

# The Holiday Miracle – “We have your baby boy!”

A true story of hope.

When the magical phone call came a few days before Thanksgiving, South Jersey residents Lisa and Joe Mollo couldn't believe it. They had been waiting for nine years to become parents. Lisa had received other emergency phone calls over the past few recent years that turned out to be shocking news. The passing of her brother. The passing of her father. The sudden passing of her second brother just a month before. She was thinking the worst, crying, as she approached the phone in the Pediatric Intensive Care Children's Unit at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia where she and her husband Joe both work.

“We have your baby boy!” exclaimed their Children's Home Society of NJ social worker at the other end of the telephone. After seven years of trying to conceive a baby of their own withstanding six miscarriages and two years of waiting and hoping while on the CHS adoption waiting list, the Mollos dreams of starting a family finally came true. They would have a son.

“At that point I couldn't function,” Lisa said. “Because it doesn't matter how real it seems. You just don't believe it. Even though you know the time is coming you never truly believe it. It's always so far off.” And there

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was so much to do in the four days notice they were given before they could pick up their baby.

When this loving couple considered adoption as a real option, they experienced all the feelings and thoughts similar to most adoptive parents-to-be: What if the baby isn't healthy? What if the parents decide they want their baby back? Could I really love someone else's child as my own?

Joe had concerns, too. “How is it going to feel for me? How will I make a connection?” After talking to other adoptive dads, he was reassured. “As soon as you see that child, it's like magic. You just become *Dad*,” he was told by a neighbor who was also an

adoptive father. “And it's so true,” states Joe. “That feeling never stops.”

After careful consideration, Lisa and Joe found The Children's Home Society

of NJ (CHS) who proved to be the only agency that provided honest insight and straightforward information.

“We were impressed with CHS from the very first phone call. Instead of just telling us to send a check [to begin the process], we were told of the real statistics and a wealth of knowledge about adoption. I wanted factual information and education about adoption and CHS gave that to us. They wanted to meet with us before they would even take our application.”

As part of her early exploration of adopting, Lisa spoke at length by phone to another CHS adoptive mom. At the end of their conversation, Lisa asked for the “bottom line” of why she chose CHS. “That's easy,” the mother answered. “My mother chose CHS, too, and I am, in fact, a second generation CHS adoptive client.”

“At that point I knew,” Lisa states. “I got that good feeling inside that CHS was the agency for us.”

They were very excited to move forward. “We were worried when the social worker first came to our house because it was completely under construction with renovations. There was plastic hanging where walls should have been. She reassured us not to worry about the reconstruction ‘disaster’. We laugh now because the house still wasn't finished when we were told, two years later, that we would have a son within four days.”

Joe spent the next 72 hours putting up drywall, painting and finishing what he could. Not surprisingly, there was also an incredible meteor storm that first night. Joe states, “There was dust and dirt everywhere. The nursery needed to be completely ripped apart. We added new sheet rock, new insulation, new windows, new paint, furniture – everything.”



Christopher Mollo, CHS of NJ Adoptee

Lisa remembers, “There was so much construction noise... and meteors flying overhead, plus flood lights outside of our house that lit up the neighborhood. But nobody minded.”

Everyone knew that Christopher was coming home. It was the name they had given their six-week old son based on the description provided by their CHS social worker.

Even the hour-long trip to CHS to pick up Christopher would prove to be memorable. “We're often late for things, so we were determined to leave early, but there was a back-up on the turnpike that caused several miles of bumper-to-bumper traffic. Somehow, Joe got us around it, saying, ‘I'm not going to be late to pick up my son!’ ” Looking back, they laugh at that nerve-racking drive.

**“For us, time froze at that moment.”**

Tears flow as Lisa recalls seeing Christopher for the first time when they finally arrived at CHS. “The walk from the room where we signed the final paperwork to the room where he was sleeping in a cradle seemed like an eternity,” she states. “You know how they say time stops. For us, time froze at that moment.”

They had experienced such a tremendous amount of loss over the course of the previous four years and life had become too unpredictable for them. They needed a miracle.

When they were allowed to enter the CHS “adoption” room, the Mollos knelt down in front of the cradle. “We simply cried. We were just stunned.” They had their son at last. “We thought, ‘Oh my God. It's finally real.’ ”

Moments later they met the CHS foster parents who had taken care of their son since his birth. “This was just the most incredible feeling,” they shared.

“Having been through so much together,” Joe states, “we knew how to put each other first before ourselves.” It was natural for Lisa to feel then, after getting Christopher, that, ‘my life is no

longer my life. It's our life.’ We don't do anything without thinking of him first.”

For other couples considering adoption, they have this advice: “We already had a strong love for each other. And now, our love is even stronger. We've been through so much. And we've stuck together through it all.”

Even little Christopher, now 5-years old, understands how special he is and where he came from. He glows as his parents tell his adoption story. And running quickly into their arms as he hears them recount their journey, he exclaims excitedly, “It's the Adoption Story!” He says, “I didn't grow in Mommy's belly, I grew in Mommy's heart.”

## PLEASE HELP US

**At a time of year when we are all trying to figure out how to give back in this world, here's one idea that may be *right* for you.**



Come explore a volunteer opportunity that takes only a few hours a year to help save the life of a baby.

**Wednesday, January 9, 2008  
Upstairs Food Court  
5:15 pm – 6:30 pm  
Wegmans in Cherry Hill, NJ  
Light Refreshments**

We'll talk to you about helping us with our South Jersey Valentine's Day fundraising event. The proceeds support infants that live in our free, loving foster care homes until we find caring, adoptive families for them.

If interested in attending, please contact Colleen Gehring at 609-206-0506 or via email [colleeng@chsofnj.org](mailto:colleeng@chsofnj.org) to RSVP.

**We'll be giving away a \$50 Wegmans Gift Card to one lucky attendee!**

The Children's Home Society of New Jersey has been saving lives and building Southern NJ healthy families since 1894.

[www.chsofnj.org](http://www.chsofnj.org)