



**Derek & Nathan**  
and Duncan!



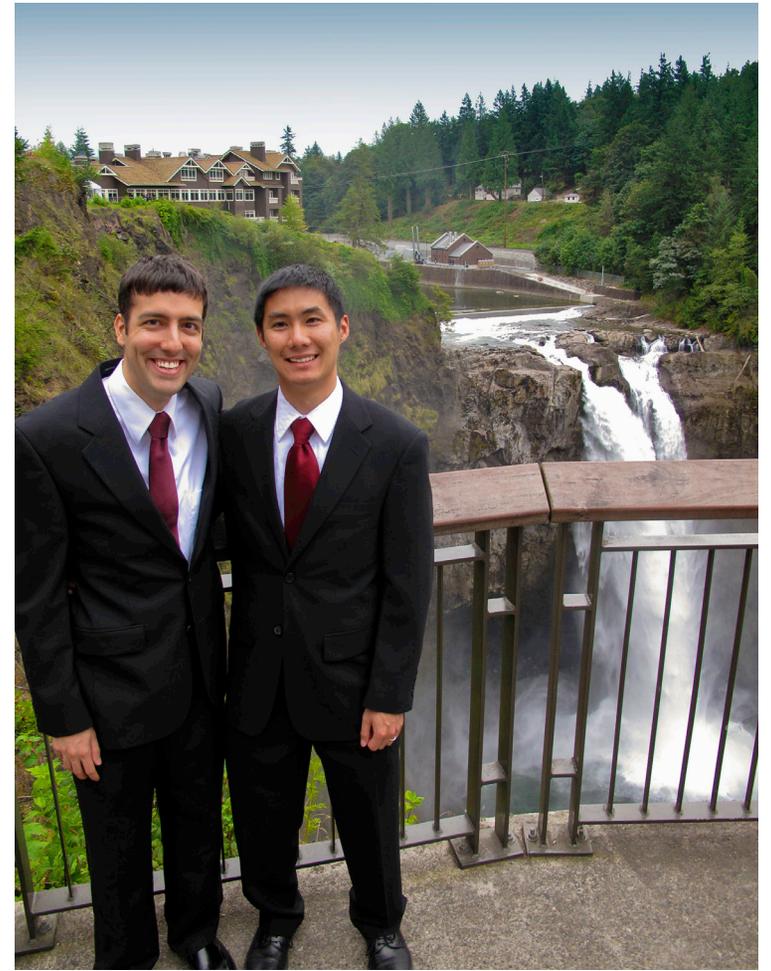
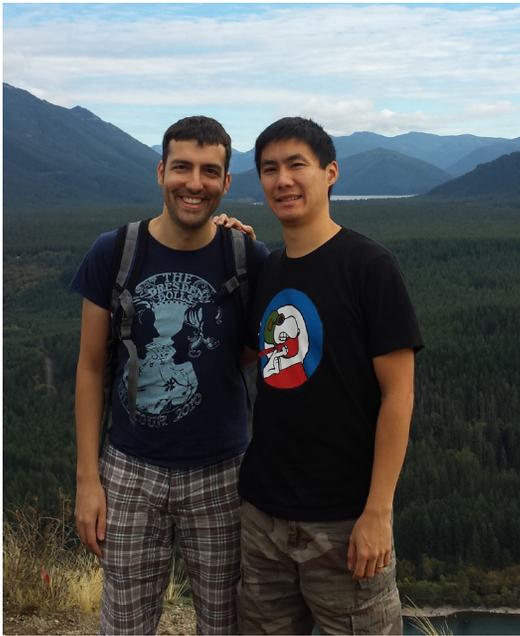


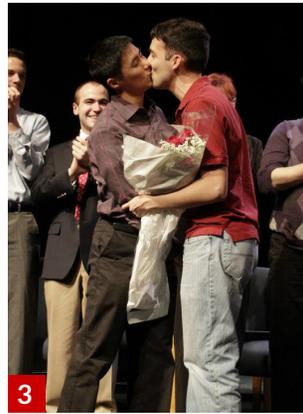
# The Story of Us

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 canoeing on one of the many lakes in Wisconsin. Occasionally we'd do something more elaborate like an overnight trip to Vancouver or a meet up with friends in New York City.





# 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 our letters to each other. Then we write new letters and put in a new bottle of wine to be opened in another five years. We proudly display the wine and letter box 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 and letter box

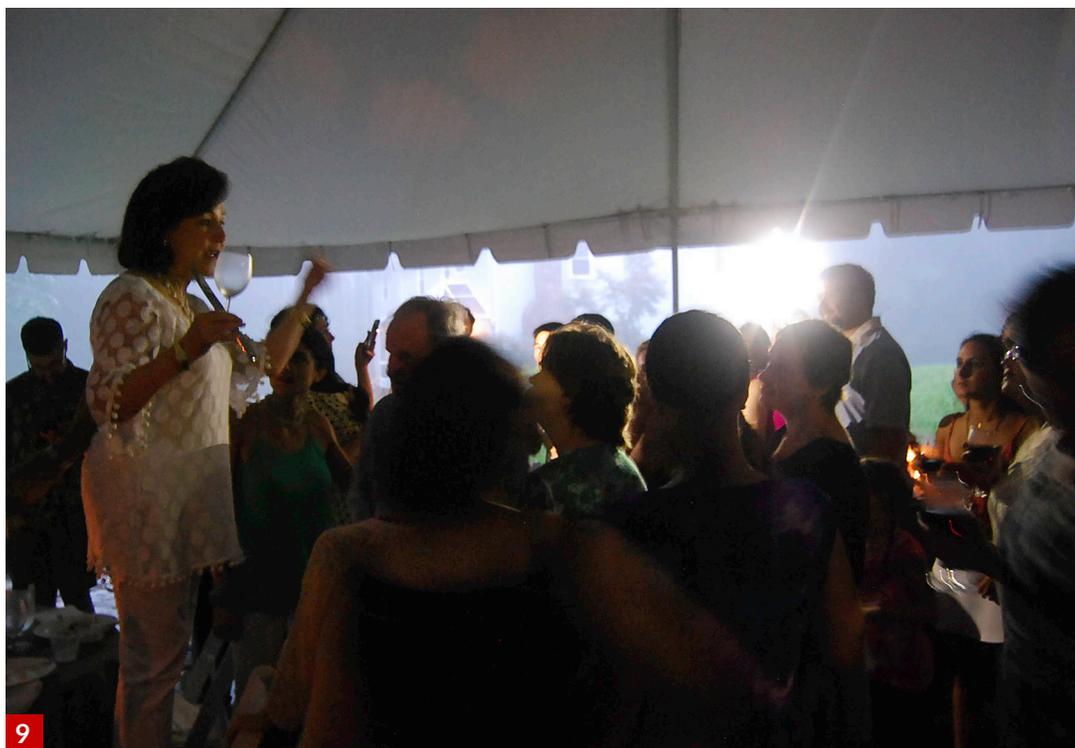
**6** Nathan’s brother and parents pose with us at our wedding

**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 our vacation days going between Madison and Seattle, we took the opportunity to explore the world together. Our honeymoon was in Italy. We experienced 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 also went to Las Vegas with friends and to Disney World with our family. Closer to home, we hiked trails such as Little Si, explored the San Juan Islands, and visited Mount Rainer National Park.

After Duncan was born, we celebrated our fifth wedding anniversary with a trip to Maui. We also flew to Georgia for a big family reunion and every year we fly to Virginia to spend Christmas with family. As our children grow up, we plan to take them on similar trips to discover and enjoy places near and far.



1



2



3

1 Duncan gets a horseback ride at a farm

2 Celebrating our fifth anniversary in Hawaii

3 At a temple in Japan

4 Derek rubs turmeric on his friend's face as part of her wedding ceremony in Bangladesh

5 Duncan's first sail

6 In a bar made of ice in Las Vegas

7 Going whale watching

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 I took only a few swimming and art classes, I embraced ice skating, piano, and violin lessons for many years.

My best memories involve music. In my teenage years, I played concertos on the piano with local orchestras, an experience I repeated as an adult in 2015. Playing the violin helped me make many lasting friendships. My friends and I still reminisce about our high school band trips and I have fond memories of playing in the orchestra in college. Within a few weeks of moving to Seattle in 2004, I joined an orchestra and continue to play with them even putting on a virtual concert recently.

“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 engineering manager. 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

- Software Engineering Manager at a financial services 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 road trips to visit my many relatives in Florida, 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!

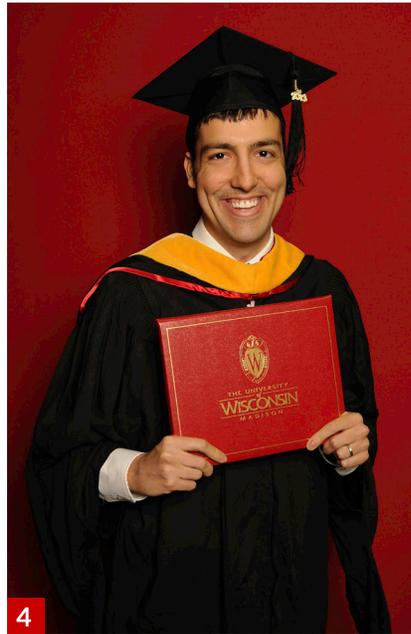
Social justice and advocacy is also a strong part of my identity. I was the president of my university's LGBT group. Later I worked at the University of Wisconsin's LGBT campus center and then as a field organizer for a political campaign.

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
- Organized volunteer trips to build houses with Habitat for Humanity over college breaks
- 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 most light-hearted member of our family who can always make Duncan and me laugh. But he's also perceptive and knows how to soothe or encourage Duncan when he needs it.



- 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 birth mother 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 send Julia photos and emails about Duncan's progress every month. 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 feeling the connection with his birth family.

Duncan enjoys preschool. He likes the fun activities such as arts and crafts, story time, yoga, and especially outdoor play. He absorbs the things he learns at school about bugs, animals, and the solar system. He comes home happily singing the new songs he learned that day.

At home, Duncan loves listening to books, often choosing a story right after he wakes up and throughout the day. He always looks forward to his three bedtime stories. He eagerly awaits the monthly magazines of Babar the Elephant in French. He is imaginative and often pretends to be a lion, mermaid, pirate, or astronaut. He loves running and biking around the neighborhood. He also loves to splash, kick, and blow bubbles in the local pool. We take Duncan out on weekends to places he enjoys such as the zoo, where he intently watches the penguins and the orangutans, and the parks, where he loves playing tag or throwing pebbles into the water.

Duncan is a friendly kid and gentle with babies. He tells us he wants to be a big brother. He's so affectionate and kind that we have no doubt Duncan will make a great one.

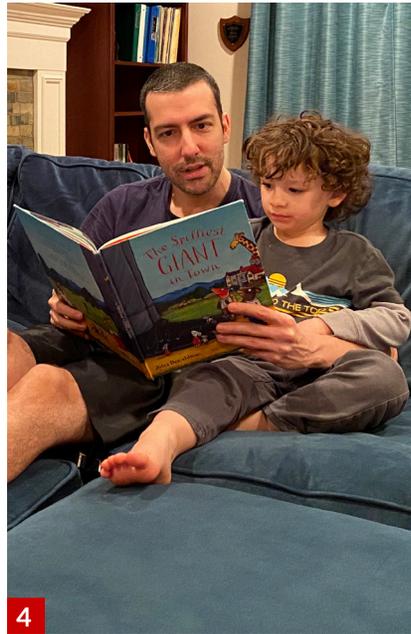


# Fun Facts

- Favorite books: Library Lion, Room on the Broom
- Favorite animals: dogs, penguins, tigers
- Favorite foods: soup dumplings (xiaolong bao), pasta, pizza, bananas, grapes
- Favorite songs: Old MacDonald, Hakuna Matata

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.



- I love to climb trees
- Rocking out to Old MacDonald with my friend from daycare
- Painting with Papa
- Reading is one of my favorite activities

- I ask to video chat with Grandpa & Grandma almost every day
- Biking around my neighborhood
- 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 many relatives in the Seattle area who we get together with frequently. Our extended family includes people of Latin, African, and Asian heritage, as well as adoptive children. They are 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 together. We believe experiences are more important than things.

We want Duncan to become independent and empowered so we allow him to choose his play activities or what book to read next. If Duncan's having difficulty changing his clothes, 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. We teach him to share and take turns with toys when he plays with others. We model kindness for Duncan and praise his kind acts. When his friends have a fall or get hurt, Duncan often asks if they're okay and gives them a hug.

We want Duncan to feel safe, happy, and protected so we accept his age-appropriate behavior and do not expect him to be perfect. Above all we want Duncan to feel loved so we play together, use kind words, and give him lots of hugs and kisses every day.

**1** Derek's brother with his wife and children

**2** Our family

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

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

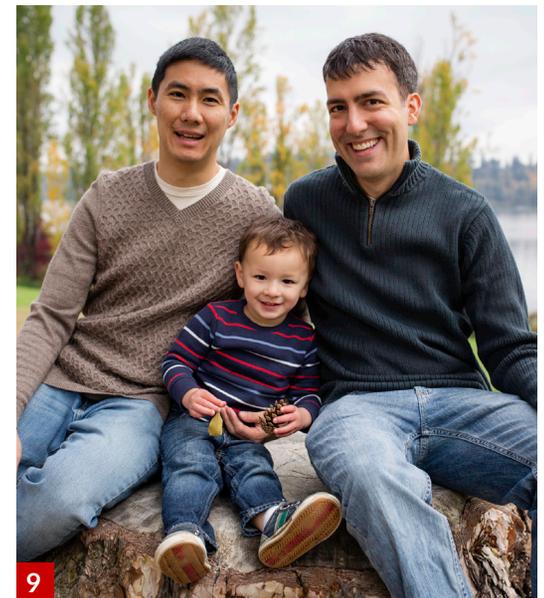
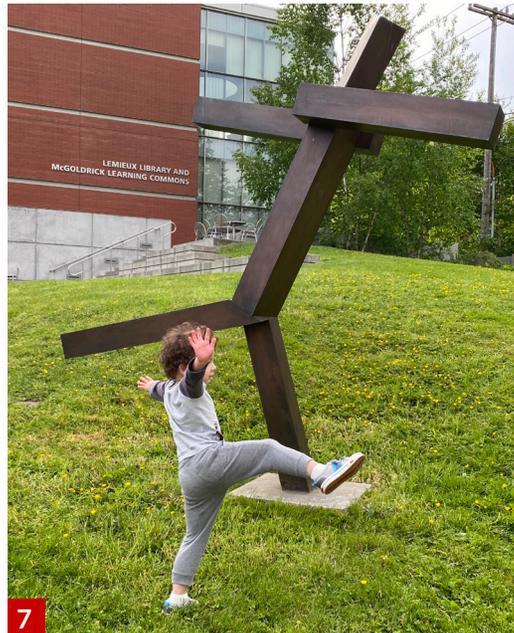
**5** Blasting off in our rocket ship with Papa

**6** Here we are at the Georgia Aquarium

**7** Hanging around the neighborhood

**8** Riding a see-saw with Daddy

**9** We love to visit our local parks

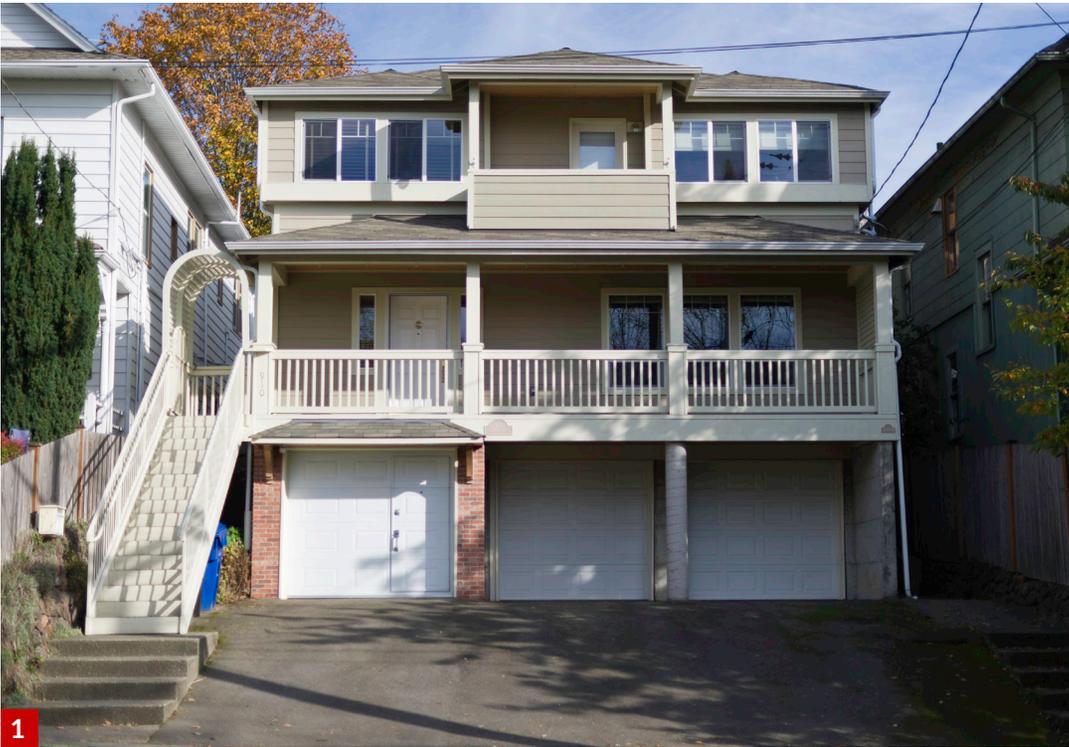


# Our Home and Neighborhood

We moved into our current home in 2014. Our lovely single-family house is spacious enough for our growing family and out-of-town guests. In the living room is Derek's piano, which he serenades us with and which Duncan likes to play too. The open kitchen and dining room lead to a back patio where we've hosted relatives and friends with outdoor dining on clear summer nights. In one bedroom Nathan has a loft bed from his childhood which Duncan loves to climb on.

On most days we walk to and from Duncan's preschool. We live mere blocks away from several parks and playgrounds. Seattle University's pedestrian-friendly campus is a big source of fun for Duncan where he can ride his balance bike, see the ducks, hear the clock tower chime, and watch the trucks and cranes at the construction site. 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 have friendly neighbors including a family across the street with three dogs that Duncan adores. 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 Duncan

**3** Nathan relaxes in the living room with his two nephews, brother, and parents

**4** Duncan plays the piano

**5** Papa chases Duncan in a nearby park

**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 ten years, we've had Bocce reunions in Virginia, Georgia, as well as at our home.

In Seattle we have great opportunities to celebrate Derek's Chinese heritage. Every year 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 anymore. (Thankfully we had a backup bird.)
- 4** Duncan's third birthday

- 5** Duncan meets Santa
- 6-7** Family Bocce tournaments
- 8** Dressed up as a family for Halloween
- 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, to care for others, to dare to dream big, and to 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 kind, curious, and independent. We will make sure our children know that our 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 look forward to having a relationship with you in whatever way is most comfortable for you from sharing photos and texts to having visits throughout the year. 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.





