



# TRUE TO LIFE

Summer 2021

A Publication of Evangelical Child & Family Agency

## Anders' Story as told by Ruth, Suzanne, and Anders

**Ruth (adoptive mom):** John and I met and married during college, and we desired to have children as soon as possible. Our labor lasted 9 years – labors of infertility treatments and failed private adoptions. It was an emotional roller coaster – hopes and dreams that rose, then shattered on a monthly basis.

As hopeful as we were to adopt, my heart went out to the birth parents; thinking that it must be such a difficult decision to place their child for adoption. Finally, we were blessed with adoption through ECFA of a baby boy we named Jonathan in January of 1984. Our hearts were full of the joys and challenges of having a baby!

We again started the adoption process through ECFA a year and half later, and we received “the call” in June of 1986 – a baby boy!! Our hearts were overjoyed with a son we named Anders (family name)!

Since they were young, our boys have known they are adopted – that it was so special that they had two sets of parents that loved them. We would also support them in their desire to seek out their birth parents at a time when they felt they were ready.

Anders' birth parents chose to continue communication with us through ECFA. What a joy it was to share with them his life through letters as he grew up! We remained anonymous to each other, but in each letter, I tried to describe in detail all about Anders in his growing up years.

One of life's lessons learned, especially through adoption, is that we as parents do not “own” our children. They are given to us through birth or adoption as a tremendous gift from God. Our task is to raise them in a godly manner and to prepare them to use their unique gifts to give to others.



*Ruth, Anders, & Suz*

We are at a place now where both boys have families of their own. As wonderful as parenting has been, what great joy it is to be grandparents!

**Suzanne (birth mom):** I sought out ECFA after I became pregnant at the end of a long-term relationship with a man who was 45 when my second son was born. He had raised a child on his own, and the ups and downs of that experience, plus raising a child with special needs of my own, let me know that there was NO positive space for my second son.

ECFA and adoption were my answer. Eleanor Hill and Bev Ozinga helped me figure out what to do responsibly with this pregnancy. I found a “home” for my son through the help of ECFA.

I never forgot my second son. I never had a day that I did not think about him. However, I moved on! I had my first son to raise. I had done all the responsible things I could for my second son. Through the years, I kept ECFA aware of my whereabouts, and on March 2, 2018, I received a letter from Bev Ozinga telling me she had news for me. I called immediately knowing the son I had placed for adoption, now 31, was writing. I believe his adoptive parents' sensitivity in letting him explore and seek out his birth parents in his own time was extremely important.

Anders had been married for a year and was attending medical school. He and his wife were expecting their first child. He said he wanted to know if his characteristics were “nature OR nurture.”

Anders' birth father was apprised that his son had made contact. They also connected with each other and they continue to communicate. His biological father and I, and his half-brothers, fit with the adoptive family as an extension of people who love him, his wife, and child.

While I did not raise Anders, my love and concern for him and his family is very present to me daily. I am so grateful to receive pictures of this young family

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## Anders' Story *continued*

and his adoptive parents. My family has fun writing and sharing the joys of their family events.

I believe this has worked because we all are appreciative of our relationships, and respectful of our boundaries, allowing EACH person to direct their own lives, and trust the Divine to handle the rest.

**Anders (adoptee):** I cannot remember a time when I did not know I was adopted. I mostly remembered this at the beginning of each school year when sharing an interesting fact about myself with the class, or when my friends would joke with me about what my



*Anders, Grace, & Theo*

birth parents were like.

I could not have grown up in a household with two parents who loved me any more than they did, so I never once thought about having different parents or a different family. If anything, it was actually something that made me feel a little special.

I would often see portrayals of people in movies or TV who had been adopted. I remember finding it strange that any of

them had the perspective that they were unwanted or unloved. That thought never crossed my mind.

Any time it came up in conversation, my parents always emphasized how difficult that decision must have been, and how much they must have loved me in order to make it. I always knew a good deal about my birth parents as well. My parents always shared with me any information I asked for or that they had. So, I always had a good idea of what they were like, and that was enough for me for a long time.

I am ashamed to say that for a very long time I didn't give much thought to how difficult it must have been for my birth parents to have to wait for me to get in contact with them. My initial thoughts for contacting them were mostly out of curiosity, which began in my 20s. As I learned more about who I was as a person, I began to wonder why I was the way that I was.

"Nature vs nurture" was always something that interested me. Contacting them was something I talked about doing, but never pulled the trigger on doing. I graduated college with a physics degree. After doing some soul searching to figure out what I wanted to do with my life (and some self-discovery), I began thinking more about my birth parents.

I eventually decided on going to medical school. While pursuing this, I met my future wife, who at that time was going through the process of placing her son for adoption. After learning that I was adopted, she asked me my thoughts on this. Knowing her through this experience gave me a new perspective on what my birth parents went through.



*John, Ruth, & Suz*

I believe it helped me to finally decide to get in contact with ECFA.

I contacted ECFA, and in less than a week, I received an email from my birth mom. Shortly after that, I got in contact with my birth father, and then with a half-brother on my mom's side, and a half-brother on my dad's side. I have not fully processed and cannot describe what this all means to me or how it has affected me; especially after my wife and I have had a baby boy of our own.

I can only say for sure that it has been a completely positive experience. My parents have been 100% supportive and actually are good friends and speak frequently with my birth parents. My birth parents have completely opened their lives to me and have become like a second set of parents to me, and also grandparents to my son.

They live across the country from us, but we have had visits with them and they have had visits with us. Not surprisingly, we share quite a lot in common and we all became fast friends.

They have given me the space I need to process everything at my own pace and to continue to live my life; something I am deeply grateful for. They are truly a permanent part of our family and they have made us feel like a permanent part of theirs.



# Prairie Landing Golf 2021

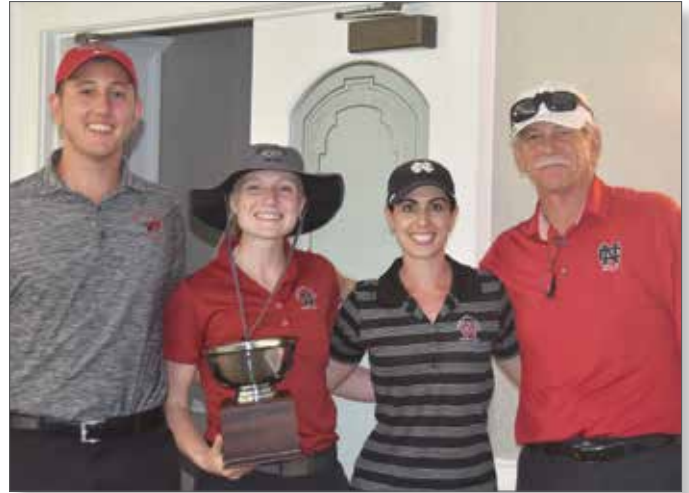
On Monday, June 14th, ECFA history was made at our annual Golf Outing and Silent Auction at Prairie Landing Golf Club in West Chicago. Not only were we blessed with gorgeous weather, but also a record number of 80 attendees and raised (>\$26,000)!

After registration and a quick peek at the auction items, golfers enjoyed a Continental Breakfast before they hit the links. The weather and golf course could not have been more beautiful and our golfers enjoyed socializing with friends and meeting new acquaintances.

Immediately following golf, hors d'oeuvres and desserts were served as attendees listened to brief, powerful testimonies and informative explanations of what we do, by our Pregnancy Support Services, Adoption, and Intact Family Counselors.

Our silent auction included over 50 items. Bidding was generous and participants walked away with prizes such as a week's stay at a Florida condo, a set of Taylor Made irons, a GoPro Hero 9, an aerial HD camera/drone, and Sonos Arc XL soundbar to name a few.

With your generous support, we will continue our journey of saving tiny lives, placing children into the arms of loving parents, and teaching families in crisis how to lovingly and more effectively parent. Thank you to all of our golfers, donors, sponsors, supporters, and volunteers. Your efforts to further our mission and spread His word to families in need is greatly appreciated.



Congratulations to the team from North Central College who won the College Presidents' Cup Invitational: Lincoln Slagel, Frankie Saban, Alayna Dufour, and Jim Alderfer



Congratulations to the winners of our Open Scramble Event: Dennis Demoss, Gene Crume, Tim Schofield, and Ethan Suits



Savannah Geeve



Alayana Dufour

# Meet

# The

# New

# Staff



**Jessica Curry** joined the Pregnancy Support Services (PSS) Team as a pregnancy counselor after completing her internship in the PSS Program. She earned a BA in Psychology from the University of Central Arkansas and will soon finish a Master's Degree in Social Work program at Aurora University. Jessica and her family attend Calvary Church in Naperville.



**Hayes Anderson** began in her role as the Development Associate in June. She works closely with our Development Director, Tony Malandro, on special events, social media, donor relations and other areas of development. She has a BA in Communication and Journalism from Western Kentucky University, and many years of experience doing event planning and fundraising events. Hayes and her family attend Hosanna Church in St. Charles.



**BreAnna Mikic** joined the Intact Family Services Team in June. She earned both a Bachelor's Degree and a Master's Degree in Social Work from Aurora University. BreAnna and her family attend Life Church of Glenview where she serves on the media team.



**Lynn Peterson** has been a faithful volunteer at ECFA. In May, she joined our staff as a part-time receptionist. She has many years of experience as an office manager and as a clerical worker. Lynn also attends Calvary Church in Naperville.

# Annual Benefit Auction Update

Calling all ECFA supporters! Plans are well underway to prepare for the 2021 Annual Benefit Auction, and **you can help**. How? First of all, mark your calendars and plan to **join us at Abbington Distinctive Banquets** in Glen Ellyn on Friday, November 12th for an evening of fun in support of ECFA. Secondly, **we are currently in need of items to place up for bid at the event**. In general, we'd love to have new items with a retail value of \$25 or more. You can mail, drop off, or contact Tony Malandro (630-653-6400) to arrange for pick up.



You can also send a check and we'll purchase items for you! As always, we are thankful for your support of ECFA's ministries to share God's love with those seeking to adopt, those in need of counseling, women dealing with unplanned pregnancies and families in crisis.

*Remember this? We are looking forward to seeing all of you again this fall!*

Finally, please pray for God's hand upon this, our largest fundraising event of the calendar year. Keep an eye on the "Events" section of our website ([www.evanca.org](http://www.evanca.org)) for more information as plans progress.



*Not sure what to buy? You can purchase items directly from our Amazon Wish List by scanning the QR code, or using the following website URL:*



[https://www.amazon.com/hz/wishlist/ls/3QFACBMX6G2XS?ref\\_=wl\\_share](https://www.amazon.com/hz/wishlist/ls/3QFACBMX6G2XS?ref_=wl_share)



## ECFA Foundation

This year, the ECFA Foundation will provide funding for counseling services to economically challenged individuals and families, a part-time adoption worker for kids in the child welfare system, a part-time bilingual Spanish-speaking pregnancy support services case manager, and assistance with other agency needs.

Please consider investing in the ECFA Foundation. Your gift will support our work and ministry to children and families in need, 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.



# Love In Action 2021 Update

In lieu of our normal in-person *Love In Action* dinner in 2021, Executive Director, Ken Withrow, issued an appeal letter to request donations to ECFA. We are thrilled and blessed to report that we have received gifts in excess of \$75,000 from our partners in ministry.

Our generous supporters enable ECFA to continue our service to those in need of counseling, women

struggling with unplanned pregnancies, those seeking to adopt and to be adopted, and children suffering from child abuse and neglect. Those are the people we are honored to serve and share God's love. Thank you all for making this unusual *Love In Action* event a spectacular success!

We look forward to seeing you at our "in-person" event next year on Friday, April 22nd, 2022.



## Stride for Life

PREVENT CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT  
STRENGTHEN FAMILIES AND AFFIRM LIFE

Our annual "Stride for Life" event will be held Saturday, September 18th, at Herrick Lake in Wheaton. Join us for a day of exercise, family fun, food, and fellowship. You choose the level of activity you'd like, as you run, walk, or bike marked trails. Lunch is provided, and we'll have plenty of fun and games, including a balloon artist and face painter for kids of all ages. Can't make it? That's OK, you can also register and participate virtually at the location of your choosing!

With your help, we can reach our goal of raising \$15,000 to support ECFA's services to children and families, like Linda (Pregnancy Support Services client):

*"Having my daughter has changed my life. The responsibility can be overwhelming at times but the support that I received through PSS assisted me tremendously. My counselor really helped me prepare for having a baby during a critical and emotional time in my life. I am grateful that there was somewhere to turn when I needed guidance and support."*

Registration is \$25 for adults and \$10 for children 12 and under. **Those who collect sponsorships/donations of \$250 or more will receive a gift card of their choosing!** Be sure to register before August 27th to secure your event t-shirt. Event details and registration can be found online at:

<<https://evanca.org/events/stride-for-life>>



*For illustration only*

# The Value of Volunteers

*"No one is more cherished in this world than someone who lightens the burden of another."*

*~ Author Unknown*

Our newest volunteers for Pregnancy Support Services (PSS) have certainly lightened the load of the workers in the program. In the past 6 months, God has met a huge need and we now have 15 regular volunteers! The current areas of volunteering within the PSS program are drivers to pick up diaper donations, PSS Closet organizers, translators for non-English speaking clients, and mentors.

Two years ago, the PSS Program established a relationship with a diaper bank in Waukegan called "Keeping Families Covered." This partnership allows our clients to receive up to 200 diapers per month, as well as other baby/child necessities like car seats, clothing, and formula. We have been incredibly blessed by this partnership and know our clients are very appreciative as well.

Before our volunteers began to help us, our staff would spend a half day every 2 weeks going to Waukegan for the diaper pick up. Now we have 4 wonderful volunteer drivers who take turns, averaging 1 trip every 2 months. This is a great help to the PSS workers and an immense support to our clients.

After the Agency fire in 2018, the PSS Team had very little room for baby necessities because of cramped, temporary work spaces. When we moved back into the Agency building in March 2020, we were excited to reorganize and began to collect baby donations again.

Then COVID-19 hit and we decided not to receive donations due to the virus being so contagious. This Spring, we were allowed to accept donations again and the donations flooded in. Thankfully, we have 3 creative volunteers who love to sort and organize the PSS closet so that the workers know right where baby and maternity items are kept.

The PSS Team loves to help clients who are from other countries adjust to living in America, to learn about safety standards here, and to feel less isolated. A



common challenge is language. We are grateful to have one Arabic translator, Rebecca, who has worked with several of our clients with great success.

However, our need for translators kept increasing, so we put out the word that we needed more Arabic translators. Fortunately, we were able to add 3 additional ones that we have already put to work. At this time, we are without a bilingual, Spanish-speaking PSS worker, so we have acquired a Spanish speaking translator as well. This helps assure that the client and worker are able to communicate effectively with each other.

We find that many of our PSS clients lack positive female relationships. This may be due to a troubled family background, distance from family members, death of loved ones, or other tragedy that has led to isolation. This vacuum of positive role models is why the PSS team created the mentoring program. At this time, the program has 3 volunteer mentors who are each matched to build a relationship with a PSS client.

PSS mentors make a one-year commitment to connect with a new mom several times a month in order to provide encouragement, support, friendship, and guidance. Some ways our mentors have helped, include doing a Bible study, going to church together, meeting at the zoo, getting together to have coffee or share a common hobby, or simply going to the park.

The PSS staff is profoundly grateful for every one of these volunteers. Their availability, interests, and ways of serving may be very different, but to the PSS team, they are all deeply valued and appreciated. If you want to learn about any one of these volunteer opportunities in PSS, please contact Faith Allman at [faitha@evancfa.org](mailto:faitha@evancfa.org) to start a conversation about using your time and talents in the program.

*~Faith Allman, Supervisor  
Pregnancy Support Services*

# Memorials - In Loving Memory

**Mr. and Mrs. Clark Comstock**

*From: Martha Comstock*

**Bonnie Fisher**

*From: Daryl and Ann Caneva  
Daniel and Sarah Collins*

**Eleanor Hill**

*From: Edmund and Rhonda Covarrubias*

**Ann Horne**

*From: Mrs. Marian Schultz*

**Sylvia Kietzman**

*From: Deanna Chase*

**Dr. Mabel Koshy**

*From: Tomachen and Mary Kutty*

**Barbara McFadden**

*From: April and Dave Edwards*

**Carol Ann Novick**

*From: Charles and Donna Phebus*

**James Weeks**

*From: Robert and Marian Elliot*

**Minerva Williams**

*From: Mr. and Mrs. George Dearing*

**Charity Zigterman**

*From: Paul and Bonnie Zigterman*

# Tributes - In Honor of

**Mr. Thomas Idichandy**

*In recognition of his 88th birthday and 25 years of  
service  
as ECFA's Director of Professional Services from  
1969 to 1994.*

**Ken and Kathy Martin**

*From:  
Edmund and Rhonda Covarrubias*

**Tim Martin**

*From:  
Edmund and Rhonda Covarrubias*

**Ralph Todd**

*From:  
Faith and Scott Allman  
Edward and Kerry Todd  
Mrs. Jessie Todd  
Kevin and Brenda Todd*

**David Wollard**

*From:  
Mr. and Mrs. Robert J. Wollard*

**Deborah Wollard Swift**

*From: Mr. and Mrs. Robert J. Wollard*

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