

## AtMP At Ten: How Our Baby Has Grown

Dorian, Marshall, and the newest addition to their family.

By Dorian Solot & Marshall Miller

As AtMP's founders, it is amazing to see our baby growing up so quickly. Ten years old already? Time sure did fly.

We launched AtMP as a couple of twenty-somethings frustrated with the pressure to get married, angry about the discrimination we experienced, and surprised at the total lack of information about unmarried relationships. We had no trust fund, no angel donor, and no foundation grant to start things off. When early interest in the organization surged, Dorian left her job in the adoption field to run AtMP as a full-time volunteer, and Marshall supported us and the organization on his small nonprofit salary. Early newsletters -- simple pages of text with no photos or fancy formatting -- reveal repeated pleas for donations of a paper cutter and postal scale. (Dorian's grandmother came through with a paper cutter.) We celebrated having letters to the editor published, and being quoted in regional newspapers and on local radio shows. At AtMP's first board meeting -- held in our apartment with no air conditioning on a day so hot sweat rolled down our cheeks -- the gathered activists dreamed of being able to influence laws and change policies, but left that idea in the fantasyland of the "maybe someday" category.

Ten years later, AtMP has taken giant steps forward. Nicky Grist, its Executive Director, is leading the organization in exciting directions, bringing with her Yale and Princeton degrees, extensive experience growing small organizations, and the motivation of her own unmarried experience. (Nicky discovered AtMP's Executive Director job listing while visiting our website looking for legal information for herself.)

These days, the website bursts at the seams, boasting over 400 pages of articles, resources, and "what you can do" action boxes on current issues for diverse family forms. Utne magazine highlighted our newsletter, calling it one of the best grassroots newsletters in the nation. Journalists and producers around the world turn to AtMP when they are working on pieces about single and unmarried issues, and AtMP pitches story ideas to writers at national media outlets that shape public understanding. When a lawsuit or legislative proposal affecting unmarried people would benefit from grassroots action, AtMP has the capacity to easily activate its members in any state or region of the country, generating votes, phone calls to legislators, or letters to the editor. The idea that we could influence policy is not just a dream anymore, but part of AtMP's daily work.

AtMP has gotten smarter, too. It is doing a better job at focusing on the needs and interests of solo singles, not only unmarried people in relationships. It is also taking the longer view on health care issues, the number one subject that brings people to contact AtMP seeking help. Rather than focusing just on domestic partner benefits, which add health care benefits for a few more people within the existing, deeply flawed system, AtMP has joined the movement for a universal health care system that provides access to care regardless of one's relationship or marital status.

AtMP's number one challenge has not changed much in all these years: funding. Although hundreds of people contact AtMP each year seeking information, thousands more use the information on our website, and millions of unmarried people stand to benefit from the kinds of policy changes AtMP advocates, barely 200 donate each year. AtMP will continue to submit grant applications, but until unmarried people develop the political identity that other groups have (like women's groups or LGBT groups), most foundations will not recognize the importance of our work. The key to AtMP's long-term sustainability is donations from regular people like you (and like us -- we are donors, too). If you already give,

thank you, thank you, thank you. If you are reading this article and you are not already a donor, we hope you will become one.

And us personally? Still happily unmarried to each other. A few years back we celebrated our twelve-year anniversary with a commitment ceremony on a mountaintop, surrounded by family members and friends. We may not have signed a marriage license, but we did have the idea to literally "tie the knot" during the ceremony, holding opposite ends of a long scarf and climbing awkwardly over and through the scarf's loops until it had a nice fat knot in the middle. We figured the next time someone asked us when we would tie the knot, we could say we already have.

Last year, we celebrated the birth of our daughter, who beams at us each new morning as she perfects her technique at sucking on her own toes. We are members of AtMP's board of directors, thrilled to be part of the team steering the ship, even though we are no longer the ones running things day to day. We could not be prouder of the organization AtMP has grown to be -- and what the future holds for unmarried people and families thanks to its work.