No, she is not adopted, nor did she adopt a child.

She is a Birthmother who chose adoption through The Cradle for her baby.
With YOUR Help

**IMPACT BY THE NUMBERS:**

The Cradle served **THOUSANDS** of families in FY2018, including:

- 45 Domestic Placements Made
- 74 Home Studies Completed
- 476 Expectant Parent Inquiries Answered
- 1,199 Center for Lifelong Adoption Support Appointments Held
- 279 Professional Outreach Visits Made
- 450 CEUs Awarded
- 29,048 Adoption Learning Partners Online Course Registrations

### Revenue

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2017</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public Support</td>
<td>$2,580,364</td>
<td>$2,083,190</td>
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<tr>
<td>Program Revenue</td>
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<td>3,016,500</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interest and Dividends</td>
<td>326,837</td>
<td>309,768</td>
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<td>Realized-Unrealized Net Gains on Investments</td>
<td>1,383,932</td>
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<td>Changes in Value of Split Interest Agreements and Trusts</td>
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<td>Miscellaneous</td>
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<td>3,046</td>
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<td>Total Revenue</td>
<td>$6,966,411</td>
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### Expenses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program Expenses</td>
<td>$5,313,616</td>
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<td>Management &amp; General</td>
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<td>Fundraising</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Expenses</td>
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### Change in Net Assets

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<tr>
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<th>2018</th>
<th>2017</th>
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<tr>
<td>Net Assets—Beginning of Year</td>
<td>$17,452,759</td>
<td>$16,452,778</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net Assets—End of Year</td>
<td>$17,868,602</td>
<td>$17,452,759</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Dear Cradle Friends,

Happy Spring! I celebrated my two-year anniversary at The Cradle on December 1st, and what a time of great forward momentum the past year has been. The Cradle has successfully deepened and expanded organizational partnerships, strengthened internal operations and teams, paid down more than $1 million in long-term debt, and decisively streamlined resources to ensure the long-term sustainability of services for families touched by adoption.

This spring, The Cradle is excited to debut a completely overhauled marketing campaign giving voice to birth mothers and—literally—placing adoption in the family planning aisle for the very first time. In this issue’s feature story, you can learn more about this innovative campaign and our pro-bono advertising partner, BBDO, who helped make it all possible.

In these pages, you can also browse our FY2018 annual report, learn about a wonderful variety of events and activities in which you can participate, and meet other key members of The Cradle community including Cradle Board Member Therese Fauerbach, birth mom and author Lorri Benson, adoptive mom Brennetta Simpson, committed volunteers, and staff.

Since 1996, The Cradle has been a beneficiary of The Chicago Auto Show’s First Look for Charity. We have the Stasek Family, specifically Linda Stasek and her late husband, Bill Stasek, to thank for this. For the past 23 years, The Cradle has had the good fortune to benefit from the Stasek’s outstanding leadership and involvement. They adopted their children, Jemy and Monica, through The Cradle during the 70s and 80s, and their leadership with First Look for Charity has been transformational for The Cradle. Last year, in recognition of all the ways the Staseks have embodied the values of The Cradle and inspired so many others, I had the privilege of presenting to Bill and Linda the inaugural Stasek Star Award. What a special evening it was! And I know that all of us, especially his beloved family and friends, miss Bill deeply. Yet his legacy lives on, in so many ways.

On Friday, February 8, I had the honor of presenting the second Stasek Star Award to North Suburban Pediatrics, a group of pediatricians which has been deeply supportive of The Cradle since the beginning of the practice more than 50 years ago. These physicians have provided exceptional care to literally thousands of infants who have been cared for in The Cradle’s one-of-a-kind nursery. One of the founding physicians of the practice, Dr. Richard Burnstine, served as The Cradle’s Medical Director for more than 30 years, and as a Cradle Board member. When Dr. Burnstine retired, another physician from the practice, Dr. Ira Salafsky took over as Medical Director and continues to serve in this role today.

Dr. Rachel Ellwell and Dr. Ben Kornfeld complete the medical staff for The Cradle and each of these physicians has been involved with The Cradle’s work for years. They examine each and every baby that is cared for in The Cradle’s nursery. They are available at all hours to consult on any medical concern that arises. They generously share information and best practices to influence our nursery care, decisions and support our nursery team. All of this and so much more has been provided in a pro-bono capacity. This amazingly generous group of physicians has impacted the lives of thousands of Cradle babies. We are so grateful to everyone at North Suburban Pediatrics for the immeasurable generosity and commitment to The Cradle and to the babies for whom we care so deeply.

May the rest of this year be filled with success, abundance, and joy. In the meantime, you’re always welcome to contact me directly with questions or suggestions. From all of us at The Cradle, we are so grateful for your friendship and partnership in the work to build families through adoption, support families through life’s challenges, and strengthen communities through education.

Warm Regards,

Kim Perez, MSW
President & CEO
The popular Cradle Family Picnic will return to The Hub at Berens Park in west suburban Elmhurst on Saturday, July 27, from 10 a.m. to Noon.

Relax on the grass or cool off in the park’s 6,000 square-foot spray ground, and enjoy complimentary snacks and lemonade. We will have soccer balls, hula hoops, bubbles, toys, games, and other fun activities for the kids. The playground also has two separate play structures for children ages 2 to 5 and 6 to 12. There is a suggested donation of $10 per family.

To learn more or register, please visit www.cradle.org/picnic.

Enjoy the summer season with your friends, family & coworkers at The Cradle Associates Board’s signature event, A NIGHT FOR THE NURSERY

Lagunitas Brewing Company, 2607 W. 17th St. in Chicago!
The date to save for this fun-filled evening is Tuesday, August 13, from 5:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

You’ll enjoy exclusive access to our private party in the Lagunitas Taproom, $6 beers, food, games, prizes, and more! Tickets are $25 and proceeds will benefit The Cradle Nursery - the only on-site nursery at any adoption organization in the nation.

For more information about this special Cradle Associates Board event or to inquire about sponsorship please email Liz Fruth at elizabeth_fruth@yahoo.com.
ADOPTIVE FAMILY WEEKEND 2019

Every year since 2010, Cradle Adoption Counselor Carmen Knight has organized an Adoptive Family Weekend "summer camp" at YMCA Minikani in Hubertus, Wisconsin. The special weekend includes traditional outdoor activities, and room and board for families for a nominal fee. But what makes it truly unique are its camp counselors—all of whom are adult adopted persons, who lead daily adoption-related activities for children.

This year’s event will take place Saturday, August 31 through Monday, September 2. Registration fills up fast, so sign up soon so you don’t miss out on this fun weekend. Adult Adoptee camp counselors are also still needed.

To register for the weekend or inquire about being a camp counselor, please email: adoptivefamilyweekend@gmail.com or visit cradle.org/AFW.

SAYERS SOIREE
NEW NAME, NEW VENUE

The fabulous Sayers Summer Soiree is now the Sayers Soiree!
Always a highlight of The Cradle's busy event season, since 2013, hundreds of Cradle family members and friends of adoption have enjoyed a relaxed evening of cocktails, hors d’oeuvres, mingling, music, and dancing to generate awareness and support for the Ardythe and Gale Sayers Center for African American Adoption at The Cradle. As one of the only programs in the country that promotes adoption awareness specifically in the African American community, The Sayers Center’s goal is to find permanent, loving homes for Black and multiracial babies, and recruit more African Americans as adoptive parents.

The Sayers Soiree will be held on: September 12, from 6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.
Galleria Marchetti, 825 W. Erie Street, in Chicago.
For more information, please visit cradlefoundation.org/sss.

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Therese K. Fauerbach: 
The Importance of a Helping Hand

As CEO of The Northridge Group, a certified women owned and operated business (WBE), Therese K. Fauerbach is used to providing C-level management consulting solutions that address the complex operational problems of Fortune 100 companies. “Interesting problems that need to be solved keep me going,” says Therese. “The stuff that’s hard is the most rewarding to do.” However, Therese is always ready to remind those she serves about the importance of giving back. “It’s my belief that no one gets to their full potential without help from others,” says Therese. “Many times, there is no way to return the favor other than to pay it forward.”

Under Therese’s leadership, The Northridge Group focuses its significant and longstanding philanthropic work on children, education, and youth leadership. An adoptive parent and Cradle Foundation Board member since 2003, Therese is a champion of the lifelong, wraparound support that The Cradle provides to everyone in the adoption circle.

“The Cradle Nursery is an extremely valuable safety net,” says Therese. “At a highly emotional time, it allows for the grownups to have conversations without the added burden of caring for the child. A little bit of sanity and quiet to get through the internal dialogue to make the best decision.” She’s careful to caution, however, that child welfare is not achieved just because a placement is made. “Adoption is a lifelong learning process for the adoptee, the adoptive family, and the birth parents,” says Therese. “Having life-cycle solutions makes The Cradle a full-service organization.”

The Cradle is grateful for the many years of sponsor support from The Northridge Group. But Therese is quick to point out that the positive impacts flow in both directions. For example, Northridge’s work with The Cradle inspired the company to revamp its maternity and paternity leave policies for adoption equity. “I only got five days off of work when I adopted,” says Therese. Ensuring parental leave policies offer equal time off for adoption safeguards the needs of all children.

“In the end, we have similar objectives,” says Therese. “The Northridge Group transforms businesses. The Cradle transforms lives. Because I believe that our work is just part of who we are, I make sure we give back.”
CRADLE CONNECTIONS
A SUPER Cradle Open House to Kickoff Summer!
More than 250 Cradle community members, some from as far away as Ohio, Connecticut, Colorado, and Arizona came together at the 42nd Annual Cradle Open House on Saturday, June 1.

The theme for this year’s event was superheroes—some guests came dressed as their favorite superhero, and “real-life” superheroes also joined us as well. Volunteers were on hand to take guests upstairs to peek in at the babies in the Nursery. Cradle President and CEO Kim Perez mingled with guests at the popcorn machine. In addition, a special reception was held for The Cradle Class of 2018, including a light lunch and group photo.

The Cradle would like to thank to the members of The Cradle Associates Board for their time and talent: Laura Irons (Chair); Mary Bach; Liz Fruth; Kayla Gardner; Casey Karl; Aaron Katz; Zach Kisley; Jeff Marcella; Yael Mayer; and Kim Patterson.

GREAT COURSE + GREAT CAUSE = GREAT SUCCESS
THE 19TH ANNUAL CRADLE CLASSIC GOLF TOURNAMENT RAISES $184,000

The 19th Annual Cradle Classic Golf Tournament raised more than $184,000 on Monday, June 10, at Lake Shore Country Club in Glencoe, Illinois. The Cradle Classic was one of a very few outings being hosted at the course in 2019.

Congratulations to this year’s winners!

First Place (Score 117): Tim Zoph; Robbie Ventura; Gary Cole; and Joel Lee.
Second Place (Score 119): John Luce; Matt Dintelman; John Nelson.
Third Place (Score 124): John Coffey; James McLord; John Meany.
Closest to the Pin: #6 Kelly Sheehy; #8 Brian Hurley; #11 Tom Weibel; #14 Katie Lopez.
Long Drive: #5 Sarah Frech; #16 Dave Ruder.

Thank you so much to our generous participants. Your support will directly impact the lives of the hundreds of families touched by adoption who turn to The Cradle’s programs and services each year! The Cradle would also like to thank the hardworking members of the Cradle Classic Committee for their efforts this year: Therese Fauerbach (Chair); Braeden Schaefer; Jim Connelly; Greg Kaczmarek; Casey Karl; Larry Macy; Joel Solomon; and Phyllis Thomas.
VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Meet Cradle Associates Board Member Yael Mayer

Cradle Associate Board member Yael Mayer still has a picture of the foster family that cared for her during the first three months of her life before she was adopted. “It’s kind of funny,” Yael says. “I went into a foster family with many biological children, and they were all white with red hair.” She says you should look at a picture of her adoptive family instead. “Mom is black and dad is white. I haven’t chosen to search for my birth family, but to my knowledge, my biological mother was Italian and my biological father was black. It’s switched but it makes a lot more sense.”

For Yael, challenging stereotypes about adoption is what inspires her to commit her time and passion to The Cradle. “I am biracial, but if someone pigeonholed me, I would say I’m black, without a doubt,” says Yael. “That’s the experience I had growing up and what I experience as an adult.” As the moderator of The Cradle’s recent Our Children: Perspectives on Transracial Adoption roundtable, she helped other transracial adoptive families talk about their journeys.

“We had African-American adoptees talking about their experiences being adopted by white families, and we were able to talk freely about what we’ve experienced. Those conversations are super necessary.”

A business administrator in the Center for Synthetic Biology at Northwestern University, Yael first learned about The Cradle in 2011 when her lab moved to Evanston from Chicago. During her housing search, she viewed an apartment across the street from The Cradle. “Not long after, I was stuffing envelopes,” she says. Eventually she wanted to be more involved. In 2017, she applied to join The Cradle Associates Board. “We set up events that are fun, something that the audience is already interested in doing, like going to a brewery,” says Yael. “My generation and the generations after are all about experience. If we can bring them into a group discussion to think about what adoption means, it’s much better.”

She’s quick to point out it’s not just about fundraising. “Board members aren’t typically 30-year-olds, and the give is a lot easier for them,” she says. “The Cradle Associates has a modest commitment. The key is really educating a younger demographic about adoption and cultivating future Board members. Getting that message across is something I think The Cradle Associates Board does very well.” She says as the group continues to grow, they hope to raise awareness by engaging in group discussions with their peers, who share similar values and experiences.

Yael acknowledges it isn’t always easy to find time to volunteer. “No one’s schedule ever gets easier,” she says, “and yet we make time for The Cradle. I just can’t stress enough what a gift it is to be part of The Cradle and let people know how full-service the organization is throughout the lifecycle of adoption.” She says she’s never been shy to talk about her adoption experience, but her work with The Cradle Associates Board has given her something more. “It’s really empowered me to be more impactful and to talk about adoption on a different level,” Yael says. “For me, it’s been transformative.”

If you would like to become a Cradle Volunteer like Yael, or learn more about The Cradle Associates Board, please visit cradle.org/volunteer-application.
Since 2003, the Silver Cradle Awards have been presented to Chicago-area companies that provide equitable adoption benefits to their employees. Companies nominated for the award are evaluated based on the types of assistance they provide to their employees who adopt, and the perceived value of those benefits. Recipient companies are recognized at The Cradle’s Annual Rock The Cradle Gala for their commitment to supporting adoption through employee benefits.

Recipients are also acknowledged in the Gala invitation and program book, here in The Cradle newsletter, on The Cradle website, and in press releases distributed to local media.

To nominate your company for this special honor, please email Kikanza Harris at kharris@cradle.org

STAFF SPOTLIGHT
CRADLE DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATE: PHIL BLOCH

For the past year, Development Associate Phil Bloch has worked diligently to keep The Cradle’s fundraising database well-maintained and updated. Phil came to work at The Cradle with two decades of experience in programming and nonprofit database management, and is thrilled to be able to work for an organization he believes in.

“The Cradle is made up of really dedicated people who love what they do,” says Phil. “And I love making sure that important information from the database is accessible and available to everyone in the organization whenever they need it.”

A Detroit native, Phil decided to move to Chicago with his family in 1983 and never left. He lives with his wife, Kathleen, in the city’s West Ridge neighborhood, not far from his oldest child, Aaron. Unfortunately, his daughter, Rivka, youngest child, Yitzchok, and their families—including Phil’s seven grandchildren—live much further away. With Yitzchok’s family in Baltimore and Rivka’s family in the Old City of Jerusalem, special moments at The Cradle take on a real poignancy for Phil.

“My favorite time is when I hear the message over the loudspeaker to come downstairs and witness a new placement,” says Phil. “Watching the happiness of the new parents always brings me joy, too.”

Phil holds a BA in sociology and anthropology with a minor in Judaica from Oakland University, and an MA in speech communications (radio, tv, and film) from the University of Michigan. In his spare time, he enjoys writing fiction and stage plays, photography, performing parlor magic, and keeping active in his synagogue community.

NOMINATIONS OPEN FOR THE
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In the 1990s, Brennetta Simpson was a woman on a mission. “I had a plan,” says the Cradle adoptive mother of two. “Get a degree, find a job, get a car, have a baby, buy a grand piano—in that order!” The Chicago native was teaching music in the Evanston public school district when she decided to break off a wedding engagement and follow her plan on her own. A degree from Columbia University and several years of a career at a publishing firm later, Brennetta realized she was ready for the next step in her plan.

She accepted a position as an Assistant Dean at Northwestern University to come home to Chicago, and started the adoption process. “I always knew I would adopt if I didn’t marry,” says Brennetta. “My mother was raised by her grandmother and grew up always wondering if her mom was ever going to be there when she came home from school. I knew it was something I had to do.”

She got the call about a potential placement from Cradle counselor Karin Peterson on Christmas Eve while she was on her way to her parents’ house. “I’ll never forget, my sister gave me two sweatshirts,” says Brennetta. “The big one said ‘Baby’s Mommy’ and the little one said ‘Mommy’s Baby.’” At nine days old, she met the baby’s birth mother and birth grandmother and knew. “I’m a person who asks a lot of people their opinions to see if they have anything I haven’t considered,” she says. “But there were never any doubts.” Soon she would bring home her new daughter, Imani-Brenae.

Although Brennetta was committed to being a single parent, she intended to make sure Imani was not an only child. “When one hand was free when Imani turned five,” says Brennetta, “I knew it was time again.” On a trip to Disney World with Imani, she got two phone calls. One was from a friend telling her that North Carolina Central University was looking for a new music director, the other call was from The Cradle. Although her mother couldn’t believe she was moving and adopting at the same time again, Brennetta signed a contract with the university—where she remains today—in October, bought a house and enrolled Imani in pre-school in November, and brought Nia home shortly thereafter.
Brennetta acknowledges she doesn’t tend to take the easy road. But she has a secret. “You have to know what you want to do, and you have to trust and believe,” she says. “It doesn’t mean there won’t be road blocks and difficult times. But if you put one foot in front of the other, God will help you.”

She feels the same way about being an adoptive parent. “You have to have that deeply inside of you, or don’t do it,” she says. “People say they’ll never have enough money to raise a child. But if you are committed and focused and put your child first, you make the right decisions. I do work hard. It’s a lot, but it’s all good.”

Imani, now 22, wants to follow in her mother’s footsteps and be a second-grade teacher. Now a junior in high school, Nia used to want to be a veterinarian but she’s changed her mind. (“A classic 17-year-old!” says Brennetta with laughter.) She told them they were adopted from a young age, so they could be okay with it and connect with other adopted children and share their stories and experiences. Six years ago, while Brennetta was driving, Imani casually shared with her from the passenger seat, “Mom, I found my birthmother on Facebook.” Now both families are close. Nia is on a different path and isn’t interested in contact with her birth family right now—but may want to in the future—and that’s okay, too.

The way Brennetta sees it, as long as you believe in yourself and have faith, things work out. “This is what I was on this earth to do,” she says. “To be their mother.” For Brennetta, there was never any doubt.
A LEARNING PLACE: AN INNOVATIVE ONLINE TRAINING PLATFORM FOR FOSTER EDUCATION

Seeking to replicate the current model of our nationally pre-eminent online training platform for prospective adoptive parents, Adoption Learning Partners, The Cradle has developed A Learning Place, a state-of-the-art training platform offering child-welfare professionals a highly customized approach to training and supporting prospective foster parents.

With over 400,000 children in the foster care system on any given day--more than half of them children of color--the U.S. lacks enough licensed foster parents. The traditional approach to the required pre-service training of foster parents involves lengthy, in-person trainings to which many prospective foster parents are unable or unwilling to commit. A Learning Place offers a first-of-its-kind micro-learning platform for foster parents that provides required training in compact doses that are conveniently available on smart phones and tablets.

Nearly all adults in the United States are online and 70% use smart phones. A Learning Place allows prospective foster parents to proceed through required training at their own pace, on their own time, from their own mobile devices. The training modules available through A Learning Place range from five to fifteen minutes in length, with a single module covering a single learning objective. This short segment format suits prospective foster parents by being less daunting in scope and flexible enough to fit into their busy lives.

Many Fortune 500 companies have started incorporating similar micro-learning modules for employee training within their organizations, and research shows learners are more engaged and retention is improved when the time commitment is concise and the learning objective is specific.

Courses available and in development address best practices in the field of child welfare and online education, and the platform is designed to grow and evolve as families do. The Cradle has signed a content licensing agreement with the American Academy of Pediatrics, an association of 67,000 member pediatricians with a mission to promote optimal physical, mental, and social health and wellbeing for all children and young adults. Our first joint project is based on a publication by Kenneth Ginsburg, MD, MSEd, FAAP: Building Resilience in Children and Teens. The training will help parents offer meaningful protection against the effects of childhood trauma.

In its initial phase, A Learning Place has already provided training for 55 individuals. In its next phase, The Cradle expects A Learning Place, via national partnerships, to reach between 1% and 3% of all domestic foster parents—potentially providing access to training to nearly 10,000 individuals, and continuing The Cradle’s innovative efforts to leverage the power of the internet to build and strengthen families.

To learn more about A Learning Place, please email Kirby Lindgren at Kirby@adoptionlearningpartners.org.
LORRI ANTOSZ BENSON
A BIRTH MOM AND AUTHOR SHARES HER STORY AT THE 2ND ANNUAL CRADLE ALUMNI LUNCHEON

Chicago native Lorri Antosz Benson didn’t realize when she placed her biological daughter with adoptive parents in the 1980s that her story would be among those that would inspire The Cradle to embrace a philosophy of open adoption and help change the adoption movement in America. Lorri returned to The Cradle for the first time on Saturday, March 2, to share her story with adult adopted persons at the 2nd Annual Cradle Alumni Luncheon.

In the 1980s, closed adoptions with sealed birth records were the rule across America. “The most terrible years of the whole process came six months later when they told me that the door was closed,” says Lorri. She wrote letters to her biological daughter, Katie, and Katie’s adoptive mom, Anne, but Cradle staff could not initiate communication—-they had to wait to hear from Katie’s adoptive parents, first. After nearly 16 years, Lorri was finally able to hear back from Katie, and now Lorri’s family and Katie’s family have a close bond. “At this point, I couldn’t be happier,” says Lorri. “They’re now a part of my family.”

Lorri shared her story publicly for the first time in her critically acclaimed 2016 memoir, To Have and Not to Hold. In 2018, Lorri published her second book, Adopting Hope, a collection of essays from birth parents, adoptive parents, and adopted persons about the joys, lessons, and challenges of adoption. “It’s all true, and it’s not all Pollyanna, it’s reality,” says Lorri, but perseverance is key. “Act in love, and somehow this courageous, selfless act will also benefit and enhance your life,” she says. “It will strengthen you. Somehow it will.”

Launched in 2018 by Cradle Foundation Board Chair Joel E. Solomon as a way to cultivate community among adult Cradle adoptees, registration at this year’s Cradle Alumni Brunch was double last year’s attendance. Lorri’s story resonated with the event’s nearly 30 participants, a mix of Cradle alumni ranging in age from their 20s to their 90s and their families and spouses, and there were more than a few tears in the room by the time she was finished.

The event began with a coffee reception in The Cradle’s historic Living Room, followed by tours of the Nursery with Cradle staff. Some alumni hadn’t been back inside the building since their placements. After Lorri’s presentation, President and CEO Kim Perez and Director of Post Adoption Support Nina M. Friedman, LCSW, made remarks, and the group engaged in an open discussion about their shared experience as adult adoptees. One alumna said she and her husband had come all the way from Georgia—a particularly poignant visit as the couple are now considering adoption, themselves. Said another participant, “Some people always ask me ‘Which mom are you talking about?’ but you guys get it that when I say my mom, you know my adoptive mom is my mom.”

As for Lorri, she’s thrilled to have found a way to give back to a community she loves. “The adoption story has to be part of your child’s story from the time they are young,” she says, “as their identity is developing. For their own sake, they need to know all of who they are.”

For more information about Lorri and her writing, please visit: lorriantoszbenson.com. For more information about The Cradle’s wraparound services for Cradle alumni, please visit:cradle.org/lifelong-post-adoption-support-center.
This spring, The Cradle will launch an all-new ad campaign to celebrate the bravery of birth mothers and highlight the importance of adoption as an option. The marketing effort would not be possible without the assistance of The Cradle’s innovative advertising partner, Energy BBDO. After a member of The Cradle Board of Directors brought Cradle President and CEO Kim Perez and Energy BBDO CEO Tonise Paul together in summer 2017, the two organizations began to discuss the possibility of a creative partnership. The idea seemed like a good fit—Energy BBDO Senior Vice President Anna Bleers has a close family connection to The Cradle, and the firm’s creative team was excited to learn more about The Cradle.

When Tonise Paul and her creative team visited The Cradle to go over some preliminary ideas, Kim shared that what the organization needed most of all was a complete overhaul of its marketing messaging and branding. “I told them we needed something big to help propel our strategic realignment for future sustainability,” says Kim, “and that I was prepared for The Cradle to have to make an investment in work of that magnitude.” However, Kim wasn’t prepared for the magnitude of Energy BBDO’s response. “They came back and said they loved the idea,” says Kim, “and that they wanted to get to work on it as a pro bono partner!”

Tonise and her team began nine months of work on a new, brand-defining idea that included a deep-dive assessment of The Cradle’s existing messaging, innovative potential new messaging, and ways to put birth mothers front and center to help improve public perception about adoption. By spring 2018, true creative messaging was emerging. By fall 2018, that messaging was honed into a creative platform on which Energy BBDO crafted a fully fledged marketing campaign for The Cradle. The firm engaged in deep-dive qualitative and quantitative research to ensure that the nuances of the new messaging resonated positively with the public—and with birth mothers.
Over the winter, five Cradle birth mothers were recruited for the campaign, and a video production crew, director, and photographer were hired to capture their stories. Their stories will be used to help reframe the narrative on adoption from the perspective of birth mothers. In an amazing turn of events, the director’s mom turned out to be an adoption birth mother, too. And Tonise, herself, was present on production day. “I thought that was remarkable,” says Kim. “Energy BBDO embraced The Cradle, learned who we are as an organization, and are so passionate about the work that we do that their CEO came to the video shoot. They are so beyond committed, and we’re very grateful to them for that.”

Be on the lookout for The Cradle’s bold new marketing campaign, created by our pro bono partner, Energy BBDO, to launch later this spring. “We really want it to make a statement,” says Kim, “so that women facing an unplanned pregnancy will know that calling The Cradle is an option. To get that to happen, we need to even the playing field with all the other options women have available to them when they face an unplanned pregnancy. Thanks to Energy BBDO, we think this amazing campaign will accomplish that.”
March 12, 2019, marked the 96th anniversary of the day in 1923 when The Cradle Society was officially established. Our founder, Florence Walrath, opened a newborn nursery in the modest brick house that served as The Cradle’s first home. Although the Nursery has changed quite a bit over the years, the training, care, and devotion of our staff has not. The needs of our Cradle babies haven’t changed, either.

You can help The Cradle celebrate 96 years of providing exceptional care to more than 16,000 babies by making a gift in support of the Nursery. Here are a couple of ways:

- Become a Nursery Angel by sponsoring The Cradle Nursery for a day of your choosing. Go to cradle.org/donate and select “Nursery Angel” from the pull-down menu.

- Purchase items from our baby registry on Amazon.com. Visit cradle.org/nurserywishlist to see what we need.

- DONATE NOW AT cradle.org/support-the-cradle OR complete the inserted envelope in this newsletter to gift The Cradle TODAY.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROSITY!