

## BOARD MEMBERS

Shelley Ballard, JD, President  
Tracy H. Burns, Treasurer  
Lorie Colabelli, Secretary, Past President  
Deane Borgeson  
Philip Cowen, CFA  
Peter Lechman, MD  
Jennifer J. Pedley, MJ, LSW  
Margot Riphagen  
Mary Beth Sommer  
Susan Spires  
Karen Steele

## STAFF:

Enid Callen & Susan Wilson, MS  
Co-Executive Directors  
Vicki Twomey & Kim Tant  
Case Managers

## HONORARY BOARD:

Tobi Ehrenpreis, Founder, Past President  
Megan O'Connor, Past President  
Karen Ksander Ettelson, JD  
Kevin Flynn, JD  
Rikki Gipp  
Kathy Henrichs, PhD  
LaNell Hill, ACSW  
David McKirnan, PhD  
Cher Pollock, MS, LCPC

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## BOARD NEWS

OYFF welcomed new board members, Margot Riphagen, Susan Spires and Karen Steele. We accepted the resignations of Joann DiStefano, Debbie Frisch, and Jessie Williams, and thank them for their time and energy on behalf of OYFF. Shelley Ballard has taken over as Board President replacing Lori Colabelli, and Lorie has taken over Shelley's role as Secretary. Tracy Burns replaces Phil Cowen as Treasurer, and has been hard at work with Enid updating all our financials.

## SALLY SOMMER-FLYNN RUN/WALK

Although September 26<sup>th</sup> dawned cloudy and damp, it couldn't dampen the enthusiasm of over 100 runners and walkers for the 5<sup>th</sup> annual Sally Sommer Flynn Run/ Walk for families. Once again, Mary Beth Sommer did a tremendous job organizing the event, which honors the life of her sister, Sally, who died 5 years ago. Mary Beth partnered with OYFF when she initiated her annual Run/Walk, and donates the proceeds to OYFF. In addition to the Run/ Walk, a "GNO" (girls night out) was held on Sept. 9<sup>th</sup> at Fresh Ideas in Northfield. Owner Julie Blunt generously donated 20% of the evening's sales to The Sally Sommer Flynn Foundation. Over \$12,000 was raised from these events and will be donated to OYFF.

MaryBeth Sommer with  
nieces Gen and Katie Flynn



# SMALL STEPS ~

## BENEFIT NEWS:

### PAVING A PATHWAY ... TO DREAMS...



Tracy Burns

## DID YOU KNOW?

In 2009 OYFF provided:

- \* *career & life counseling to 75 birthmoms*
- \* *55% of grants are for educational purposes*
- \* *87% of clients meet with case manager in person*
- \* *2 retreats for birthmoms from Illinois, Indiana, Nebraska, & Pennsylvania*
- \* *Birthmom get-togethers in the Chicagoland area, including Annual Mothers Day Dinner*
- \* *Two chatrooms for birthmoms only*
- \* *New facebook page*

### OUR CLIENTS:

- 85% are single*
- 63% live in Illinois*
- 37% live in Indiana*
- 42% are parenting other children*
- 83% have a high school diploma*
- 57% do not receive any state/federal assistance*

*70% have continued contact with OYFF*

Our annual dinner benefit was held April 24<sup>th</sup> at Pinstripes in Northbrook. Co-Chaired by Joann Di Stefano and Jessie Williams, the evening was a great success. Jenn Pedley put together a touching video which was filmed at a birthmom retreat, and it really helped all the attendees understand the importance of our programs for birthmoms. The silent auction had some great items, including a hand made doll house, and Chicago Bears tickets. More than 100 guests enjoyed bowling and bocce, and we raised over \$20,000. Lorie Colabelli and MB Sommer are working on some exciting fundraising ideas for next year.



Matt & Vicki Twomey with Jenn Pedley

## BIRTHMOM ACTIVITIES:

Our fall retreat was held Oct. 17-18<sup>th</sup>, once again at a lovely home in Michigan City Indiana. We had 19 attendees, including a new birthmom, Catelynn, one of the teenage girls featured in the MTV production of "16 and Pregnant". MTV is beginning a new series titled "Teen Mom", and it continues to follow Catelynn's journey after making an adoption plan for her child. MTV approached OYFF about filming parts of the retreat weekend, as they felt it was a unique opportunity to glimpse into the feelings and emotions of birthmoms, specifically Catelynn. After discussions with each of the attendees and the OYFF board of directors, the decision was made to allow MTV to film, with the stipulation that filming would stop if it became uncomfortable. Any birthmoms not wishing to be filmed would be exempt, and only specific events would be filmed. The result was a great retreat weekend, with minimal disruption from the film crew. They were respectful, helpful, and everyone is optimistic that the filming of our unique weekend will bring a positive understanding of the adoption experience, and some good publicity for our foundation.



2009 Retreat



Thank you to our Retreat Sponsors; Adoption Center for Family Building, St. Mary's Services, and Ballard, Desai, Bush-Joseph & Horwich.

# ABUNDANT HOPE

## ALISON'S STORY.....

When I was twenty, I found out I was pregnant. The story of placing my daughter is one that is full of heart ache, a lack of choice, and one that divided my family. My parents saw no other option for me; adoption was the answer to this tragic unwedded pregnancy. I moved to Chicago after Lexi Belle was born to work for a film production company. Twenty one at this point, I went to the one place where people my age would congregate, the bar. While drowning my pain in Jack Daniels, I would tell people my story of adoption; pretend my heart felt ok, and often reached out to strange men in search of companionship. I drank my sorrows away for two years. I then decided that if I didn't seek some sort of help, I would at some point end my life. At a party, I cried for hours on end, repeating the words, "my heart hurts, it hurts so bad, my heart hurts." I opened my laptop, and searched "help for birth moms." This is when I discovered the website for On Your Feet Foundation. I called and immediately was connected to someone over the phone who could understand the despair I was feeling. To hear another birth mom tell me she understood was the first breakthrough of many. OYFF gave me a grant so that I could attend therapy on a weekly basis. Within the office of my therapist, I began to untangle the mess that was called my life. We explored my alcoholism, adoption issues, and the deep rooted issues of my past. I began to sort through the immense anger I was feeling towards my parents, Lexi's adoptive parents, and most of all the anger I cast upon myself. I am currently paying for my own therapy, and continue to forge ahead with the hopes that I will someday feel content with my past. On your Feet Foundation also awarded me a grant to begin my education at Northeastern Illinois University. I am currently in the middle of my second semester, and school is the most liberating place on earth! I am on the Honor Roll, Vice President of the Feminist Collective, and I am claiming my education in every way I can. On Your Feet Foundation has given me the greatest hope since the day I placed Lexi in the hands of her adoptive mother. The people within this organization have lifted me up, believed in me, and guided me through life altering decisions. They helped me get back on my feet and I am forever grateful to the staff of OYFF, and to the people who donate financially. Because of their contributions, I am a new woman, full of hope, and ready at the age of 24, for my life to begin!



Carolyn Kelsch & Jillian Whalls

## EVERYONE IN THE POOL!

In August, OYFF staff and Bd joined Enid Callen & Deane Borgeson who hosted an Adoption Connection reunion. The pool party was held at Deane's Northbrook house. It was terrific to catch up with Adoption Connection families, and share the exciting programs offered by OYFF! We hope to get some of them involved.



2009 Adoption Connection reunion

OYFF was blessed to receive a very generous grant from Colleen and Peter DesRoiser who donated \$10,000 to hire a case manager for the central Indiana area. We're delighted to have hired Kim Tant who will be seeing those clients.

## *Our Mission:*

*On Your Feet foundation honors and values the choice birth parents have made to place their children for adoption, helps birthparents become self sufficient, and provides support and community after placement.*



*Wishing Everyone a Happy  
and Healthy Holiday  
Season!*

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**If you** have not done so already, it's not too late to make your 2009 year end donation! Please help us continue to provide our important and vital services. We need your help now more than ever. You can donate online at [OYFF.org](http://OYFF.org).