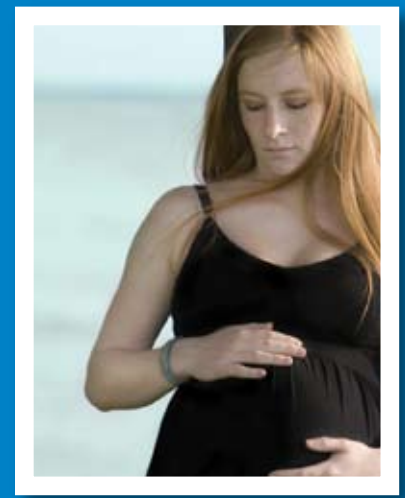
The Affordable Care Act raises the maximum adoption credit to \$13,170 per child, up from \$12,150 in 2009. It also makes the credit refundable, meaning that eligible taxpayers can get it even if they owe no tax for that year. In general, the credit is based on the reasonable and necessary expenses related to a legal adoption, including adoption fees, court costs, attorney's fees and travel expenses. Income limits and other special rules apply.

In addition to filling out Form 8839, Qualified Adoption Expenses, eligible taxpayers must include with their 2010 tax returns one or more adoption-related documents, detailed in the guidance issued today.

The documentation requirements, designed to ensure that taxpayers properly claim the credit, mean that taxpayers claiming the credit will have to file paper tax returns. Normally, it takes six to eight weeks to get a refund claimed on a complete and accurate paper return where all required documents are attached. The IRS encourages taxpayers to use direct deposit to speed their refund.

Taxpayers claiming the credit will still be able to use IRS Free File to prepare their returns, but the returns must be printed out and sent to the IRS, along with all required documentation.

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ABOUT ST. MARY'S MATERNITY SERVICES

St. Mary's takes great pride in offering unparalleled counseling to pregnant women considering adoption. An unplanned pregnancy can create feelings of being overwhelmed, anxious and stressed. St. Mary's is here to help pregnant women explore their adoption and parenting options using a non-judgmental, individualized and confidential approach. There is no charge for counseling and the agency offers material assistance when needed. If you or someone you know is experiencing an unplanned pregnancy and wants to learn more about adoption, please call 1-888-ST-MARYS. We care. We listen. We're here to help.

St. Mary's Grant Funding

As a nonprofit organization, grant funding makes it possible for St. Mary's to meet a variety of needs ranging from maternity and special needs infant expenses to marketing and operational needs. The agency would like to recognize and extend a special thank you to the organizations that provided grant funding during the last year.

- The Helen Brach Foundation
- Kenilworth United Fund
- CME Foundation
- Christ Church Benevolence Committee
- George M. Eisenberg Foundation for Charities
- The Park Ridge Rotary
- Emmanuel Church Women Committee



CARLA AND JASON
WELCOME SOPHIE



KATHRYN
AND MARTY
WELCOME DEKEN



Save the Dates

Below are the upcoming informational seminars for adoptive families.

SEMINARS

Talking to Your Child About Adoption at Different Developmental Stages

Wednesday, November 10, 2010

7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

St. Simon's Episcopal Church Parish Hall

Parish Hall

717 W. Kirchhoff Road

Arlington Heights, IL 60005

**November is National Adoption Awareness Month*

Becoming a Transracial Adoptive Family

Saturday, January 22, 2011

9:30 a.m. to Noon

St. Andrew's Episcopal Church Parish Hall –

1125 Franklin Street

Downers Grove, IL

Effects of Prenatal Substance Exposure on the Developing Fetus and Managing Behaviors

Saturday, March 19, 2011

9 a.m. to Noon

St. Simon's Episcopal Church Parish Hall

717 W. Kirchhoff Road

Arlington Heights, IL 60005

Parenting and Disciplining Your Adopted Child

Saturday, May 14, 2011

10 a.m. to Noon

St. Simon's Episcopal Church Parish Hall

717 W. Kirchhoff Road

Arlington Heights, IL 60005

**Pre-registration is required. To register, go to www.stmaryservices.com and click on the "Adoption Education" tab or call 1-888-ST-MARYS.*

All seminars are open to the public. There is a \$20 per person fee, to be paid in advance and is non-refundable. This fee does not apply to families that have been accepted into St. Mary's domestic and international programs. Programs are not appropriate for children and babysitting services are not available. One credit given per seminar hour attended.



ST. MARY'S OPEN HOUSES

Thursday, November 18, 2010

8 a.m. to 10 a.m.

St. Mary's Services Headquarters

717 W. Kirchhoff Road

Arlington Heights, IL 60005

Tuesday, November 30, 2010

8 a.m. to 10 a.m.

St. Mary's Services Satellite Office

(housed within Heartland Community Church)

1811 N. Linden Street

Normal, IL 60005

RSVP: 1-888-ST-MARYS and ask for Jamie Hammer or e-mail jhammer@stmaryservices.com.

Cover story continued...

St. Mary's encouraged us to contact all of our family and friends, and network about our desire to adopt again. We started with Facebook and created a group page. This page simply mentioned a bit about us, our desire to adopt again, and a few family pictures. We sent the link to this page to all of our friends, and we encouraged them to share the link with their friends to achieve an even further reach. Right away we got a lot of positive feedback that included messages from friends, family and even strangers. We waited and hoped a lead would come our way.

Another six months went by, and we felt like we needed to make another splash, to remind people of our adoption efforts. We decided to make a YouTube video for potential birth mothers to watch. We put together a simple video with pictures, music and text to introduce ourselves.

We used the Facebook page to spread the word about our YouTube video. This was a great way to remind people of our adoption journey.

It gave them something to watch, and connect with. We just wanted people to remember us, should they come across any potential birth mothers.

In January 2010, a friend of our Facebook group became aware of a birth mother who was looking for potential adoptive parents. Because of our presence on Facebook, he thought of us right away, and passed along the birth mother information. This was the break we were looking for.

We wasted no time calling the birth mother and scheduled a meeting. Over the course of the next month we got to know her a little better and we were in the hospital with her when our son, Logan, was born.

We feel so blessed to have Logan in our lives. We believe you are given the child you are meant to have. We felt this way with both of our children. We can't thank our friends enough, who kept us in their prayers, and helped make this happen for us.

To view our Facebook group Web site, which also has a link to our YouTube video, go to www.facebook.com/home.php?#!/group.php?gid=69453657808.



JASON AND SYBIL
WELCOME LOGAN



DENEEN AND SAL
WELCOME RENEE

At St. Mary's we understand that the adoption process might seem overwhelming for adoptive parents and we want to help simplify it and decrease the time it takes for couples to be placed with a child. Therefore, currently we are exploring a program that will navigate the social media world for adoptive parents and help them to connect with potential birth mothers. Stay tuned! ♥

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Michaelyn Sloan, MS Ed
international adoption coordinator

OUR MISSION STATEMENT



Established more than 120 years ago, St. Mary's Services is a faith-based, non-profit organization that serves women experiencing unplanned pregnancies who are considering adoption and families looking to adopt children. Through personalized counseling, education, supportive resources and adoption services, the agency is dedicated to building loving families.

St. Mary's is licensed by the Illinois Department of Children & Family Services #040234-11.



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