

*Logo by Jamel Darling*

*38th Annual  
American  
Adoption  
Congress  
International  
Conference*

April 5, 2017 - April 8, 2017  
Grand Hyatt In Buckhead  
Atlanta, Georgia

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# Welcome Conference Attendees!



On Behalf of the American Adoption Congress Board of Directors and AAC Conference Planning Committee, we would like to welcome you to the 38th Annual International Conference, A March To Change: Healing Through Action! This year's conference is held in Atlanta, Georgia. Atlanta is one of the South's most exciting destination. Within walking distance of the Hyatt Grand, you will find hot restaurants, cool neighborhoods, world-class shopping, sports, concerts and attractions. Also, there is a beautiful and serene Japanese Zen Garden and relaxing pool to find a quiet moment.

Our conference features many amazing and diverse presenters who will cover a wide range of topics in adoption and foster care, focusing on search and reunion, legislation, DNA and loss and trauma. There will also be support groups, films, performance art and much, much more! Please mingle, learn and share! We hope you leave having gained a wealth of knowledge, new friendships and lasting memories.

Please join us on Wednesday, April 5 as we kick off the conference with an AAC Open House, from 3-5 p.m. on the East/West Terraces (weather permitting). This event will be held in Cassis Restaurant if there is rain or bad weather.

We look forward to healing, connecting and making changes together with you!

Sincerely,

Cynthia McGuigan  
Conference Advisor

## **PLEASE - Pick up your materials and Register!**

**Times will be strictly adhered to so volunteers may attend workshops.  
Thank You!**

<b>Day</b>	<b>Registration Time 1</b>	<b>Registration Time 2</b>	<b>Registration Time 3</b>
Wednesday	1:15 PM - 3:30 PM	5:45 PM - 7:00 PM	8:30 PM - 10:00 PM
Thursday	7:00 AM - 8:30 AM	11:15 PM - 12:30 PM	3:45 PM - 5:45 PM
Friday	7:00 AM - 8:15 AM	3:45 PM - 5:15 PM	
Saturday	6:30 AM - 7:45 AM		

# About AAC

Founded in 1978, the American Adoption Congress (AAC) is an all volunteer-driven, tax exempt 501(c)3 organization, which was incorporated in 1981. AAC Board of Directors, as well as the AAC State Representatives serve entirely as volunteers and receive no monetary compensation. AAC relies on funds generated by membership dues, sponsors, grant donations and conference revenues.

Our AAC membership is made up of adoption and foster constellation members, individuals conceived through assisted reproduction, professionals, and others whose lives have been impacted by adoption and foster care.

AAC is an International network of individuals, households, organizations and support groups committed to promoting truth in adoption. Our members help promote honesty, openness and respect for family connections in adoption, foster care and assisted reproduction.

## Meals Included:

### ***Thursday***

Breakfast 6:30 - 9:00 AM

Strategic Planning Lunch 12:30 -2:00 PM

### ***Friday***

Breakfast 6:30 - 9:00 AM

Appetizers 5:30 - 6:15 PM

Awards Dinner 6:30 - 8:00 PM

Reception 9:30 PM - 1:00 AM

### ***Saturday***

Breakfast 6:30 - 10:00 AM

## Conference Committee Members

### **Conference Advisor**

Cindy McGuigan

### **Conference Committee**

Conference Advisor: Cynthia McGuigan

Erica Babino

Linda Clausen

Archie Hyde

Bruce Kellogg

Susan Merkel

Leslie Moran

Kris Probasco

Desiree Stephens

Marilyn Waugh

Susan Friel-Williams

Mary Wilson

Amy Winn

### **Event Registrar**

Susan Friel-Williams

### **Brochure**

Roberta MacDonald

# Conference Details

## Atlanta, Georgia

This year's conference is being held in Georgia's capitol city Atlanta, which was established in 1837. (*The city existed prior to being called Atlanta, it was called Terminus.*)

**The Grand Hyatt Atlanta in Buckhead** is located in the city's uptown area, on Atlanta's Peachtree Street. Buckhead features Atlanta's best shopping, dining, entertainment, sports and live music .

## Workshops

This year's conference workshops will cover a variety of topics such as practice and policies, search and reunion, loss and trauma, historical perspectives, transracial and international adoption, identity issues, birth/first parent issues and legislative efforts. And we will have our support groups offered also.

## NASW CEU's Information

"This program is Approved by the National Association of Social Workers (Approval # 886655988-1438) for 18 continuing education contact hours."

The following states do not accept National CE Approval Programs and require individual program/provider application processes:

New York (<http://www.op.nysed.gov/prof/sw/swceinfo.htm> )

Michigan ([http://www.michigan.gov/lara/0,4601,7-154-35299\\_63294\\_63303---,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/lara/0,4601,7-154-35299_63294_63303---,00.html) )

West Virginia ( [www.wvsocialworkboard.org](http://www.wvsocialworkboard.org) <<http://www.wvsocialworkboard.org>> )

The following states currently do not recognize NASW National Approval. Applications can be submitted to NASW State Chapters:

New Jersey ( [www.naswnj.org](http://www.naswnj.org) <<http://www.naswnj.org>> )

Idaho ([www.naswidaho.org](http://www.naswidaho.org) <<http://www.naswidaho.org>> )

Oregon( [www.nasworegon.org](http://www.nasworegon.org) <<http://www.nasworegon.org>> )

## Shuttle & Transportation Information

**Download Shuttle Information from the Hyatt website at:**

<https://atlanta.grand.hyatt.com/en/hotel/our-hotel/transportation.html>

**Or Print off detailed information from the AAC website at:**

[http://www.americanadoptioncongress.org/2017\\_-\\_transportation\\_to\\_hotel.php](http://www.americanadoptioncongress.org/2017_-_transportation_to_hotel.php)

*Bring Awareness to this Conference on Twitter*

*Twitter @AAC1978 #AACCONF*

*or on*

*Facebook at American Adoption Congress*

## Disclaimer

The AAC wishes to provide a safe and welcoming conference space for all attendees, guests and presenters and does not condone unbecoming behavior. Also, the expressed opinions shared by presenters at this conference are solely the opinions of the presenters and not that of the AAC.

# The Trailblazer Keynote Speakers

## **Rob Gent**

**Wednesday - April 5, 2017 8:00 PM - 9:30 PM**

*The Neurobiological Impact of Relinquishment and Adoption:  
Creating a framework for Healing*



## **Dr. Ruth McRoy**

**Thursday - April 6, 2017 9:00 AM - 10:30 AM**

*Changing Adoption Practices and Policies: Implications for Adopted Children,  
Birthparents, Adoptive Families and Professionals*

## **Blaine Bettinger**

**Friday - April 7, 2017 9:00 AM - 10:30 AM**

*Revealing Your Genetic Heritage With DNA*



## **Dr. Chiatra Wirta / Kathy Mackecheny**

**Saturday - April 8, 2017 8:00 AM - 9:30 AM**

*Thoughtful & Intentional Recruitment Language in  
Adoption & Foster Care*



# Keynote Performances & Film

## **Alison Larkin LIVE!**

**Thursday - April 6, 2017 8:00 PM - 10:30 PM**

*In her poignant, hilarious new show, Alison talks about her adoption by British parents, her reunion with her Southern birth mother, nature, nurture, England, America, parenting all-American teenagers, women on overload - and how to make a decent cup of tea!*



## **Amy Mihyang Ginther - Homeful**

**Friday - April 7, 2017 8:00 PM - 9:30 PM**

*What is an authentic life experience? What does a young person learn from living abroad and traveling the world? When events compel her to return to home, Amy navigates a more internal journey, redefining her relationship to roots, self and shifting communities .*



## **Andrew Tash & Derek Frank - Six Word Adoption Memoirs - 2**

**Saturday - April 8, 2017 3:45 PM - 5:00 PM**

Motivated by Jean Strauss' workshop in 2013, giving voice to adoption experiences.



# Wednesday - April 5

**NOTE:** Unless requested by the presenter all  
keynotes, workshops, performances will be recorded.

When participating in question and answer please speak into microphone.

A link of all taped sessions will be sent to all registered attendees  
post conference.

1:15 - 3:30 PM **REGISTRATION OPEN (Grand Staircase)**

3:30 - 5:45 PM **REGISTRATION CLOSED**

3:00 - 5:00 PM **AAC Open House** (Weather permitting East/West Terraces  
(Alternative - Casis Resturant lower lobby)

Open to All attendees and General Public. Take this opportunity to meet AAC Board members, State Representatives and Conference Presenters. Come learn about the AAC while enjoying light snacks and beverages.

5:30 - 6:45 PM Dinner on your own

5:45 - 7:00 PM **REGISTRATION OPEN (Grand Staircase)**

7:00 PM **REGISTRATION CLOSED**

6:30 - 7:45PM **Welcome to AAC 2017!**

Facilitators: Pam Hasegawa and Katalina McGlone  
(Peachtree Room - 3rd Floor Garden Level)

Welcome to AAC 2017! We will give you the opportunity to connect with people you will see throughout the conference. Small group conversations assure you the benefit of personal interaction and exposure to a variety of perspectives. Being on time will guarantee you maximum benefit!

8:00 - 9:30 PM **Keynote: Rob Gent - The Neurobiological Impact of Relinquishment and Adoption: Creating a framework for Healing** (Highland Ballroom)

This presentation will explore the neurological, psychological, and physiological impact that relinquishment from a birth parent has on development, coupled with the experience of adoption. As the impact of relinquishment can be significant in the development of the self, this presentation will provide a framework for creating, healing, utilizing interpersonal interactions to increase relational attunement, disrupt and resolve the cycle of shame, experience trauma resolution, establish neurobiological regulation and integration, promote positive self-concept, and increase capacity for healthy intimacy and joy.

8:30 - 10:00 PM **REGISTRATION OPEN (Grand Staircase)**

10:00 PM **REGISTRATION CLOSED**

# Thursday - April 6

6:30 - 9:00 AM	Breakfast (Azelea Ballroom)
7:00 - 8:30 AM	<b>REGISTRATION OPEN</b> (Foyer 1st Floor)
8:30 - 11:15 AM	<b>REGISTRATION CLOSED</b>
8:30 - 8:45 AM	<b>Welcome &amp; Houskeeping: Cindy McGuigan, Conference Advisor</b> (Highland Ballroom)
8:45 - 9:00 AM	<b>OPENING REMARKS: Amy Winn, President</b> (Highland Ballroom)
9:00 - 10:30 AM	<b>Keynote: Dr. Ruth McRoy - Changing Adoption Practices and Policies: Implications for Adopted Children, Birthparents, Adoptive Families, and Professionals</b> (Highland Ballroom) <p>Adoption practices and policies have significantly changed over time, and it is important to understand their evolution, as well as the implications of these changes. This keynote presentation will highlight research findings on outcomes of infant and older child adoptions from foster care, openness in adoption, interracial, transracial and intercountry adoptions, and adoptions by lesbian and gay families. Implications and recommendations for birth and adoptive family and recommendations for birth and adoptive family members, as well as adoption professionals, will be provided.</p>
10:30 - 11:15 AM	<i>BREAK</i>
11:15 AM - 12:30 PM	<b>REGISTRATION OPEN</b> (Foyer 1st Floor)
12:30 PM - 4:15 PM	<b>REGISTRATION CLOSED</b>
11:15 AM - 12:30 PM	<b>WORKSHOP SERIES 100</b>

Don't miss out on our **Strategic Planning** boxed lunch in the Grand Ballroom on Thursday, from 12:00 - 2:00 PM.

## 101 Internet Searching for Family

Presenter - Marilyn Mendenhall Waugh (Highland 1)

Reconnecting with family is possible if you utilize accurate, updated, and user-friendly internet sites. Marilyn will discuss how to logically search "reliable" sites that are available to the general public for free or at minimal costs. Multiple handouts will be distributed at this workshop.

## 102 Grieving the Loss of A Genetic Child

Presenter - Kris Probasco (Highland 2)

One of the first losses in adoption is the loss of the genetic child for the adoptive or donor parents. Without resolution of infertility, appropriate letting go and acceptance, emotional attachment will be difficult for the parents.

**103 Six Word Adoption Memoirs - 2**

Presenters - Andrew Tash and Derek Frank (Highland 3)

Motivated by Jean Strauss' workshop in 2013, giving voice to adoption experiences, Derek and Andrew invited participants at 2015 Denver AAC conference to speak about their adoption experiences, narrowing these to a Six Word Adoption Memoir. We will screen this film, talk about the filming/editing experience, invite interviewees to speak, and conduct a question/answer period for attendees.

**104 The Role of Information in Birthmother Experience**

Presenter - Rachel Clemens (Highland 4)

What role does information play in the birthmother experience? This in-depth study describes the experience of eight birthmothers (each participating in some flavor of "open adoption"); patterns include power, trading of trust, shame, on-going coping, and co-crises. Implications for practice are directed to practitioners but relevant to all triad members.

**105 When Adoptive Parenting Does Not Go As Planned**

Presenters - Norman Thibault, Eric Fawson and Thane Palmer (Highland 5)

This clinical presentation will discuss some of the common traits and skills associated with successful clinical work with adoptive parents. Skills discussion will include working with parents in both an outdoor behavioral health and residential settings. Attendees will leave with specific interventions that they can implement in their practice when working with adoptive parents.

12:30 - 2:00 PM

**Strategic Planning Lunch** - Boxed Lunch  
(Grand Ballroom - Lower Lobby)

**NOTE:** Pick up Boxed Lunches in Grand Ballroom (Lower Lobby)

Erica Babino, Director of Strategic Planning will give an overview of the AAC's Strategic Plan. This plan is a work in progress. Join us to see what your AAC Board is working on and bring your thoughts to help us shape our AAC's future!

2:15 - 3:30 PM

**WORKSHOP SERIES 200**

**201 Birth Identity and Access: Panel and Discuss**

Presenters - Jeannie Zoppi, Pam Hasegawa, Pete Franklin and Jennifer Ghoston (Highland 1)

How do you believe lack of access to birth information impacted and informed your adoption identity? What would you hope to shed if you lack access now and gain it in the future? If you know your birth family now, what aspects of your identity have shifted/changed since meeting them? What is new for you because of access and what relationships, knowledge or understanding has access brought you?

***Watch for AAC's NEW Website in May 2017!***

## 202 Working with an Ethical Agency: What to Look For

Presenter - Kim Anderson (Highland 2)

The field of adoption has drastically changed over the last few years. Adoption is now turning into a baby brokering business instead of being focused on the best interest of the child. The practice of adoption works best when agencies are focused on finding families for children instead of finding babies for families. This workshop will examine the best practices in the field of adoption.

## 203 Legislation 101

Presenters - Erica Babino, Tim Monti-Wohlpert (Highland 3)

The workshop is a PowerPoint and interactive presentation answering the following: 1) what is adoptee rights legislation? 2) why is it important and why would someone want to volunteer to help 3) how do I start and lobby legislation, 4) importance and how to get the community involved and 5) how to manage the road blocks and pitfalls. It is for new and seasoned adoptee rights advocates.

## 204 Healing the Dark Side of Adoption, A Case Study

Presenters - Rob Gent and Thomas Ahern (Highland 4)

In deeply personal fashion, Thomas will reveal the impact of relinquishment, trauma and relational dysfunction with the goal of helping others understand the life style obstacles and developmental impact of this complicated topic. He will also share his story in search, reunion, triumph.

## 205 The Importance of Building a Life Book

Presenter - Miranda Rochol (Highland 5)

We will review the important sections of a Lifebook, how to start gathering information, who to involve while you are building the Lifebook, and what options are out there to build Lifebooks. We will also focus on the conversation between the adoptive parent and child after the Lifebook is built.

**3:45 - 5:00 PM**    **SUPPORT GROUPS** (See Page 16 )

3:45 - 5:00 PM    **REGISTRATION OPEN** (Foyer 1st Floor)

5:00 PM    **REGISTRATION CLOSED**

5:30 - 7:00 PM    Dinner on Your Own

6:00 - 7:15 PM    **State Representative and Board Social** (Cascade)

State Reps this dinner is for you! Join your Regional Directors and Board members for a working dinner. Bring your suggestions and ideas for support and training and communication. Come help shape the future!

8:00 - 9:30 PM    **PLAY: Alison Larkin - LIVE!** - Alison Larkin (Highland Ballroom)

In her poignant, hilarious new show, she talks about her adoption by British parents, her reunion with her Southern birth mother, nature, nurture, England, America, parenting all-American teenagers, women on overload and how to make a decent cup of tea.

10:00 - 11:30 PM    **Hospitality Meetup** (Highland Foyer)

# Friday - April 7

6:30 - 9:00 AM Breakfast (Azalea Ballroom)  
7:00 - 8:15 AM **REGISTRATION OPEN** (Foyer 1st Floor)  
8:15 - 12:00 PM **REGISTRATION CLOSED**

8:30 - 9:00 AM **Announcements and Give-Aways** (Highland Ballroom)

9:00 - 10:30 AM **Keynote: Blaine Bettinger - Revealing Your Genetic Heritage With DNA** (Highland Ballroom)  
We will analyze how DNA can be utilized by adoptees to identify their genetic heritage, including a look into the increasing ease with which biological families are being identified. We will also look at the results of an informal study that attempts to quantify the use of DNA by adoptees in 2016. We will also see how DNA revealed an adoption in my family and how, at age 40, I discovered a brother I never knew I had.

10:30 - 11:15 AM *BREAK*

11:15 AM - 12:30 PM **WORKSHOP SERIES 300**

## **301 Roots: Healing the Neurobiology of Relinquishment**

Presenter - Steve Sawyer (Highland 1)

This presentation includes cutting edge science while examining working with adopted clients through a neurobiological window. We examine six key biological attachment variables and the impact of implicit memories of loss associated with relinquishment from a biological parent. This will include modern parent child research from Heartmath and an overview of healing neurobiology with Brainspotting.

## **302 Educating the Public through Media**

Presenters - Susan Friel Williams and Amy Winn (Highland 2)

This workshop will discuss the different methods that the adoption constellation can use to educate the public in adoption issues. From blogging, to documentaries, through individual print or online reunion stories, into film and television exposure, how we can use 'entertainment' to educate the public on our issues. There will time for discussion and questions at the end of workshop.

## **303 Rise Above it! Foster Revolutionaries**

Presenter - Shalita O'Neal and Jamole Calahan (Highland 3)

This workshop will give youth and professionals a jumpstart on next phase of your life! In this session you will learn how to say "bye" to your internal critic, limiting beliefs, playing small and living in the past. You will learn not only how to set goals, but to smash them by mapping out strengths, talents and interest. Each person has greater potential for success in specific areas. The key to human development is building on who you already are.

**Learn how to Start A Support Group in your area**

[http://www.americanadoptioncongress.org/support\\_group\\_list.php](http://www.americanadoptioncongress.org/support_group_list.php)

**304 Radical Reform & Grass Roots Activism: Achieving Adoptee Equality in Your State**

Presenters - 'Emm' Marla Paul, Marley Greiner, Mirren Theiding, Brenda Romanchik (Highland 4)

Why Rights & Not Reunions? DNA & Internet, why ballot initiatives aren't fiscally feasible & why grass roots activism can work, why adoptee rights organizations should be adoptee-led, the legal ramifications of sealed records outside of the immediate issue, what veto legislation & compromise mean to those left behind.

**305 If You Are Not Your Experience, Then Who are You?**

Presenter - Nancy Verrier (Highland 3)

In the case of relinquishment the experience of being separated from one another is such a devastating trauma for both mother and child that it seems to color every aspect of ensuing relationships. Added to this for the adoptee is the dilemma of fitting into a non-genetic family. This workshop is designed to learn ways to become aware of the beliefs that influence attitudes, feelings, and behaviors, to challenge the beliefs and to integrate those experiences into the reality of who you truly are.

12:30 - 2:00 PM

Lunch on Your Own

12:30 - 2:00 PM

**Helping Kids in Foster Care - (Highland 5)**

Join the AAC Conference Advisor, Cynthia McGuigan and help decorate 40+ bags for foster youth in Atlanta, Georgia

2:00 - 3:15 PM

**WORKSHOP SERIES 400****401 One First Hand Account of Healing Adoption Trauma**

Presenter - Ken Huey (Highland 1)

Adoption is a beautiful trauma. This workshop will look at periods in the life of the presenter as examples of some of the effects of that trauma. Using video, stories, and research, it will also propose strategies for healing. For adoptees this will resonate. For adoptive parents this will give hope. For professionals this will give a roadmap.

**402 Unfettered access to adoption records is near!**

Presenter - Katalina McGlone (Highland 2)

Learn effective advocacy with a touch of aloha. We have enough to open our records thanks to changing norms, cultural traditions, prior work of adoption advocates, court rulings and research. We removed the conditional access to records of Hawaii's 1990 law in 2016. Act 80 gives adoptees, birth and adoptive parents unfettered access to their records when persons adopted in Hawaii are at least 18.

**403 Ethics in Post Adoption Services**

Presenter - Kim Schenkelberg (Highland 3)

I would like to present ethics in regards to the search and reunion process. It is not uncommon that those providing services to members of the adoption constellation have no knowledge of many issues related to adoption. It is more than a search. Providing support and education through the post adoption experience is integral to the overall well being and mental health of individuals involved.

**404 Effectively Engaging Alumni Perspectives**

Presenters - Shalita O'Neale, Jamole Callahan. (Highland 4)

This workshop shares insights on youth and alumni engagement and advancing the mission of your organization by including the voices of those most impacted by the work of your organization. It will focus on ways to meaningfully engage and incorporate alumni and transitioning foster youth into your organization at every level and will discuss the benefits, barriers and solutions.

**405 First/Birth Mother Experiences in Open Adoption**

Presenters - April Dinwoodie, Leslie Pate Mackinnon (Highland 5)

DAI is excited to release the findings of our new research study surrounding options counseling experience of first/birth mothers in the era of open adoption. This large scale study is the first of its kind to explore in depth the experiences of first/birth parents through both surveys and interviews. Professional perspectives were also obtained. Key findings and recommendations will be discussed.

3:45 - 4:45 PM **SUPPORT GROUPS** (See Page 16 for Location)

3:45 - 5:15 PM **REGISTRATION OPEN** (Foyer 1st Floor)

5:15 PM **REGISTRATION CLOSED**

5:30 - 6:30 PM Cocktail Reception (East/West Terrace weather permitting, Alternate Azalea Ballroom)

7:00 - 7:45 PM Awards Dinner (Azalea Ballroom Foyer 2)

8:00 - 9:30 PM **Keynote Play: *Homeful*** Amy Mihyang Ginther (Highland Ballroom)  
 What is an authentic life experience? What does a young person learn from living abroad and traveling the world? What wisdom and foolishness should be experienced in our 20s? After graduating college, Amy decides to leave US to figure out who she is and what is important. When events compel her to return to home, Amy navigates a more internal journey, redefining her relationship to roots, self and shifting communities directed by Desiree Burch. The show is autobiographical in nature. ***There is some offensive language and a few references to drug use.***

9:30 PM- 1:00 AM **Dance and Conference Celebration** - DJ & Entertainment (Azalea Ballroom)

***Do you have a story, poem, book review or do you know of any upcoming conferences?***

Then write your story, poem or book review, or gather the information regarding the upcoming conference and have it posted into ***The Beacon*** the AAC Newsletter

Contact - [aacmembership2016@gmail.com](mailto:aacmembership2016@gmail.com)

# Saturday - April 8

6:00 - 8:30 AM Breakfast (Azalea Ballroom)

6:30 - 7:45 AM **REGISTRATION OPEN** (Foyer 1st Floor)

7:45 AM **REGISTRATION CLOSED**

8:00 - 9:30 AM **Keynote Panelists: Dr. Chaitra Wirta-Leiker and Kathy Mackechney - Thoughtful & Intentional Recruitment Language in Adoption & Foster Care** (Highland Ballroom)

Displaying pictures. Describing histories. Listing diagnoses. Mentioning hobbies. Social media posts: "I was in foster care 873 days, and today I was adopted!" These are common methods used to recruit foster/adoptive parents. The drawbacks to these approaches are numerous, including violating youth privacy and expecting potential caregivers to be educated regarding the qualities necessary to successfully parent youth from hard places. An adoptee-centric paradigm shift proposed by two adult adoptee mental health professionals who have a passion for adoptee rights includes a focus on youth privacy and recruitment language tailored to finding caregivers to match these youths' needs.

9:30 - 10:15 AM **AAC Coffee Break and Light Snack** (Highland Foyer)

10:15 - 11:30 AM **WORKSHOP SERIES 500**

## **501 Beyond Legislation: Role of Institutional Policy**

Presenter - Ana Elisa (Highland 1)

This workshop will discuss the ways that triad members and professionals can influence institutional policies to promote access to records and information. Focusing on adoption agencies, we will explore what can be done outside of the legislative process to minimize secrecy and promote respect of all triad members.

## **502 Open Adoption: A Parent's Journey**

Presenter - Thomas Rector (Highland 2)

This workshop explains a father's journey developing a methodology based upon current neuro-scientific research and practical application of the Biosocial Cognition Model to open adoption. The model connects elements of a child's behavior, environmental influences that affect the child, and hones a parents' ability to assess the child's needs.

## **503 What You Don't Know Can Hurt Me**

Presenters - Eileen Drennen, Clare Allen, Leslie Pate Mackinnon and Michelle Pellegrini (Highland 3)

This workshop will explore the importance of providing prospective birthmothers with informed, honest counseling. The social worker I got in 1976 was fresh out of college, unschooled in the realities of women and children. She confessed regret for all she had not known in 2010, when I interviewed her for my book. Unfortunately, this still happens today.

**504 Adoption and Relationship Addictions**

Presenter - Daryn Watson (Highland 4)

Addictions are very common with adoptees. Drinking, drugs, gambling and many others are very common struggles with teenage and adult adoptees. My addiction struggles were with romantic relationships. After several years of going through unhealthy relationships, I realized my dating patterns were not working anymore. I want to share my journey with others to help them see healthy relationships.

**505 Richard Gitelman the adoption matchmaker**

Presenter - Debra Allen (Highland 5)

This presentation tells of how I stumbled upon the adoptions facilitated by Richard Gitelman an art dealer turned baby matchmaker. The games and tricks he used and the manipulation of birth mothers and adopting parents to get them to agree to the child placement. I've reunited 77 of these families to date.

<b>Support Groups*</b>		
<b>Support Group</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Facilitator</b>
Constellation / Triad	Highland 2	Pam Hasegawa/ Jeannine Zoppi
Female Adoptee	Highland 1	Susan Merkel/ Erica Babino
Birth/First Parent	Highland 4	Mary Wilson
Adoptive Parent	Ivy	Rebecca Falco
Professional	Highland Foyer/East Terrace	Kris Probasco
Male Adoptee	Highland 3	Thomas Ahern
LGBTQ	Chicago	Amy Winn
Assisted Reproduction	Highland Foyer/East Terrace	Phyllis Lowinger
Late Discovery Adoptee	Highland Foyer/East Terrace	Andrew Tash

**\*Note: An individual support group may be cancelled if attendance doesn't support the need.**



••••• AAC will be donating and decorating 40+ bags for foster youth in Atlanta, Georgia. We are asking attendees and members to help us with this wonderful event by decorating the duffel bags. All bags will be donated to youth in Georgia.

••••• *As a former foster child and alum, I spent 5 years in foster care and at that time lived in 5 different homes. Many of my moves between homes included packing what little I did own into a trash bag... Cynthia McGuigan*

11:30 AM - 12:45 PM

Lunch on Your Own

12:45 PM - 2:00 PM

## **WORKSHOP SERIES 600**

### **601 Pitfalls & Promise: Open Adoption Over Time**

Presenter - Rebecca Falco (Highland 1)

Most adoption professionals are trained to facilitate the “match” through finalization of the adoption. But for the newly created extended family of open adoption, the journey has just begun when the professionals’ jobs are done. From the adoptive parent’s point of view, what does open adoption look like over time? What pitfalls? What positive consequences? What education is needed?

### **602 Core Issues of Adoption as a Normative Response**

Presenter - Marie Dolf (Highland 2)

Core issues of adoption (loss, identity, rejection, guilt/shame, intimacy, grief, control, abandonment, loyalty, fitting-in, entitlement, & claiming) are a normative response to relinquishment, adoption, and how professionals, society, & support systems treat adoption triad members will be discussed.

### **603 Yes/And: Adoptee Writers on Intersectional Trauma and Identity**

Presenters - Liz Latty, Mark L. Keats, Mariama J. Lockington and Lisa Marie Rollins (Highland 3)

This workshop will center the voices of adoptee writers whose work explores complex narratives engaging with queer, multiracial, and multinational identities, using an intersectional lens to push adoption discourse in new and necessary directions. It asks participants to consider the importance of recognizing the complexity of the adoption experience, in particular for adoptees living at the intersection of adoption and other marginalized identities, and to consider what stories comprise the dominant narratives of adoption. The panel ultimately seeks to ask how an intersectional approach to adoption trauma and identity can support healing and influence policy and practice. All are welcome.

### **604 The Impact of Infertility on Building Families by Adoption & Third Party Reproduction**

Presenter - Phyllis Lowinger (Highland 4)

The purpose of this workshop is to understand how infertility impacts families formed by adoption and third party reproduction. The focus of the workshop will be: Infertility:

- 1) A complicated loss.
- 2) The differences between having a child by birth from a child thru adoption and 3rd party reproduction.
- 3) What third party reproduction can learn from the history of adoption.

### **605 A Family Systems Approach to Working With Families in Foster Care and Pre/Post Adoption**

Presenter - Dr. Joyce Maguire Pavao (Highland 5)

Entering a family system causes disequilibrium. Losing a family member causes pain and loss - most especially for those living in the world of adoption. The Objectives will be:

- To understand: The Normative Crises in the Development of the Adoptive Family.
- To observe models for treatment as normal crises.
- To learn the models for treatment in the adoptive family, as well as for the professional, who is part of the larger system of adoption. This overview will include lecture, discussion, case example.

2:00 - 2:15 PM

*BREAK*

2:15 - 3:30 PM

## **WORKSHOP SERIES 700**

### **701 Educate To Erase FASD (Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder)**

Presenter - Rebecca Tilou (Highland 1)

This workshop will tell my story of being adopted, having closed records, relying on non-identifying info for my health. Getting diagnosed with FAS at 34 years old. This is one reason open records and original birth certificates is so important. I will show my YouTube video of my life with FAS.

### **702 I Can Tell My Own Story**

Presenter - Angela Sharp (Highland 2)

The artist will introduce 'From the Inside Out: Navigating Transnational and Transracial Adoption' an interactive, non-linear dialogue between the adoptee and her North American mother, her South American birth mother, and the founder of her orphanage el Buen Pastor. Oral history interviews, videos, and documents on this website highlight the messiness, love, and politics of transnational adoption.

### **703 Where The Rubber Hits the Road: Promoting Healthy Identity Formation in Adopted Tweens and Teens**

Presenter - Susan Merkel (Highland 3)

Identity formation, a primary developmental task which begins during adolescence, is more complicated for adoptees due to 'biological ghosts' and societal stigma. Tween and teen adoptees who struggle with identity tasks are at greater risk for depression and maladaptive coping behaviors; and transracial and international adoptees face additional complications due to racial and ethnic marginalization. This interactive presentation will introduce participants with the unique developmental tasks adoptees face and potential solutions.

#### **AAC IS SEEKING U.S. STATE REPS in:**

Alabama, Alaska, Arkansas, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Iowa, Massachusetts, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, South Dakota, Vermont, Virginia, West Virginia, Wisconsin and Wyoming

#### **AAC IS SEEKING CANADIAN PROVINCE and TERRITORY REPRESENTATIVES:**

**Provinces:** Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, Ontario, Prince Edward Island, Quebec and Saskatchewan

**Territories:** Northwest Territories, Nunavut and Yukon

#### **ARE YOU INTERESTED?**

Contact a Regional Director or the AAC President - Amy Winn  
or Vice President - Susan Friel-Williams

3:45 - 4:45 PM

**FILM: *Six Word Adoption Memoir-2***

Andrew Tash and Derek Frank (Highland Ballroom)

Motivated by Jean Strauss' workshop in 2013, giving voice to adoption experiences, Derek and Andrew invited participants at 2015 Denver AAC conference to speak about their adoption experiences, narrowing these to a Six Word Adoption Memoir. We will screen this film, talk about the filming/editing experience, invite interviewees to speak, and conduct a question/answer period for attendees.

4:45 - 5:45 PM

**AAC Town Hall Meeting** - (Highland Ballroom)

A place for our conference attendees to join us and give us your feedback on the conference you just attended. Let us know how you think we can make AAC's upcoming conferences even better. Are there specific Keynote you would like to hear? Are there specific themes you would like to hear more about?

Would you like to Present at the 2018 Conference?

Then submit a Workshop Proposal for the  
AAC 39th International Conference

Submissions begin **July 15, 2017 - September 5, 2017**

Please look for updates on the AAC website and Facebook page.

**ADOPTees' ORIGINAL BIRTH CERTIFICATE ACCESS  
U.S. STATES OVERVIEW**

Total states with some form of access: 28

Unrestricted access (9): AL, AK\*, CO, HI, KS\*, ME, OR, NH and RI

Access began in 2016(4): CT, HI, IN and MO

Access began in 2017 (1): NJ

Access to begin or resume later in 2017(1): PA

Access to expand in 2018 (1): MO

*\*Alaska and Kansas never sealed adoptees' original birth certificates*

See details for all states on the AAC website::

<http://www.americanadoptioncongress.org/state.php>

*Biographies*  
***Presenter Biographies***

# Presenter Biographies

**Ahern, Thomas (MA)** - Is a former School Psychologist, Adoptee and a Senior Vice President at Calo. He has been an outspoken advocate for improvements to the continuum of care. **(204)**

**Allen, Debra (BS, Certified AZ Confidential Intermediary)** - Has reunited thousands of families separated by adoption and uses her training and search expertise she obtained during her career for 25 years in law enforcement. Upon retirement, Debra became an Arizona Confidential Intermediary and licensed private investigator in California and Arizona specializing in adoption research and reunion. Debra is honored to serve as the Arizona representative for the AAC. **(505)**

**Allen, Clare (BA)** - An adoptee in reunion and the birth mother of an 8-year-old son in an open adoption. Clare holds a BA in Sociology from Mercer University and is currently in an Atlanta internship as part of her MSW coursework at Smith College in Northampton, MA. She has presented before the Georgia Association of Licensed Adoption Agencies as well as leading in various other adoption related gatherings. **(503)**

**Anderson, Kim (MS)** - Is the Pregnancy, Parenting and Adoption Program Director for the Nebraska Children's Home Society (NCHS). Ms. Anderson is a Licensed Mental Health Practitioner and has over 18 years of experience in the field of adoption. **(202)**

**Babino, Erica (BA)** - As a former State Representative and Legislative Chair for the AAC, Erica Babino has initiated and lobbied for adoptee rights legislation. Erica continues to strategize on and lobby for House and Senate bills in Texas and New York with Tim Monti-Wohlpart. She currently works as a Strategic Planner for the AAC. Her goal is to help bring Adoptee Rights and Education to a broader national platform. **(203)**

**Bittenger, Blaine (PhD, JD)** - Is an intellectual property attorney at Bond, Schoeneck & King in Syracuse, New York. He is the author of the long-running blog *The Genetic Genealogist*, and frequently gives presentations and webinars to educate others about the use of DNA to explore their ancestry. **(Keynote - Friday)**

**Callahan, Jamole (BS)** - Has a Bachelor's Degree in Music and over 15 years of child welfare professional training and experience advocating for and influencing legislative policies for youth in foster care. **(303 & 404)**

**Clemens, Rachael (PhD Candidate)** - Is a PhD Candidate in the School of Information & Library Science at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Her research focuses on information engagement, decision-making and coping behavior of women who place a child for adoption and birthmothers. Rachael is also a birthmother. **(104)**

**Dinwoodie, April (BA)** - A nationally recognized thought leader on adoption and foster care. She is a transracially adopted person and Chief Executive of the Donaldson Adoption Institute (DAI). April is committed to improving laws, policies and practices through sound research, education and advocacy. **(405)**

**Dolfi, Marie (LCSW, MSW)** - Is an adoption constellation therapist, advocate and trainer. Marie has participated on the board of numerous adoption organizations and presents at local & national conferences. To learn more about Marie visit [www.adoptioncounselingny.com](http://www.adoptioncounselingny.com). **(602)**

**Drennen, Eileen (MFA)** - A reunited birthmother and former Atlanta newspaper journalist who is fine tuning her first book, a memoir. She received an MFA in Creative Writing in 2009 from Queens University in Charlotte, N.C. Her work has appeared online at The Rumpus. **(503)**

**Elisa, Ana (MPP)** - A reunited adoptee. She has studied child welfare and adoption policy extensively following reunion. Her master's capstone explored institutional policy options to address secondary traumatic stress among caseworkers in Massachusetts DCF. **(501)**

**Falco, Rebecca Patton** - An adoptive mother of five, is a former social studies teacher, youth minister, litigation associate, coordinator of sexual assault support services, and branch director of an open adoption agency. She is author of award-winning, *Everything In Its Own Time and Sunday Confessions*. **(601)**

**Fawson, Eric (LCSW)** - Is the Clinical Director at RedCliff Ascent Wilderness Treatment Program. Eric is adopted, and he and his wife Shannon are the parents of 5 children, including one adopted child. **(105)**

**Frank, Derek (MFA)** - Is a documentary filmmaker, professor of film production and adoptee in reunion. **(103 & Keynote Film - Saturday)**

**Franklin, Pete** - Is an Iraq War veteran. He started AWOL AdopteesWithOutLiberty.com in 2008 to advocate for adoptees in the military. As a NJCARE member dedicated 10 years to end secret adoption in NJ. **(201)**

**Friel-Williams, Susan** - Is currently the Vice President and Membership Chair of the American Adoption Congress. She also administrates the AAC Facebook and Twitter accounts, edits and produces 'The Beacon' and is the Chairman for the Nominations and Elections process of the Organization. **(302)**

**Gent, Rob (LPC)** - is one of the founding members and owners of Calo. He has lead the Calo organization in clinical development and is the lead developer of the proprietary CASA Developmental Trauma Treatment Model. Through specialization in Developmental Trauma and Attachment issues, he has become a nationally recognized presenter and trainer. His accomplishments include the development of CASA Competency Training, Embark- Family Intensive Program, Calo Teens / Preteens, Canine Attachment Therapy, and other specialized programs. **(Keynote - Wednesday & 204)**

**Ghoston, Jennifer** - Is a retired police detective after a 27-year career in Chicago is featured in Jean Strauss' film, "A Simple Piece of Paper". She has written a compelling memoir, "*The Truth So Far*". **(201)**

**Ginther, Amy Mihyang (PhD)** - A Theater Arts professor at UCSC and has lived, taught, and performed in the US, Europe, South America, and Asia. Her show, *between*, was performed in NYC, Seoul, and at the Edinburgh Fringe. Amy's performance work was featured in a TEDx talk in Cheongju. She was on the cover of the *NYT Magazine* in 2014, writes for *Transracial Eyes*, and has been referenced in Reuters, *Al Jazeera*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *KoreAm*, and *The Toast*. **(Keynote Performance - Friday)**

**Greiner, Marly (BA, MA)** - The co-founder and executive chair of Bastard Nation: the Adoptee Rights Organization, She has presented papers at various adoption and legal conferences and testified before numerous state legislatures in support of adoptee equality. Greiner has published over 1200 entries in her 'Daily Bastardette' blog covering all aspects of adoption. **(304)**

**Hasegawa, Pam (BA)** - Began a search for birth family in 1975 which, by God's grace and DNA results, concluded last year when she was warmly welcomed by her sister's family and several cousins. **(AAC Welcome & 201)**

**Huey, Ken (PhD)** - Dr. Ken Huey is an adult adoptee who has dedicated his career to understanding and healing childhood trauma. He has done this as the founder of Calo. He does this by training across the country on issues of adoption, trauma, and addiction recovery. **(401)**

**Keats, Mark L. (MFA)** - Was adopted from South Korea at the age of three. He earned his MFA in fiction from the University of Maryland and is the recipient of a Kundiman fellowship. His work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Waxwing*, *The Offing*, *Eastern Iowa Review*, *The Boiler*, *Smokelong Quarterly*, and others. He is currently a PhD student in English at Texas Tech University. **(603)**

**Larkin, Alison (BA)** - An internationally acclaimed comedienne, award winning audiobook narrator and the bestselling author of *The English American*, an autobiographical novel about an adopted English woman who finds her birth mother - and her self - in the United States. The novel is set, in part, in Georgia. **(Keynote Performance - Thursday)**

**Laty, Liz (MFA)** - Founder of the adoption news website, [www.anopenrecord.com](http://www.anopenrecord.com), as well as Open Record Consulting, where she offers adoptee-centric support and educational services for families and professionals. She holds an MFA in creative writing from Goddard College and her writing has been featured in a variety of magazines, journals, and anthologies. Liz is a Lambda Literary Fellow and her work has been nominated for Best American Essays, a Pushcart Prize, and the Jackson, Phelan, and Tanenbaum Literary Awards from the San Francisco Foundation. She currently lives in Brooklyn and is working on a memoir. **(603)**

**Lockington, Mariama** - A writer, nonprofit educator, and transracial adoptee who calls many places home. She is the founder of the womanist project the Black Unicorn Book Club (<https://blackunicornbookclub.com>) and is published in a number of journals and magazines including BuzzFeed News Reader, the Washington Square Review: Issue 36, Prelude Magazine, and Bodega Magazine. Her poetry chapbook "*The Lucky Daughter*" is forthcoming from Damaged Goods Press (March 2017), and she is currently working on a YA novel in verse. Mariama lives in Michigan with her partner and their dapple-haired dachshund, Henry. You can find more of her work at: <https://mariamajlockington.com>. **(603)**

**Lowinger, Phyllis (MS)** - In private practice for over 30 years, her specialty includes infertility, adoption, third party reproduction. She has presented at workshops & conferences: 92nd St. Y, St. John's International Post Adoption Conference. She has written articles for magazines. She was featured in the documentary "Adoption: We Can Do Better" in the segment: Infertility: A Complicated Loss. **(604)**

**Mackecheny, Kathy (LCSW)** - Is an adoptee and therapist who founded Adoptee Therapy, LLC, to specialize in working with adoptees and their families. Kathy saw a need for therapists who \*get it\* during her experiences of having to educate her own therapists about the issues adoptees commonly face. Kathy's mission is to increase adoptive and prospective adoptive parents' understanding of, and compassion for, adopted children's behaviors in order to provide the nurturing, yet structured, parenting these children need. **(Keynote - Saturday)**

**Mackinnon, Leslie Pate (LCSW)** - Is a psychotherapist and national trainer on families conceived through adoption & third-party reproduction. She has appeared on numerous national television shows and her story is included in *The Girls Who Went Away*, & the documentary A GIRL LIKE HER. Leslie serves on various adoption-related Boards and is the psychological consultant for the new TLC program, LONG LOST FAMILY. **(404 & 503)**

**McGlone, Katalina (PhD)** - An adoptee with a PhD in social welfare, and is vice president of Adoption Circle of Hawaii. She is a health educator and researcher, and now a filmmaker. She helped in the passage of Hawaii's Act 80 that gives triad members unfettered access to their adoption records. **(AAC Welcome & 402)**

**McRoy, Ruth (PhD)** - In September 2009, Ruth G. McRoy became the first holder of the Donahue and DiFelice Endowed Professorship at Boston College School of Social Work. Prior to joining the Boston College faculty, McRoy held the Ruby Lee Piester Centennial Professorship at the University of Texas at Austin School of Social Work. A practitioner, academician, researcher, and lecturer in the field for over 30 years, McRoy has published numerous articles and books on adoption issues. **(Keynote - Thursday)**

**Merkel, Susan (BA, MSW, LSW)** - Susan Merkel is a licensed NJ social worker who provides counseling to adoptees and adoptive parents, first/birth parents, and fertility patients. She has a MSW from Rutgers University Graduate School of Social Work and a counselor at the Infertility and Adoption Counseling Center. Susan is the AAC Mid-Atlantic Regional Director and Professional Liaison. **(703)**

**Monti-Wohlpart, Tim - (BS, MS.Ed)** Is a New York adoptee, in reunion since 1998. He is the acting Interim Legislative Chair of the AAC. Tim joined the AAC Legislative Committee in 2016. His current advocacy efforts, supported in part by an ongoing public petition, are aimed at restoring and advancing the unrestricted access bill in New York. He holds a B.S. in marketing, with minor in political science, and a Master of Education. He lives in Brooklyn. **(203)**

**O'Neale, Shalita (MSW)** - The founder and CEO of Fostering Change Network has a Bachelor's in Criminal Justice and Masters in Social Work from the University of Maryland. An Alumna of foster care, Mrs. O'Neale has over 12 years of experience working and advocating for youth in the foster care system, nationwide. **(303 & 404)**

**Palmer, Thane (MS, LMFT)** - Is the Program Director of Three Points Center. He and his wife, Heidi, are the parents of eight children, four of whom are adopted. **(105)**

**Paul, Marla 'Emm' (BA)** - Lives in the Rocky Mountains with her husband and sons. She spent 15 years working as a family connector for families with new disability diagnoses. Now as an editor and author, she teaches cooking classes to diabetics in her free time. A lifetime Bastard Nation member, she serves on the Executive Committee. Marla is both a Bastard and an adoptive parent, and is firmly committed to the restoration of rights to ALL adoptees. **(304)**

**Pavao, Joyce Maguire** (PhD, EdD, LCSW, LMFT) - The founder of PACT, Pavao Consulting, and CFFC., is a Lecturer in Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, and author and adopted person. Lifetime member and past Regional Director of AAC, several awards and the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Award for Angels in Adoption 2000. **(605)**

**Pellegrini, Michelle** (BA) - Is a first mother. In 2012, after 23 years of a closed adoption, she and her son happily reunited. They have been riding the rollercoaster of post-reunion life ever since. Michelle is a professionally trained pastry chef and holds a BA in International Affairs & Political Science from The George Washington University. She lives in Atlanta with her husband and two youngest sons. **(503)**

**Probasco, Kris** (MSW) - Is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker in the states of Kansas and Missouri. She specializes in the area of adoption, infertility, and donor conceptions. She has practiced in this area for over 40 years. Kris maintains a private practice in the Kansas City area. **(102)**

**Rector, Thomas** (JD) - Is a National Speaker, BioSocial Cognition Theorist, and CEO. Tom has three birth children, two adopted children and seven grandchildren. His experience as a National Presenter, businessman, Open Adoption panelist, Foster Kinship Trainer, CASA, and Dad, provide him the dynamic ability. **(502)**

**Rochol, Miranda** (BS) - Is the CEO & founder of Lifebook Builder, along with her husband Kevin they have three lovely children. Two of her children are half-siblings who were adopted from Foster Care. The Lifebook helps her and her family have a conversation with their children about their history. **(205)**

**Rollins, Lisa Marie** - Director, playwright, poet, and reproductive justice activist. She is the author of the acclaimed solo play "Ungrateful Daughter: One Black Girl's Story of being adopted by a White Family... that aren't Celebrities". Most recently she co-directed Young Jean Lee's *The Shipment* (Crowded Fire Theater) and a reading of Tarrance Chisholm's *Br'er Cotton* (Playwrights Foundation). Currently, she is obsessing about her new play *TOKEN*, being developed in Just Theater's New Play Lab in Berkeley, CA. Lisa Marie is a Resident Artist with Crowded Fire Theater in San Francisco. She is Lecturer in the Race and Resistance Studies Dept at SFSU. **(603)**

**Romanchick, Brenda** (LCSW) - A therapist in private practice in Georgia and has been involved in the adoption reform movement for 29 years. She is the author of *Your Rights and Responsibilities, Being a Birthparent, Birthparent Grief, What is Open Adoption?, A Birthparent's Book of Memories, and A Gift of Myself*. She is currently writing a book on trauma in adoption. Ms. Romanchick has some honors and awards, but feels the only one worth mentioning is the Adjunct Teacher of the Year for the Wayne State School of Social Work, because her students gave her that distinction. She also was awarded a "Best Mom Ever" mug from her children, which she is immensely proud of. **(304)**

**Sawyer, Steve** (MSW, LCSW, CADC) - Is a licensed psychotherapist filled with cutting edge knowledge as a trainer for Brainspotting International and Heartmath. His experience comes from over a decade of intervention with tough to reach client populations in therapy settings ranging from residential, outpatient and wilderness. **(301)**

**Schenkelberg, Kim** (BSW, MSW) - Graduated with her BSW in 1997 and her MSW in 2007 from the UN-Omaha. She is a Licensed Independent Mental Health Practitioner in private practice for eight years while concurrently working for Nebraska Children's Home Society. She has worked in the Post Adoption program for five years. She became certified in Training for Adoption Competency through C.A.S.E. in 2014. Kim co-facilitates Adoption Circle, a monthly group for those in the adoption constellation. **(403)**

**Sharp, Angela Lucia (MA)** - Is a multimedia artist; academic; and transnational and transracial adoptee examines the different forms of mediation involved in identity formation among adoptees. Through the progression of her work, she has found her voice and is using it to gain autonomy over adoption narratives. **(702)**

**Tash, Andrew (JD)** - Is a father, birthfather, and late discovery adoptee. Teaches media and works on sharing adoption voices with his artistic partner Derek Frank to demonstrate the diversity of adoption and its impact. **(103 & Keynote Film - Saturday)**

**Theiding, Mirren (AB, PhD, BS)** - Was adopted, and raised in St. Louis, MO. She holds an AB in Archaeology from Bryn Mawr College; a PhD in Art History from UC Berkeley; and a BS in Nursing from Samuel Merritt University in Oakland, CA. She has worked with Missouri Open since the 1990s. **(304)**

**Thibault, Norman (PhD, LMFT)** - Is the Founder and Executive Director of Three Points Center, which is the first residential treatment center designed exclusively for adopted adolescents. **(105)**

**Tilou, Rebecca (BS)** - Was adopted at birth out of New Jersey. I searched and found my birth mom although it was a closed adoption. I got more than I bargained for. What I thought was genetics was actually brain damage. **(701)**

**Verrier, Nancy (LMFT)** - Is a therapist specializing in adoption issues. She is an advocate for children and the author of *The Primal Wound*, a book adoptees call their "bible," as well as *Coming Home to Self*. As a recognized authority on the effects of relinquishment and adoption, she is requested to be an international speaker on the subject. She is the recipient of the Book of the Year Award from CERA in 1993 and the Emma May Vildardi Humanitarian Award from AAC in 2003. **(305)**

**Watson, Daryn** - Is a reunited adoptee living in Austin TX. He found his birth mother October, 1995 in Alberta, Canada. He has since found and reunited with several paternal family members beginning in 2011. You can view his blog at [www.adoptionreunionrealites.wordpress.com](http://www.adoptionreunionrealites.wordpress.com). **(504)**

**Waugh, Marilyn Mendenhall (MA)** - Is a reunited birth mother, Director of Adoption Concerns Triangle of Topeka, past AAC president and current KS state representative. For over 23 years she's been in the Post Adoption Services of the KS Division for Children and Families searching/reconnecting families. **(101)**

**Winn, Amy (MA, LMHC)** - From casual conversations among friends to advocating for an adoption question on every medical intake form, Amy never misses a chance to educate others about adoption. Her passion is to teach all health care workers, doctors, lawyers and all the people in between how adoption affects those in the adoption constellation. **(302)**

**Wirta-Leiker, Chaitra (PhD)** - Is an adoptee, adoptive parent, licensed psychologist, author of *"EMPOWRD! Ways to Respond to Adoption Questions"* Workbook, and owner of Beyond Words Psychological Services. **(Keynote - Saturday)**

**Zoppi, Jeannine (PhD)** - Is a Clinical Psychologist in a private practice in New Jersey. She specializes in the treatment of adoption issues, trauma and PTSD. Dr. Zoppi was selected as New Jersey Psychological Association's Psychologist of the Year for 2014. **(201)**

# A Special Thank You to the Following For their generous donations



SPOKEO - Spokeo is a people search engine focused on helping people research and reconnect with one another. This year we extend a gracious *thank you* to Spokeo for donating two subscriptions to Spokeo, for two winners at our conference.



ANCESTRY - We extend a *thank you* to Ancestry.com for donating a World Level Subscription to AAC for this years conference. This will be given to a lucky winner who attends.



FTDNA - We extend a big *thank you* to Family Tree DNA this year for donating three Family Finder Kits to AAC for this years conference. These kits will be given to three lucky winners attending this year's conference.

**The AAC is Always looking for Help!  
So Become a Volunteer**

Do you have a skill you think we can use?

Contact us at: [americanadoptioncongressinfo@gmail.com](mailto:americanadoptioncongressinfo@gmail.com)

# Board of Directors

## Meet the 2016 - 2017 AAC Board



**Amy Winn** is an adoptee, a psychotherapist specializing in adoption issues and a decades long advocate for change and healing within the adoption constellation. Amy's goals as the current president of the AAC are to educate, advocate and bring reform to our adoption world.



**Susan Friel-Williams** is the AAC Vice President, Membership Chair, Event Registrar as well as an AAC Florida State Representative. She is the former America Online Search Forum leader, and has appeared on National TV highlighting search and reunions to educate the public on adoption issues. Susan is a published author with Chicken Soup for the Soul.



**Mary Wilson** is a reunited birthmother and volunteer adoption searcher for over 18 years. She was one of the 2013 Spokeo Search Angels, and joined AAC, becoming a State Representative in 2014. Active in education regarding adoptees having access to original birth certificates with TxCare in the late 90's, 2013 and 2015 Texas legislative sessions. Facilitates an adoption support group in the Dallas/Fort Worth Area since 2013. In 2017, she will fill the AAC Secretary Position.



**Sarah Dodson** is an adult adoptee in recent reunion, understanding the delicate balance of emotions, heart and history that fuel the adoption community. Sarah worked on several grassroots, field, and event marketing campaigns, and has worked to develop all types of content, including web, social, print, email, and scripting pieces across several industries. Sarah is currently the Communications / Social Media and Website Chair.



**Monti-Wohlpert, Tim** is a New York born adoptee, in reunion since 1998 and he currently lives in Brooklyn. In 2002 and 2003, he served as Vice President and Legislative Liaison for New York Statewide Adoption Reform. At that time, he lobbied for unrestricted original birth certificate access for adult adoptees. In 2015, he began a grass-roots effort to restore the unrestricted access bill after it was changed in June 2015. His public petition, supporting that effort, has been provided to key legislators and the Governor. Tim joined the AAC Legislative Committee in 2016. He holds a BS in marketing, with minor in political science, and a Master of Education. Tim is the Interim Legislative Chair.



**Susan Merkel** is a licensed NJ social worker actively advocating on behalf of adoptees and adoptive parents, first/birth parents, and fertility patients. She has a MSW from Rutgers University Graduate School of Social Work and a counselor at the Infertility and Adoption Counseling Center. Susan is a member of NJCARE; Concerned Persons for Adoption and RESOLVE: The National Infertility Association. She currently serves as the AAC Mid-Atlantic Regional Director and is the AAC Professional Liaison.



**Andrew Tash** is a Birth Father, Late Discovery adoptee who teaches and produces Media to raise awareness about the perspective many adoptees carry into their everyday lives. Andrew is an AAC Board Member at Large.



**Deborah Myers** is the AAC's Western Regional Director, and Washington State Representative. She trained as a confidential Intermediary, and volunteered with Washington Adoptees Reunion Movement. Served with WARM for over 20 years. Deborah was a founding member of Washington Coalition for Adoptees Rights and Equality (WA-CARE) and was instrumental in passing an OBC access law in 2012.



**Thomas Ahern** is the Senior Vice President of Business Development for Calo Programs and an Adoptee in reunion for many years. Thomas is a former School Psychologist with 30 years of behavioral health and education industry experience. He is an advocate for adoptees and for improvements in the treatment and understanding of developmental trauma. He enjoys fly-fishing, competitive endurance sports and his therapy dog, Nando. Thomas is an AAC Board Member at Large.

<b>AAC Board of Director Contact Information</b>		
<b>President</b> Amy Winn amyaac2016@gmail.com	<b>New England Reg. Director</b> VACANT	<b>Educational Chair</b> VACANT
<b>Vice President</b> Susan Friel-Williams aacmembership2016@gmail.com	<b>Mid Atlantic Reg. Director</b> Susan Merkel aacmidatlantic@gmail.com	<b>Canadian Liaison</b> VACANT
<b>Secretary</b> Mary Wilson maryewilsonaac@gmail.com	<b>South Reg. Director</b> VACANT	<b>Puerto Rico Liaison</b> VACANT
<b>Treasurer</b> VACANT	<b>Midwest Reg. Director</b> VACANT	<b>Support Group Liaison</b> VACANT
<b>Interim Legislative Chair</b> Tim Monti-Wohlpart tmw713@gmail.com	<b>Southwest Reg. Director</b> VACANT	<b>AAC Historian</b> VACANT
<b>Membership Chair / Event Registrar</b> Susan Friel-Williams aacmembership2016@gmail.com	<b>West Reg. Director</b> Deborah Myers deborahmyers915@gmail.com	<b>AAC Grant Writer</b> VACANT
<b>Nominations &amp; Elections</b> Susan Friel-Williams AACElections2016@gmail.com	<b>Website Administrator</b> Sarah Dodson sarahedodson@gmail.com	<b>AAC Volunteer Coordinator</b> VACANT
<b>Professional Liaison</b> Susan Merkel aacmidatlantic@gmail.com	<b>Communications Chair</b> Sarah Dodson sarahedodson@gmail.com	
<b>Board Member at Large</b> Thomas Ahern tahern123@yahoo.com	<b>Board Member at Large</b> Andrew Tash andrew.tash@gmail.com	

**Legal Advisor** - Richard AuBuchon

***The AAC has a Support Group Webpage?***

Located at:

[http://www.americanadoptioncongress.org/support\\_grps.php](http://www.americanadoptioncongress.org/support_grps.php)

Check it out . . .

Do you see a group that no longer exists?

Do you know of a NEW Support Group that should be on the list?

If so, then contact either the AAC Support Group Liaison or  
Website Administrator who will revise or add any Support Groups .

## CEU Breakdown by Day and for Full Conference

Time	Program	CEU's	Sub-Total
Wednesday - April 5, 2017			
6:30 PM 7:45 PM	AAC Welcome and Orientation	1	
8:00 PM 9:30 PM	Opening Keynote Rob Gent	1.5	
<b>Wednesday CEU Sub-Total</b>			2.5
Thursday April 6, 2017			
9:00 AM 10:30 AM	Keynote: Ruth McRoy	1.5	
11:15 AM 12:30 PM	Workshop 1	1	
2:15 P.M. 2:30 P.M.	Workshop 2	1	
8:00 P.M. 10:30 P.M.	Keynote Alison Larkin Performance	2	
<b>Thursday CEU Sub-Total</b>			5.5
Friday April 7, 2017			
9:00 A.M. 10:30 A.M.	Keynote: Blaine Bettinger - DNA	1.5	
1:15 A.M. 12:30 P.M.	Workshop 3	1	
2:00 P.M. 3:15 P.M.	Workshop 4	1	
8:00 P.M. 9:30 P.M.	Keynote Amy Ginther Play	1	
<b>Friday CEU Sub-Total</b>			4.5
Saturday April 8, 2017			
8:00 A.M. 9:30 A.M.	Keynote: Dr. Wirta-Leiker & Kathy Mackecheny	1.5	
10:15 A.M. 11:30 A.M.	Workshop 5	1	
12:45 P.M. 2:00 P.M.	Workshop 6	1	
2:15 P.M. 3:30 P.M.	Workshop 7	1	
<b>Saturday CEU Sub-Total</b>			5.5
<b>Full Conference CEU's</b>			18

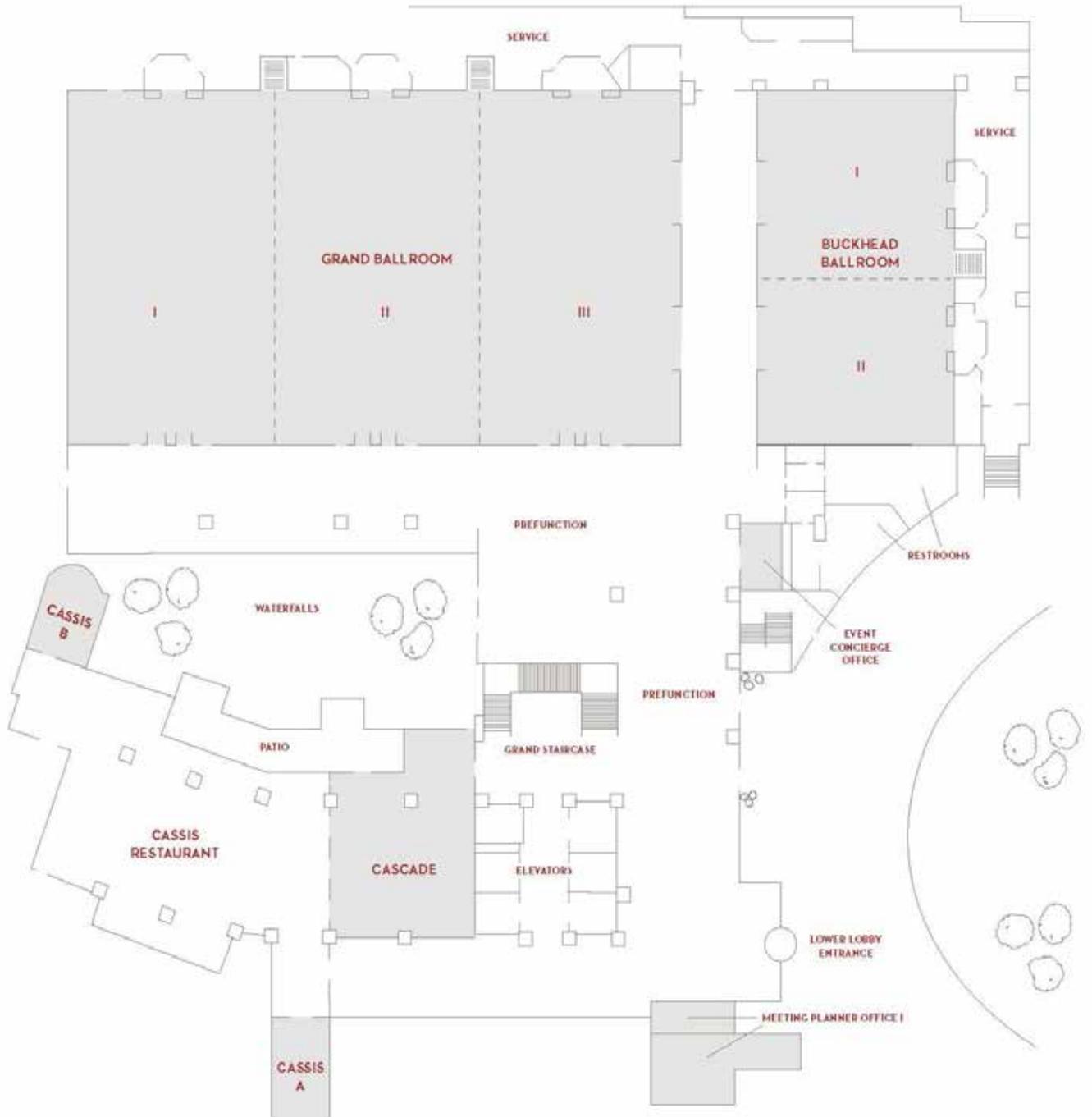




# Floor Plans for Grand Hyatt In Buckhead - Atlanta

## FLOOR PLANS

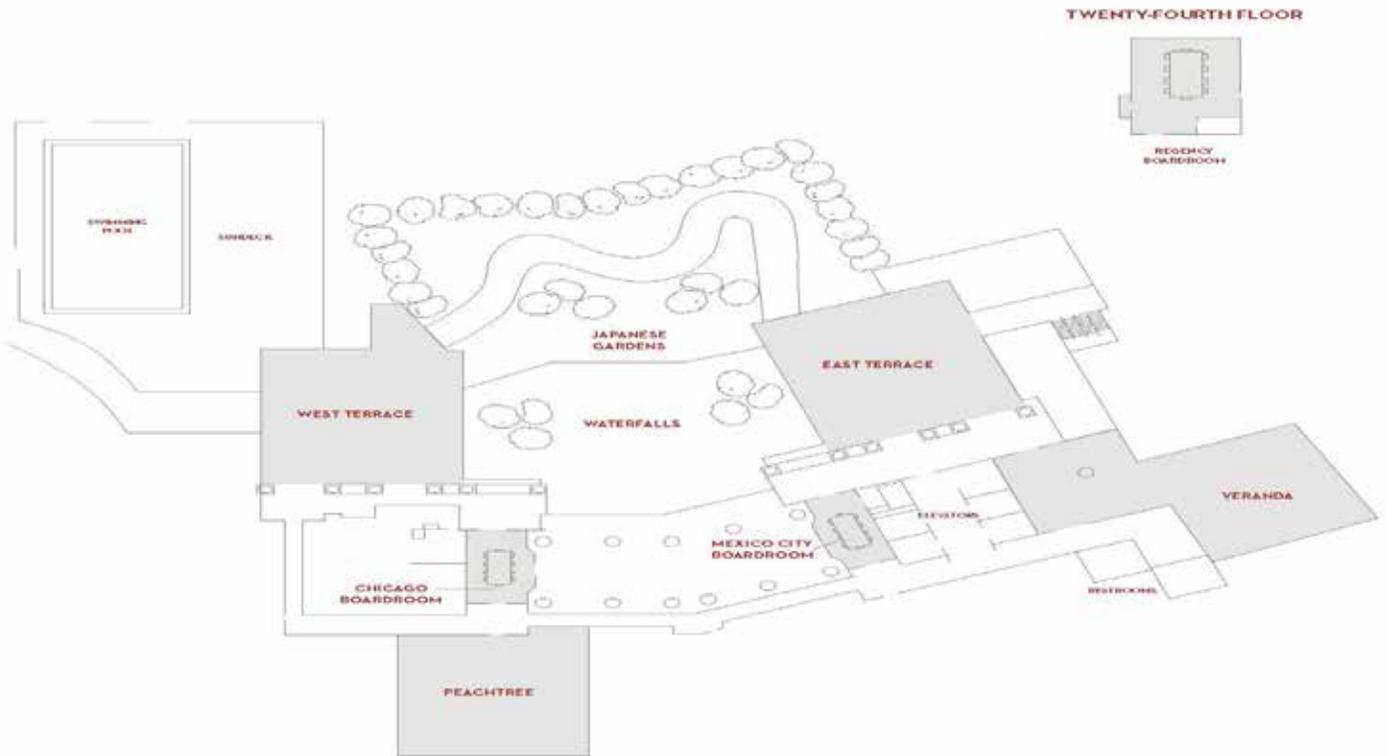
Lower Lobby Level



**FLOOR PLANS**  
Lobby Level



**FLOOR PLANS**  
Garden Level—Third Floor



*Thank You*

Look for where our conference  
will be in 2018  
in your printed or online  
conference brochure!

