



Kara, Elaine, & K





Hi there! We are Elaine & Kara and this is our son, K [REDACTED].

Thank you for reading our book - we hope it gives you a little glimpse into who we are and what it's like being in our family!



Our Story...

We met playing ultimate frisbee in 2010 while we were both studying environmental engineering. We bonded over being big nerds and sharing a love of sports, the outdoors, and excellent music. By the end of 2011, we'd quickly settled down and adopted our dog, Rayleigh. We bumped around the Bay Area for a few more years while Kara finished school. By 2014, we were both planning to pop the question, but Kara got to it first in Croatia, our first big trip together.



Some of our favorite things to do together:

Hiking, working on house/yard projects, listening to records, and taking our son on adventures.

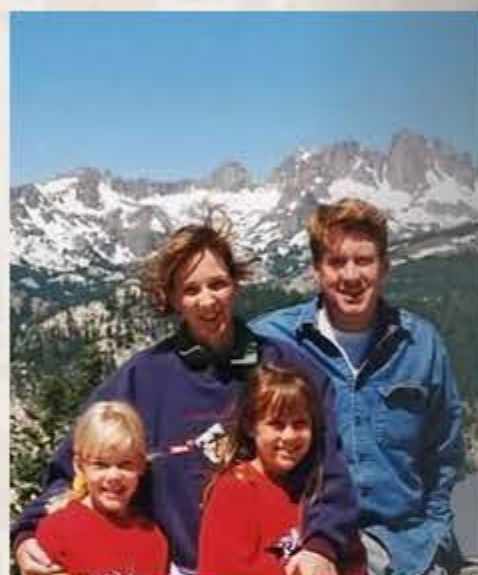


We got married in 2015 in Washington and were so fortunate to be able to celebrate with our friends and family from all over the country. When we got back home, Elaine took a job in Portland on a bit of a whim and Kara agreed to try out the PNW while she finished school and job hunted. It was a whirlwind year, but it all worked out in the end - Kara loved the Pacific Northwest and we put down roots in Southwest Portland. It took us a little while to get our house and our lives ready, but in 2019 we started our parenting journey by fostering our son, K. After almost three years, we finally adopted him in 2022. Life has changed SO MUCH since we met back in 2010, but through it all, we've helped each other grow as individuals, as partners, and as a family.



A little more about Kara...

I grew up in southern California with my parents and sister. My parents had a wonderfully loving marriage and set a great example for a supportive family full of unconditional love. My family enjoyed being active outside (going to the mountains and the beach often) and I was fortunate to travel a lot. I enjoyed learning and solving problems, which led me to study engineering. I strive to continue to explore and learn throughout my life. My mom passed away in 2022 after a year-long battle with cancer. She taught me powerful lessons about unconditional love, empathy, and the importance of giving your time. Her passing taught me to prioritize spending time with people I love and not sweating the little stuff.



Little known facts

- I studied an Italian lake in graduate school and was able to explore the sites and sample the cafes and pizzerias!
- In high school, I was in competitive marching band
- I've been to the Galapagos Islands and scuba dived with sharks and manta rays in Tahiti

Favorite childhood memories

- Eating out of our garden in the backyard
- Road trips to visit mountains in Colorado and my Grandpa's ranch in Idaho
- Going to the beach in the summer



Parenting

Growing up, I was fortunate to be exposed to lots of new and interesting things and this shaped how I parent. I try to foster a sense of exploration, curiosity, fun and silliness in my kids by trying new things, learning new skills, and exploring the world.

What I do for fun

I love hiking, gardening, baking and when I've got my chainsaw. I fancy myself an amateur arborist. I have always loved traveling and being active and sharing these experiences with my family and over the last few years I've really gotten into triathlons.

What I do for work

I work as an environmental scientist, studying waterways and coastal environments. I have always loved the water and feel fortunate to work on something I find fascinating. I mostly work from home at a desk, but sometimes get to go out on boats for work!

According to K:

Mommy is super strong and super fun. Mommy rides her big kid bike very very fast and I met a dinosaur once at her finish line.



A little more about Elaine...



I grew up mostly in Burien, a suburb south of Seattle, Washington. My parents divorced when I was 4, so I split my time between their homes. That meant I was an only child with two of everything... a dangerous combination! We moved around and I switched schools a few times, but my parents always made sure I had what I needed and they always supported me in my interests, which were mostly sports (especially baseball) and school (I was, and still am, a huge math/science nerd). When I left home to go to college in California, I always thought I would come back to the Northwest someday, but it took me a little longer than I expected. I loved college so much that I went on to grad school and then I met Kara and had to stick around California for a little longer to see that through. When we put roots down in Portland in 2016, it finally felt like coming home.

Little known facts

- I've mismatched my socks for luck every day of my life since winning a softball tournament in the 8th grade
- I lived on a sailboat with my dad on Lake Union for two years as a kid
- My ancestors almost died in an infamous Oregon Trail disaster in the 1840s

Favorite childhood memories

- Going to the Mariner's 1995 play-off games
- Seeing Elton John & Billy Joel at the Tacoma Dome
- Sailboat trips in Puget Sound with my dad
- HGTV-inspired house projects with my mom



Parenting

My parenting style is all about unconditional love, consistency, validation, and curiosity. I love learning about who my child is as they discover new things about themselves and I love helping my child learn about the world. Parenting has completely changed my approach to life. I used to be very focused on achievement and now I find myself striving more for kindness, understanding, and empathy.

What I do for fun

I love being outdoors, trail running in the forest, building things, doing house projects, arts & crafts, and going to epic concerts (especially classic rock legends and 90s era singer-songwriters). I'm a lifelong learner (currently learning guitar!) and I love writing (poetry, prose, and songs).

What I do for work

I work in clean energy planning and regulation. I was super fortunate to open my own consulting company after becoming a parent, so I work from home and have a lot of flexibility in my work schedule.

According to K [redacted]:

Mama fixes things when they are broken because she is very strong, but not as strong as Mommy. I like when Mama plays guitar, but when she sings, I ask her to be a little more quieter, please.



K

K is 4. He loves most things, but especially singing, dance parties, riding his big kid bike, gardening and eating from the garden, pretend play, jumping on the trampoline, going hiking in the forest, being silly, meeting new people, exploring new places, and getting his wiggles out in creative ways.



Rayleigh

Rayleigh is 12. She loves kids, snuggles, sleeping, and rolling in freshly cut grass.



Some have asked if Rayleigh is related to the "luck dragon" from the Neverending Story. Others think she's a bat. We're not quite sure what she is, but we love her very much.



Baby K shown for scale





Our home, our happy place

We live in Southwest Portland, close to tons of parks, trails, the Southwest Community Center at Gabriel Park, and the Multnomah Art Center, all of which we visit pretty regularly. It took us a few years to fix up our house and get the yard in shape, but now it's our favorite place to be! We spend as much time as we can out in the yard playing, jumping on the trampoline, chilling on the hammock, and tending to the apple trees and the garden. Inside, we've got a few good spots for making forts!





Our Garden

One of our favorite yard projects has been building our raised beds and planting a garden each year. This is all new to Elaine - she didn't eat a fresh vegetable until her 20s! But Kara grew up eating out of her garden and we wanted to pass that on to our kids. We find it so grounding to physically work in the garden and K. LOVES to eat whatever veggies he's allowed to pick or dig up. We get a lot of visitors to the garden, mostly birds, squirrels, and bunnies. And we try to cook with what we harvest as often as we can.



Some years are better than others, but we get massive crops of apples, pears, and figs every year, and sometimes we get tomatoes, squashes, pumpkins, cantaloupes, watermelons, onions, beets, carrots, blueberries, and all sorts of lettuces.

Fun around the neighborhood



Oregon Coast



Trail running

Portland Bridge Pedal



Redwoods!



Rowing on Green Lake



Brandi Carlile & Friends @ the Gorge



London, Baby!



Car camping



Outings,
Adventures,
& Traditions

Family



Grandma (Elaine's mom) and Grandpa live outside of Seattle and enjoy games, trains, baseball, and K time.



Grandpa M (Elaine's dad) and Gramma C live outside of Seattle and love biking, knitting, and taking K for walks on their beach!

Grandpa (Kara's dad) lives in Southern California and loves surfing, going on crazy adventures, and seeing his kids and grandkids.



Grammy (Kara's mom) loved throwing parties, playing (competitive) games, and being there for her family. She passed away in 2022, but she's ever-present in our hearts.



Kara is close with her sister, Morgan, who lives in Georgia with her husband, Joe, and their two kids. We get the cousins together a few times a year - usually Thanksgiving or Christmas, Easter, and any other big family events. Sometimes we travel to California or Georgia and sometimes we all meet in Portland!



Elaine is also close with her aunts and cousins, who all live up in Washington. We drive up for family events at least once a year to visit them and their kids.

Holidays!



We celebrate Thanksgiving and Christmas with the grandparents every year, which means sometimes we travel and sometimes we host. However the logistics go, it's important for us to see both of our families at some point during the holidays. Christmas is a BIG DEAL for Kara's family (especially her mom and brother-in-law), so we go pretty big sometimes. Elaine is always shocked by how effortlessly Kara can throw together a complete Thanksgiving dinner. And Kara is always shocked that Elaine still dresses up in costume for Halloween every year!



Grandpa's bees



Grandpa M & Gramma C's beach



Oregon Coast



More fun adventures



Great Grandpa's ranch in Idaho



Dreams for our kids

We want our kids to grow up in a home full of love, support, curiosity, and learning. We want to expose our kids to all sorts of opportunities, interests, and ways of living so they can figure out who they want to be. We want them to understand and take pride in who they are and where they came from, and respect the backgrounds and cultures of others, in both our local community and in the global community.

We want our kids to always feel confident in themselves and safe - physically, mentally, and emotionally. To us, this means spending a lot of time as parents listening, trying to understand and validate how our kids are feeling, meeting their immediate needs, and helping them learn how to do hard things and meet more of their own needs as they grow into adults.

We'll feel like successful parents when our kids are out in the world, able to pursue the things that bring them happiness, able to withstand the hard parts of life with strength and resilience, and extending kindness to others and to themselves along the way.

Open adoption aspirations

We hope that open adoption helps our child feel embraced for who they are and connected to where they came from. We hope that it creates opportunities for them to feel the love that their biological family has for them. We appreciate that love can take many forms and we look forward to getting to know our child's biological family and understanding how they want to share their love if that feels right for them. We view open adoption as a gift because it will help us understand our child better and it will help our child understand themselves better.

We've navigated open adoption with K's biological family and the experience has opened our minds to new ways of thinking about family. It's also made us sensitive to the complexities of those relationships and their evolutions over time. It's not always easy, but to us it's very important to foster those relationships, in whatever form they take, with the singular goal of doing what's best for our child.