Cradle adoptee and recently appointed Cradle Board member, Stuart White, says that The Cradle took a risk when they placed him at six weeks of age, over 67 years ago, with a mother who was blind from birth. But it was a carefully calculated risk. After just two visits to the Detroit home of prospective parents Margie and Gene White in the fall of 1947, The Cradle’s Ruth McGee was convinced that Margie was clearly up to the task.

“Mothers at that time were viewed as having no boundaries to their abilities,” Stuart explained. “Ruth McGee was the social worker assigned to my family. In doing the home visits I’m certain she had many things to look for: Could this blind woman take care of me? Could she change my diapers? Prepare the food? Could she do all the things a sighted person does, without thinking twice? My dad had a company to run, so could a blind woman take on all of these challenges without another adult in the house?”

Years later, Margie told Stuart that although Ruth was reluctant at first, she quickly put aside her reservations. “The Cradle discovered that my mother didn’t have boundaries,” Stuart added with pride. It was because of his mom that Stuart decided to become more involved with The Cradle and increase his giving – to honor the remarkable person she was.

Margaret Jean Cogsdill was born in 1920 with holes in her retinas – an irreparable condition. Her parents never considered her to be disabled, though, and encouraged her independence. She went to a public school in Detroit that had 80 kids in the classroom. When the family moved to a lakeside community, her parents gave her a canoe which she paddled, solo, while her dog Brownie barked from the shoreline to guide her. Her father, Stuart, introduced her to golf - a sport she played passionately until she was 81 – and he reluctantly pulled her behind the motorboat as she became accomplished at water skiing. Margie was also an avid cross country skier (once competing in a Colorado race for blind skiers), skater, swimmer and fisherwoman. The lake was her stage.

(Continued on page 2)
By the summer of 1992, after chairing Cogsdill for nearly two decades, Margie, then 72, told Stuart that she was tired. She also told her son that she wanted him to chair the company going forward. He agreed, and for the next ten years while he was still teaching, Stuart shuttled back and forth between Michigan and South Carolina.

During the war years, Margie worked at the Red Cross, took graduate classes at the University of Michigan and worked the switchboard at her father’s company, Cogsdill Tool Products.

Gene returned safely and went to work with his father-in-law at Cogsdill. He and Margie adopted Stuart (named after his grandfather) in 1947 and Stuart’s sister, Cindy, also a Cradle baby, in 1949. Two more children joined the family, in 1958 and 1960, through an agency in Michigan.

“My mother taught us, as little kids, how to ride a bike, play golf, water ski and ice skate,” recounts Stuart. “She also taught us how to fish on the lake and when we didn’t want to put the worm on the hook, she’d say ‘give me that’ and put it right on. She had no fear about those sorts of things.”

The Whites were always very open and honest with their children about adoption and where they came from. As Stuart recalls, “They would tell each of us, ‘You were loved but your mother couldn’t take care of you and we found you. We chose you.’” He also had a vivid imagination as a child, envisioning The Cradle, literally, as a giant cradle that held babies until they were taken out and brought home with a family.

Stuart attended DePauw University in Greencastle, Indiana and on the first day of classes, he met a girl named Suzie who was also adopted and who would become his wife. While he was encouraged to join the family business upon graduation, the corporate life wasn’t calling to him. It was the late 1960s, and as a socially conscious person, Stuart decided instead to become a teacher. After earning a Master’s degree from Syracuse, he and Suzie settled in Ann Arbor, where Stuart taught middle and high school Social Studies until 2002.

Margie, meanwhile, was a very active volunteer, serving on numerous nonprofit boards and helping to found a teen center. In 1962 she received the “Exceptional Woman of the Year” award from the Detroit Rotary Club. When Gene White passed away in 1973, Margie stepped in, assuming the chairmanship of Cogsdill Tool. The company relocated to Camden, South Carolina in 1977 and a year later, Margie married William Walters, Cogsdill’s new president.

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Stuart’s first visit to The Cradle since his placement was in 1987. Ruth McGee was still here and talked with him about visiting his parents’ home and how impressed she was by Margie. Although he didn’t return until 2013, he came with a renewed interest. Cradle President Julie Tye gave him a tour and introduced him to Nina Friedman, Director of Post Adoption Support. While Stuart has begun to explore his biological roots, he’s not sure at this point how far he wishes to proceed. He describes The Cradle as “a place of dreams” and is quick to acknowledge what a wonderful life he’s had, thanks in large part to his parents.

“When it became easier for me to start donating, I did, and the reason I started was to honor Margie White,” Stuart said. “No doubt about it. All the issues she’d gone through – and what made me this okay person – needed some kind of return. Her memory was the reason.”

Today, Stuart continues to serve as chairman of Cogsdill Tool, while also chairing the board of Washtenaw Technical Middle College, a Michigan public school academy that enables 10th, 11th and 12th graders to earn college credits. He and Suzie have two children, Megan and Caleb, who are in their early forties. Stuart is looking forward to his work with The Cradle Board and his unique position as the only “Cradle baby” currently serving.

Margie died in April of 2009, a few months shy of her 89th birthday. The following excerpt from her obituary, written by Stuart, beautifully captures the essence of his incomparable mother:

The awkward act of folding a contour sheet or cooking dinner for a family of six or putting a worm on the hook for her children in the boat adrift on Orchard Lake or shuffling a deck of cards prior to dealing them to the Bridge players at her table go a long way in explaining how gracefully Margie navigated in her sightless world. Her amazing mind cataloged volumes of data without visual cues. Her fearlessness in a perilous world inspired all who knew her.
Dear Friends,

In our Fall newsletter we shared the story of Cradle baby Audrey, who was born with Prader-Willi syndrome and who found the perfect home with the Starkweather family. I told you about Marshall, another special needs baby whose prognosis was uncertain due to a prenatal brain injury. As Marshall approaches his first birthday on Christmas Day, he continues to amaze and delight his parents by defying the odds. They recently sent us a video of Marshall at 10 months, smiling and giggling as he crawls around the family room – something that wasn’t guaranteed would ever happen. “We are so proud of our little miracle man,” they wrote.

And we are so proud of our families who welcome and love these children facing a lifetime of challenges, and who do everything they can to help them reach their potential.

A Cradle mom who faced a steep challenge of her own – lifelong blindness – is featured in our cover story. But Margie White let nothing hold her back, as her son Stuart, a Cradle Board member, so eloquently attests.

What some perceive as a “disability” in a child or a prospective parent, The Cradle views as an opportunity to build strong, nurturing families in which all parties benefit.

Since our fiscal year ends on September 30, typically we include a “year in review” article in the Winter newsletter. We are doing something new this year: combining the 2014 Cradle Annual Report with the Spring issue of the newsletter. This will not only save on printing costs, but enable us to reach a far wider audience with the annual report.

Until then, I will share with you a few key service statistics. The Cradle facilitated 73 placements in FY14 through our domestic and international adoption programs; our expectant parent team fielded 928 inquiries from women seeking guidance about an unplanned pregnancy; and The Cradle Nursery provided exceptional care to 76 infants, including 14 with a high level of medical risk. Support from our families and friends, like you, helps us to continue this vital work.

There is still time to make a year-end donation to The Cradle. Please turn to page 5 to learn how. Thank you so much, and best wishes for the holidays and a joyful New Year.

With gratitude,

Julie S. Tye

Join the new Adoptee Facebook Group!

The Cradle has launched a new Facebook group for Cradle adoptees 18 and older. Our purpose is to give our “alumni” a forum for connecting and communicating with one another, and for you to share your thoughts and news with us.

If you are a Cradle adult adoptee and would like to join the group, go to tinyurl.com/cradlebabies. Please also pass the word along to other Cradle adoptees.

Thanks for helping us build a great new group!

Apply by January 31!

The Siragusa Scholarship Fund for Special Needs Adoptive Families offers annual scholarships of up to $1,500 to families who have adopted a child or children with special needs through The Cradle.

Siragusa Scholarship

We have upgraded to an online application in an effort to cut our costs and insure more funds for families in need!

For more information and the online application: www.cradle.org/siragusa

Apply by January 31, 2015

We will not be able to accept applications after this date.

The Siragusa Scholarship Fund for Special Needs Adoptive Families offers annual scholarships of up to $1,500 to families who have adopted a child or children with special needs through The Cradle.
I could not imagine there was an organization that would embrace our desire to create a family as strongly and as passionately as The Cradle did,” said Cradle dad John Luce to the more than 250 guests assembled in the ballroom of The Ritz-Carlton Chicago on October 18 for the 20th Annual Cradle Ball.

John, who is also a Cradle Board member, has chaired or co-chaired the Ball committee for the past five years. This year his co-chair was Cradle mom Kimberly Simonton (Noah ’06), who also serves on The Cradle Board.

John’s Cradle baby, Aidan, was born in 2003. “And now, after 11 years, I never could have imagined how powerful the experience would be and how being a father to this one little girl would touch my soul and change my life forever,” he added.

In keeping with this year’s theme, “Children… Families… Imagine,” guests were invited to imagine how many lives The Cradle had touched in its 91-year history. They also had the opportunity to enjoy a cocktail reception, gourmet dinner, dancing to Lynne Jordan and the Shivers, and silent and live auctions for fabulous prizes. Six nights at the Four Seasons Buenos Aires and a suite at the United Center for the Blackhawks vs. LA Kings game were just two of the exceptional items up for bid.

The evening’s program also included a presentation of the 2014 Silver Cradle Awards, which recognize Chicago-area companies that provide adoption benefits to their employees. Thirteen of the 24 companies honored this year joined us to accept their award at the event.

Thanks to the generosity of our sponsors, donors and attendees, and the hard work of our volunteers, the 2014 Ball raised more than $123,000 for Cradle programs and services.
Imagine... all the lives changed because you support The Cradle.

Gifts from Cradle friends and families like you will help care for babies in the Nursery, provide counseling to pregnant women and create happy families.

Visit www.cradlefoundation.org/donate to make a secure online gift, or use the envelope enclosed.

Thank you for supporting The Cradle.
THE ASTROVE FAMILY: Respect and Fondness for The Cradle

The Edgar Astrove family has been giving to The Cradle since they adopted their son Jim more than fifty years ago. Ed is a retired engineer and inventor who holds four U.S. patents and now lives in Hamden, CT. He is also an artist who painted in the American folk style before losing most of his vision to glaucoma. Ed’s wife Katherine was an elementary school teacher who loved any activity that involved helping people. She passed away in 1997 after battling diabetes and ovarian cancer.

Ed is very close to his two children and three grandchildren, even though they are scattered around the country in Virginia, California, Georgia, North Carolina and New York. He credits The Cradle with the beginning of his and Katherine’s joy and fulfillment with their family.

“The idea of adoption was very important to our lives, and proved itself in our children and grandchildren. Our thinking about adoption was molded by our Cradle experience, even though our second child, Jane, came through a private adoption opportunity. We included The Cradle in our will to show our respect and fondness for what The Cradle has meant to our family.”

For many adoptive parents and adopted people, The Cradle is a foundational resource to building their families and supporting them throughout their lifetime. Jim Astrove shows his own gratitude by supporting The Cradle, and purchased a brick in his parents’ honor for The Cradle courtyard.

Making the commitment to adoption requires support beyond placement day – Ed’s bequest gift will help future families he will never meet. He says, “Katherine would have wanted to help others become parents through adoption.” Thank you, Ed and Katherine!

To learn more about gift planning, call 847.475.5800 or visit www.cradlefoundation.org/plannedgiving.
Sayers Center parents Angela and Jason Taylor brought their daughter Jordan home in August of 2012. Six months later they received a call from The Cradle’s Nijole Yutkowitz, asking if they’d be willing to mentor a couple who were early in the adoption process and had a lot of questions. The Taylors jumped at the chance to help, and met the couple at a restaurant, with baby Jordan in tow. Because the families lived rather far apart, after that evening they kept in touch via phone calls and texting.

“They were so appreciative of any information we’d share,” Angela said. “I think they felt comfortable asking us the difficult questions because we had already been there.”

After completing their home study and going on the waiting list, the couple had two potential matches that didn’t work out. Their mentors offered encouragement. “You don’t understand this now,” Angela told them, “but you will once you bring your child home – the child that was meant for you.” And soon they did. In late January 2014, around a year after their dinner with the Taylors, the couple came to The Cradle to bring their new baby daughter home.

Nijole already had another couple in mind for Angela and Jason to mentor – something they were happy to do. The two families lived near one another, and after meeting over dinner, they realized they had a lot in common: barbecuing, wine, golf for the men and Scandal for the women. After the experience of mentoring a second couple, Angela and Jason also began to notice some common concerns.

“People get stressed creating their profile,” Jason explained, “and trying to make it perfect.” He and Angela encouraged their mentees just to be themselves. Other concerns they’ve addressed include nervousness about going into a match meeting and the degree of involvement with the birth family following the placement. On a practical level, they advised the second couple about selecting a pediatrician and having their car seat installation checked at a police or fire station. The match happened very quickly for this couple and they, too, welcomed a daughter in November.

Not surprisingly, Angela and Jason are already mentoring a third family!

To date, forty families in addition to the Taylors have agreed to become mentors. Mentoring creates an environment of trust, understanding, support and friendship. It gives a prospective adoptive family an opportunity to voice their fears and concerns, overcome hurdles and find solutions. It also allows us to create a community of diverse families who value their experience with The Cradle and want to help us build more strong, nurturing families.

To learn more about the mentoring program, contact Nijole at 847.733.2298 or nyutkowitz@cradle.org.

Film Screening and Reception to Benefit The Sayers Center

“It took 26 years and 1500 miles to find it,” says the tagline to “Closure,” Bryan Tucker’s moving 2013 documentary about his wife Angela, a trans-racial adoptee who finds her birth mother and meets the rest of a family who didn’t know she existed, including her birth father. Join us for a screening of the 76-minute film, followed by a cocktail and hors d’oeuvres reception, where Bryan and Angela will be on hand to answer your questions.

Wednesday, March 11, 2015, 6:30 pm to 9 pm
Chopin Theatre, 1543 W. Division Street, Chicago
Tickets are $50, with proceeds benefiting The Cradle’s Ardythe and Gale Sayers Center for African American Adoption.
To purchase tickets, go to www.cradlefoundation.org/closure.
CRADLE Calendar  WINTER 2015

01/31  SENSORY PROCESSING, SELF REGULATION & YOU
Parenting Workshop*
The Cradle, Evanston
9:30 am – 11:30 am

02/13  FIRST LOOK FOR CHARITY
McCormick Place, Chicago
6 pm – 11 pm

02/21  HOW TO DEAL WITH SIBLING RIVALRY
Parenting Workshop*
Theraplay Institute, Evanston
10 am – 11:30 am

02/28  CARING FOR AFRO-TEXTURED HAIR AND SKIN
Parenting Workshop*
The Cradle, Evanston
9 am – 12 pm

03/11  “CLOSURE” SCREENING AND RECEPTION
Sayers Center benefit
Chopin Theatre, Chicago
6:30 pm – 9 pm

03/14  NATURE, NURTURE AND SELF: Adoptees & Identity Formation
Parenting Workshop*
The Cradle, Evanston
10 am – 11:30 am

*For fee and registration info, go to www.cradle.org/adooption-workshops.

The Cradle looks especially pretty in winter.