

Finding a Forever Family

Ethiopian orphan, new adoptive family growing closer together

Enthusiastically she dashes away from the bay window at the south end of the living room. She barrels on toward the couch at the other end. Her bare feet rejoice at the sensation from the plush carpet underneath.

And of course, she snorts all the way.

She's not sure why she has to snort — or even run, for that matter — but she heard and saw her new brother do both, and what her brother does, she thinks she needs to do.

Only about 20 months old, the adopted Lydia is now enveloped in a world of mommy's hugs, full tummies, soft beds, bedtime stories, big brothers and more — and she doesn't know how to handle it.

But she's learning, and the former orphan who once lived in Ethiopia, the world's third poorest country, is discovering what a blessing a family can be.

"Yes, she imitates all of the time," said Brandy Aschliman, who, along with her husband, Ryan, adopted Lydia this summer. "But as time has passed, we see more and more genuine emotion, but it will take time for her to



The Aschliman family — daughter Isabelle, son Hunter, daughter Lydia and parents Ryan and Brandy — enjoy each other's company in the comforts of their home in Indiana.

realize that we will love her no matter who she becomes."

In the meantime Ryan and Brandy are trusting God to make this family more complete — just as they had to trust in Him after their second child was born.

After a difficult birth,

Brandy's doctor told her that she could no longer bear children, but the couple still wanted another child.

So when the Lord closed one door, He opened another, and Ryan and Brandy pursued expanding their family in a different

way.

But like Lydia now, the Aschlimans found themselves in a new world — one where the laws and requirements of more than 50 countries and 300 agencies rule.

"You can research

See "Family" on pg. 2

Who We Are

Loving Shepherd Ministries is a Christian, not-for-profit organization providing objective, no-cost advocacy, resources and direction to the faith community for the direct benefit of children and families who find themselves at risk or in need.

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Joe Gerber brings new expertise to LSM

Joe Gerber, Loving Shepherd's newest employee, is no stranger to working with at-risk children.

But this time, his work is extending beyond northeast Indiana and reaching out beyond the state, the Midwest ... and even the nation.

As Loving Shepherd's project specialist, Joe has three primary responsibilities:

1. Inform and encourage churches to get involved in orphan/at-risk youth outreach.

2. Research best practices for culturally sensitive international group homes.

3. Provide orphan/at-risk youth advocacy material to churches and the public.

"Loving Shepherd's vision is one that's easy to become passionate about," Joe said. "In addition, I felt



LSM Quick Facts

Full name: Joe Douglas Gerber

Born: May 18, 1978

Family: Born to Doug and Ruby Gerber. Five siblings: Molly, Abby, Will, Carson and Grace. One niece. No cats.

Education: Bachelor's degree in economics from Wabash College.

Hobbies: Reading, and research.

the job position was a good fit for my interests."

"Youth outreach is really where my heart is," he said. "It makes coming into work a real blessing."

Along with his passion, Joe is bringing more than five years worth of experience of motivating Christians to support worthy causes such as Loving Shepherd.

He previously served as



Loving Shepherd's newest employee, Joe Gerber, works in his office. As the project specialist, Joe has three primary responsibilities at LSM.

the office manager for Gateway Woods, a children's home in Indiana that has collaborated before with Loving Shepherd. He has also been involved with Come See Ministries, which

reaches to juvenile prisoners.

Joe started at Loving Shepherd in June and has compiled educational materials for pastors to use to motivate congregations to assist with the plight of children.

Family: Loving Shepherd Ministries gives Aschlimans much needed advice and direction in their adoption journey



Newly adopted daughter Lydia leans back against a chair while holding on to one of her favorite toys — a toy microphone.

online for days and months and not get anywhere," Brandy said.

Many families needing to tread through adoption agencies' labyrinths of jargon and legal requirements soon lose their passion — exiling infants and children starving for a home.

Ryan and Brandy, however, did not want the spark to dim, so in August of 2006, they came to Loving Shepherd for help.

"We needed that," Brandy said. "It was so nice to have someone who was unbiased."

Loving Shepherd first

presented the family with objective information about international and domestic adoptions.

The Aschlimans, thanks to Loving Shepherd's materials, decided to pursue an international course.

From there, Jen Schwartz, Loving Shepherd's family resource specialist, sat down with them and discussed their options.

With the help of Loving Shepherd, Ryan and Brandy decided to look to Ethiopia, and Loving Shepherd also pointed them toward their adoption agency, which the couple still rave about today.



Going ... going ...

Lord willing, Loving Shepherd is planning to hold its sixth-annual benefit auction in early March. Once again, Loving Shepherd is looking forward to a day of fellowship and fun – with all proceeds going to Loving Shepherd’s mission to help at-risk children and families across the world. Like last year, Loving Shepherd will be selling quilts like the one above, vacations, service projects, food, children’s toys and more.

Families still flocking to LSM

About 80 new families a month continue to seek assistance from Loving Shepherd. Here are a few of their comments.

Wisconsin — It is so helpful to have qualified people to help sort through all the facts! What a true blessing it is to have your help. We feel somewhat vulnerable in this new process for us; it has been very comforting to have your help.

Indiana — Thanks so much for all the wonderfully valuable information you

have given to our family regarding adoption. We have been passing along your information to others because we have had such a good experience and have been so blessed.

New Jersey — It’s a comfort to know that there is someone willing to give unbiased research and opinions and allow us to make the decisions based on them.

Tennessee — I really appreciate what you are doing because trying to do this on our own is overwhelming.

Trying to sort through the mountain of information can be a tremendous task, especially for someone who knows nothing about international adoption.

Oregon — The willingness of your organization to guide families like ours is definitely a Godsend! We look forward to working with you in the future.

New Jersey — This is some very helpful information - the best we have seen so far in our "checking" things out.

From the Word

- By Ed Schwartz

Who are the forgotten children of the world?

- Sorina, a 14-year-old girl in Romania, spending her days at the train station and her nights under a railroad bridge...

- 13-year-old Nicolae, living under the same bridge in Romania and huffing glue to forget his hunger...

- The eight other 10 – 14 year olds living under the same bridge and sleeping on whatever separates them from the cold, hard ground.

- 9-year-old Violeta, living in an eastern European orphanage. She used to wonder when her mom was coming to visit, then she wondered if her mom would come to see her; now she knows she will never see her mother again.

- 8-year-old Jean-Pierre, working from the dark of morning to the dark of night for a family in Port au Prince, Haiti.

- 10-year-old Monica, fending for herself on the streets of Agua Prieta, Mexico, as her parents cross the border for work in the United States.

The list goes on: Eun-Jae from China, Sabahat from Uzbekistan, Chola Mpundu from Zambia...

Who are the forgotten children of the world? Isaiah 49:1, says "...The Lord hath called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath He made mention of my name."

God knows their names before these children take their first breath. He sees them and hears their voices. He loves them. God has not forgotten them.

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PO Box 375
Bluffton, IN 46714

Phone: 260-824-9000
Fax: 260-824-9002
Email: Info@loving-shepherd.org

Visit our Web site at:
www.loving-shepherd.org



Mission Statement

The mission of *Loving Shepherd Ministries* is to bring honor to God by providing objective, no-cost advocacy, resources, and direction to the faith community for the direct benefit of children and families who find themselves at risk or in need.

This is accomplished by following the example of Jesus Christ as the loving shepherd in [Isaiah 40:11](#) - "He shall feed His flock like a shepherd; He shall gather the lambs with His arms, and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young".

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Bluffton, IN
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Loving Shepherd International Services
and Foundation Inc.
PO Box 375
Bluffton, IN 46714
(260) 824-9000

