



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

# 2025 IMPACT

*“On Your Feet [Now Shared Journeys] doesn't shy away from hard truths. No one talked about the trauma experienced when I placed my daughter for adoption a decade ago. I am so grateful for this safe space - both in person and online - where I can share with other women who understand and empathize.”*

## 2025 BY THE NUMBERS

In 2025, Shared Journeys Birthparent Collective served **134** active clients, including 88 new clients, and remained connected to **811** birthparents in total.

### THIS YEAR'S HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE:

- Hosting **70+** Connect Calls, providing 5-6 calls a month, including one just for birthparents in closed or in-reunion adoptions.
- Connecting more than **433** birthparents through closed Facebook groups, including our birthfathers support group
- Sending over **900** birthday card emails to our clients for both their birthday, and for the birthdays of the children they placed, providing them connection, recognition, and community on difficult days
- Giving gifts to more than **24** birthmoms and hosting a virtual gathering on Birthmothers' Day that provided community and support
- Hosting **23** birthmothers at therapeutic retreats
- Throwing special events like Palentine's Day and a holiday party for **35** birthparents
- Having **8** women participate in our birthmom-to-birthmom mentoring group

## NEW IN 2025: BEYOND PLACEMENT A Monthly Space for Deeper Healing

This year, we launched **Beyond Placement**, a groundbreaking therapeutic support group in response to an urgent need we've observed: birthparents struggling with mental health challenges that peer support alone cannot address. Limited to just 8 participants, this monthly group provides professional, therapeutic intervention for depression, anxiety, trauma, and life challenges that extend far **beyond placement**. Participants explore adoption trauma, develop healthy coping mechanisms, and address the complex ways placement has rippled through their relationships, careers, and well-being. Under expert clinical supervision, we're finally offering the depth of support our community has desperately needed.

## NEW IN 2025: PMAD ASSESSMENT & TREATMENT

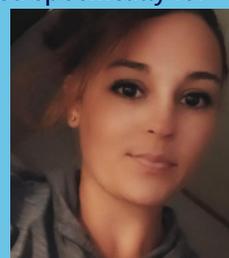
**We are breaking new ground in maternal mental health!** Birthparents face unique mental health challenges, yet they are rarely assessed for Perinatal Mood and Anxiety Disorders (PMAD), conditions affecting 1-in-5 people during pregnancy and post-partum. Research shows PMAD rates are even higher among trauma-exposed populations, which includes birthparents. Left untreated, these conditions can develop into severe, life-threatening mental health crises. Shared Journeys is one of the only organizations specifically addressing this gap. We have transitioned to a group practice model and are currently onboarding adoption-competent therapists to provide specialized care. Simultaneously, our case management staff are pursuing training in PMAD assessment and diagnosis, ensuring birth parents receive the early intervention they deserve. This expansion represents a critical step toward comprehensive support for a population that has been overlooked for far too long.



*“When you can't hold yourself up, On Your Feet [Now Shared Journeys] will. Whether it be an employee, another birthmother you meet, or a group that is here, all these things help you live with adoption and the role it played in your life.”*

## Create! Birthparents Art Grant

This year's winner combines artistic creativity with entrepreneurship, using her art to solve a problem that many members of the adoption constellation have encountered. Congratulations to Sydney S., who created a line of greeting and holiday cards designed specifically for adoption relationships. Her project directly benefits birthparents, adopted people, and adoptive parents, giving them a way to connect with each other through cards that are written specifically for adoption relationships.





## HOLIDAY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Did you know that On Your Feet is the only organization that helps birthparents provide holiday presents for both the children they are parenting and those they placed? No generic gifts here: every present is thoughtfully chosen to match the interests of each child. Last year **30** birthparents participated, and we provided holiday gifts for **52** children, totaling **\$1300**.

### CASE MANAGEMENT

In 2025, our Case Management team helped birthparents navigate check-ins, birthday cards, and connections to therapists, housing, food assistance, and job training. Birthparents worked on goals like budgeting, writing letters to their children, and setting healthy boundaries, while programs like Connect Calls, our Peer Mentorship Program, Beyond Placement, and retreats offered growth and community. Within our community birthparents are accessing the guidance and resources they need, making a lasting difference for themselves and the children they love.

*“I’ve attended other support groups but they were facilitated by an adoption agency. The conversation is different when women don’t have to worry about offending the agency they depend on for support. At On Your Feet groups [Now Shared Journeys], birthmoms don’t have to censor themselves. We can acknowledge 100% of everything we’re dealing with and it’s incredibly liberating.”*



Join us in congratulating our Executive Director, Alexis Eyler, who completed her MSW degree in December of 2025. As an MSW student at the University of Illinois, and every day at Shared Journeys, she has been a fierce advocate for ensuring that every birthparent that needs it has access to the care and community they deserve, while being a trailblazer in maternal mental health assessment and treatment for birthmothers.

*“There are millions of birthmothers, in America alone – just America – who weren’t educated, weren’t given options counseling, and aren’t getting support afterwards, and that is a huge, huge problem. When you look at that lack of post-placement care? This is why On Your Feet [now Shared Journeys] exists.”*

 Hope O Helder

Shared Journeys Boardmember, author, and birthmother



# GATHER

*With us to celebrate!*

### LOOKING AHEAD TO 2026

Different name; same incredible support and community! Watch our site in 2026 for the updated times and days for our Connect Calls.

Retreats are going fully virtual In 2026, with one on April 11th, 2026, and the other on November 7th, 2026.

In 2026, we are implementing our PMAD assessment app – make sure you are on our mailing list so you don’t miss a thing!



### Mark Your Calendars!

2026 Gather is celebrating On Your Feet’s 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary!

**Gather 2026**  
May 2, 2026

Thank you to this year’s *Gather* sponsors, whose generosity helps ensure that birthparents will always have access to the help they deserve. And thank you so much to everyone who donated, bought tickets, and came out to support birthparents. We could not have done all that we did this year without the help of people like you, who recognize the critical importance of birthparent support.