

OUR STORY

The logo for 'Infinite Family' features a stylized black silhouette of a family (two adults and a child) inside a red circle. The words 'Infinite Family' are written in a black, cursive-style font across the bottom of the circle.

When Amy Stokes and her husband Chris arrived in Johannesburg, South Africa to adopt their son Calder Qhawe in 2003, Amy knew she was a long way from home. What she could not yet anticipate was that the 8,000 mile trip was the beginning of a very big journey. It was not just bringing home a South African infant – this had always been part of the Stokes family plan. Amy and Chris had focused their adoption efforts on South Africa because research made it clear that HIV/AIDs and poverty in sub-Saharan Africa were resulting in an orphan crisis that far surpassed any ever seen before. Millions of parents were dying leaving behind children who too often were growing up alone. But they also knew they would enjoy making African culture, food, art, history and music a part of their everyday life.



Amy realized by the third day of that trip that as difficult as life seemed for the many tots to teens she saw in orphanages, these children were in fact the lucky ones. Most children were struggling to survive in communities that were already overwhelmed by the orphan crisis. Simply put, there were just not enough adults to care for all the children growing up alone.

Amy also realized that none of these children, regardless of their living situation, would grow up in “the village” commonly believed necessary to teach, coach and nurture them to become successful adults. Who was going to guide these children as they became the next generation of leaders of their own families, communities and country? Adopting millions of African children away from the continent was not a viable option or even a good idea. Adopting children away from their country and their culture would have removed one of the only sources of hope left for creating a new future beyond the pain and devastation of AIDS.



It was then that Amy realized she must develop a new way for adults living anywhere in the world, using emerging webcam technology, to share their wisdom, guidance and love with children in Africa. It was her dream to connect these children with knowing, nurturing adults who could share the tools, information and experience the children would need as they figured out who they were, and who they were going to be. This began several years of listening to experts and asking questions to figure out how she could make this happen.



Very early on, Amy met several people that were critical in bringing this dream to reality: Dana Gold, another adoptive mother from the same South African orphanage joined the team first, becoming Infinite Family's Founding Director of Programs; Micael Holmstrom, a Swedish technology specialist opened the door to Infinite Family's first Internet platform; and Katy Keck, an early Director and Board Chair, joined the team to lead fundraising events and help Infinite Family grow from an entrepreneurial start-up to a sustainable non-profit organization.

With the pioneering financial support and guidance of The Rockfeller Brothers Fund, Internet Solutions and Bombardier Transportation and the volunteer help of more than 400 video mentors, event hosts, Directors and advisors, Infinite Family has evolved from a small pilot in 2006 to a thriving program today. Mentors hail from 14 countries and more than 37 U.S. states. Infinite Family computer labs serve orphanages, after-school programs and squatter camps in several locations in South Africa.

The children who chat with their mentors through Infinite Family's platform know that they are different. These children know that there is an adult that they have only met through a computer connection, but who carries them in his heart and works to help them make their dreams come true..... dreams of a future that don't have them walking home to a shack or orphanage, but have them entering a university classroom and a whole new world of opportunity. Because of Amy's vision and action, these children have Infinite Possibilities.



infinitefamily.org
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