

# TRUE TO LIFE

An Evangelical Child and Family Agency Publication



## The Pain and Joy of Adoption

The Adoption journey isn't always an easy one, but it is worth it in the end! Here is a story of one of our recent, adoptive families and their journey.

"Our journey towards parenthood began much like any other. We were married in July of 2016 and knew we didn't want to wait long before trying for our first child. In February of 2017, we found out we were expecting, and on October 30th, our son was born.

While adjusting to life as a family of three, my husband began to develop flu-like symptoms. Weeks passed, and rather than his symptoms subsiding, they only grew worse. When our son was only four months old, my husband was diagnosed with Hodgkin's Lymphoma.

Although it is a very curable form of cancer, we learned that he would need chemo treatments that would leave us unable to expand our family naturally. We were devastated and spent a lot of time in prayer trying to discern God's will for the future of our family.

We surrendered our desires and trusted that God would expand our family for His glory. After that decision, it was amazing to see how God shifted our desire towards adoption.

We found out about ECFA through someone we knew in the adoption world. We decided to reach out to them to begin the home study pro-



cess while my husband was going through his stem-cell transplant. This was the final step to remission, and we knew that once he was healed, we wanted to be ready for whatever God had in store for us.

He was declared "cancer free" in April of 2019. A few months later, we were approached by a friend from church who said she knew of an expectant mother who was searching for a Christian family to adopt her child. She asked if we'd be willing to consider it, and of course we said yes!

In August of 2019, we brought home our sweet baby girl from the hospital. The birthmother had informed us prior to this that the birth father wanted nothing to do with her. However, as time passed, we found out that this was not the case and a legal battle began over the mother and father's conflicting desires.

We again were devastated, but remained hopeful that everything would work out in our favor. During

this time, we developed a strong, open-relationship with the birth mom, and knew that God had intentionally placed us in her life to minister to her. This was our opportunity to show grace, forgiveness, and unconditional love.

As time went on, our legal counsel shared that it was highly likely that we were going to lose the little girl we had loved and raised since birth. After 8 1/2 months, that nightmare did in fact become our reality. Our little girl was placed with a family member of her birth father, and we were left with thousands of dollars in legal fees and broken hearts.

We took months to grieve and mourn our loss. As we prayed for God's direction, we didn't know how we could possibly pursue another adoption. I became bitter towards even the thought of adoption and didn't understand what we had done to receive so much hardship.

How could surrendering to God the thing that meant the most to us be met with only hurt and unmet expectations? However, as time passed, we began to sense God softening our hearts towards adoption. I reached out to Dorinne to share our change of heart, and she joined us in prayer for God's timing and plans.

In November of 2020, we felt God place a sense of urgency to complete the home study update pro-

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cess. However, this time we felt that pursuing a national infant adoption was where God was leading us. In December, we were home study approved, and officially signed on with Christian Adoption Consultants to help us in our search.

We received a situation that my husband and I were very drawn to in early January. We decided to present to the birth mom and found out that we were officially matched with a baby boy due in Florida in March! From there, everything went flawlessly.

Our son was born perfectly healthy on his scheduled C-section date. I was able to be in the operating room for his birth, and our birth mom selflessly allowed me to be the first person to hold him. My husband and I were able to name him, were given our own hospital room to care for him while he was a patient, and after 48 hours, both parents terminated their rights.

He was ours! We love him so much and are still in awe that he is the child we had been praying for over the last few years.

We will forever be thankful for the staff at ECFA and the ways that they

intentionally prayed for us during each step of our adoptive journey. Dorinne has become like family to us and was such a great support to our family in the joy and the mourning.

Her compassion, wisdom, and encouragement were always available when we needed it most. We looked forward to our home visits with her, and don't know how we would have done it without her genuine love and support.

Throughout the last three years, I often lamented to God about what I perceived as "wasted time." I couldn't see the good in three years of extreme trials, shattered dreams, and loss. However, as I look back now, I can't help but realize that not one second of it was wasted.

Because of the suffering that God allowed us to endure, we were able to know our God in incredible ways and experience the depth of His love, goodness, and peace that surpasses understanding. He refined us and got us to a place of complete surrender.

I also stand in awe that God would choose to lavish us with so much grace to restore and redeem all that had been lost. My husband is

completely healed and healthy. We continue to get to have a relationship with both of our birth moms. Our son was brought into our lives to complete our family.

Lastly, we get to live each day with renewed purpose and joy in serving our Lord. He has ignited a passion in us to help support couples going through the adoption process.

We don't know what God has planned for us next, but we are excited and open-handed to whatever it is! We



pray that whether you're currently in a season of valleys or mountaintops, that you would experience the fullness of God, knowing that no season is wasted."

~ Megan and Jaren Sternard



## Employment Opportunities

Evangelical Child & Family Agency is seeking a Licensed (WI) Master's Level Social Services Supervisor and a Pregnancy Support Services worker of evangelical Christian faith for the Greater Milwaukee area.

Please see <https://www.ecfawisc.org/jobs> for more information.

## ECFA Foundation

The ECFA Foundation continues to support Agency services in several ways. Recently, the Foundation provided a grant for the purchase of much needed new computers for the New Berlin office. This gift will help our staff immeasurably.

Please consider investing in the ECFA Foundation. Your gift will support our work and ministry as we move into the future.

For information about how to direct a gift to the ECFA Foundation, please contact Tim Carrick at 630/653-6400.



# WITH A GRATEFUL HEART

There is a continual outpouring of blessings received by this ministry.  
As a result, there are many individuals to be grateful for in each quarterly newsletter.  
*"I will give thanks to the Lord with all my heart; I will tell of the wonders." Psalm 9:1*

## Serving at Our Office:

♥ Many hours of landscaping and supplies for our beautiful flower beds and flowerpots that we enjoy each day, by Tina Wiens

## Pregnancy Support Services/Baby Blessings Boutique:

♥ Baby boy outfits from Carol Honeyager  
♥ Baby blankets, clothes, formula and diapers from Andrea Schneider

## Miscellaneous Gifts:

♥ Delicious chips and snacks brought in for staff, from Dennis  
♥ For the great smelling hand soap bottles for our office from Carol Honeyager

## Memorials

In loving memory of: Michael Bartels  
From: Jerry & Michele Schmitz

In loving memory of: Perry Bartlett  
From: Donna Bartlett, Audrey Hale, Betty Ring, and Wendy Selensky

In loving memory of: My forever friend, Marian Davis  
From: Dixie Lee Craig

In loving memory of: Alex Muza, husband, father, Grandpa & Great-Grandpa  
From: Betty Muza

In loving memory of: Ed Plagemann, for his years of service to ECFA  
From: Dave & Jennie Tietjen

In loving memory of: Donna Relihan  
From: Jerry & Michele Schmitz

In loving memory of: Our parents, Howard & Maxine Ulvog  
From: Richard & Wendy Schoonhoven

## Tributes

In honor of: My friend, Nancy Farrell, for her birthday  
From: Carol Honeyager

In honor of: My friend, Margo Whitcomb  
From: Alice Laukert

In honor of: Gwen Wiens  
From: Ronald & Colleen Olejniczak

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## The Unexpected Invitation



The past three years have been a journey of trials and triumphs, pruning and preparing, grieving, growing, and gleaning. God used

this season to instruct me in many things. I appreciated the opportunity He provided to enjoy more family time, some travel, rewarding volunteer opportunities, and even follow dreams and attain goals.

I had some serious medical issues along the way which resulted in down time and healing, grew in knowledge and experience to become a gardener, wrote a book

(Mercy Extended, The Gift That Transforms Lives, Impacts Generations, and Mobilizes Multitudes for Eternity) and launched a website: [www.lindaoberbrunner.com](http://www.lindaoberbrunner.com).

In retiring and stepping back from ECFA in November 2017, I felt it allowed the next staff to gel as a team and seek God's direction for the future. What never changed was my admiration for the Mission & Vision of ECFA, especially my love of the Pregnancy Support Services Program and the opportunity to pour forth compassion to the birth moms and birth dads experiencing an unplanned pregnancy.

Sharing the joy of a relationship with Jesus Christ to those in difficult circumstances was always a

privilege I never took for granted. It was clear every client we served contacted the agency through the leading of the Holy Spirit.

In mid-April, Executive Director, Ken Withrow called me. He extended an invitation to come back to ECFA as a Pregnancy Support Services Program Consultant. Tears welled up since I was already prepared to give an answer.

I had turned down other job and ministry opportunities prior to his request and immediately realized this was why. On April 29, 2021, I began serving. Your prayers are coveted as we rebuild the PSS Program with a new team whom God has called to ECFA. ~ Linda Oberbrunner



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& Family Agency  
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## MARK YOUR CALENDAR

**ENCLOSED:**  
Bike & Hike Brochure  
Prayer Pathways Card  
Join Us!

**35th Bike & Hike Fundraiser,  
Supporting Moms, Dads, & Babies**  
Saturday, September 11th at 9 am,  
on the Glacial Drumlin Trail starting at  
Bethesda Park Shelter, Waukesha

ECFA's  
**Bike  
& HIKE!**  
Supporting Moms, Dads & Babies



**4th ECFA Benefit Auction, November 19th**  
Brookfield Sheraton  
Donations of new items greatly appreciated  
Please call Sue for details

**38th Anniversary Celebration, Saturday, May 14, 2022**  
with Point of Grace, Client Testimonies and more!  
Marriott Milwaukee West, Waukesha

For information about these events, contact Sue at the office 262.789.1881 or [suec@ecfawisc.org](mailto:suec@ecfawisc.org)