

DEREK AND GREG

Family Photo Book



Hello - It's great to meet you!



We are Greg (left above) and Derek (right above), and we're looking forward to getting to know you!

OUR RELATIONSHIP

We met in 2015 and got married in 2021. In that time, the two of us became the three of us when we got a dog, Frankie. We quickly decided we all needed a bit more space, so we bought a house in South Seattle that we have called home for the last five years. In our early days of dating, we found out quickly that we clicked and meshed and wanted to do all of life's adventures together, including starting a family. We filled our dating years with travel, meeting new friends and family, developing our careers, volunteering, music and theater, and much more.

We bonded over the outdoors and activities like camping, running, hiking, and spending time on the water (our first date was a run and our third was a hike!). We discovered a shared love of music and dancing - we can't resist the dance floor at a wedding! As cliché as it sounds, we are husbands, sure. But more than that, we are each other's best friend.

We share a love of our family, our friends, our neighbors, and we both invest time in giving back to our communities.



Our parents and siblings, extended family, close friends, old high school and college friends, roommates, teammates, and neighbors were all a special part of our wedding, and continue to make up our community. All of them are excited and supportive of our open adoption journey and will play a huge part, both in our child's life, and hopefully the life of our child's birth parent(s) as well. In addition to the joy and love we experienced spending the weekend with all our favorites, one of the most memorable parts of our wedding was our choreographed first dance to a mashup of the Jonas Brothers and Beyoncé. Get in formation!





ABOUT DEREK

There was a period of time when I was a kid that I would answer the question "how are you today?" with the response, "zesty!"

I like to think that I still am a zesty person- excited about life, eager to experience new things, and always interested in the path less traveled. And I hope these will all be things I can share with a child in our lives.

For work, I'm a marketing and communications manager in the sportswear industry. I've also volunteered for a number of years at a local high school as a cross country and track & field coach.

I love family, travel, camping, and that first sip of morning coffee.

FUN FACTS ABOUT DEREK

- Mango is my favorite flavor of just about anything
- Fourth of July is my favorite holiday- I just love a good BBQ
- I studied abroad in Chile in college (and am now fluent in Spanish!)
- I love to jump in the water any chance I can get- hiking, camping, cabin visits, you name it
- I've run two marathons and qualified for the Boston Marathon both times



THE EARLY YEARS

I was born in Tacoma, Washington, and grew up in the neighboring city of Gig Harbor. As a kid, I loved being outside- family camping trips made for (and still do) some of my favorite memories as did fishing with my dad, building forts in the woods behind our childhood home, and more. I have a strong relationship with my parents and my sister (top right) and we enjoy seeing each other throughout the year.

I went to college on the north coast of California and then made my way back to the Pacific Northwest to begin my career and to plant my roots in Seattle. The school was a small liberal arts college with a very eco-conscious culture. My time there and also studying abroad influenced me heavily and shaped my values and my friend circle today.

My upbringing and experiences in early adulthood helped me explore my love of nature, create and maintain a balanced and healthy lifestyle, craft my work ethic and chart my career, and also develop respect and empathy for different people of all walks of life.



I believe in balance in life and try to practice it in work, at home, and in my activities. While I work hard and am passionate about my career, I value time spent with family and friends, and I subscribe to the work to live, don't live to work philosophy.

I try to bring that same sense of balance to my activities as well. For years, I've worked and also coached track and cross country at a high school here in Seattle (bottom right). While coaching has wrapped up for now, a normal weekend for me includes a bit of work around the house on whatever home improvement project is currently underway, visiting or events with friends, and some me-time spent exercising or reading. Greg and I do much of this together, and we are excited to be able to bring our future child into all of it.

This balance has come from lessons well-learned. I've gone through periods of my life when I've savored life without much aim and then when I've poured myself overwhelmingly into work or into marathon training and sacrificed my mental health or relationships with friends. I've discovered that the more I can prioritize my relationships while also pursuing my passions and professional responsibilities, the better the outcome and the better I feel.

Starting a family will be the challenge of a lifetime, but having learned lessons like these makes me feel just about as prepared as perhaps an adoptive parent can be.



ABOUT GREG

What do you get when you combine a devoted husband, loving friend and family man with an outdoor loving accountant who grew up on a farm and a gay man who loves to sing, throw living room dance parties and travel the world? I'm Greg and it's great to meet you!

In my professional life, I am a Certified Public Accountant (CPA) who oversees operations for an investment advisor in Seattle. While accounting is my day job and something I do enjoy - spending time with Derek and Frankie, hanging with friends and family, volunteering with local non-profits, camping, hiking, and traveling - these are where my true passions lie.

FUN FACTS ABOUT GREG

- I have served on the Board of Directors for Seattle's LGBTQ Center and Big Brothers Big Sisters (also was a Big Brother for BBBS)
- I can parallel park a tractor (true story)
- I've ran 7 full marathons and ~20 half marathons
- I studied abroad for a semester in Australia at a University that had wild kangaroos on campus.
- I love to sing shamelessly in the car at the top of my lungs. Does not matter the type of music!
- I got my Masters degree in Accounting from WSU, but did my honors thesis in crop science

THE EARLY YEARS

I was raised on my family's dairy farm in Eastern Washington. From the time we could walk, my younger sister and I were driving tractors, adventuring in ponds and creeks and learning to take care of animals. It was a fantastic way to grow up that left me with an aptitude for hard work, a love for all things family and community and a passion for animals and the outdoors.

One of my favorite memories was our annual party to hang Christmas lights the day after thanksgiving. My parents would cook a big pot of chili, invite all our friends and we would spend the whole day snowmobiling and hanging lights. The day was always filled with snowball fights, endless laughs, beautiful lights and full hearts.

Growing up on a farm taught me many of the values that I carry with me today: hard work, honesty and integrity and the importance of family and community. While I was blessed with a loving family and wonderful friends, it was also a challenging time in that conservative rural towns are not always easy for someone questioning their sexuality. I spent a lot of time denying and hiding who I was, which was a lonely place to be, despite the love and warmth around me.

Looking back now, I'm thankful for that experience in that I know it has helped shape the person I've become today and the parent I want to be in the future. In every interaction I strive to always lead with empathy and a non-judgmental mindset as you never truly know someone else's story and what the might be going through.



AND NOW...?

The Greg of today is someone who loves to adventure, whether its a weekend trip to Ocean Shores (I absolutely love the coast) or a cross-globe trip to Thailand. I love to see and experience all the world has to offer.

At the same time, I'm also someone who loves being home for a quiet night on the couch with a good book or a new TV show. I take a tremendous amount of pride in the home that Derek and I have created, and I love spending time building new planters for the yard, painting and repainting things that dont need it, repairing things that aren't broke and of course pressure washing. I truly believe that one does not know a true feeling of accomplishment until you've pressure washed a dirty sidewalk!

I also love spending time with friends and family. My little sister has two girls whom Derek and I simply adore. I also have two godsons and countless other nieces, nephews and cousins, all of whom bring so much light and joy to our lives. At the end of the day, I'm a pretty regular guy who loves his family and friends and finding the joy in life. Oh, and I truly cannot wait to be a dad!



OUR HOME & NEIGHBORHOOD

We moved into our home in South Park in 2018 and have fallen more deeply in love with our house and our neighborhood every day since.

The house is a 3-story craftsman with lots of extra bedrooms. Over the years, they've been used as home offices and guest rooms and a home gym, but we're excited about turning at least one of those into a kid's room! Our pandemic project was redoing the yard; it was the perfect hangout for socially distanced outdoor gatherings, but now it's ready for its next chapter of being a play space.

One of our favorite summer activities is setting up the projector and showing outdoor movies in the backyard. Hocus Pocus 2 was quite a hit last fall!



We live one block from the local elementary school which our neighbor's kid attends. For now, we drop by frequently to play fetch in the big grass field attached to it with our dog when school isn't in session. Nearby, there's a community farm and more green space for play and outdoor time. We love that South Park is extremely community driven; at its core are a handful of restaurants that pull everyone together including our local coffee shop, a pizzeria, a delicious burger joint, and more.

Our neighbors are extended family to us. We have great relationships with everyone around us and some of our neighbors have become true friends; they were integral at our wedding and have been our weekend hangout buddies, dog watchers, Christmas guests, and so much more. One of our favorite memories was when Greg's niece called to ask if we would throw her a "Harry Potter Birthday Party" at our house (below). She was very specific that we invite all our friends and neighbors because she had so much fun dancing with them at our wedding. We of course did our best to turn our house into Hogwarts!

Our neighborhood is about 40 minutes from Derek's parents in Gig Harbor, and it's easy to get to other parts of the city like downtown where Greg works or the Fremont neighborhood where Derek works.



FAVORITE TRADITIONS

We are big fans of traditions in our house. It started with our first date, which was a run around Discovery Park on New Year's Day. Since then, every New Year's, we go out for a run or some sort of outing to honor the day and start the year with some fun as well as good intentions. From there, the traditions have grown!



We love Christmas around here. Continuing his tradition from childhood, Greg turns our front yard into a verified light show (it's mentioned on the neighborhood Facebook group of houses to check out!), and we always spend it with family and friends. Last year, we hosted Derek and Greg's families as well as neighborhood friends. The house was full of cheer and full bellies.

The Fourth of July is Derek's favorite holiday. When we don't have travel plans with friends or family, we usually host friends and neighbors for a BBQ and to watch the local fireworks. Our neighborhood loves the holiday, too, so we can get a great show just from our backyard!

Derek's family does a yearly family reunion called Cousins Weekend. Most recently, it was in Sunriver, Oregon, with 50+ attendees from four generations. We love the chance to reconnect with extended family.

We do several annual camping trips. One of them is a trip along the Yakima River with our friends. We both love the Washington Coast- the beaches of the Pacific have a special place in our hearts, and we love to get out there at least once a year for a weekend of bonfires, beach combing, and sunset gazing.

Travel is more or less a tradition for us as well- we love to go to new places, eat new food, and gain new experiences. We've had a running trip to Mexico with friends and we most recently traveled in Thailand.

Within our neighborhood we also have an annual pumpkin carving evening for Halloween, a tree decorating party, and a corned beef and cabbage dinner for St. Patrick's Day.

DREAMS FOR OUR CHILD



Both of our lives have been guided by the principles of love and family. When we think of welcoming a child into our lives, we want to build on those values and create a family that is compassionate, honest, open, supportive, and maybe even a bit daring at times.

We both come from families who worked hard to provide for us. This instilled in us both a strong work ethic as well as the desire to offer our own children opportunities to learn, grow, and savor life. We will provide our children with everything they need to grow and thrive; however, we also recognize how important developing that work ethic was in our ability to have the life we've built and we want to pass the along to our child. Our hope for our child is that they can dream big, and that we can help them as they chart their course toward their future.

When we think about our future life with a child, we think of big family events like holidays and reunions. We think of taking trips with our close friends and their kids. We also think of days at home, walking the neighborhood, eating dinner together, playing games, and watching a movie as a family.



While we have worked hard to build the life we always wanted, it hasn't been without challenges. We both have our own coming out stories which dramatically shaped and impacted who we are today and how we will parent in the future. We know that parenting will be hard and there will be times we don't understand a decision or an action our child takes. From day one, our child will know that no matter what they do or what type of situation they find themselves in, we love them unconditionally and will support them in a way that is free from judgment and shame.

Both of us recognize how fortunate we are to have the life we do and the gratitude we feel each day is not something we take for granted. Above all else, it's important to us that we raise our child to be a good human, to treat everyone with humility, decency, and respect. Volunteering and giving back - whether it's serving on boards, working with local non-profits or volunteering within our community - is something we have always valued and taken part in, and we look forward to sharing the joy that comes from helping others.



OPEN ADOPTION ASPIRATIONS



We started our adoption journey with one main criteria in mind as we made decisions: What would be the best decision for our future child? We quickly realized that open adoption aligned perfectly with the values that we hold dear: openness, honesty, love, and communication. To be honest, we were nervous at first. The thought of creating and fostering a lifelong relationship with our child's birth family was a little scary. But the more we learned, and the more we stopped to really think about it, the more we realized - what a gift open adoption truly is.

It is important for our child to know their birth parents and to be able to tell the story of where they come from. But more than that, we hope to foster an environment where our child's birth family becomes a part of our extended family and can be involved in our child's life to whatever extent feels right for us all. In our perfect world, our child has the opportunity to really get to know their birth parents in a way that is genuine and positive for everyone: they'd be able to ask their questions and to better understand who they are and how they came to be where they are. Our goal as parents is to build relationships and live our life in a way that honors our child's birth family, reflects our understanding of the loss they feel, and celebrates their journey.

Our "family" is currently enriched with family friends who we call our aunts and uncles, neighbors, lifelong friends, and more. We welcome and look forward to including our child's birth family as well.



THANKS FOR GETTING TO KNOW US!