



# TRUE TO LIFE

An Evangelical Child and Family Agency Publication



## Adoption Training from a Christian Perspective



At ECFA, we desire to support, educate, and provide services to our adoptive couples in their journey. On Saturday, March 6th, we held our fourth "Adoption Training from a Christian Perspective." Since couples who adopt

domestically must complete six hours of in-person training, and there are very few agencies providing this opportunity due to COVID, couples were appreciative that we offered this training. Ten couples were in attendance, some of whom were referred from other agencies and traveled as far as Eau Claire and Green Bay to attend the training. Poplar Creek Church again let us host this six-hour, in-person training at their campus. We were given a wonderful room that not only met all the technological and instructional needs, but our social distancing needs as well.

The topics and presenters included the following:

"Adoption Parenting and Brain Trauma," presented by Bethany Blechacz. She and her husband, Phil, have been married for 17 years and have six children ages 7 to 18, three biological and three adopted from China through ECFA. She is passionate about encouraging friends and adoptive parents to see how God uses the hard seasons in life for His glorious purposes. Bethany has a wealth of knowledge about how trauma impacts a child's brain as well



as experience in parenting three adopted children from different backgrounds and with different needs.

"Grief-Loss-Transition-Change," presented by Maria Notch. She is married to her high-school sweetheart, Jacob, and is mother to Jacob Jr., MaryAnne and four babies in heaven. By her love for people and the Lord, Maria spreads the message of faith and hope for a rainbow to come after the storm. Maria understands the grief steps and process having experienced it a number of times which allows her to give practical application to adoptive parents.



"Relationships and Resolving Conflict in Adoptive Families," presented by Aaron and Karen Luebke. They have been married since 2014 and have one biological son, and an adopted daughter through ECFA in 2018. They are passionate about teaching conflict resolution and forgiveness to bring healing to families and restore right relationships. Their experience coming from different backgrounds and learning how to effectively communicate and work through conflict brings validity to their presentation.



The final activity of the day was hearing from an "Adoption Panel" consisting of past adoptive parents. The couples were encouraged to ask any questions

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they had about adoption or the adoption process. This "Q & A" session is a highlight for all who attend the training.

The ECFA staff of Dorinne Geldon, Adoption Social Worker; Jamie Olson, Social Services Secretary; and Jennie Tietjen, Director of Development

and Facilities put in extra time to make this event run smoothly. A huge thank you to Jim Valentine

and Cousins Subs for providing lunch for all 31 people in attendance that day.

God is at work at ECFA stretching us to bring families additional opportunities and support to assist them in their journey of adoption. We are thankful for the opportunity to share this training and look forward to another training in the fall.



## 37th Anniversary Celebration

It comes as no surprise that ECFA's major gathering and fund-raising event, the 37th Anniversary Celebration, scheduled to be held on Saturday, May 1, 2021, is being postponed again.

Since the agency cannot meet its donors in person this spring, it was decided to hold a "virtual banquet/fundraiser." Generous donors have supplied a matching (dollar for dollar) grant of \$10,000. The desire is to receive enough funds to maximize this opportunity. As support is received, the impact on families and clients is assured. In a recent letter to ECFA donors, it was asked if a timely gift to the agency would be possible. Would you consider giving a gift to ECFA as well? If so, please mark your envelope "Virtual Match." Or, if personal circumstances make giving difficult, the staff understands. Prayer on behalf of ECFA staff and clients is greatly appreciated. As you know, this has been a challenging year for almost every aspect of the ministry.

If this is a time in your life when you need prayer, the staff would count it a privilege and delight to pray

for you. Many of you have already sent in prayer requests to the agency. Thank you for trusting your concerns, heartaches, and joys with staff who truly care. Please feel free to use the enclosed envelope or communicate online at [www.ecfawisc.org/](http://www.ecfawisc.org/) contact.

The staff and clients are blessed beyond words with the kindness and encouragement expressed through your gifts to ECFA. A verse chosen for this time is Psalm 13:5-6, "But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation. I will sing the Lord's praise, for He has been good to me."

The 38th Anniversary Celebration Brunch event has been rescheduled for Saturday, May 14, 2022, at 9 am at the Marriott West in Waukesha. As the famous quote says, "Third time's the charm." Hopefully, this saying applies to ECFA's plans. A new and exciting aspect of this gathering will be a delicious brunch in place of a dinner. The program will include the music of Point of Grace along with hearing Agency updates and wonderful testimonies from clients. More information will follow in the coming months.



# ECFA Foundation in Support of ECFA Services

For many years, the ECFA Foundation has come alongside the Agency to provide for a number of special needs. In the fiscal year 2021, the Foundation provided three \$5,000 matching grants (\$15,000) for our three main fundraising events: Anniversary Celebration in May, Bike & Hike in September, and Benefit Auction in November. These grants have been wonderful incentives for our donors to match, having been doubled and sometimes tripled by supporters who took part in years past. The result for the Agency is much-needed funds that help underwrite the Pregnancy Support Services (PSS) program.

The Foundation has given support in other ways as well. It has assisted in the funding of additional hours

in clerical support for the social services programs, helped with printing of PSS marketing materials, and purchased a new LED video projector and screen for the conference room at the office. These funds have enabled staff to complete additional and backlogged clerical work, have contemporary and up-to-date PSS marketing materials, and have modern technology for meetings, trainings, etc. All of this has encouraged the staff greatly.

Please prayerfully consider an investment in the ECFA Foundation. This is a gift which keeps on giving to the Agency today and in the future.

For further information, please contact Tim Carrick at (630)653-6400.



 We are condensing our Facebook presence to feature only one page, and so we are removing our page titled "Pregnancy Support Services of ECFA serving SE Wisconsin" at the end of the day on Saturday, April 10th.

All our Facebook content going forward will be shared on our "Evangelical Child & Family Agency of Wisconsin" page. If you are not following us there already, please make sure to do so!



CHOOSE LIFE license plates help support pro-life centers in the state of Wisconsin.  
Do you have yours?

<https://wisconsin.gov/Pages/dmv/vehicles/title-plates/choose-life.aspx>

# Welcome Katie!



ECFA is happy to introduce the newest member of the Pregnancy Support Services team. Katie Ruth began on March 8th and has her BSW from UW Milwaukee. She will soon complete her MSW from Loyola University Chicago. Her husband Bob is a Milwaukee Police Officer, and they just celebrated their 10th wedding anniversary.

Katie has a strong passion for adoption that began four years ago when she and Bob applied to adopt their first son, Cesar. She will never forget the phone call that told them they could fly to bring him to his forever home. In October 2021, they welcomed Andres in their family. The boys are both from the wonderful country of Colombia which has become the family's home away from home. Their love continues to grow by leaps and bounds for the boys. They plan to adopt again in the future.



A question was asked of Katie, as to what drew her to ECFA. She answered, "Because of the mission. Helping families through pregnancy, adoption, and parenting is such an honor. Our own adoption social worker was such a blessing to us. I could only hope to be that for other families as well. I love that Christ is the center in everything we do at ECFA...I look forward to growing in this mission and helping promote ECFA both inside and outside of the office."

In her free time, Katie loves to be with family and friends, play with her boys, walk the dogs, and enjoy bonfires with neighbors. These activities bring her so much joy.



To the Faithful ECFA Family,

I have a personal prayer concern. During a recent hospitalization, I was diagnosed with a serious heart condition and therefore, have taken an unpaid medical leave from my responsibilities at the office. It is hoped that recovery will permit a return by early summer. With assistance from the Illinois office, our pro-life ministry to expectant mothers and adoptive families will continue uninterrupted. Thank you for your ongoing support and prayer on behalf of ECFA and me.

Jennie Tietjen  
Director of Development and Facilities



Two more checks arrived this winter totaling \$93.09 for the last two quarters. Thank you Amazon Shoppers!

If you are an Amazon.com customer, you may choose "**Evangelical Child & Family Agency**" as your favorite charity on AmazonSmile. AmazonSmile will donate 1/2% of your purchase to ECFA of Wisconsin.

Make sure your browser is:

<https://smile.amazon.com/>

# Post-Abortion Healing

As a Christian, pro-life ministry, Evangelical Child and Family Agency's Pregnancy Support Services (PSS) workers are saddened when they hear of a client who has chosen to end their pregnancy through abortion. One of the primary goals of the program is to help women in our community carry their pregnancy full term. However, it doesn't always work out that way.

Because we serve a loving and merciful God, the response of the PSS program is one of compassion, sensitivity, respect, and grace for those who have chosen abortion in their past. When statistics indicate that approximately 33% of women have experienced an abortion, that means that there are a lot of women with hidden pain.



For many, the shame of the unplanned pregnancy is compounded by the shame of the "solution to the problem", the abortion. Now, months or years later, to talk of one decision, necessitates the need to talk about both, and many women do not have non-judgmental people with whom they feel safe enough to share such intimate and traumatic details. As a result, these women isolate themselves, pursue self-destructive activities, and encounter emotional struggles such as anxiety, guilt, depression, being easily "triggered", or being consumed with the abortion experience.

Disenfranchised grief, also known as hidden sorrow, refers to grief that goes unrecognized or unvalidated by society. This type of grief is often minimized or not understood by others, which

makes it particularly hard to process and work through. Many women who have experienced an abortion must deal with this type of unsupported grief on a daily basis.

When a woman makes the decision to engage in counseling for post-abortion healing, social workers in the PSS program consider it an honor to walk alongside her through the healing process. Often, the worker will utilize a bible study specifically for women who have chosen abortion. This study leads them through raw emotions, painful memories, hurt and anger at self and others, and asking how God could forgive this transgression, when it is so hard for the woman to forgive herself. The goal is for the woman to be released from the bondage of guilt and shame, through God's remarkable grace.

Some of our friends at area pregnancy help centers also provide assistance through support groups, which can be very helpful. In PSS, our services are based on the individual, and are provided one-on-one, in order to really hone in on how to best meet the needs of each woman.

It is our hope that each woman who has chosen abortion will receive healing grace and forgiveness from our Lord and Savior. He desires to see her released from the shame and guilt that has held her prisoner. Psalms 103:10-12 speaks of how God shows love and mercy to us and "as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us."

Faith Allman, LCSW  
Pregnancy Support Services Supervisor  
ECFA, Illinois

*"as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him;  
as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us."*

**Psalms 103:10-12**

# Save The Date

Please join us for ECFA's 35th Annual Bike & Hike event!

## ECFA'S 2021 Bike & Hike

**Saturday, September 11th, 2021**

**9am-1pm**

**Bethesda Park Shelter in Waukesha**

We will walk or bike along the Fox River Trail

**Look for registration details on  
our website [www.ecfawisc.org](http://www.ecfawisc.org) after  
July 1st**



Planning is underway for the annual

## ECFA Benefit Auction!

**Friday, November 19th, 2021**

We're beginning to solicit items for auction at the event, and we are requesting donations of new items or cash for use in purchasing auction items.

**Please contact Sue Carlson at  
262-789-1881 for information about  
how you can help.**





# 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*

♥ Thank you to all the dedicated volunteers who assembled a mailing for the agency the end of January and mid-April:

- |                   |                       |
|-------------------|-----------------------|
| Annette Cernohous | Lauren Olson          |
| Joyce Dankert     | Julie Patterson       |
| Char Duranceau    | Katie Ruth            |
| Marvin Engle      | Darleen & Phil Snyder |
| Nancy Farrell     | Shevonn Tate          |
| Sharon Fuller     | Dave Tietjen          |
| Carol Honeyager   | Margo Whitcomb        |
| Anita Julius      | Tina Wienss           |
| Patti Miller      | Friends of ECFA       |
| Gail Moses        |                       |

## Serving at Our Office:

- ♥ For the painting of Katie's office, by Marvin Engle.
- ♥ Cleaning projects inside and outside, by Aiden Tietjen.

## Pregnancy Support Services/Baby Blessings Boutique:

- ♥ Handmade soft baby blankets from an anonymous donor.
- ♥ Toddler pajamas from an anonymous donor.
- ♥ Knit baby hats from Mary Ellen Burbey.
- ♥ Baby clothes from Alice Reimer.
- ♥ Boppy pillow with covers, baby swing, bouncy seat, play mat, bassinet and baby seat from Sharon LaCoursiere.
- ♥ Baby nail care set, bibs, soft blankets, blanket buddies set and Mommy & Daddy mugs from Kristi Webster.
- ♥ Laundry soap for moms from Carol Honeyager.
- ♥ Baby dolls and hooded towels from Judy Bartels.
- ♥ Dr. Brown's baby bottles and baby wipes from Lori Cottrill.

## Memorials

In loving memory of: Gloria Anderson  
From: Dave & Jennie Tietjen, and James & Leah Valentine

In loving memory of: Ron Baer  
From: Leanne Harbaugh, and Beverly Kuntzsch

In loving memory of: Bill Bartels  
From: Bill & Lynn Blaser, Leo & Joy Jankowski, Craig & Jennie Peplin, Victoria Rodriguez-Hartung, Jeff & Lynn Stone, Kaye Swanson, and Todd & Cherrill Warren

In loving memory of: Richard Engelhardt  
From: An anonymous donor

In loving memory of: Our father, John Hillmer  
From: John & Bonnie Hillmer

In loving memory of: Our sister, Carol Learned  
From: Ken & Gerry Connor

In loving memory of: Alex Muza, Husband, Father, Grandpa & Great-Grandpa  
From: Betty Muza

In loving memory of: My wife, Janet  
From: Jerry Schley

In loving memory of: Our friend, Albert (Al) Smith  
From: Dave & Jennie Tietjen

In loving memory of: My dear wife, Sarah Troxell  
From: Gary Troxell

## Tributes

In honor of: Our sister, Kathy Misany  
From: Roger & Bonnie Bellin

## Is it Time to Make Your Will?

You need no longer delay this critical matter.  
Call 262-789-1881 to request our workbook "Preparing a Christian Will." It will guide you through the process to gathering the information that is needed by your attorney to draft your personal document.

There is no charge or obligation.

Preparing  
A Christian  
Will



Evangelical Child  
& Family Agency  
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# MARK YOUR CALENDAR

## **37th Anniversary Celebration, May 1st**

Will be postponed again this year due to COVID restrictions  
**More info inside newsletter.**

## **35th Bike & Hike Fundraiser, Supporting Moms, Dads, & Babies**

Saturday, September 11th at 9 am, on the Fox River Trail  
at Bethesda Park Shelter, Waukesha

## **4th ECFA Benefit Auction, November 19th**

More info to follow in summer newsletter

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