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BOARD NEWS

OYFF welcomed new board members, **Colleen Desrosiers** and **Michael Stick**. We accepted the resignations of **Margot Riphagen** and **Karen Steele**, and thank them for their time and energy on behalf of OYFF. Mike has already been put to work negotiating with MTV, who again filmed at our fall retreat. Our board is focusing on fundraising, and they are working hard to insure that OYFF will continue to provide our vital services to birthmothers. The board is planning several fundraising events throughout the upcoming year. You may have noticed a new return address! In an effort to be more cost effective, in Feb., OYFF closed its office, and Enid, Sue, and Vicki are working out of their homes.

GEORGE the salon

Tracy Burns and **Mary Beth Sommer** helped organize a wonderful salon evening on March 1st at **George the salon** in Chicago. George and his stylists donated their time and salon for hair and make up services, we also had a well being therapist, a psychic, and reflexologist. Fifty ladies, including eight birthmoms (who were sponsored), enjoyed a pampering experience, which included Hors' d'oevres, wine and dessert. The evening was such a hit that we have already booked **George Salon** for Mon. March 7th 2011, so mark you calendars, as this event fills up fast!

SALLY SOMMER-FLYNN RUN/WALK

May 8th dawned cloudy and cool, however, it couldn't dampen the enthusiasm of over 100 runners and walkers for the 6th 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 6 years ago. Mary Beth partnered with OYFF and donates the proceeds of the SSF Run /Walk to us. In addition a "GNO" (girls night out) was held on May 6th at **Fresh Ideas** in Northfield. Owner **Julie Blunt** generously donated 20% of the evening's sales to The Sally Sommer Flynn Foundation. Over \$10,000 was raised from these events and will be donated to OYFF.



Mary Beth Sommer with
niece Gen Flynn

SMALL STEPS

BIRTHMOM ACTIVITIES:

We held two retreats in 2010. The spring retreat was held April 23rd-25th. We had a waiting list for this weekend, and everyone who was wait listed was guaranteed a spot for the fall. Our fall retreat was held Oct. 15-17th, once again at a lovely home in Michigan City Indiana. We had 20 attendees, over half of whom were attending for the first time! We also had MTV in attendance, as they continue to film birthmom, **Catelynn**, one of the teenage girls featured in the MTV production of "Teen Mom". The show continues to follow Catelynn's journey after making an adoption plan for her child. Teen Mom is the most popular program on MTV, and the teens have been featured on the cover of *People* and *US* magazine this year. This is the second year that Catelynn has attended our retreat, and the second time MTV filmed parts of the retreat weekend. 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, three women elected not to be filmed. The result was a great retreat weekend, the best ever, some said, 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. This year we added t-shirts with our logo, and a new banner. All of the women wore their t-shirts during the filming on Saturday. Additionally, this year MTV offered OYFF a donation, which we gratefully accepted. Our birthmother retreats have been so popular that **Jenn, Cher** and **Vicki** are planning 3 retreats for 2011! We are truly grateful to all three facilitators, as we could not do the retreats without them. For birthmoms by birthmoms, you guys are the best!

Many thanks to our sponsors for the April retreat; **Adoption Center for Family Building, Ballard, Desai and Miller, and St. Marys Services.**



2010 Fall Retreat



By **Nellie Jenkins**

I was all nerves before the retreat. I felt afraid of being judged, not being liked, really simple stuff really. I had connected with Kerry and another birth mom before, and it had clicked. I was scared that people wouldn't like me. I can't explain what it felt like to meet all these women who knew what I felt and yet, didn't even know me.

The retreat was in a word, intense. Looking back, I feel that it was moving the roadblocks out of the way, so I could finally let some of that grief and regret out. There was no judgment, no 'how dare you', there was only love and understanding. I am used to people abandoning me, so for me to let myself trust a group of women with the pain I experienced, was hard.

This was my first retreat so I felt out of place, like I didn't belong. I like to say my adoption experience was a miracle and it really was, but the feelings and personal struggles are the ugly side for me. When I tell my story I edit and I didn't have to edit.

The weekend was a chance to let go. Even now, I feel the sting of tears coming to my eyes, and it hurts so much more than I want to admit or think about. I miss the women I met, and need them in my life. I was holding a lot back from myself and this retreat really helped me to start the process of letting go. I am so grateful to Vicki and everyone.

The decision to place changed my life forever, but for me personally, deciding to live was a big part of the change for me. "To Live is To Love" is the expression of my heart and this retreat really opened me to the idea of being able to love myself, and open my hearts to all of you.

ABUNDANTHOPE

BIRTHMOM POOL PARTY!

We hosted a birthmom pool party on Aug. 30th at Deane's house. We had a lovely day for friendship, food, and fun in the pool. We were thrilled that two birthmoms drove all the way from Michigan and Indiana to join us! Most of these women were not able to attend the retreat, so this was an excellent opportunity to spend time with women who have gone through similar experiences. In addition to about twelve birthmoms, well being therapist **Jamie Lerner** came, and shared some of her positive energy and wonderful supportive wisdom. Jamie also gave each birthmom a copy of her book (which she gladly autographed!) "The Ever loving Essence of You" Thanks so much Jamie!

BENEFIT NEWS

We hope you all enjoyed our "Top Ten Reasons NOT to come to our Masquerade Ball" this fall!

Seriously, the board felt that in this difficult economic climate, rather than spend money on a venue, food, etc. we would be better off keeping our costs down and trying something different. We are delighted to report that our "non-benefit" benefit raised over \$12,000, and nobody had to leave their house!! Thanks to **Jenn Pedley** for the great script! In addition to the Georges Salon event in March, we will be participating in a *Red Hat luncheon* featuring book dramatist "**Barbara Rinella**", on April 7th, 2011. The Red Hat luncheon will be held at the Concord Banquet Hall, in Kildeer, Illinois and Barbara will be doing "Loving Frank". Please call the office at 847-433-7820 for more information. The Sally Sommer Flynn Walk/ Run is scheduled for May 21, 2011. Mark your calendars!

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.

We're on Facebook!
PLEASE VISIT US ONLINE AT
WWW.OYFF.ORG



1st annual Birthmom Pool Party Aug. 2010

*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.*

OYFF was blessed again to receive a very generous grant from Colleen and Paul Desrosiers who donated \$10,000 to continue to fund our case manager for the central Indiana area, Kim Tant.

We gratefully acknowledge all of our 2010 Donors

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