



STAR NEWSLETTER

[IMPORTANT NEWS ABOUT ADOPTEE RIGHTS IN THE STATE OF TEXAS]

[FROM THE PRESIDENT]

WELCOME! My name is Joellen Peters and I am an adoptee and adoptee rights advocate. I have been on the STAR board for the last 3 legislative sessions and we have been working hard to educate legislators, make the correct strategic moves, build key relationships, make our presence known and highlight the unequal treatment of adopted adults under Texas law. *If you would like to join us in our efforts, please contact us at STAR@texasadopteerights.org*

Unequal access to original birth certificates (OBCs) continues a state-mandated system of infantilization, shame, and secrecy. Whether adults are able to access their OBC or not, the lack or final acquisition of that information has a profound impact on sense of self and personal identity. The adopted person's journey to physical and emotional well-being is understandably filled with questions and a longing to know one's roots and genetic heritage. By championing legislation that allows adult adoptees to access this vital piece of their personal history, STAR and others help to empower adopted people across Texas, the country, and the world. Even though the legislation did not pass this session, we move forward with a sense of belonging and understanding because of the inspiration from the founders of STAR, our shared advocacy, legislative leaders, and the relationships built.

This newsletter is a way for us to further connect and grow the awareness of the difficulties adopted adults face who are unable to access their vital records. Newsletters will include a letter from the president, legislative updates, a gratitude post, as well as STAR board updates, OBC access in the news, a highlight of an important event or person, and/or a spotlight containing a personal story of how inequitable OBC access has impacted an adopted person or his/her family. ★



Representative Cody Harris April 3, 2023 after laying out HB 2006

It is with our sincerest and deepest appreciation to Representative Cody Harris, his Chief of Staff, Jeff Carlson, Senator Morgan LaMantia, and her Deputy Chief of Staff, Ruben O'Bell, for their ongoing support of changing the current law in the State of Texas and working on behalf of the thousands of adult Texans to be able to obtain their Original Birth Certificate.



Senator Morgan Lamantia on March 21, 2023, after recognizing STAR on the Senate floor

“We’re a nation in a state built on the truth that all men are created equal by our Creator yet adopted Texans are treated differently than non-adopted Texans. It’s my belief that every one of us, adopted or not, has an instinctive deep desire to know who we are. To know where we came from. It is a basic insatiable response to life. Who are we to deny that knowledge to an adult?”

— REPRESENTATIVE CODY HARRIS —

VOICES OF ADOPTED TEXANS

[NOEL JOHNSON]

My name is Noel Johnson and I am a STAR board member. Sometimes things are not as easy as they seem, especially in the realm of Texas adoptees obtaining their original birth certificate (OBC). I had all the information legally needed to obtain my OBC, and still the law was not followed. In Texas, if you have the name of your birth parent and submit the proper documentation to the Department of Vital Statistics you can get a copy of your OBC. I met these requirements and my information exactly matched my OBC, only to be told that the record did not exist. I also had my birth mother’s maiden name, so I resubmitted the documentation with her maiden name, which was not on the birth record, and at that point was provided a copy of my OBC. If the law had been followed, I would have received my OBC the first time. How many other Texas-born adoptees don’t have the resources to go that extra step when the Department of Vital Statistics fails to follow the law? This is just one of many obstacles I encountered in my journey to get my OBC. I was blessed with the knowledge and resources to ultimately reach my goal and I work with STAR so that other adoptees can get this same kind of information.★

[MISSION]

STAR is a statewide 501(c)(4) nonprofit organization composed of more than 2,000 Texas adoptees, birth parents, and adoptive parents dedicated to advocating for legislation that would restore access to original birth certificates (OBCs) for adult adoptees in Texas.

[GRATITUDE TO MARIA WATSON FOR HER SERVICE]

Former board member, Maria Watson, has been involved with STAR since 2016, and lobbied for adult adoptee rights during previous legislative sessions. She is a Texas adoptee, united with both sides of her biological families in 2018. That experience underscored the need for adult adoptees to have access to their OBCs so they can have a chance to connect with their biological parents and families.



While Maria has recently resigned from the STAR board, she will continue her advocacy efforts for all Texas -born adult adoptees until the law is successfully changed. As an organization we deeply appreciate the time and dedication Maria has given over the past several years and wish her all the best in her future endeavors. THANK YOU, Maria!★

[IMPORTANT FACTS]

★★★
77%
of all Texans support adult adoptee’s access to their OBCs.*

★
600,000+
Texas born adult adoptees.
Vital Records are **VITAL**

* Based on a 2021 poll by Baselice & Associates

[CONTACT]

Facebook
www.facebook.com/texasadopteerights

Instagram
[@txadopteerights](http://www.instagram.com/texasadopteerights)

Web Page
www.Texasadopteerights.org

Email
STAR@texasadopteerights.org

“Valuing the dignity of every Texan, I introduced Support Texas Adoptee Rights to the Senate during the 88th Legislative Session. The resounding support for SB 2237 is a testament to the commitment of Texas adoptee, birth parents, adoptive parents, and supporters. The fundamental access to vital records upholds the integrity of every Texan’s identity”

— SENATOR MORGAN LAMANTIA —