

# Paul and Robin Pennington Have Helped Thousands of Orphans Find Homes

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**The Pennington family**

DAMON N. PENA

Paul and Robin Pennington believe all orphaned children should have a chance at finding families – and they've spent much of their lives working toward that end.

The couple, of Driftwood, Texas, have spent 35 years growing their family of six with children adopted internationally, and it's a tradition they've passed on to their next generation, as well as to other families throughout the country.

"It was never intentional to go out and adopt a child who would make our family diverse," Robin, 53, says. "It was always just a case of, 'What child needs a family?'"

Since founding [Hope for Orphans](#) in 2001, a nonprofit with a mission to educate churches on how their congregations can adopt orphans around the world (with the goal of finding homes for orphans through adoption and foster care), the Penningtons have helped thousands of kids find homes.

"These children," says Paul, 58, "might include kids who are older, sibling groups, kids with medical issues, kids from abuse, kids with fetal alcohol syndrome and other brain-related issues. Also, kids from disrupted adoptions, or those with PTSD."

The Penningtons have first-hand experience with special-needs orphans with several of their own five adopted children (they have one biological child) and 11 grandchildren.

Along with their biological firstborn, Elizabeth, 32, their family includes Seth, 27, who was adopted in the U.S. and diagnosed with Graves Disease at age 10; Hope, 19, who was adopted in South Korea and was born with five heart defects, requiring numerous surgeries; and Noah, 17, who also was adopted in South Korea with very short arms and a heart defect that has since been corrected. The remaining siblings are Kit, 29, adopted in the U.S.; and Ethan, 19, adopted in South Korea.

"Paul and Robin are incredible," says Joshua Zhong, president of Chinese Adoption International, whose organization has worked with the Penningtons for a decade. "They're somewhat unique compared with other

adoption advocates, because they're adoptive parents themselves, so they have a much more sensitive heart. They've had their own personal journey, including both failures and successes."

All of the Pennington children are either thriving in school or in the working world.

"When we adopted Kit and Seth, we were adopting in order to have a family," says Paul. "But with the next three, we were adopting in order to give a child a family. Increasingly, we're seeing that sentiment all around the world: people adopting to give children families, and infertility often has nothing to do with it. That's a major change."

Ethan was the Penningtons' first international adoption, when the boy was 3½ months old. When Paul flew to Seoul to pick up Ethan and toured the orphanage wards housing children with special needs and medical conditions, who were likely never going to be adopted, he realized he needed to do more to educate people about adopting.

"Those were kids with congenital defects, terminal illnesses and the like," he says. "That's when the idea for Hope for Orphans began."

### **Carrying on a Family Legacy**

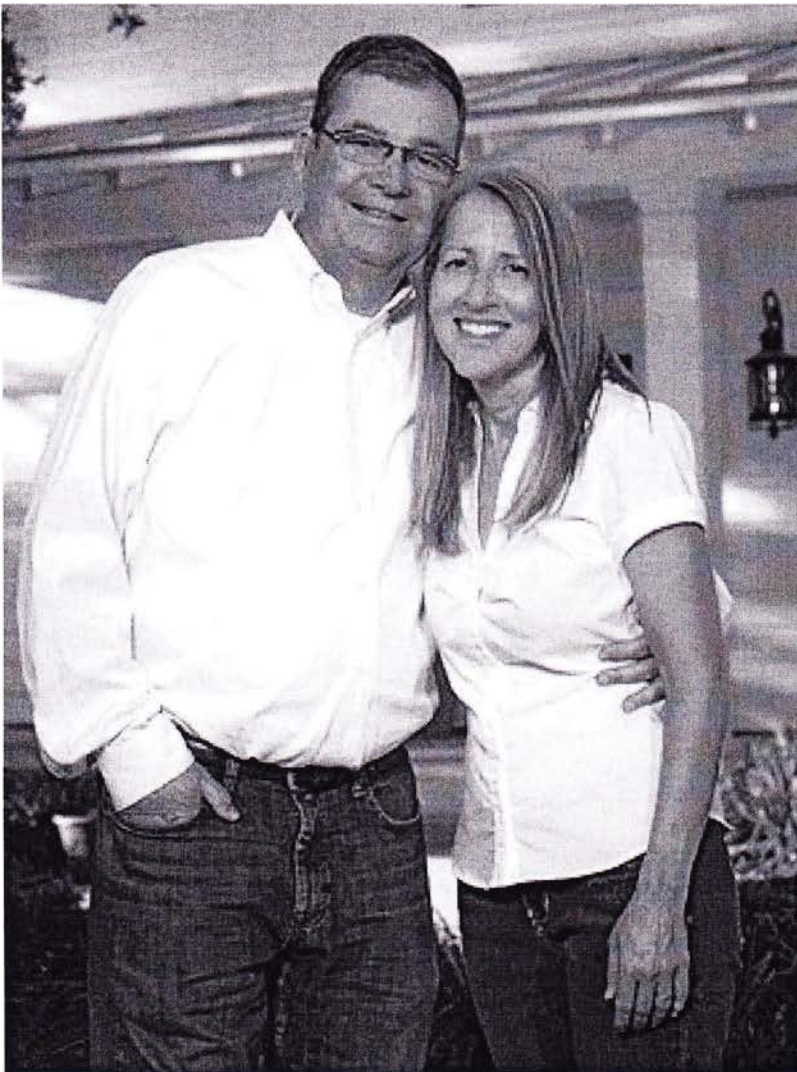
Today, Paul and Robin's grown children are carrying on the family legacy: Elizabeth, who works for <http://www.generationsadoptions.org/>, a nonprofit adoption agency in Waco, Texas, and her husband Mathew Golic have six kids: including Victoria, 16, adopted in Ukraine; and Alise, 14, adopted in China. Their four biological offspring are Jack, 11, who has had three open-heart surgeries; Henry, 10; May, 6; and Emmeline, 5, who has had surgery to correct a heart defect. (The Golics' son Benjamin, who was adopted in South Korea, died in 2011 at age six of complications from a heart defect.)

Kit, who lives near Dallas and is married to Kelly Taylor, adopted the family's first child (Oliver, now 9) from Eastern Europe at 14 months old while she was pregnant with another son, Stuart, now 8. The couple's remaining children are all biological, including George, 6; Charley, 4; and Eloise, 2. But Kit (who is newly pregnant with child number six) says she and Kelly haven't ruled out adopting again someday.

"What inspired me to adopt in general were my younger siblings," Kit says. "The experience changed my life. It taught me how to love someone other than myself, how to nurture and protect."

Paul and Robin say they're proud that their oldest daughters have adopted internationally and are helping to get out the message that more families are needed to take in orphans – particularly those who might be hard to place – from many countries.

"When a child goes into an adoptive home that is prepared for that child's needs, the reward is seeing that child become someone different right before your eyes," says Robin. "You see what love can do."



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