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PARENTGUIDE

Concerned Persons for Adoption (CPFA) was featured in the March 2007 Issue of the New Jersey PARENTGUIDE News Magazine.

Below is the article from the on-line version:

<http://parentguidenews.com/articles/March07/Concerned.php>

Concerned About Kids

A local adoption support group helps children find a home and parents find a voice.

by Kathleen Strakosch Walz,
Pat Bennett and Janet O'Neill

PARENTGUIDE NEWS March 2007

In 1972, a small group of women organized an adoptive parent support group with a clear mission of education, networking and advocacy, dedicated to the belief that "every child deserves a family." Thirty-four years later, Concerned Parents for Adoption (CPFA) is still one of the area's most notorious adoption support groups, and its volunteers still take their mission just as seriously.

One of the most valuable aspects of CPFA is that it is not associated with any specific agency, attorney or type of adoption. While a plethora of information on adoption is available in books and on the Internet, the strength of the support group is the community of parents who have dealt with infertility, the intricacies of the adoption process, and who are ready and willing to share their experiences and knowledge. Members include parents of infants and older children adopted domestically and internationally, through agencies, attorneys and Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS). The breadth of experience represented by this group of adoptive parents is remarkable, and it's worth tapping into. Networking is very important in every stage of adoption, since the challenges and joys are unique.

Educational programs are held monthly and cover a wide variety of adoption-related topics relevant to both pre-adoptive and post-adoptive parents. Examples of programs provided by adoption professionals as well as volunteer speakers include Adoption 101, Adoption and School Issues, Birthmother Panel Discussion, Loss and Grief in Adoption, Hot Issues in

International and Domestic Adoption, Adult Adoptee Panel Discussion and Parenting Your Adopted Child. A lending library of adoption-related books, magazines and videos is also available to members at monthly programs. Through its monthly newsletter, CPFA provides interesting articles and serves as a good resource during all stages of the adoption journey.

The group has attracted highly qualified speakers at both its educational programs and annual "Let's Talk Adoption" Conference held at Rutgers University. November 2006 marked the 25th year of this excellent conference, which attracted approximately 500 attendees from the tri-state area. It provided a full day of speakers, agency exhibits, book sales and a choice of 36 different workshops for pre- and post-adoptive parents, social workers, guidance counselors and educators.

Besides offering support to those touched by adoption, CPFA also hosts four social events throughout the year including a Cultural Heritage Party, Summer Picnic, Halloween Party and Holiday Party. Both children and parents benefit by interacting with other families created through adoption. Adoption is one of the many ways to form a family; spending time with other adoptive families normalizes the experience for adopted children whose school and social lives may not include contact with other adopted kids. Parties provide a relaxed and fun way to get to know one another, and many lifelong friendships have started at these CPFA social events.

November is National Adoption Awareness Month, a movement that started in 1976 as a one-week proclamation in Massachusetts and morphed into a larger national movement by 1990. Each year, as more and more families are touched by adoption, that initial proclamation grows in breadth and depth. Creating a new public consciousness about adoption has been beneficial for our children, helping to normalize the adoptive family experience. The North American Council on Adoptable Children (NACAC) says that "November is a great time to educate the public, teachers, or parents and professionals about adoption." Adoptive Families, NACAC and other established adoption advocacy groups have developed some terrific educational products for sharing information about adoption. One of the things that CPFA has done to make a difference in peoples' lives is to hold its "Let's Talk Adoption" conference in November each year.

From the beginning, CPFA defined itself as an advocacy group. CPFA has also lobbied for, and helped draft, state and federal adoption legislation and is a member of the New Jersey DYFS Advisory Committee. The all-volunteer board members are acknowledged experts within the adoption community and have received numerous awards including the "North American Council on Adoptable Children's (NACAC) Adoption Activist Award," awarded posthumously to Janet Levin in 1995; The NACAC "Support Group of the Year" award in 2002; and most recently, the Angel in Adoption Award presented to board members Pat Bennett, Anna Marie O'Loughlin and Jo-Ann Tatz by the U.S. Congress.

While CPFA's monthly educational programs are free to the public, there are many benefits to becoming a member, including:

- 1) Monthly CPFA newsletter that includes articles on domestic, international and older child

adoption, legislation news, upcoming events and adoption book reviews.

- 2) Networking opportunities including access to other members who have agreed to be contacts for information about their adoption experience.
- 3) Reliable and objective information resources including a list of adoption therapists, handouts on domestic adoption, international adoption resources and surviving the wait.
- 4) Lending library with books, magazines, videos and CDs about adoption, as well as adoption-related books for children.
- 5) Free admission to social events that provide important opportunities for you and your children to socialize with other adoptive families.
- 6) Commitment to your own adoption journey by being intentionally involved with your local adoption community.
- 7) Financial support for adoption advocacy and charity work of CPFA.

CPFA remains committed to honoring the importance of interpersonal contact in a world dominated by cyberspace. We are eager to share our adoption successes and are here to offer our support, experience, knowledge and friendship.

Concerned Persons For Adoption (CPFA) is a non-profit organization in the State of New Jersey dedicated to the belief that every child deserves a family. Kathleen Strakosch Walz is the president of CPFA; Pat Bennett is the conference coordinator; and Janet O'Neill is the recording secretary. For more information, visit www.cpfanj.org or call (973)625-5628.

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