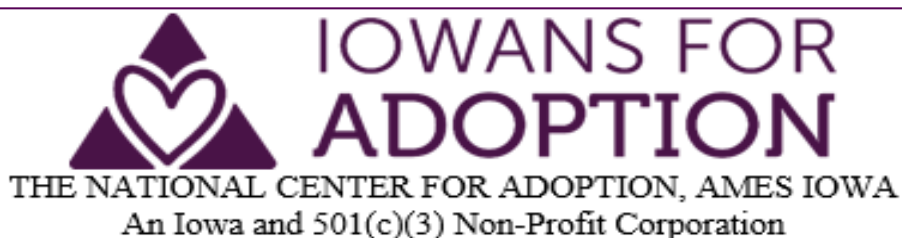




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Iowans for Adoption Inaugural Banquet

Our first Iowans for Adoption banquet was a huge success! Hosted at Glen Oaks Country Club in West Des Moines, the night started with mingling and posing with the Gingerbread Person. Silent auction tables faced the entrance of the room, filled with various items such as signed ISU athletic supplies, tickets to Disney on Ice, a baking supply basket and a basket of wine bottles with chocolate. In celebration of the fall season, we decorated the tables and hallway with pumpkins, leaves, candles and orange ribbon.

Bill Pearce, VP of Iowans for Adoption, started the banquet with a brief summary of our hard work so far and introduced our first guest speaker, Myron Linn. Linn discussed his family's adoption story.

Erin Kiernan spoke next. Kiernan, who is an honorary board member for Iowans for Adoption, shared her powerful, emotional story to all those who attended. Kiernan became pregnant during high school and decided to place her son for adoption. Years later, she married and started experiencing a period of infertility. She went through many months of medication and hormone injections. Kiernan and her husband considered adoption during this stressful time. Finally, she found out she was pregnant with a son, Michael Francis. She calls him her miracle child. To this day, she advocates for adoption and continues to share her struggle of infertility. No matter how hard her situation, she never gave up.

Lastly, Rusty Johnson shared his difficult journey through foster care. He connected with his biological mother, who in return gave him a saxophone. Rusty recently connected with a previous foster parent, Ms. Carolyn Brickley. Brickley, an elementary school music teacher, showed Rusty the ropes of music and how to play the saxophone. To this day, he advocates for child welfare. This past July on his 37th birthday, Brickley adopted Johnson. During the banquet, Rusty and Carolyn played "Somewhere Over the Rainbow" together for the first time.

Overall, we made \$4,000 in donations. A big thank-you to our following sponsors: Adoption Associates of Iowa, Stacey Baker, Roxanne Conlin, Ryan Genest, Iowa Farm Bureau, Michael Pearce and Lillis, O'Malley, Olson, Manning, Pose & Templeman Law Firm. We will focus on using the donation money to pay for grants to hopeful, adoptive families and educational materials on adoption. Check out a few photos below! To see the rest of the banquet photos, click on our Iowans for Adoption Facebook page [here](#).



Oh, SNAP! It's '90s Trivia!

Pizza, Trivia & Raffles



Global Brew Tap House Fundraiser

Saturday, Nov. 25

2:00-5 p.m.

*Global Brew Tap House
9500 University Ave.
West Des Moines, IA 50266*

Global Brew has teamed up with Iowans for Adoption to bring you an "Oh, SNAP! It's '90s Trivia" event! Tickets are \$10 a person and will include pizza and live trivia. Teams of 2-6 are welcome to participate, but teams of at least 4 are encouraged. Prizes will be awarded to the 1st, 2nd and 3rd place teams. Teams will receive bonus points for each team member dressed in sweet '90s attire. Trivia will include questions on movies, TV shows, music, sports and more.

All ticket proceeds will benefit waiting families who are hoping to grow their families through adoption. Get tickets [here](#)!

Successful Fifth Annual Gingerbread Run/Walk

In celebration of National Adoption Month, runners and walkers across Iowa gathered at Ankeny DMACC for our fifth annual 5K Gingerbread Run/Walk.

Registration began around 9:30 a.m., followed by the youth gingerbread chase at 10 a.m. The actual run/walk began at 10:30 a.m. Around 250 participants signed up for the race. In total, we raised almost \$2,000. The money raised will be given to families who want to adopt a child but don't have the means to do so, as the process can be expensive. To our surprise, we found a family to be the recipient of the first Iowans for Adoption grant of \$5,000 during the event.

In light of the recent deaths of Natalie Finn and Sabrina Ray, the run not only celebrated adoption, but also highlighted the need for quality foster and adoptive parents. Finn and Ray died in the hands of their adoptive parents. In Iowa, there are more than 800 children waiting to be adopted from foster care.

We want to thank our sponsors for their continued support of our organization. Our sponsors include: Adoption Associates of Iowa, AMP-Achieving Maximum Potential, YSS, Wicked Soundz, ISU Adoption Club, Adoption Advocates of Iowa, The Bockoven Family, The National Center for Adoption and Iowans for Adoption.

To see more photos and news stories regarding the run, LIKE and check out our Gingerbread Run Facebook page [here!](#)



Gingerbread Skate for Adoption Story



"It's the only thing that keeps me going," he says, as he contemplates when he will be able to hit the ice next. Staff Sergeant Luke Vance, a combat soldier in the US Army Reserves, has found healing in the sport of hockey and hopes to inspire others, promote awareness for various causes and simply bring people together. Luke has been playing hockey for just over a year, which started when he decided he was going to try his hand at pick-up hockey, offered at the Ames Ice Arena. Early on, he suffered a fall on the ice that landed him in the hospital for two days, but

that did not deter him in the slightest. Within a few weeks, Luke would be found back on the ice. The next year brought about new friendships and opportunities, culminating in his current endeavors to provide a space to bring other hockey novices together.

Luke won't share much about his 12-month deployment in Iraq, but will admit to the post-traumatic stress he endured. In the immediate aftermath, Luke became consumed by video games and heavy drinking. He had very few, if any, friends and found camaraderie primarily in the safety of his Army unit. There is mutual understanding and empathy among battle buddies. A fellow service member and friend to Luke was involved in hockey himself and was instrumental in peaking Luke's interest in the sport. Ultimately, Luke has found healing through hockey in many ways; a positive outlet for releasing pent up emotion and a sense of self for which he has always been searching. Luke is continuously thinking of ways to utilize hockey for good. He has chosen to support Iowans for Adoption because of the personal impact adoption has had in his life.



As a transracial adoptee, Luke grew up in rural Iowa and has limited knowledge of his birth parents. He has wrestled with his identity all his life and one day hopes to find more answers to the questions that linger. Luke desires to bring awareness to the multi-faceted issue of adoption, and having been familiar with the Gingerbread Run, he began to ponder, "What about a Gingerbread Skate?" It didn't take long before the planning was underway. The first Gingerbread Skate for Adoption was held on July 15, 2017 and overall, they gathered \$300 in donations. Luke hopes to coordinate another Gingerbread Skate event in 2018.

Volunteers NEEDED for 2018!



We need help with our annual Gingerbread Run/Walk in Ames (October), in Ankeny (November) and fall banquet. We need people to help raise funds, secure donations and sponsors, sell tables/tickets for the banquet, create brochures, write grants and help on steering committees. Lastly, we need a videographer to help with all of our events and to videotape people's adoption stories. If you can help in any of these tasks, please contact Diana at Baltimore.diana@gmail.com.

Iowans for Adoption In The News...

WHO Channel 13 News

- [Group Works to Promote Adoption as a Positive Parenting Option](#)
- [Adoption Investigating](#)
- [Gingerbread Run](#)

KCCI News Channel 8

- [Daughter's Wish of Adopting](#)

We Are Iowa

- [Gingerbread Run](#)
- [Gingerbread Run 2](#)

Des Moines Parent

- [Rusty's Story](#)

WHO Radio

- [Erin Kiernan Talks Adoption & Banquet](#)

Meet Our Board Members



Bill Pearce

Vice President

Bill Pearce is the co-director of Adoption Associates of Iowa and is certified as an Iowa Adoptions Investigator. Adopted by his stepfather at the age of 15, Pearce began to support adoption at a young age. He held numerous professional seminars on child development, juvenile justice, family dynamics and adoption issues. Pearce earned his B.A. and M.A. in Sociology at Drake University. He has been married for 56 years and has two children and three grandchildren. Pearce worked in Juvenile Court for 25 years and served as the Iowa Court System unofficial lobbyist. He freelanced as a writer, investigated contested custody cases, managed a psychiatric clinic and now owns a secular, adoption agency. He is the co-author of *Scruffy Shares a Secret*, an illustrated storybook about young children of alcoholics and the co-author of *Tough-Minded Parenting*. Pearce has an understanding of individuals with problems, families as systems, formal organizations, budgets, policy and law.



Diana Lang Baltimore

President

As the founder and executive director of The National Center for Adoption, Diana Lang Baltimore hopes to educate others about adoption terminology, the adoption processes and the positive aspects of adoption that can enhance the well-being of children and families. Adopted at birth, Baltimore is in reunion with her birth family members. Her birth father was also adopted. She is a proud mom of two children—Blake and Danielle. Blake is biologically-related to her and she adopted Danielle six months after her birth. Diana earned her B.S., M.S. and Ph.D. from Iowa State University. Her desire to educate others about adoption stems from her experiences as an adoptee, an adoptive parent and an adoption researcher. She interviewed and surveyed numerous individuals who have been involved in the adoption process. The majority of individuals who participated in her research indicated a need to educate others about **adoption as a positive parenting option**.



Meghan Hoyt

Technology Coordinator

Meghan Hoyt is the Customer Relations and Business Operations Manager at EnSoft Corporation. In her prior roles, Hoyt was a project coordinator at EnSoft, a shelter intern at ACCESS Women's Shelter and a respite care provider for Healthy Connections, Inc. She received her B.S. in Psychology, Sociology and Women's Studies at Iowa State University. Hoyt was adopted at a very young age. In total, her parents adopted five children and have been foster parents for roughly 30 years. Adoption and foster care have always been the foundation of her family. She considers herself fortunate for having been adopted and advocates for children successfully finding adoptive families. Through her current job, Hoyt is knowledgeable on managing websites, applying for funding and communicating with people from countries all over the world.

Meet Our Board Members



Ryan Genest
Adoption Attorney

Ryan Genest attended Southern Illinois University at Carbondale earning his Bachelor's Degree in Political Science in 1989. He attended Drake Law School in Des Moines, Iowa earning his Law Degree in 1992. He has been in private practice since graduating from law school. Genest practices in domestic relations (including adoption) and criminal law. He has represented clients throughout the state, including all of the counties in the central Iowa area. He is a member of the Iowa Trial Lawyers Association and the Iowa and American Bar Associations, Family Law Section.



Melonie Wallace
Secretary

Melonie Wallace has been an advocate of adoption for years and is an expert of the adoption process. She has two, adopted children named Delaney and Makenzey. After eight years of fertility treatments, Wallace began her journey of adoption. During that time, she experienced three scams and a birth mom who changed her mind after three days. Currently, Wallace works closely with Diana Lang Baltimore planning and organizing the Gingerbread Run. The two added the kid gingerbread chase and silent auction. Over the years, she learned how to network in her career and enjoys talking to others about adoption. Wallace is looking forward to making a difference in adoption efforts and seeing what she can accomplish in three to five years.



Erin Kiernan
Honorary Board Member

Erin is a co-anchor of WHO Channel 13 news team and an advocate for adoption and adoptive parents' rights. Kiernan became pregnant at age 16 and chose adoption for her son, who is now in his twenties and remains an important part of her life. She and her husband, Michael, made public their eight-year struggle to start a family of their own, a process that involved multiple rounds of artificial insemination and in vitro fertilization. The experience prompted her to help spearhead a bill in the Iowa legislature that would guarantee an adoptive parent the same maternity leave as a birth mother. Today, Erin and Michael are the proud parents of their son, Michael Francis.

Meet Our Board Members



Michelle Vogel
Treasurer

Adopted as an infant, Michelle joined the family of a couple that had adopted a baby girl five years earlier. As a curious and impatient young person, Michelle always wondered about her biological family and if she had family that looked like her or shared the same traits. In 2007, after the birth of her second child, an unexpected chain of events reunited Michelle with her biological parents. While they remain in contact, Michelle believes adoption was a blessing for her and cannot imagine having to make such a difficult, selfless choice as an expecting mother. Michelle joined this organization because she wants to help others understand that adoption is a positive, powerful choice. Michelle lives in Ames with her husband, Jake, and their three young children, and serves as Vice President at Sigler Companies.



Natalie Liedman
Marketing Coordinator

Natalie is a recent graduate from Iowa State University, where she earned her B.A. in Spanish and B.S. in public relations. She is currently the marketing coordinator for Iowans for Adoption and an administrative specialist at BANK in West Des Moines. In her prior roles, she was the marketing intern at Delta Dental of Iowa and president of ISU Association for Women in Communications for the 2016-2017 academic year. Although not personally adopted, Natalie is eager in using her communication skills to share stories on adoption and maintain effective relationships with various media outlets. Natalie is knowledgeable in press releases, event planning and graphic design.



Rusty Johnson
PR Coordinator

Raised in Oskaloosa, Iowa, Rusty Johnson defied the odds of the foster care system. Beginning in the fourth grade, Johnson moved into several temporary foster homes. By the sixth grade, elementary music teacher Ms. Carolyn Brickley agreed to take Johnson as a foster child. During supervised visits, he also connected with his biological mother, who in return, gave him a saxophone. After his mother's death in 1994, Johnson used music and his saxophone to ease his childhood struggles. In 2006, he combined music and advocacy to create "Rusty Johnson's American Dreams" tour. His child welfare advocacy has received national recognition and awards. This past July on his birthday, he was adopted by Ms. Carolyn Brickley.

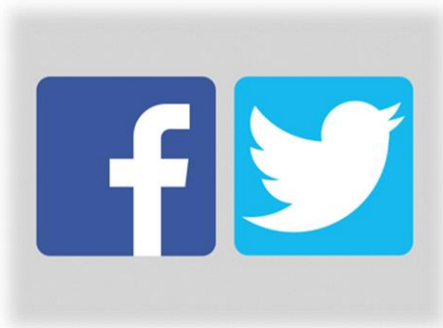
Visit Our Website!

www.iowansforAdoption.org

Our website is an interactive, online resource for anyone who is interested in learning more about adoption. Subscribe to receive our newsletters and to donate to our organization, click on the Donate. Feel free to read posts regarding the process of adoption and information about our annual Gingerbread Walk/Run. We could not be where we are without you!



Like us on Facebook & Follow us on Twitter!



Please visit and "like" our Iowans for Adoption Facebook page. Also follow our Twitter account, @Iowans4Adoption. Recommend us to your friends to help gain recognition for our organization and promote adoption as a positive parenting option.

Get Involved!

We are always looking to use the talents of our volunteers to further our organization and our mission. Many opportunities are available to help educate others about adoption. Please contact us at info@iowansforadoption.org to volunteer to promote adoption!



Share Your Story!

Please share your adoption-related story by heading over to our website, www.iowansforadoption.org and clicking on the [Share Your Story](#) tab. Or, e-mail your story to info@iowansforadoption.org and we will post it on our website. We love reading and sharing adoption stories!