



Nathan & Derek
(and Duncan)



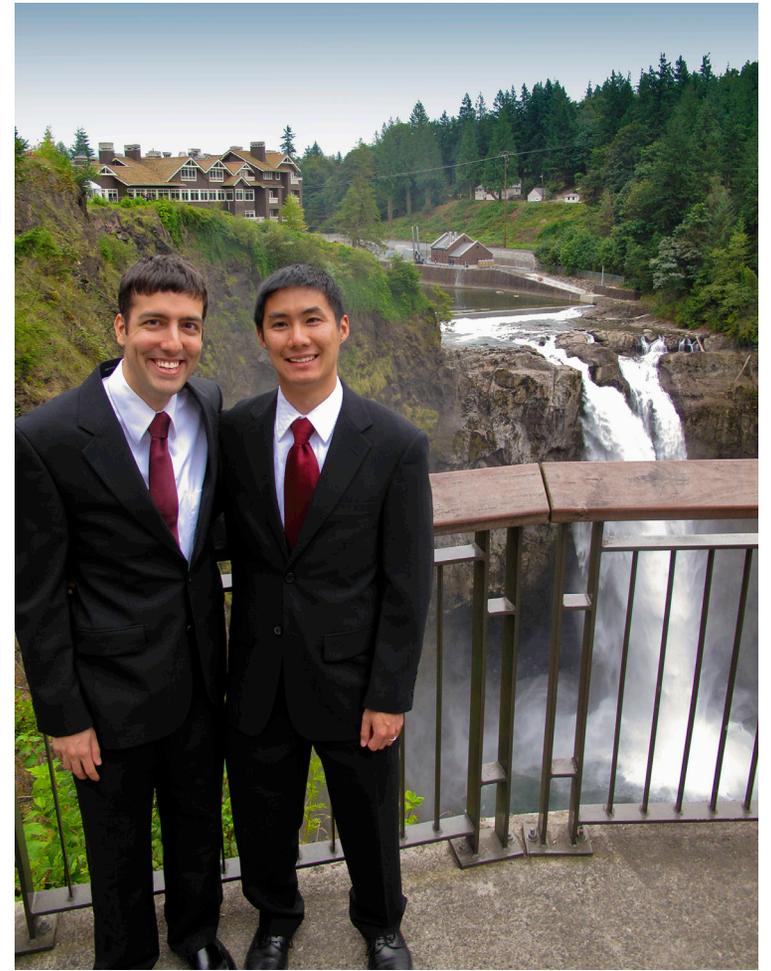


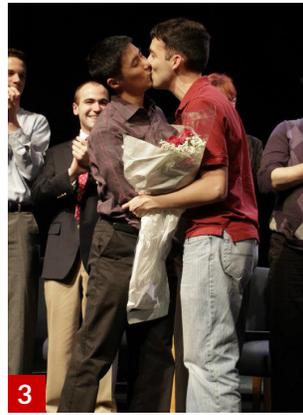
The Story of Us

Our story begins in April of 2011. Nathan was living in Madison, Wisconsin. While Nathan was visiting Seattle, his friend Tyrone invited some friends including Derek for dinner. When we had a few moments to ourselves to chat that night, we realized how much chemistry we had together. Although Nathan left Seattle the next day, we kept in touch over Skype and email. Derek made a trip out to visit Nathan two months later and by then we both knew that this was a relationship destined to last.

With Nathan just starting a PhD program at University of Wisconsin that fall and neither of us able to move then, we discussed very early the more practical issues of being in a relationship – things that most couples don't get to until much later – goals, outlook, beliefs, values, and whether we wanted children (yes!). Starting out being physically apart meant that we had to have great communication and a high level of trust, which we believe is something that has made our bond stronger and our relationship richer. As our mutual love for each other continued to grow, we talked every day over Skype for the next two years.

During our time living apart, one of us would travel every month to visit the other. Sometimes we would have a quiet night in, cooking at home and curling up on the couch with a movie. Other times we'd go to the zoo or go canoeing on one of the many lakes in Wisconsin. Occasionally we'd plan something bigger like a trip to Vancouver for a night or meet up with friends in New York City for a few days.





Tying the Knot

In February of 2013, Nathan had a part in “8”, a play about California’s Proposition 8 on marriage equality. Unknown to Nathan, Derek with the help of the director, had a surprise planned at the end of the show. Derek walked onto the stage and in front of the entire audience proposed to Nathan!

We got married in March of 2014 in a small ceremony surrounded by immediate family and a few close friends. There we established a cherished tradition. We wrote letters to each other expressing our love and put the letters along with a bottle of wine in a box. Every five years, we open the box, drink the wine, and read the letters to each other. Then we write new letters and put in a new bottle of wine to be opened in another five years. The wine box sits proudly on the mantle in our living room.

Nathan’s parents gave a wedding reception for our extended family in the backyard of their Virginia home. The dinner was interrupted by a thunderstorm which cut power to the tent right after everyone finished their food. We huddled together in the center of the canopy as lightning flashed, thunder rumbled, and rain blew in the unprotected sides. Undeterred, Aunt Rita stood up on a chair and gave a toast to us by the light of candles and cell phones. This is the spirit of our family, to seek out joy in the face of any setback. Once the power was restored, we converted the tent to a dance floor to round out a truly memorable day.

1-4 Derek proposes to Nathan

5 The wine box

6 Nathan’s brother and parents pose with us at our wedding

7 Tyrone, who introduced us, and Amelia, Derek’s best friend

8 Cutting the cake

9 Aunt Rita toasts to our marriage as the rain falls in the background

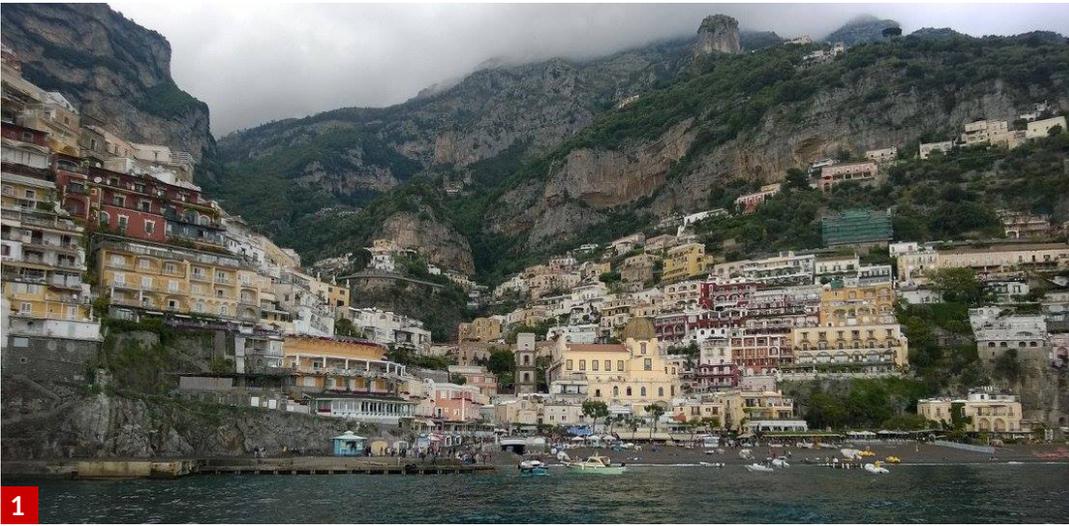
10 We dance the night away, leaving muddy footprints in the ground



Our Travels

After Nathan moved to Seattle and we were no longer spending vacation days going between Madison and Seattle, we took the opportunity to explore the world together. Our honeymoon was in Italy. We explored the rich history of Rome and Pompeii and drank in the beautiful scenery of the Amalfi coast and Capri. Half a year later, we helped one of Derek's best friends celebrate her wedding in a multi-day ceremony in Bangladesh. On the way there, we stopped in Singapore to visit Derek's brother and in several cities in Japan to see the sights and sample the delicious food.

We've also taken trips to Las Vegas with friends and to Disney World with our family. Near to where we live, we hike trails such as Little Si, explore the San Juan Islands, and visit Mount Rainer National Park. As our children grow up, we plan to take them on similar trips to discover and enjoy places near and far.



- 1 Pulling into port on the Amalfi coast for our honeymoon
- 2 Visiting the Colosseum in Rome
- 3 At a temple in Japan
- 4 Derek rubs turmeric on his friend's face as part of her wedding ceremony in Bangladesh

- 5 In the Blue Grotto on our honeymoon in Italy
- 6 In a bar made of ice in Las Vegas
- 7 Enjoying the Singapore Botanical Garden
- 8 At a floating temple in Japan
- 9 Hiking Little Si mountain



Meet Derek

I was born in Southern California, though I spent most of the first five years of my life in Hong Kong. Just before I started first grade, my family moved back to the United States to live in Bethesda, Maryland. My family continued to speak Cantonese at home as I was growing up and I remain a fluent speaker today. I have one older brother who now lives in Singapore with his wife and two children.

Growing up, my mom valued having me try everything at least once and introduced me to many activities. While swimming and art classes didn't interest me much, I gravitated toward ice skating, piano, and violin.

My best memories involve music. In my teenage years, I would play piano concertos with local orchestras, an experience I repeated in 2015. Playing the violin helped me make the most connections and lasting friendships. My friends and I still reminisce about the high school band trips and I have fond memories of playing in the orchestra in college. Within a few weeks of being in Seattle, I joined an orchestra and continue to enjoy playing with them.

“Trying everything at least once” – advice I took from my childhood – has guided me not only to try new foods, meet new people, but also to learn to fly an airplane. Ever since I was little, I was mesmerized by the miracle of flight but being nearsighted, I never thought it would be possible to fly a plane myself. But with the encouragement of a coworker and fellow aviator, I spent six months studying and got my pilot's license in 2009. Learning to fly an airplane required skills quite different from my day job as a software developer. It opened up a new world for me, including an opportunity to fly a plane across the country from Ohio to Seattle. I hope that I will be able to inspire our children to believe that anything is possible and to pursue their dreams.



Fun Facts

- Developer at a software company
- Speaks fluent Cantonese and a bit of French
- Holds a pilot's license
- Plays the violin and piano
- Loves Legos
- “Neat freak” of the family

Nathan says: Seeing the patience and affection that Derek shows to Duncan reminds me every day why I'm so happy to be married to him.



1-2 I'm a pilot
3 Lego Death Star that I built
4 I love to travel. Here I am petting a deer in Nara, Japan.

5-6 Playing a piano concerto and the violin with my orchestra
7 I enjoy ice skating

Meet Nathan

I was born on a military base in Stuttgart, Germany. My dad, an officer in the Air Force, along with the rest of our family moved to Manassas, Virginia, a suburb of Washington, D.C. when I was three years old. My upbringing reinforced the strength and importance of family. Growing up, my family took many road trips to visit my many relatives – in Florida primarily, but also in Georgia, Connecticut, and Pennsylvania.

One of my best friends grew up in a loving foster home two doors down, and I saw how the power of love and commitment bound their family together and made them stronger. I've been inspired by those experiences and have known since adolescence that adoption was something I wanted to pursue.

My biggest passion growing up was in theatre and drama – both in watching and in acting on stage. Seattle has many theaters, and I enjoy watching plays and musicals whenever I have time. I also love to cook. I'm looking forward to having a little helper (or two) in the kitchen!

Social justice and advocacy was also a strong part of my identity. I was the president of my university's LGBT group. Later I worked at the University of Wisconsin's LGBT campus center and then as a field organizer for a political campaign.

Though I enjoyed my time at those jobs, made many friends, and learned a lot about leadership, I returned to my other passion – computer science. I was accepted to and entered the PhD program at University of Wisconsin, shortly before I met Derek. While completing my studies, I worked full-time as a lead programmer for a window blinds manufacturer. I exited the PhD program early with a Master's degree to be with Derek in Seattle.

I have so many fond memories of growing up with the love and support of my family. I'm eager to share with our children the values, traditions, and love that my family has shared with me.



Fun Facts

- Software developer for a real estate website
- Ran up Columbia tower, Seattle's tallest building, to raise money for cancer research
- Met actress Natalie Portman at a nightclub in New York City
- Once worked as a beer jockey
- Loves to cook
- Performs card tricks for friends and family

Derek says: Nathan is the silly one. He's the clown in the family who can always make Duncan and me laugh. But he's also perceptive and knows how to soothe Duncan when he needs it.



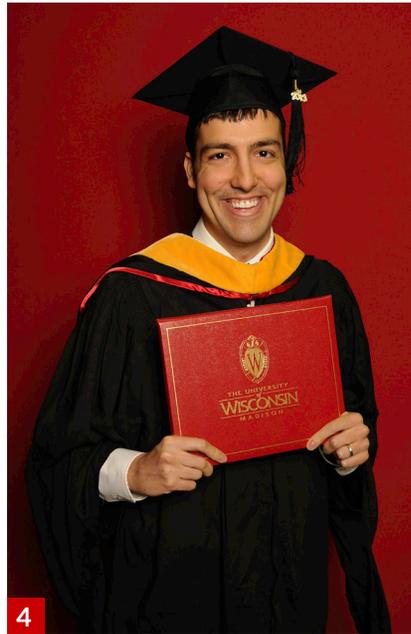
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- 1 Cooking with my nephew, Noah
- 2 Marching for LGBT equality
- 3 I love acting
- 4 Receiving my degree from University of Wisconsin-Madison

- 5 I enjoy digital photography
- 6 I make puzzles for my family every Christmas. Here are some I created.
- 7 At the Shrine of 1000 Torii in Japan. I love to travel.

Meet Duncan

Duncan was born in August 2017 to birthmother Julia. That evening, Julia selected us to be the adoptive parents of her baby. We were notified the next morning and drove to Oregon to meet Julia and Duncan. We immediately felt a connection. Duncan is a tremendous joy in our lives and we are forever grateful to Julia for choosing us.

We regularly send Julia photos and emails about Duncan's progress. We continue to embrace the values of open adoption and hope to grow our connection with her over the years. Duncan will grow up knowing his whole story and all the important people in his life.

Duncan got to meet and play with many babies at an early age. He enjoyed the stories and singing at the weekly baby story times at our neighborhood library. In our new parents group, Duncan met nine infants of his same age. We continue to meet for activities such as play dates, baby swim classes, and outdoor music concerts.

Duncan started going to daycare at six months old. He enjoys the fun activities there especially hand painting, story time, and music time. He is learning new words daily and recently began to say the names of his daycare friends.

At home, Duncan loves to listen to Derek play the piano and also loves to play the piano himself while sitting on Derek's lap. He is an intrepid explorer and loves to climb on everything. He squeals with delight when Nathan chases him around the house. He also has a unique organizational style and regularly rearranges the books, toys, and laundry. He loves books – including some French and Cantonese baby books that Derek reads to him.

Duncan is a friendly toddler. When he's out, he will wave and sometimes spontaneously give hugs to strangers. He's so affectionate and loves being around other children. He will make a great brother.



Fun Facts

- Favorite book: Little Blue Truck
- Favorite animal: dogs
- First word: doggie
- Favorite foods: crackers, bananas
- Favorite song: Wheels on the Bus
- Dislikes: wearing hats

Derek says: Duncan has such a sense of wonder and curiosity. He loves to meet new people and explore new places. I can't wait to see what he does next.

Nathan says: Duncan's outgoing personality and infectious laughter make him a joy to be around. I love seeing him grow and learn more each day.



- 1 Playing with a dog at my friend's house
- 2 Hand painting at daycare
- 3 I love "helicopter" rides with Daddy
- 4 Splash time is fun!

- 5 Reading is one of my favorite activities
- 6 Playing a duet with Papa
- 7 On my first airplane ride to a family reunion in Atlanta



Our Family

Although we have family scattered across the country and abroad, we have a large concentration of relatives in the Seattle area who we get together with frequently. Our extended family includes people of Latin, African, and Chinese heritage, as well as adoptive children.

Family is an important part of our identity and a strong part of our support network. To us, family means unconditional love and that we support each other, respect each other, and of course, have fun with each other.

Duncan gets lots of hugs and kisses from us every day. We want Duncan to feel independent and empowered, so within the limits of being a toddler, he gets to choose his play activities or what book to read next. If Duncan's having a bit of difficulty climbing onto the couch, we don't immediately help him. Instead we offer words of encouragement so that he has a chance to learn to do it by himself.



1 Derek's brother with his wife and children

2 Our family

3 Nathan's brother with his wife and his two boys

4 Extended family visiting Nathan's parents in Virginia for Thanksgiving

5 Having fun while waiting for food at a restaurant

6 Here we are at the Georgia Aquarium

7 Riding on Daddy's shoulders

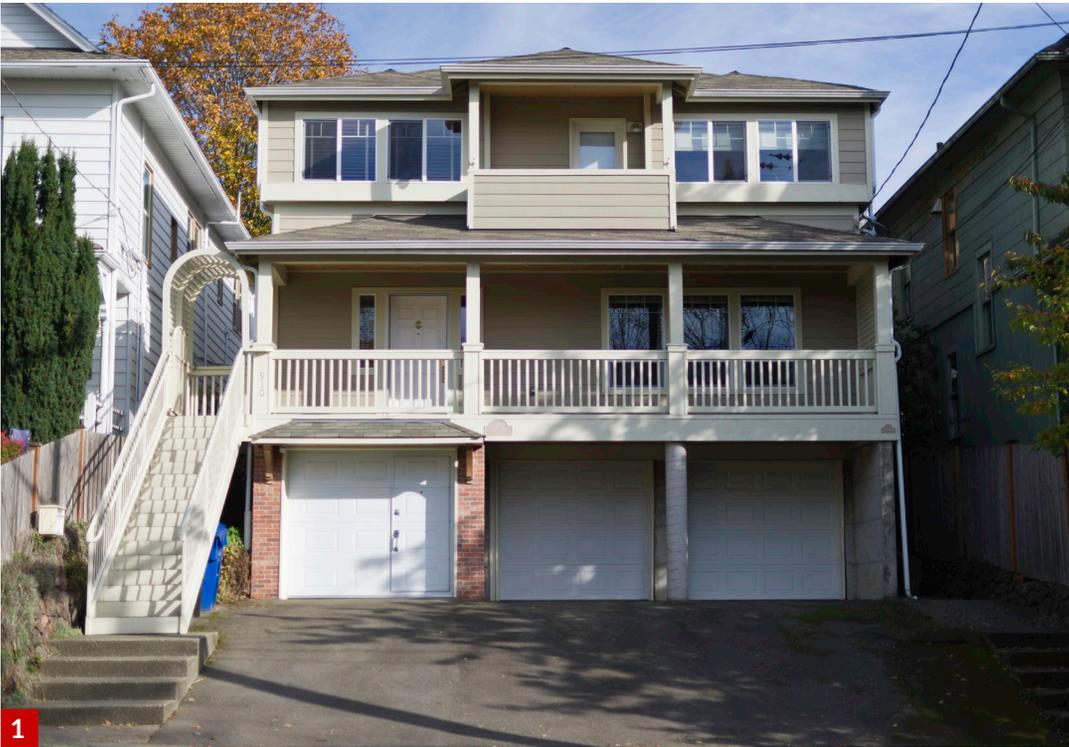
8 Rolling a ball with Papa

9 At a picnic in the park

Our Home and Neighborhood

We moved into our current home in 2014. Our lovely single family house is spacious for our growing family and out-of-town guests. We have two friendly sets of neighbors in a separate building behind ours who have garages under our house. In the living room is Derek's piano, which he hopes to serenade our children with and perhaps play duets with in the future. The open kitchen and dining room lead to a back patio where we've hosted our relatives with outdoor dining on clear summer nights. In one bedroom, Nathan keeps a loft bed from his childhood which will be loads of fun for our children once they are older.

We live mere blocks away from several parks and playgrounds which we take Duncan to regularly. Nearby as well are beaches and the Arboretum where we enjoy the summer weather and have picnics. One of our favorite things about where we live is our close proximity to many of our friends and relatives. We often host game nights, parties, and play dates - we want our house to be a favorite gathering place for friends and family.



- 1 Our home
- 2 Nathan cooks in the kitchen with family friends
- 3 Nathan relaxes in the living room with his two nephews, brother, and parents

- 4 Derek and Duncan play piano together
- 5 Nathan and Duncan enjoy a playground two blocks from our home
- 6 Playing a board game in the dining room



Traditions

Many of our favorite traditions involve the extended family. In the Seattle area, we gather every year for Thanksgiving, Christmas, and a summer family picnic. The Christmas celebration begins with a costume contest and a friendly competition such as bowling. We then eat a pot-luck dinner and have a spirited White Elephant gift exchange. At our summer picnic in Bellingham, we enjoy family with an abundance of good food and fun outdoor activities.

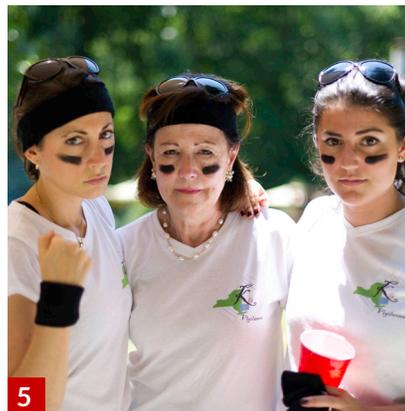
Our Bocce tournaments are a special tradition that bring family members from across the country together. Bocce is an ancient Italian game similar to lawn bowling. In addition to the game, we celebrate family with lots of food and good cheer. In the last six years, we've had Bocce reunions in Virginia, Seattle, and Georgia.

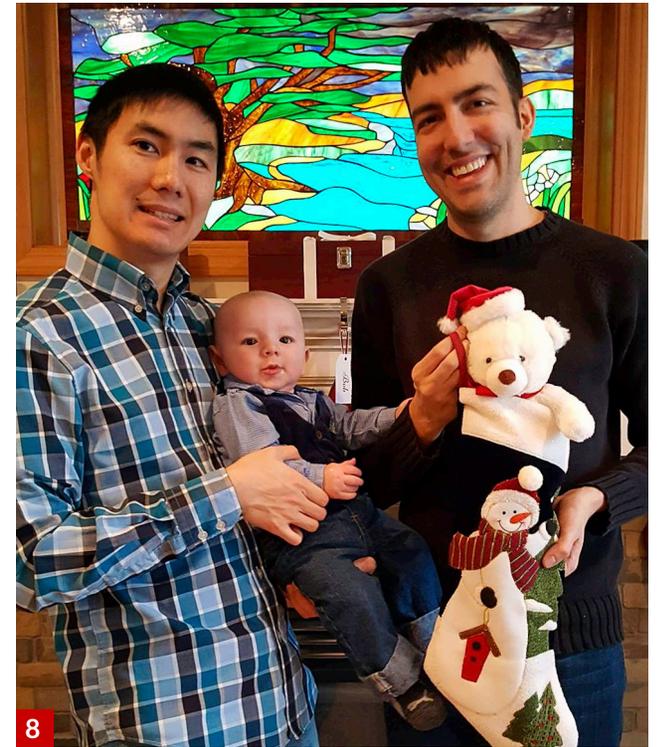
With Seattle's strong Asian presence, we have great opportunities to celebrate Derek's Chinese heritage. For Derek's birthday, Nathan gets one of Derek's favorite foods, a Hong Kong style chestnut cake. On weekends, we sometimes go to dim sum, a distinctively Cantonese-style brunch. We attend activities in the International District for holidays such as Chinese New Year and the Mid-Autumn Festival. We think our children will love the parades with music, costumes, and dragons.

We love Seattle's vibrant puzzling community. We've participated in a number of puzzle events, escape rooms, and scavenger hunts with our friends. We solve crossword and word puzzles every night before bed. As a Christmas present, Nathan usually writes a puzzle for his entire family to solve.

- 1** Derek's birthday chestnut cake
- 2** Chinese New Year celebration in Seattle
- 3** Nathan's Dad isn't allowed to make Thanksgiving turkey any more. (Thankfully we had a backup bird.)
- 4** Duncan in his Halloween costume

- 5-7** Family Bocce tournaments
- 8** Duncan's first Christmas
- 9-10** Our entries for the "Christmas swants" and "bowling outfit" costume competitions at our family Christmas parties







Dreams for Our Children

We promise above all that our children will have endless unconditional love in a safe and comfortable environment. We will raise our children to be moral, ethical, and upstanding citizens of the world – to be confident with a strong sense of self, who care for others, who dare to dream big, and who make the world a better place.

We will raise our children to value and cherish family, to be compassionate, and to support and feel supported by the loved ones around them. Our children will grow up to marvel at the beauty of this earth and embrace the diversity of people they will encounter.

We will take our children to travel, see, and experience the world and its rich and varied cultures to gain a better understanding of the land we all live in. We will encourage our children to grow up to be curious, to explore, and to be independent. We will make sure our children know that home will always be a place of security and love.

Open Adoption Aspirations

We understand that open adoption takes many forms, but that every successful adoption is built on a foundation of respect: for the child; for you, the birth family; and for us, the adoptive parents. We will be respectful of your goals, needs, and desires. We hope to be with you and to enable you to succeed in your own life journey. We will welcome you into our family and would be glad if you would consider us to be a part of yours. We would love to have you participate in our family's traditions and we in yours if you choose.

We want you to be a part of our child's life and for our child to know you as one of the most important people in their life. We also want our child to understand, accept, and embrace the decision you have made to place your child for adoption. We hope all our children grow up secure in their cultural identity, appreciate their origins, and know that they are loved by all of us.





