

## The Whitman Family

*by Brad & Sarah Whitman*



Do you know how hard it is to navigate an international airport after receiving a call that you have been chosen by a birth family? It's almost impossible. Finding your luggage, finding your car, and driving two hours home seems like the most difficult tasks. Don't get me wrong, it was great to struggle with simple things. Especially with the wonderful news we had just received.

If we rewind about 8 months, Sarah and I had started planning to adopt. We contacted Wyoming Childrens Society and they were very welcoming. They walked us through the steps and we began the process. Being our first time adopting, we had a tremendous amount to do. So, we got to work. Biographies, home studies, and everything else that goes into this were done as soon as we could. The excitement was sometimes overwhelming, dreaming of what the future would hold for us. Once everything was finished, the hardest part set in. The waiting. Not knowing. Hoping for a phone call. The catch is that you have to carry on with life. We talked daily about the possibilities and probabilities. The "what ifs," if you will.

As we discussed the different scenarios, we decided to pass the time with a vacation. During this vacation, I remember adoption being in the forefront of our minds. Breakfast, lunch, through dinner, and walks on the beach. Then one day during this vacation, Sarah received a phone call to ask if we wanted our family profile to be shown.

As I was just listening to one side of the call, I'm fairly sure Sarah said yes before whoever was on the other line could finish. Of course, we agreed and then went back to waiting. This was our only topic of conversation. Emotions were intense for the remainder of the vacation.

**“...they remind us daily how blessed we are to be parents. They are everything we dreamed of.”**

Boarding the plane to return home was stressful. We hadn't heard anything yet and knew that we wouldn't have cell reception for several hours. Hopefully, they wouldn't call until we landed. Once again, thoughts were flowing endlessly. When we landed, phones went back on as soon as possible, and we had a voicemail. Shuttling off the plane, Sarah was calling. We had been chosen by the birth family. Exactly a month later, our oldest daughter, Shelby, was born.

The story doesn't end there. We have two sons as well. Milo and Bohdin. Milo has been a character since he was born. Happy, energetic, and loves life. Bohdin is the youngest. He's our troublemaker, jokingly. He is also full of life, curious, and just a fun kid to be around. All three make Sarah and I frustrated when they do something they shouldn't, they make us cry when we can't take away the pain, and they remind us daily how blessed we are to be parents. They are everything we dreamed of.





## cover story The Whitman Family continued...

Our three kids have been adopted through Wyoming Children's Society. All three had very unique adoption experiences and through these experiences, we have gained many more friends and family. Most have been touched by adoption or are curious about adoption. They are the important pieces of the puzzle that allowed us to become parents. Our children have more grandparents and relatives because of adoption. Some we see yearly, some are through social media, and others stop by monthly to see them. The relationships built with birth parents and birth families have been essential and are truly a blessing to Sarah and I, as well as the kids. Adoption has been a wonderful experience, and Wyoming Childrens Society helped make it possible. One of the best quotes I have seen; "We didn't give you the gift of life, life gave us the gift of you." This couldn't be more fitting for our family.

## Our story, your story, their story

*by Laura Shields*



At the time of birth, I naively believed that was the biggest moment in our adoption journey. In many ways it was, for my husband and I. What I am learning is that for our children, it was just the beginning of their journey. As they grow, each stage brings its own set of questions and understanding of their story. And it is just that: THEIR story. They will each have a different perspective of what it feels to be adopted at each stage of their life. I imagine the same is true for their birth parents.

Some of our kids are biologically related, some are not. This is often hard. To be honest, there is one question that I always have difficulty giving a graceful answer to. That question is "are any of them related?" The answer is "Yes, they are related to each other. If what you're asking is, are they biologically related, then, yes, two of them are."

Some of our kids have contact with their birthmother. One does not. This is often hard to understand. However, she recently said "I've never met my birth parents but hearing all the stories and stuff makes me think that they are great people."

We celebrate our family of five. We celebrate our differences. We celebrate our similarities. It is OUR story and it has times of joy, and times that are hard to understand, but it is OURS!

Last year our middle daughter Cody came home and said someone asked her what it felt like when she was adopted. She responded, "I don't remember, I was just a baby" to which the other child was stunned. She said "they think you have gone to an orphanage or something and so they ask what it was like."

I am honored to share some of our story with you all. We are the Shields family and adopted our children at birth through WCS(the most amazing agency and people!). Our children are now 14, 11 & 9 years old! My husband says "adoption feels as natural as breathing" and he is absolutely right. I cannot imagine any scenario other than the one we chose for our family. I remember holding them each for the first time. I felt this overwhelming sense of awe and gratitude that God worked in so many people to bring about that precise moment.

**story continued on page 3**





When we asked our kids recently what does adoption mean to you, we received a variety of responses:

"Being in a family."

"You can have more opportunities in life to be a better person and to do harder things." **Tucker, age 9**

"Adoption doesn't mean that your birth parents didn't want you, it's because they wanted you to have a better life."

"Adoption is a way you can have more opportunities." **Cody, age 11**

"Adoption is not something to be ashamed about."  
(DEFINITELY NOT...It's YOUR story and it's beautiful!)  
"Adoption gives you more chances to be a better person."  
**Emma, age 14**

Our oldest Emma has also had similar stories and says "a lot of people think that kids come from a foster home. It's hard to explain how you were adopted when you were born and how it's different from foster care." There are many different sides to adoption. My hope is that those of us connected with adoption, and if you are reading this newsletter, you are, can take those informal moments to educate our communities on all the sides of adoption. There are children, birthparents, adoptive parents, and adoption agencies. There are different types of adoption as well, domestic, international, at birth, older children, foster and much more. It is **OUR** story-share it!

I know this article rambles around a bit. But isn't that true for our adoption stories? The adoption symbol at the top is a clear and efficient representation of the child, the birthparents, the adoptive parents and the love shared by all. But that is not the whole story. The adoption story belongs to us all, and each story has its own unique perspective. Embrace your story, share it with those wanting to hear it, and hold it close to your heart where the most precious of feelings are kept.

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# 111th Gala was a True Success

by Kristin Burkart

Wyoming Children's Society celebrated 111 years of service with our annual gala fundraising event held on Saturday, August 27th.

We were joined by a crowd of almost 450 people to celebrate our work serving women, children, and families since 1911. It amazes me every time I think about our dynamic audience which includes adoptive parents and relatives, friends and families of adoption, local businesses who continue to support our agency and community, board members, staff, and those new to our organization and mission. It was a great opportunity to highlight our work, educate attendees about our mission and the women, children, and families that we provide critical services to on a daily basis.

We had the opportunity to honor our very own Carol Burman Lindly. Carol has recently retired from the agency after dedicating 34 years to the Wyoming Children's Society. Carol has been instrumental in moving the mission and work of this agency forward for many years with courage, thoughtfulness, grace, humility, and compassion. Carol has put her blood, sweat, tears, heart, and soul into this agency. Carol has made an enormous impact in the lives of so many people and nobody is more deserving of being honored.

The gala is our only fundraiser of the year, and our programs and services are dependent on the success of this event. Through the generosity of many, we were able to raise over \$145,000! We are incredibly thankful for the tireless work of our volunteers, staff, board, and community. Thank you for donating an item, purchasing a corporate sponsorship, attending the gala, volunteering, or even reading this article. It is because of you that we were able to experience our most successful year yet! We truly mean it when we say – *we cannot do this work without you!* Thank you for making such a difference and for helping bring families together. We wish you and your family a happy and healthy 2023!



## WCS historic building becomes an awesome art project!

Angela Stolz chose WCS's historical office building, Crook House, to complete her 3rd grade class project on. Angela with some assistance from her mom, Karen, built a replica of the Crook House. We think Angela did a great job!

Angela and her father, Patrick, are pictured with Angela's project.





## Children Who Wait

**Wyoming Children's Society is committed to recruiting adoptive families who are interested in bringing permanency to children who are waiting in the public foster care system. Currently, there are over 400,000 children in foster care with over 100,000 of those children available for adoption. Oliver and Angelly are just two of the children who are waiting for their forever families. Financial assistance is often available for adoption related expenses. If you are interested in learning more about adopting a waiting child please contact Wyoming Children's Society.**



### Oliver (10)

When it comes to pure joy, Oliver (10) finds it on the playground! This fellow loves to feel the back-and-forth sway of the swings and delights in the thrill of swooshing down the slide. Oliver is a music appreciator, especially "The Gummy Bear" song; he plays it on repeat. He even has a teddy bear that plays his favorite tune whenever he squeezes its tummy. Oliver has an affinity for plastic straws, and he comes up with ingenious ways to entertain himself with them. A well-liked activity for this sweet boy is to sit next to his caregivers and play. Oliver is bonded to his grandparents and lights up when he gets to have virtual calls. He appreciates holding his caregiver's hand and giving them hugs.

Oliver is now in the third grade. He can spell and sound out the letters in his name using some learned sign language,

All family types will be considered. Oliver will need to remain in contact with his grandparents following placement. Financial assistance may be available for adoption-related services. Oliver resides in Colorado. Child ID: 334611

### Angelly (17)

Get to know more about Angelly (17)! Being outside brings joy to this bilingual teen. If the clouds are out, the sweet Angelly likes to color and read. Watching television is one of her favorite downtime activities. She does great in the company of peers and adults.

She is doing well in her ninth-grade year.

Angelly would do best in a family with a mom and a dad, two moms, or a single mom, in which she can be the only child in the home. Financial assistance may be available for adoption-related services. Angelly resides in Utah. Child ID: 212369





# News from Wyoming Children's Society Board of Directors

**WCS recently elected new officers and one new board member to serve the mission of the agency. We would like to congratulate our new and current slate of executive officers:**

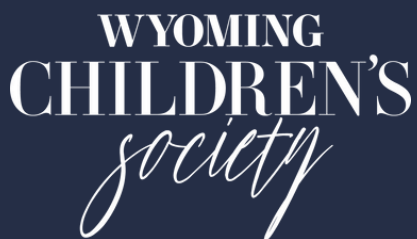
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We would also like to thank our outgoing executive President, Megan Romano, for her dedication and service on the Executive Committee for the last year. We are grateful that Megan will continue to serve on the board.



We also have the distinct pleasure of welcoming our newest board member, Robin Martin. Robin brings significant leadership and financial experience and expertise to the agency. We look forward to having Robin's service on the board!

Robin is the Chief Financial Officer at the Department of Workforce Services. Robin has a Bachelor's degree in Finance and a Master's degree in Management and Leadership as well as an MBA. Robin was born and raised in Wyoming and is proud to call this great state her home. Robin is passionate about servant leadership and truly believes that adding value to others is of key importance in any leader's role. Robin is a certified Myers-Briggs Practitioner and loves to teach teams how to respect differences and work better together. Robin has two grown children, a daughter Taylor, and her son Luke. She has two grandchildren, Dean and Everlee. To them, she is just "Nona." Robin loves to paint, and read, and can usually be found binge-watching a good true crime documentary.



## Our Mission

*Our mission is to build healthy families through adoption, and to advocate for birth families, children and adoptive families.*

## Our Vision

*A world where every child belongs to a safe and loving family.*





# 111th Anniversary Gala Corporate Sponsors

*thank you!*

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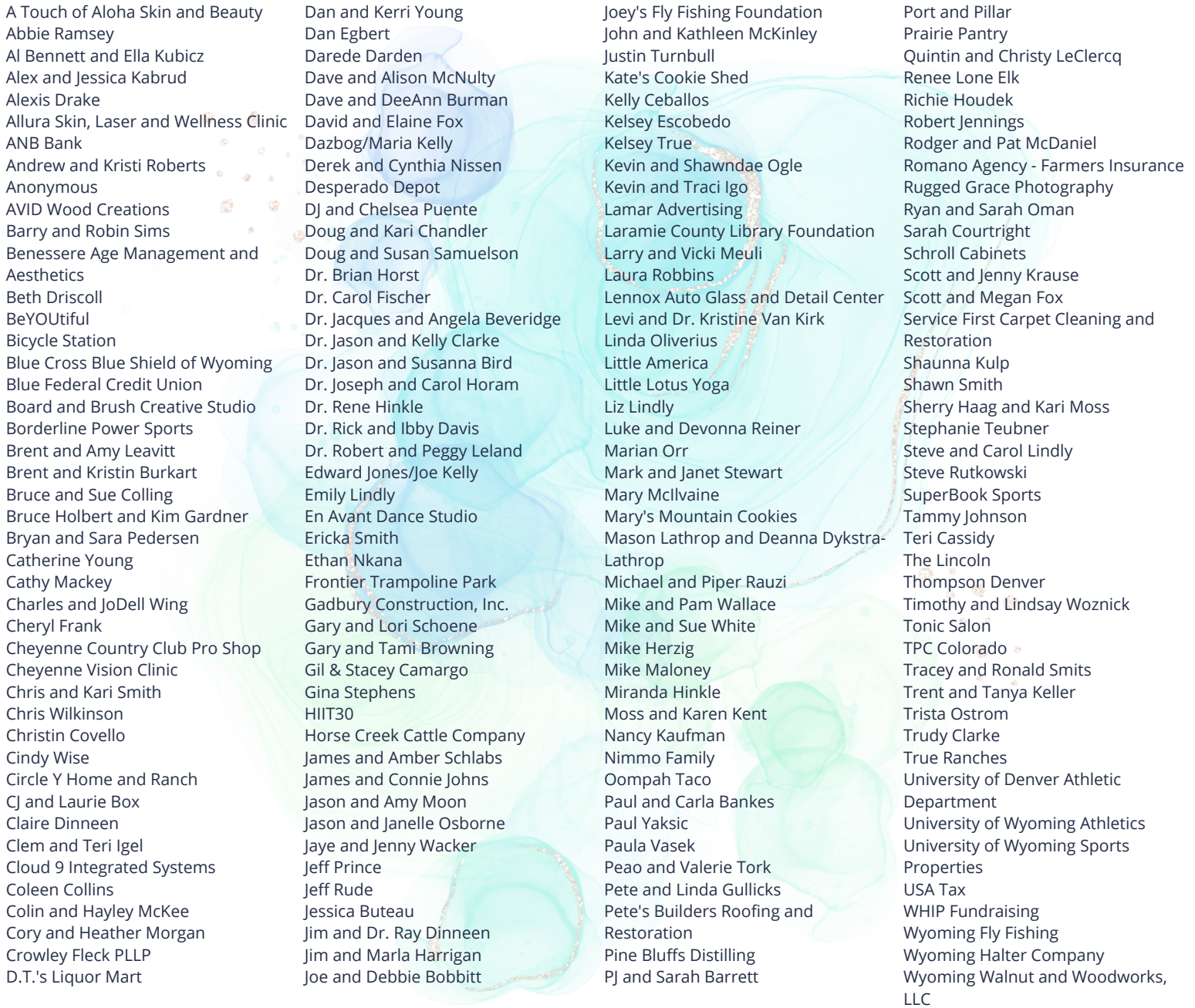
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# 111th Anniversary Gala Donations

*thank you!*



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# Little Red Stocking Fund



Dear Friends,

As the holidays approach, we look forward to spending time with our families and loved ones. During the holidays many of our community members and donors ask what they can do to help. The Little Red Stocking Campaign has served as our holiday fundraiser since 1911. In the early years of the agency, we partnered with Wyoming schools as a way for children in the schools to save their coins to donate to the Society at Christmas to help other children. It was a way to teach our children the importance of giving and sharing.

The Little Red Stocking continues to symbolize *hope* during the holidays. *Hope* that all children have the opportunity to be loved by a family. *Hope* that all women feel safe and heard when faced with a crisis pregnancy.

Please join us as we begin our 112th year. How can you help? Please consider donating today to impact women with support and services and help us ensure children of all ages have the opportunity to belong to a family. These are the gifts you can share today. Thank you for making a difference,



*Kristin Burkart*

Kristin Burkart  
CEO

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