



(spotlight)

Adoption Angel

>>> **STEVE KIRSH '76**
delivers the paperwork.

A neon pink-and-blue stork named Lullaby Louie is perched on the wall at the Carmel, Indiana, office of adoption attorney Kirsh. Lullaby Louie has greeted 2,500 babies and children in the 26 years that Kirsh has been in practice with his kid brother Joel.

Kirsh, a U.S. attorney who practices adoption law exclusively, helped found the American Academy of Adoption Attorneys in 1990. The affable, 53-year-old is a past president of the academy and currently serves as treasurer. Known as the father of adoption law in Indiana, Kirsh spotted a flaw in the state's 1989 adoption law that resulted in the Indiana legislature enacting the state's Putative Father Registry, which helps identify children who may be adopted. Kirsh was named to the U.S. delegation to the final drafting session of the Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption (the final rules were issued in November) and the U.S. Congress named him an "Angel in Adoption" in 2005.

Spending time in the clouds is nothing new to Kirsh, who, during the last 15 years has piloted a twin-engine Cessna 310 to visit many prospective birth moms. He says he flies only for business, but that's hard to believe as he excitedly shows a picture of his new single-engine, fixed-gear 2005 Columbia 350.

Kirsh came to Dartmouth with the intention of becoming a pediatrician, a career wholeheartedly supported by his parents. That was before being told to dissect a frog in biology lab. He couldn't stomach the idea, and instead graduated magna cum laude with an A.B. in history. "My parents eventually forgave me after they decided that I should become a lawyer!" says Kirsh, who graduated in 1979 from the Indiana University School of Law, where he served as president of the Phi Delta Phi legal fraternity.

Kirsh has a passion for adoption law. "Why not?" says family law attorney and colleague Dorene Philpot. "It's the only area of law where people actually want to have their picture taken with the judge!"

—Julie Slaymaker