

Dear Expectant Mom,

Thank you for reading our letter and giving us this chance to tell you about our family. We hope that by getting to know us, you will feel a connection with us.

We know that you are considering adoption because you profoundly love your soon-to-be-born baby and are trying to ensure that he or she has a bright future and a world of opportunities. We also know that an expectant mother, considering adoption, must be comfortable with the prospective adoptive parents, their values, personalities – everything about them. We hope this letter gives you that peace of mind. Of course, we would be happy to answer any other questions you might have, talk with you by telephone, or meet you in person, whatever you would like so that you know that you have the right parents for your baby.



We have a five-year-old daughter, Savanna. We believe that all children, first and foremost, should feel loved – and that the way to make sure of that is to spend time with them, lots of time, helping them learn, introducing them to the people and activities you love, and helping them find what they love.

Savanna is our daughter by birth. We are unable to give birth to another child, but we yearn to add a baby to our family. Since we are already parents, we know first-hand the immense love a parent feels for their child. But we also know you don't have to be biologically related to a person, or of the same race, to love a person. We both have adopted siblings. We love our siblings even though we don't share the same genes. So choosing to adopt was easy for us. That's not to say we didn't do a lot of research – we did, because Matt can't do anything without doing research!

We live in a four-bedroom house on a quiet street in wonderful small town in the Midwest. There are lots of children in the neighborhood and excellent schools just blocks away. Matt is a philosophy professor at a local university. Amy is a full-time mom, and teaches an online course about



religion. As teachers, our schedules are very flexible. Amy works when she gets a free moment. Matt teaches three days a week. On the others, he walks Savanna to and from school, and works while she's there. He has summers off and lots of vacation time -- plenty of time to spend with Savanna and with another child. We plan on keeping these same schedules once we adopt a child.

Amy:

I am one of six children. We are all married and most have kids. The new baby will have Savanna and lots of cousins, aunts and uncles, and grandparents all waiting for us to bring her or him home to meet them. We all get together for a couple of weeks at a time during the summer and the winter. We have a lake house where we all gather during the summer. It is a wonderful time for the children to all play together - in the water and in the backyard. Our new baby will have so much fun with them all. My family all meet in Florida over the holidays. It is quite special that everyone makes the trip to be together for Christmas and New Year's. There's much laughter and play in the water and at the beach.



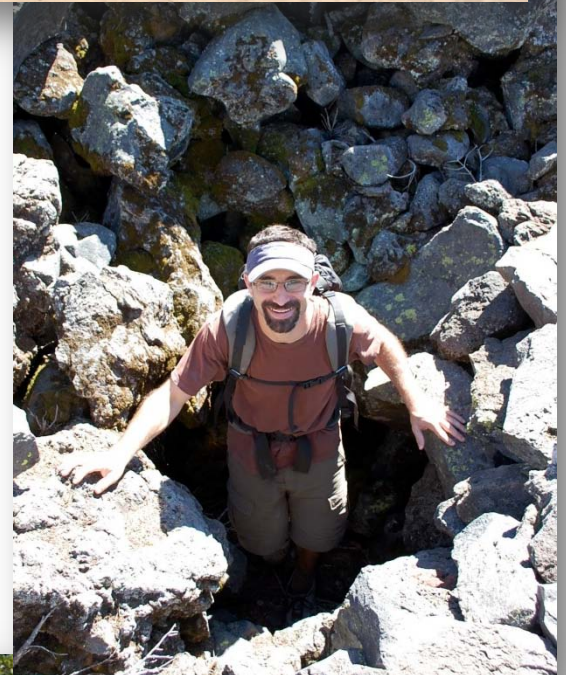
I love to knit, read, be outside, go to movies, swim, and play tennis. I love to laugh. I went to college and then on to graduate school. I met Matt while we were in graduate school pursuing degrees in philosophy. I earned my Master's degree. I like staying a teacher because it keeps me involved in the academic world. But my main joy is being at home with Savanna. I never expected the profound love I feel for Savanna or how rewarding, and difficult, being a parent is. Savanna is a constant reminder to be kind, patient, loving, and to enjoy each moment. I cannot wait for our new baby to arrive.

Savanna is now old enough to go to school, so it's a perfect time to bring home a new child. I will be able to spend so much one-on-one time with him or her. I have not gone back to work more because I want to share the same kind of time I had with Savanna with our next child. Savanna and the new baby will each gain a sibling, and that is a blessing.

Matt is a fantastic father. He is dedicated, caring, loving and kind. He gets down on the floor and plays with Savanna every day. Last summer, we were at Crater Lake in Oregon. To get to the lake you must hike a mile while descending about 1000 feet. Matt, Savanna, and I, along with my parents, hiked down the trail without a problem. For the way back up, though, there was a problem. Savanna had spent the afternoon in the sun and was very tired but still had a mile uphill walk in front of her. Savanna wasn't going to make it on her own. Matt picked her up, held her close to his chest and started walking. He just kept going and going. He and Savanna, without stopping once, made it up the hill faster than my parents and I did!

Matt:

I grew up in the northeast, with my mom and my older brother. Though my parents were divorced, my dad was always present. My brother and I saw him on weekends, and he and my mom co-parented as much as was possible. They always let us know that even though they couldn't live together anymore, they both loved us more than anything in the world. And that stayed exactly the same, even after they both remarried. I am now close with my step-mom and my step-dad, too. I feel lucky because I have four parents. My dad and my step-mom have three boys together - and though, technically, they're my half brothers, they're my brothers just like my older brother. None of us cares that we don't have the same mom. That's just another way of saying that we all have the same attitude about family - it's forever, and it doesn't matter how we all came together. For me, parenting is permanent. My first priority is my children. They will always come first. I will always love them, no matter what.





Something I learned from my parents is to try to see life as a fun adventure. Once when I was little, there was a big storm and the street we lived on flooded (we lived close to the ocean). We were going to walk to a friend's house in another part of town, but the water was too deep for me because I was still very small. Finally, we were evacuated by the National Guard, and they took us to the high school. Lots of people we knew were there. It turned out to be a really fun time, sleeping on cots and playing games and running around! I think I expected my mom to be worried (and maybe she was), but she seemed to be having a good time too, trying to treat it as a new experience. I still try to keep an attitude of fun

adventure. That's partly why I like to hike in the woods - you never know what you'll find! - and ski and snowboard - it feels like you're flying!

One of the things I remember most about my childhood is my grandmother's house. She lived just a few streets over from us, and we visited a lot. Whenever I was sick and couldn't go to school, I would go to her house for the day. She always made the best chicken soup and hot chocolate. When I think about her now, it seems to me that she loved us so much she almost burst whenever she saw us. She was always happy to see us, always gentle, always kind - even when we were misbehaving. It's been so much fun to watch my parents become that kind of grandparent. They have so much fun with Savanna and my nephews (my older brother has two boys). We visit a lot, and they visit us a lot, and they are always so excited to spend time with Savanna. In the summer when we visit, my mom and step-father take Savanna to the city to go to museums and the zoo, and my dad and step-mom take her fishing on their boat. And they are all so excited for another grandchild!

We were married on the beach in front of Amy's parent's house. The day couldn't have been more perfect. Well, Matt might say it was too hot, but then again he was in a suit! We had a small wedding with our family and close friends there to share the day with us. It is important to us to share time



together with just the two of us, so we go on a date night about once a week. Sometimes we play tennis or see a movie, and other times we just go to a coffee shop and talk.

After a few years of marriage, we had Savanna. The best way to describe Savanna is as a beaming, happy child who loves to talk. She is also very determined. If there's something she wants, she lets you know, and if she doesn't think you heard, she'll tell you again until she thinks you understand her. (Not that she gets everything she wants, of course!). She is an amazingly generous child. One day Amy brought her to see Matt teach for a few minutes. You

could see the wheels turning in her head about all the art she could draw on the giant chalkboard in Matt's classroom. When Matt arrived home that night, she gave him a piece of chalk from her art kit to use when the chalk in his classroom ran out! Matt still has that piece of chalk in his desk at work.



She is so very excited about having a sibling. When we moved into our home, she looked at the bedrooms and said, "This one will be my room, and this one will be the baby's room, and this one will be the playroom because it is between the other two rooms." She is constantly saying things like "Mom, we need another bike carrier because this one only has one seat and where will the baby go? Maybe I can hold the baby in my lap?" We know she'll be a fantastic big sister!

When Savanna isn't at school, either one or both of us is home, spending time with her. Lately, that means helping her read the books she's been bringing home from school. It's so incredible and fun to watch as she's learning to sound out words and put sentences together. We feel so very

fortunate because we have this time to spend with her. And because our schedules are not going to change, we will have as much time for your child, as well.

On weekends, we like to spend as much time outside as possible. One of our favorite things to do is to ride our bicycles downtown for lunch and to play by the river and the park. We also like to hike in the woods, and in the winter we like to ski and snowboard. We like to play games together, read stories, do arts and crafts, and we have dinner together almost every night. Our favorite part about dinner is telling each other what we appreciate about our day.

During our vacation time we love to travel, but we also love to stay close to home, so we can enjoy time in our backyard and with friends. We travel to see family, and once a year we take a trip with just the three of us (the four of us when our new baby arrives). When Savanna was two, we took her to Greece for a couple of weeks. We think it is important for us to share the world with our kids. We hope to pass our love of travel on to our children. Amy traveled extensively with her family. And until she married Matt, she went on one vacation a year with her parents. Amy usually says we cannot visit the same place twice – but she really wants us all to go to the Galapagos Islands, even though she has already been there with her parents.

We think the way we spend our time shows what's most important to us about raising children: that they know they're loved and that they get to spend lots of time with their parents, talking, learning, and most of all having fun. We can't wait for another child to share our lives with!

We hope that we have given you a good idea of the life we would give your child. If you would like to know more, talk with us by telephone, or meet us in person, please let Steve or Joel Kirsh know. You can reach them at 800-333-5736.

Lastly, if you would like, we would be happy to send you letters and photographs, letting you know how your child is getting along.

