



Summer 2020

TRUE TO LIFE

A publication of Evangelical Child & Family Agency

OUR WAIT FOR ADOPTION

When my husband Matt and I first talked about our heart for adoption many years ago, we had no idea the plans God would lay out as we embarked on this journey. Although He used infertility as a vessel to jumpstart the process, it was by no means a plan B, but rather has always been God's perfect first plan for us.

In 2010, we were relocated to Chicago from the east coast by Matt's job. After just a year of employment in this new city, he got laid off. We were already into our pursuit of adoption and this unfortunate let-go, just reinforced God's clear plan of why He even led us to Illinois in the first place... to build our family!

We were so blessed to be introduced to Evangelical Child and Family Agency through a close friend from church who was currently going through the adoption process. We truly believe that our adoption journey would have been much different, if it had not been for the godly leadership and support that we received from the staff at ECFA.

We knew that going with a smaller agency could possibly increase our wait time, but we felt confident that the care we would receive from them would outweigh our uncertainty of a timeline. And mostly, we knew of the care that our future birth mother would receive; the loving kindness and support to make the healthiest choice for herself and her baby, whether that included adoption or not.

Our wait did turn into longer than we had hoped or imagined, and by the 3 year mark it became clear that I was struggling with my timing for a family, as opposed to God's timing. I hit a point in the wait where I just needed to fully surrender my heart and desires to Him. There are so many things that are going on in the



adoption process that are unseen, as when God is working a million things! Our social worker, Barb, was such a blessing and encouragement to us through that difficult waiting time; praying with us and assuring us of God's timing and provision during the process.

I received a promotion during this time and ironically enough, after 9 months in my new position, we got that unforgettable call. A birth mother, who had viewed our profile with 2 others, had chosen us to be the family to adopt her son! I will never forget the surreal elation that overwhelmed our hearts. A week later we met with her at the agency. We were so nervous and excited all at the same time.

I can't begin to tell you how God orchestrated that meeting and how smoothly everything went. The

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ECFA STAFF NEWS



Lauren Matovu was a former intern at ECFA while earning a Master's in Social Work (MSW) degree at Aurora University. She worked as a volunteer at Serve for Hope and Venture Corps, NFP, in the countries of Uganda and Kenya. Lauren joined ECFA in October 2018 as a case manager in the Intact Family Services Program. In June 2020, she transferred to the Adoption Program. She fills the position left by long-time adoption social worker, Joyanna Dreisbach, who is now a stay-at-home mom with her newborn daughter.



Elena Johnson joined the Intact Family Services Program as a case manager in May. She is bicultural and bilingual Spanish-speaking. Elena earned both BSW and MSW degrees at Aurora University. She has worked as a youth development specialist and parent mentor at Family Focus Aurora. She also has been a case manager at DuPage County Senior Services. Elena and her family attend New City Church which meets at Glenbard South High School in Glen Ellyn.



Evangelical Child and Family Agency was one of the DuPage County not-for-profit organizations to receive a grant from the DuPage Foundation this spring.

This \$10,000 grant will help support the Agency's counseling services to low income seniors and to Spanish speaking individuals and families with mental health needs.

Since its inception, the DuPage Foundation has grown to more than \$95 million in assets and awarded nearly \$45 million in grants to not-for-profit agencies serving the residents of DuPage County and beyond. During the past fiscal year, \$6.8 million was awarded from the Foundation's funds on behalf of donors and the community.

OUR WAIT FOR ADOPTION

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experience felt so natural and our love for this woman was instantaneous. She then pulled out her phone to show us a picture of our soon to be son, and I wept as I knew God had brought us to the moment we had waited so long for.

When we decided that we wanted to grow our family again, it never crossed our minds to go in any other direction than through ECFA. Because the wait could be long again, they did recommend that we branch out to other agencies to get more exposure if we would like. So we did just that.

Waiting for number 2 was much easier as we had our first son to keep us quite busy! However, the journey to our second son was also very difficult in its own way; and in some ways, even harder.

We got the call on a Monday and flew to Rhode Island the next day. After many hurdles, and a month staying in Rhode Island, we went home without him, not knowing if one day we would be bringing him home. After 4 months of legal work from afar in Illinois, we were able to bring him home that November, under Rhode Island's guidelines to foster to adopt. It wasn't until another year later, on December 4th, that we officially adopted him into our family!

We see God's hand of provision through each step of the way and into the details of our open adoptions. The



relationships we have are truly a gift and I believe God designed them for our family. Adoption is both beauty and ash... a story of redemption that God has allowed in the here and now.

The adoption triad has loss for all parties involved and yet, God has given us a sweet gift amidst that hardship. Our birth families and the sacrifices they have made are not lost on us. We are so grateful that we serve a Lord who is in the business of redeeming things and has allowed us to build our family on that foundation.

As Christians we always seem to be in a season of "wait"; whether it's for a spouse, a child, or another answer to prayer. Yet, we are ultimately awaiting the fullness of Christ and His return. Through our adoption process, we started to see that parallel of waiting. By God's grace and His power in spirit, we tried to use our time wisely and "to be content in all circumstances" (Phil. 4:11-13).

The theme of "waiting and trusting" is weaved through our entire adoption journey. I am grateful to the Lord that He allowed us to see a glimpse of His purposes in those times, and that we didn't completely miss the good He was doing. Of course, we can't always see God's full plan, we rarely do, at least not on this side of Heaven.

Danielle, Adoptive Mom



ECFA Celebrates 70 Years!

May 1st marked ECFA's 70th Anniversary as a child welfare agency serving the metropolitan Chicago community. We had planned a celebration event at Abbington Distinctive Banquets in Glen Ellyn. However, due to COVID-19, our Annual Love-in-Action Dinner was postponed until April 30, 2021. Even though we were not able to celebrate with our friends and supporters as we had hoped, we did receive a very generous matching grant of \$35,000.

Many of our donors rallied around us and contributed an additional \$45,000 in support of ECFA. So, even though we were not able to celebrate our 70th Anniversary in the traditional sense, we were still incredibly blessed with a total of \$80,000 in much needed funds for which we are most grateful. Thanks to all who expressed support for the work and ministry of ECFA at this special milestone in the Agency's history!



ECFA FOUNDATION

The ECFA Foundation was founded in 1995 through the efforts of Henrietta VanDerMolen, a long-time board member and supporter of the Agency. The mission of the Foundation is to promote and support the interests and purposes of ECFA as it offers Christ-centered services to children, families and individuals.

Over the past ten years, due to the generosity of donors, the Foundation has contributed approximately \$570,000 back to the Agency. The Foundation's specific contributions to the Agency over the years have included the following:

- Scholarships for employees to complete their Masters of Social Work (MSW) degree
- Funding for new programs
- Assistance for equipment and automobile purchases
- Matching fund grants for major ECFA events
- Initial funding for new ECFA positions

A new means of contributing to the Foundation stems from the "Protecting Americans from Tax Hikes Act", also known as the IRA charitable rollover. This allows retirees to make charitable gifts directly to a qualified charitable organization, such as the Foundation, from their IRA without treating the distribution as taxable income. This also applies to the annual IRA Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) when applicable. The RMD has been waived for 2020, but will be applicable in future years.

ECFA has also partnered with the Barnabas Foundation to assist individuals in preparing wills and estate plans which prudently provide for bequests to Christian charities. In addition to direct donations and bequests, gifts of appreciated stock or other assets are also excellent opportunities for contributions to the Foundation.

Please prayerfully consider an investment in the ECFA Foundation, a gift which keeps on giving back to the Agency into the future.

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

2020 AUCTION GOES ONLINE



For many years, the ECFA family of supporters has come together for our Annual Benefit Auction. While it is a great time to catch up with friends and have some fun, the heart of the event is your compassionate generosity which enables ECFA to provide hope and healing to children, adults, and families. That compassion and generosity will be needed this year more than ever, as the complexities of dealing with Covid-19 have led us to move our auction from an “in person” event, to an “online” event. As we keep our eyes fixed on serving God and others, we place the safety of our supporters and staff first, and thank you in advance for your continued support. Due to this altered format, instead of the 300+ items which are typically available, we will be reducing the number of items while also attempting to increase the average value of each item.

As with every auction, we need your help in securing items to place up for bid. Would you partner with us by giving items with a minimum retail value of \$100, or by donating any amount in cash so we may purchase items for this event? All items or monetary gifts need to be received no later than October 9th, 2020. Thank you for your patience and prayerful consideration in supporting this year’s event.

Want to stay informed? Visit our website (www.evanca.org) for the most current information and/or to sign up for our e-Newsletter. **If you have questions, please contact Tony Malandro by phone (331-333-0505) or email at tonym@evanca.org.**



YOU ARE NEEDED!

ECFA has many opportunities for volunteers to use their gifts in support of our ministry to those in need, and we’re always happy to talk with prospective volunteers to find an opportunity that fits your interests and availability. Right now, we have a critical need for volunteer clerical support. You don’t need any special skills, but your efforts will be a huge blessing to ECFA staff as you lighten their

load. Another area of demand is transportation. While most of us take it for granted, not everyone has a working vehicle. ECFA staff frequently takes the time to shuttle clients to various appointments, for groceries, and other daily living tasks. If you’d be willing to serve as a “driver” for our clients in need, let us know! **To find out more about volunteering, please call Tony Malandro, at 331-333-0505.**

“Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms.”

1 Peter 4:10-11



Evangelical Child & Family Agency

STRIDE FOR LIFE

Like many other organizations, ECFA has had to adjust to this year's events. Although COVID-19 restrictions prevent us from getting together in person, we will still be having our annual Stride for Life event where we run, walk, and bike to support ECFA's life affirming services. This year we will be holding a virtual event, which allows for participation from literally anywhere, and at various times, making it easier than ever to participate. Get together with friends and family anytime between Saturday, September 19th and Saturday, September 26th to run, walk, or bike the distance of your choice, collect donations, and help support ECFA's ongoing efforts to:

**Prevent Child Abuse and Neglect
Strengthen Families and Affirm Life**

Registration fees are \$25 for adults and \$10 for children 14 and under, and include an event t-shirt for those who complete registration by August 17th.

We have been blessed with a generous grant of \$6,000 in matching funds for this year's event. In other words, every one of the first \$6,000 dollars raised/gifted (beyond the registration fees) will be doubled! With your compassionate giving and partnership, we can attain our goal of raising \$15,000 for children and families struggling during this challenging season.

**Details on registering for this event can be found on our on our website:
www.evancfa.org/events**



PREGNANCY SUPPORT SERVICES CLIENTS NEED YOUR SUPPORT!

As the Covid 19 pandemic goes into its 5th month in Illinois, the negative effects are far-reaching. Aside from the medical aspect of this disease, it has hurt our families in the PSS program emotionally and financially. Our clients, who thrive on interpersonal contact, are struggling with depression due to the isolation of the “shelter in place” mandate. Those clients who are prone to anxiety are facing new fears about their own vulnerabilities to the many aspects of Covid -19. Many clients have lost their jobs or had their hours severely reduced, making it difficult to cover their expenses.

Below is a list of often requested items for our young families.

- Baby toiletries such as baby wash, diaper cream, shampoo
- Diaper wipes
- Fragrance free laundry detergent
- Gift cards to Aldi, Jewel, Walmart, or Target

Items can be dropped off at or mailed to:
1530 N Main St. Wheaton, IL 60187



Now, more than ever, it's important for Pregnancy Support Services to help clients in practical ways. Our supporters have been faithful over the years to help the program meet the needs of its clients. We call on you to continue that support for our vulnerable clients. Your continued partnership is greatly appreciated.

In order to keep our staff and our clients safe, we are not able to accept donations of used items at this time. Thank you for understanding.

Financial donations are always welcome. Please visit our website at www.evanca.org/giving. Be sure to note that the gift is for PSS.

Thank you for your continued partnership. Your support is a blessing to those we serve.

In Christ,
Faith Allman, PSS Supervisor

Memorials - In Loving Memory

Johan Schripsema

*From: Arlan Menninga
George De Vries
George Hoekstra
Betty Van Bruggen
Dale and Kathleen Melin
Henry and Mary Lou Bos
Dennis and Susan Scholtens
Andrew and Christine Schutt
Derk and Jan Deckinga
Derk and Sandra Deckinga
Edward and Edith Turkington
Bob Boerema
Becky DeVries*

Rev Herbert and Eleanor Gotaas and Phyllis Gotaas

From: June White

Ann Tonkin

From: Allen Tonkin

Leota Young

*From: Barry and Kathryn Pleshek
Thomas and Marla Long*

Pete Romin

From: Miriam Romin

Evelyn Boonstra

From: Charles and Debbie Slager

COVID 19 Victims

From: Teri Schuman

Eleanor Hill

From: Suzanne Evans

Misty Schroeder, Jim Schroeder, Donald R. Reeve (Sr), Ryan Reeve, and Donna Rose Reeve Kouros

From: Rose Reeve

Kathi Burkman

From: Carl and Norette Burkman

Richard Martin

From: Edith Martin

Robert Wiltjer

From: Beverly Stob

Brian's and Brianne's Grandmothers

From: Steve and Sheri Durfey

Tributes - In Honor of

ECFA Staff

*From:
Bill and Marilyn Newell
Ruth Stiemann*

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