



November 1, 2024

Dear Friend,

Thanks to you, we've achieved incredible milestones in empowering birthparents on their paths toward healing, growth, and connection. Together, we've provided transformative support through our Case Management and Retreat programs, helping birthparents achieve goals they once only dreamed of.

Our Birthparents' Stories of Growth and Achievement

Birthparents in our community have made remarkable strides. Here are some of the ways they are creating change in their lives:

- *Reconnected with her daughter after years of no contact; they now text regularly, strengthening their relationship*
- *Developed job application skills, including resume writing and cover letter drafting, and started applying for jobs*
- *Secured stable housing, gained full-time employment, advocated for birth mothers, reconnected with family, and began drafting a book on her experience*
- *Attended a retreat, connected with an adoption-competent therapist, and began therapy*
- *Attended her first ConnectCall, connected with other birth mothers, and began seeing an adoption-competent therapist*
- *A transgender birthgiver expressed gratitude for the inclusivity and acceptance he found with On Your Feet*
- *Established better communication with her son and adoptive parents, planned engaging FaceTime activities, and attended her first in-person visit with her son in three years*

While these milestones inspire us, there is still much work to be done.

The Hidden Struggle: Untreated PMAD in Birthparents

As many as 1-in-3 birthparents live with undiagnosed and untreated Postpartum Mood and Anxiety Disorder (PMAD)—a complication affecting more than 20% of women who give birth in the U.S. each year. Pediatricians conduct PMAD screenings during well-baby visits, but birthparents—who are at a higher risk due to the trauma of a crisis pregnancy and adoption placement—rarely receive this assessment or care. This leaves birthparents with an impossible task: **to show up in healthy ways for their child while battling untreated PMAD.** We see this every day, and it underscores the urgent need for accessible, competent mental health care for birthparents.

A New Vision for Support in 2025

We're excited to launch a groundbreaking program that will allow birthparents to be assessed and treated for PMADs through a HIPAA-compliant smartphone app. PMAD is treatable when diagnosed, and this app will enable birthparents to connect with a PMAD-competent therapist within an average of four days. By removing barriers to care, we hope to end the silent suffering of birthparents and provide accessible, compassionate support at no cost to them.

How You Can Help

This pioneering project, along with our ongoing programs, is only possible through the generous support of donors like you. By reaching our **\$50,000 fundraising goal**, we can continue empowering birthparents to achieve their goals, foster community, and provide critical PMAD diagnosis and treatment—making a lasting impact in their lives, and the lives of every member of their adoption constellation.

Thank you for being a vital part of our community. Together, we're making a difference, one step at a time.

With our deepest gratitude and warm wishes for a holiday season full of peace and joy,

Alexis Eyler
Executive Director

Deanna Schuette
Board Co-Chair

Monica Tsikretsis
Board Co-Chair



ON YOUR FEET FOUNDATION

www.onyourfeetfoundation.org

2024 IMPACT

“On Your Feet makes me feel seen and understood. I feel like I have a community of people who won't judge or shame me. I'm able to grow with my grief through support until it morphs into something I can handle and understand.”

2024 BY THE NUMBERS

In 2024, On Your Feet Foundation served **703** birthparents - a **21% increase from last year** - including **99** new clients in **46** states and **3** countries.

THIS YEAR'S HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE:

- Hosting **88** BirthmomsConnect Calls, providing support to over **368** birthparents
- Connecting more than **371** birthparents through closed Facebook groups, including our birthfathers support group
- Having **20** women participate in our birthmom-to-birthmom mentoring group
- Sending over **1330** birthday card emails to our clients for both their birthday, and for the birthdays of the children they placed, providing them connection, recognition, and community on difficult days
- Giving Kintsugi hearts to more than **24** birthmoms and hosting a virtual gathering to honor them on Birthmothers' Day
- Hosting special events like Palentine's Day and a holiday party for **54** birthparents

Activism in Adoption Highlights

- **322** members of the adoption constellation attended a live session
- **56** families purchased a 30-Day pass to access all content
- **92** people received Adoption Education Training Certificates
- Over **50** adoption agencies utilized Activism in Adoption education



HOLIDAY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Did you know that On Your Feet is the only organization that helps birthparents provide holiday presents for both the children they are parenting *and* those they placed? No generic gifts here: every present is thoughtfully chosen to match the interests of each child.

Last year **21** birthparents participated, and we provided holiday gifts for **46** children, totalling \$1150.



BIRTHPARENT RETREATS

This year we welcomed 31 birthmoms at either an in-person or virtual therapeutic retreat. Run by birthmoms, for birthmoms, our retreats provide a safe space in which to process difficult emotions and build the friendship and community necessary to heal and thrive. Curious about what goes on at one of our retreats? This year Margot, a retreat facilitator and birthmother, pulled the curtain back to give a glimpse into our Fall retreat weekend, posting updates and photos on our Instagram and Facebook accounts. From our intention flags to practicing Kintsugi, every element of our retreat weekends is thoughtfully planned out and the friendships that are created here are lifelong.

Did you know that On Your Feet has three staff members currently enrolled in MSW programs? Not only are Alexis Eyler, Katy Finn, and Heather Janiga applying their new knowledge to the benefit of our birthparents, but they are also bringing much needed birthparent-centered adoption education back to their peers and instructors.



Create! Birthparents Art Grant



Tiffany, last year's Create grant winner, developed an innovative art therapy program, and in 2024 we welcomed a cohort of birthmothers to the program she designed and implemented. Participants used art as a catalyst for healing, as they explored each side of the adoption triad through art-making.

ACTIVISM IN ADOPTION

In 2024, we hosted 11 Activism in Adoption live sessions and 278 hours of recorded sessions were watched online. Our AiA sessions are a safe space for everyone in the adoption community — including extended family and adoption professionals — to explore preconceived notions and stereotypes, sit in vulnerability, and ask hard questions. Thank you to Cradled in Grace and Love Grown Adoption Consulting for sponsoring Activism in Adoption and your commitment to ethical adoption education.



Gretchen Sisson, PhD

In 2024 we launched our AiA affiliate program, giving our community an opportunity to help us extend the reach of our innovative programming and become change-makers in adoption, improving outcomes for everyone in the adoption constellation.



BIRTHPARENT SUPPORT ALLIANCE

In 2024 we welcomed 6 agencies to the Birthparent Support Alliance: Adoption Center of Illinois, Adoption Center for Family Building, Adoption & Beyond, Angel Adoption, Georgia Adoption Specialists, and Alaska Adoption Services. Thank you for your commitment to ethical, lifelong, individualized birthparent care.

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2024 BIRTHMOMSCONNECT

Moderated Calls: 1st Tues & 2nd Thurs of each month
Closed/Reunion Calls: 3rd Wed of each month
Open Calls: 1st, 3rd, & 4th Thurs

2024 RETREATS | Choosing Your Path

In-Person: November 7th-9th | **Virtual:** February 8th
Closed/In-Reunion Retreats
In-Person: September 26th-28th | **Virtual:** April 26th



Mark Your Calendars!

Gather 2025
August 8, 2025

Gather 2026
May 2, 2026
(25th anniversary gala)

“ I am so grateful for you and On Your Feet Foundation! Also, I am grateful that I am able to donate to your wonderful organization. Knowing that I am able to access resources offered gives me great comfort. (I've needed this organization for 50 years!!!) ”



We were delighted to welcome the authors of *Adoption Unfiltered*, Kelsey Vander Vliet Ranyard, Sarah Easterly, and Lori Holden, along with their panelists, including one of our newest board members, Erika Gonzales, to The Book Stall in February. And in May, we hosted a screening of *Found in Korea* with award-winning filmmaker and international, transracial adoptee, Nam Holtz, LMSW.



GATHER

With us to celebrate!

Thank you to this year's *Gather* sponsors, whose generosity helps ensure that birthparents will always have access to the help they deserve. And thank you so much to everyone who donated, bought tickets, and came out to support birthparents. We could not have done all that we did this year without the help of people like you, who recognize the critical importance of birthparent support.

...with gratitude & thanks

11/1/2023 – 10/31/2024

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BIRTHMOMSCONNECT

Moderated Calls: 2nd Thurs & 4th Tues
Closed/Reunion: 3rd Wed
Open Calls: 1st, 3rd, 4th (5th) Thurs

2025 RETREATS

Spring Virtual Retreats:

Traditional Feb 8th, Closed Apr 26th

Fall In-Person Retreats:

Closed Sep 26-28, Traditional Nov 7-9

Save the Date for... **GATHER**
With us to celebrate!

Join us on Friday, August 8, 2025

“I am so grateful for On Your Feet Foundation. Also, I'm grateful that I am able to make this donation ... I have been in reunion for 31 years. Fifty years ago, there was no post-placement care for birthparents.” —Birthmother and Donor

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