# Noreen and Fred

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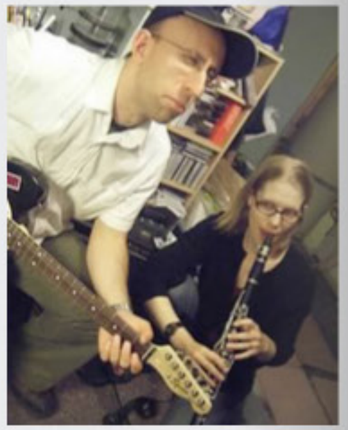
Noreen and Fred

# Our Relationship

We met in in 1998 at a conference for literacy volunteers. We hit it off right away. Five years, a long distance romance and a cross-country move later, we married. It was a simple and beautiful ceremony that honored both of our heritages. Family pitched in to build the chuppah (ceremonial wedding tent), make the flower girls' dresses and cook food for the reception.

We settled in Brooklyn, New York after the wedding and stayed there until the pull of home became too strong to resist. We wanted to move closer to family, and decided to move to Seattle, where Noreen got a job running a speech therapy clinic and Fred wrote.

We spend most of our time together with our biological daughter, Maggie. When we do sneak away for a date we enjoy going to movies, theater and trying new restaurants.



## Noreen's Thoughts on Fred

I love Fred for his patience, encouragement and sense of humor. He is an amazing dad. I'm lucky to have him as my partner in life. He encourages me to slow down, which gives me more time to focus on the important things in life.

## Fred's Thoughts on Noreen

I love Noreen because she makes me live more fully and spiritually than I would if left to my own devices. She is brilliant, thoughtful, and really fun to be around.

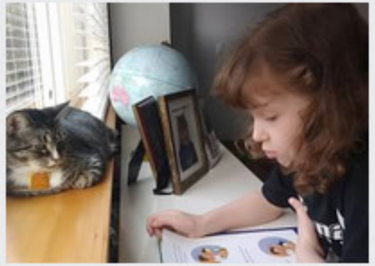
## Our Family Priorities

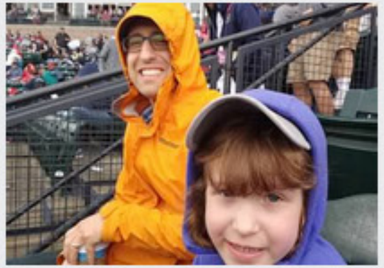
We have a family-centered lifestyle. Whenever we face a major life decision, we ask, "What will be best for Maggie?" and, "How will this impact our family?"

All of our decisions are based on what will be best for Maggie and our family as a whole. This means choosing careers and jobs that allow us to be home every night for dinner and to be home with Maggie when she is sick or on vacation.

## Family Time

We enjoy family time, which may be a family outing to the aquarium, movie night, or snuggling in front of the fireplace while reading Harry Potter aloud (Sparkles really likes this sort of family time!).





# Noreen Fast Facts

Favorite Books: To Kill a Mockingbird; The Grapes of Wrath

Favorite Movie: Princess Bride

Favorite T.V. Show: Blackish

Favorite Foods: Strawberries, chocolate

Favorite Chore: Folding laundry

## Noreen Likes

Hiking & camping

Reading

Baking cakes

Making things from scratch-lotion, lip balm, yogurt

Tea

Cooking. I've been told I have a knack for making healthy food actually taste good!

## Noreen's Job

Speech Pathologist

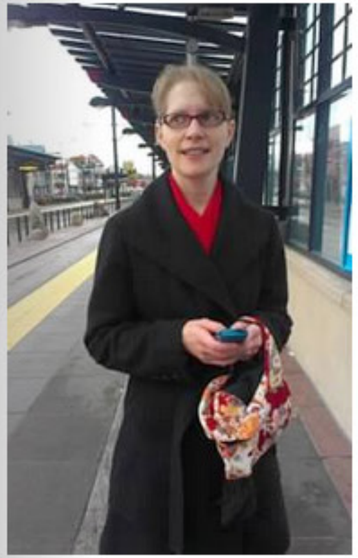
## Noreen's Favorite Family Traditions

Birthday trips to the Olympic Peninsula

Family story time every night before bed

# Noreen's Story

I was born in Gresham, Oregon and grew up exploring the trails in the Columbia River Gorge. My parents highly valued education and responsibility. We moved around a bit- Oregon, Utah, Texas. That helped me develop a broad perspective on the world and to think about the big picture when it comes to politics and global issues.



I'm the youngest of three children, and I treasure my relationship with my brother and sister. My brother Patrick lives in Eastern Washington with his family, and we love visiting them, especially for holidays. Maggie's cousins adore her.

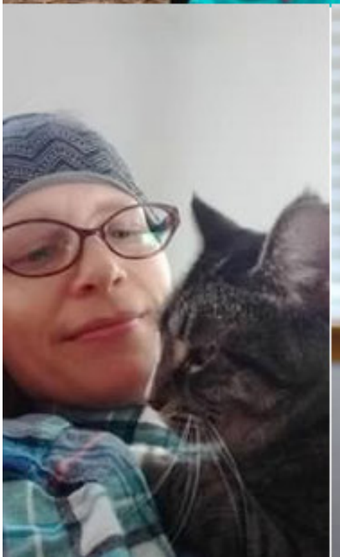
Growing up, people always thought my sister Colleen and I were twins. We were thrilled when she moved back to the Seattle area a few years ago.

One of my favorite childhood memories is learning about gardening from my grandpa. Every time I visited, he took me on a tour of his garden to show me what was new and what needed to be done. Every time I work in our yard, I feel close to my grandpa. I think I learned my work ethic from him.

When I was in high school, I spent a full summer camping out on a trail crew. I learned to love the woods, and now I like to go camping with my family during the summer.

## Noreen's Education

I went to school in Bellingham, Washington and earned a masters degree in speech pathology. As a speech pathologist, I've done a little bit of everything. I've worked with babies and toddlers who were learning their first words, adults who had strokes, and now I work with high school students with autism and Down syndrome. Being a speech therapist gave me a lot of tools that have helped me as a parent.



## Noreen's Parenting

I love being a mom! I feel really fortunate that I can spend so much time with Maggie, volunteering at her school, attending special events, taking her to basketball and swimming lessons. I have summers off to be with Maggie. During summer vacation, she and I like to take road trips together during the week and plan family adventures for the weekend.

As a mom, I like to follow Maggie's lead. We let her pick her after school activities, movies for family movie night and her own (sometimes wild) outfits for school. She has a very caring nature and works hard in school. I'm really proud of her! As a mom, I am affectionate, resourceful, and I like to provide a consistent, predictable environment.

I like to be organized and have a plan. However, a lot of household projects and chores get put on hold in favor of family time. Who wouldn't rather play Twister than mop the floor?

## Birthday Cakes

Birthday cakes are serious business in our family. Maggie picks out her theme, and we spend weeks planning her birthday cake. She even helps make Fred's birthday cake.

# Fred Fast Facts

Favorite Book: Wind in the Willows

Favorite Movie: This week it's Amarcord. Last week it was Seven Samurai. Usually the classics.

Favorite T.V. Shows: Doctor Who, The Crown, and other British TV

Favorite Foods: Pad Thai, raspberries, chips and salsa, mint chocolate chip ice cream

## Fred Likes

Science fiction

Political arguments

Rainy mornings

Eating Noreen's baked goods

Going for a long jog

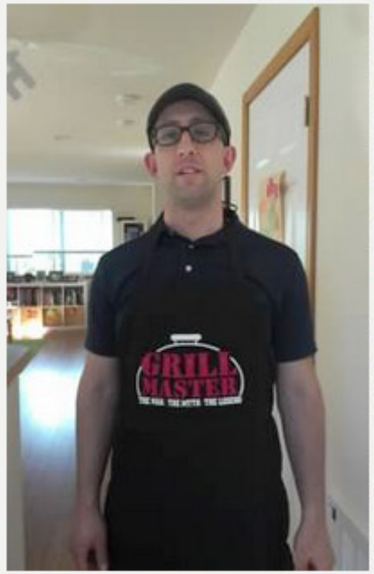
Having adventures with Maggie

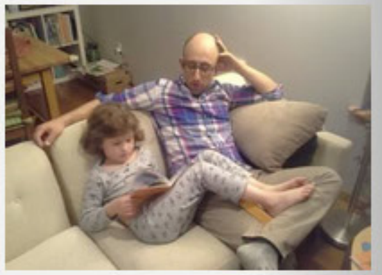
Riding trains

## Fred's Favorite Family Traditions

Lighting candles on Friday night.

"Mischief time" with Maggie after dinner: either a board game, guitar playing, or a few minutes of TV while Mom is upstairs resting.





# Fred's Story

I was born in Detroit, Michigan. I am an only child, and I was close to my cousin Eleanor growing up.

I'm also close to my Aunt Susan (my dad's twin), who is a screenwriter in New York. While Noreen and I lived in New York, we saw Susan regularly for pizza and movie nights and took care of her cats when she travelled.

When I was growing up, Susan encouraged me to pursue writing and to move to New York to follow my dream.

I grew up in the Northwest Detroit suburbs. My parents still live there. We skype almost weekly, and they come for month-long visits a few times each year.

We make it to Michigan once or twice per year, usually over the winter break from school and during the summer.

My father was an attorney in law practice with his father. My mother was an art teacher in an underserved neighborhood before I was born. After I was born, she was a stay-at-home mom.

I have fond memories of spending summers in northern Michigan on canoe trips and playing on the beach with my parents.

## Fred's Parenting Style

My parenting style with Maggie is very hands-on and involved. We talk through things, we make plans and revisit expectations. This seems to be a good fit for Maggie. She does well with structure and a lot of nurturing attention.

## Fred's Education and Work

I have a degree in Anthropology and Creative Writing from the University of Michigan.

After college, I spent a year as a VISTA volunteer working on English as a Second Language programs for Washtenaw Literacy in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

I also took a trip to Houston, Texas for a Literacy Volunteers of America conference, where I met Noreen. She was one of the most brilliant people I'd ever met.

The following year, we went to graduate programs on opposite sides of the country. When Noreen finished school, she moved to New York while I finished my master's degree in screen writing at Columbia University.

Noreen and I married later that year. I have pursued screenwriting part-time while working at a non-profit.

# Maggie Fast Facts

Favorite Book: Harry Potter

Favorite Movie: Labyrinth

Favorite TV Show: Goosebumps

Favorite Foods: Blueberries, fish, sushi

Favorite Animal: Cats

Favorite Color: Yellow

Favorite Sports: Basketball, soccer and baseball

## Maggie Likes

Reading the Sunday comics with Dad

Hanging out with Sparkles the Wonder Cat

Playing Uno with Mom

## Favorite Family Traditions

Thanksgiving and Hannukah. I like the gifts and chocolate coins.

Going to the pumpkin farm in October and crawling through the hay maze.

## Maggie's Thoughts on Adoption

I will be a good big sister because I like babies and toddlers.

When I have a little sister or brother, I will read a bedtime story to them.

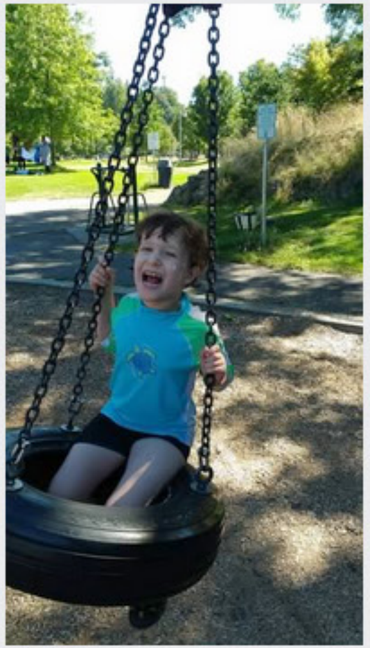
I can't wait to teach my little brother or sister how to be gentle with the cat and how to be gentle with other stuff.

I can't wait to take my little brother or sister to the Museum of Flight.

One thing I think my little brother or sister will like about our neighborhood is that our neighbors are nice.

I hope my little brother or sister is kind.

My favorite memory is the first time I met Sparkles. We got her at the Seattle Humane Society. She is sweet and light-hearted. She likes to play.



# Spirituality

We belong to a humanistic Jewish community that emphasizes culture and ethics. As humanists, we focus on our responsibility to make the world a better place through our actions.

While Fred was raised in a humanistic Jewish family, Noreen was raised Catholic and eventually left the church to follow a more Buddhist path. Over the years, we've found that the Catholic tradition of social justice and community service and Buddhist mindfulness are consistent with the Jewish concept of tikun olam-- restoring the earth.

We celebrate Jewish holidays in our home as well as some holidays from Noreens tradition/childhood. Maggie goes to Sunday school, and we participate in a parent's group at our synagogue.

# Our Home and Neighborhood

We live in a townhouse in a diverse neighborhood in Seattle. Our neighbors are from Seattle, Somalia, Kenya, China, Vietnam and other countries as well.

From our living room, you can see the neighborhood park just a block away, which is next to a play field and community garden.

A short walk from our house is a lively corner full of urban services like a grocery store and dry cleaners and also a great bubble tea house and one of the best Vietnamese restaurants in the city.

Also at the corner is a light rail station, giving us easy access to all sorts of fun destinations downtown, including the Pacific Science Center, Seattle Aquarium and Children's Theatre.

# Dreams for Our Children

We hope to raise caring people who help other people and surround themselves with loving, healthy relationships. That is our dream for our children. We want them to be happy and live a good life, to love each other and to always know how much we love them.

# Our Values

Our family values kindness, hard work, education and caring for others. We try to live lightly on the earth; we have one car and take public transportation whenever possible and eat a mostly vegetarian diet. We volunteer for an annual event at a local food bank and weekly at Maggie's school, and we contribute to the food bank, public radio and a film/visual arts center.

# Opportunities and Experiences

Camping & hiking

Family time

Holiday celebrations with our extended family

Dinner together every evening

Story time together every night

Family movie nights

Baking (and eating) cookies

Game time-Twister, Boggle, whatever

Sharing pretzels at minor league baseball games

Play dates, birthday parties and gatherings with friends

Outdoor play at the park, riding scooters and bikes

Vacations:

- Train trips to Canada
- Ferry rides to the Olympic Peninsula
- Winter Cabin
- Summer camps

A good education: Maggie attends an excellent public school, and we are both involved in supporting her education.

Pets-Sparkles the Cat!

Science Center

Aquarium

Library

Childrens Theater and Symphony

Activities:

- Swimming
- Basketball
- Gymnastics
- Whatever interests our children

# Open Adoption Aspirations

We come to the adoption process with a sense of joy. Adoption has always been part of our plan. We each grew up close to family members who were adopted. It feels natural. We are eager to expand our family by adopting a child, and we also look forward to welcoming his or her birth parents into our family.

We strongly believe in open adoption because we want our child to have a life-long connection to their entire family, including you. We are committed to fostering that relationship through open communication, respect and regular contact in person and via email.

## Thank you for reading our book!