

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **ADOPTION STORY NOT JUST A MATTER OF CHANCE**

**PHILADELPHIA, PA (APRIL 25, 2008)** – Rich Gitlen, Executive Director of Lutheran Children and Family Service (LCFS), an affiliate of Liberty Lutheran Services (LLS) is pleased to announce the inclusion of Xu Xiaofeng’s adoption story in *Chicken Soup for the Adopted Soul*, published by HCI. Xu Xiaofeng is an adorable and friendly child who had previously been on a waiting child list for nearly two years in a Chinese orphanage because he has albinism. Xu finally found “a family that was meant to be” halfway around the world when Pam McGonigle and John Stevens of Ardmore, Pennsylvania sought to adopt.

Xu found a home because of a national network of agencies helping families and children find one another. Lutheran Children and Family Service of Pennsylvania is the adoption agency the McGonigle-Stevens worked with. Lutheran Social Services of New England was the agency trying to find a home for Xu. Both organizations are members of the Lutheran Adoption Network.

LCFS social worker Kelli Gottemoller said, “Tears came to my eyes when I saw a photo of Xu at his orphanage looking at the photo of his adoptive parents. Although he was not yet four years old, he immediately recognized his mother. He must have been thinking, ‘She looks like me!’”

At 38, Pam McGonigle is an elite-level runner for the United States Paralympics team and a motivational speaker at programs for youth to promote acceptance of differences. She also has albinism and the vision problems that sometimes accompany the condition.

Xu’s journey to his “forever family” story hit bookstores March 1 in the new book, *Chicken Soup for the Adopted Soul* (published by HCI).

“Xu’s family that was meant to be is, indeed, a soul-filled story and a great motivation,” said Susan Myers, director of the Lutheran Adoption Network. “People thinking about adoption will be inspired by reading these stories of creating forever families.”

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While adoption has become a hot media topic because of high-profile celebrities, thousands of people become new families every year, and their stories are rarely told. The organizations that are part of the Lutheran Adoption Network oversee almost 3,000 adoptions every year. The majority of the adoptions involve children in US foster care or with special needs. More than a third of the adoptions are international, like Xu's.

“One of the special things about this national network, and this book, is it creates an affirmation that we're part of a larger movement of families who have found each other through adoption,” said Myers.

The Lutheran Adoption Network (LAN) is a national collaboration of nearly 30 Lutheran social ministry organizations active in international and domestic adoptions and members of Lutheran Services in America (LSA). LAN members have a shared reputation for integrity and ethical practices in adoption, as well as extensive history.

Lutheran Children and Family Service (LCFS) of Eastern Pennsylvania, an affiliate of Liberty Lutheran Services, has been bringing hope and opportunity to children and families in need since 1922. LCFS offers an array of services to vulnerable children and families including foster care, group care, adoption, in-home services, after-school programs, parenting education, immigrant services and resettlement of refugees. By strengthening thousands of families, LCFS builds stronger, more caring communities throughout the Delaware Valley.

Liberty Lutheran Services is a faith-based charitable and non-profit organization that provides programs and services to over seventeen thousand individuals annually throughout Southeastern Pennsylvania. Liberty's affiliates, including Artman Lutheran Home, Paul's Run Retirement Community, and Lutheran Children and Family Service, have a combined 200 years of service for children, families, and older adults. Caring communities are built by Lutheran congregations to serve all people, regardless of age, gender, race, religion, country of origin, ethnicity, disability, or sexual orientation. For more information about Liberty Lutheran Services and their mission, please visit [www.libertylutheran.org](http://www.libertylutheran.org).

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