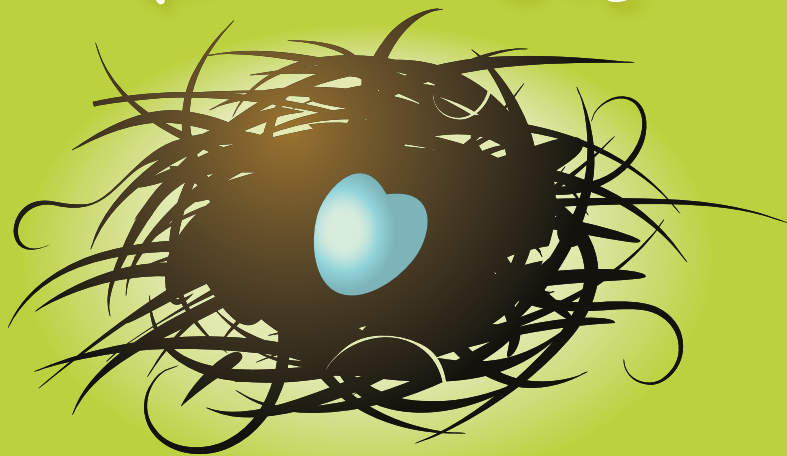


Rachel & Joe



“A new baby is like the beginning  
of all things – wonder, hope,  
a dream of possibilities.”

— EDA J. LE SHAN

Hi!

We are Rachel & Joe. We know this must be a difficult time for you and want you to know that we appreciate the courage, strength and love that have led you to this decision. We hope this letter will allow you to get to get know us and to make you feel comfortable with who we are as people and potential parents of your child. Obviously, we can't paint the entire picture, but we hope you will be able to imagine our life with our family, our friends, our dog, Buddy, and the happiness we strive for everyday. Most of all, we want you to know that we are two people committed to giving your child a life filled with nurturing, openness, opportunity, kindness, family, friends, joy and unconditional love.



# Our Story

We met 11 years ago at a restaurant in Chicago where we both worked. We both remember the exact moment we saw each other for the first time. We didn't officially meet until a few months later, and we've been together ever since. We are celebrating our Wedding Anniversary this weekend as we write this letter!

We tried to start our family shortly after we were married, and after multiple heartbreaking miscarriages, we took a step back. We realized that, although we would love the chance to get pregnant, the more important thing to us was to be parents. We knew that loving and nurturing a child was more important to us than giving birth to one. Adoption offers us the chance to realize our dreams and give a child a wonderful life.



## Buddy

Our dog is a 4 year old, 27 pound-Puggle. We actually call him our son because we love him so much. He loves to snuggle every night, play catch and scatter his many toys all over the house. Buddy also loves kids and knows everyone in the neighborhood.



# Joe from Rachel

Joe grew up in Oak Park, the nearest suburb West of Chicago. He is one of 5 children (three sisters & one brother). His mother is one of nine children, and his father is one of six children. It took me an entire year to learn every name! Happily, all live in and around Chicago. In fact, we live within a few miles from his sisters, brother, nieces & nephews. Joe's family is very important to us. At Joe's Aunt's house there is a wall of pictures. There is a strong competition to get a new photo on the wall and even rules! The pictures must be action shots or fun shots (no boring group photos allowed), and they must be approved by Aunt Maureen. These pictures capture the spirit of the family. There are pictures of us tubing on the lake and screaming as Uncle Dave drove the boat too fast and pictures from our intensive bags tournaments — when 60 year old Aunt Susan took the win and caused all the men to start training at home. There is a picture when we roasted marshmallows with the kids around a camp fire (imagine melted chocolate and marshmallow covering all hands and faces).

Joe is the person whom his cousins come to when they have a problem and need help. Joe is the one who put together a basket of movies, books, games & snacks for his Aunt Julie when she was diagnosed with Cancer (and has since recovered). She told me how special the basket and his visit were to her. Joe is the one who took off of work and spent two days painting his parents' kitchen when his mom mentioned she was planning to do it alone. This is what I love most about Joe — he gives without being asked, he shows up when he isn't expected, and he always cares.



I fell in love with Joe almost immediately — but the little things keep me falling in love all over again. Like how he surprises me with Twizzlers or Snow Caps on our movie nights because they are my favorite. He never just gives them to me — he always hides them until just the right moment when I am wishing I had a snack. I love how tickles me when he hugs me. I love it that he dragged me to take golf lessons, and it turned out to be fun. I love it when Joe cracks his first smile of the morning after Buddy plops his head on Joe's pillow when he wants him to wake up.

Joe works as a Wealth Management Advisor for a firm that focuses on working with Universities, Hospitals, Schools and Non-Profit Agencies. His office is 2 miles from our home, so he is usually home by 5:05. As a financial advisor — he has made sure we are planning for our future and has started college funds for our nieces & nephews the moment they were born.

# Rachel from Joe

Rachel grew up in Maryland across the Potomac River from Washington, D.C. She has one brother living in California. Her parents have been married for 36 years and still live in the house she grew up in. The strength of her parents' marriage has taught Rachel to build strong relationships — from our marriage to her friendships. Rachel's mom calls Rachel every other day and loves to send us care packages. The care packages contain the most random things — from our favorite coffee to a purse that she bought for Rachel. She can't wait to be a Grand Mother and has already warned us that the packages will be weekly once we bring home our child. Her Dad is much quieter — but very creative (especially for an Engineer). He recently sent Rachel a travel alarm clock that had a voice recording on it as the alarm. It said — "GOOD MORNING RACHEL — we love you, have a GREAT day". When he visits us — I love it because he can't sit still and always finds something around our house to fix or install — he installed a solar lantern on our deck on his last visit because he knows we love to eat outside in the summertime. Rachel's family is tiny compared to mine, but we love them just as much.

Rachel is the type of Aunt who is always trying to make our time with our nieces & nephews special. She set up a full ice cream bar with 10 different toppings when we babysat (I liked it almost as much as the kids). For Memorial Day she brought seeds and helped the kids start a mini garden of basil and parsley in egg crates. Over Labor Day weekend, she bought 10 beach balls, made me blow them all up and created a beach ball party in the yard for the kids. They spent 2 hours running around the yard, throwing beach balls, kicking beach balls and laughing.



Rachel makes me smile all the time. On Christmas Eve, she spent the whole night in a Wii Dance Revolution competition with the entire family — she won the contest, even though I am a much better dancer than her.

Not many wives would love the fact that I hate to empty the dishwasher & fold laundry — but Rachel took the opportunity to negotiate. It turns out she hates to take out the trash and wash clothes. A deal was struck.

Rachel works as a market manager for a consumer products company. She has forgone opportunities for promotion to stay in a job she loves and because it affords us the opportunity for her to work from home & enjoy a lot of flexibility. By design, this is an effort for us to have at least one of us home at all times while raising a family.

# Our Life

We both have worked very hard throughout our entire lives, from high school through college. But we also know how to have fun. Traveling is one of our favorite things to do, and we will share this passion with our child. We've traveled to countries all over the world. We loved eating in Italy and walking on the beach in Puerto Rico. We loved the fish market in Seattle (but Rachel has trouble with Salmon ever since we visited the Salmon museum), and we loved laughing our heads off when a lizard climbed onto Rachel's foot while she was sun bathing in Aruba while Joe watched from the pool. We loved getting lost in Paris and riding the electronic bull in Key West.

A typical week in our life is made up of work, family and fun. We both are at points in our careers where we have the flexibility and freedom to enjoy life. Because of the size of our extended family, there is always something going on — Christenings, Graduations, Weddings, Parties, Birthdays, BBQ's, Golf, Book Clubs and every other reason we can come up with to spend time together.

A typical day includes walks with Buddy and preparing meals together. We both love to cook. Joe's meatballs and Rachel's Chocolate Chip Pecan cookies are family favorites. We believe cooking is a great way to spend time together, and we love to get creative in the kitchen or on our deck grilling and experimenting with new recipes.



## Where We Live

We live in a three story, brick home with a backyard in quiet neighborhood in Chicago, right across the street from a beautiful park. We are close enough to the culture, diversity and excitement that Chicago has to offer but far enough away from the hustle & bustle that we can enjoy our neighborhood, our neighbors and our friends. We know all of our neighbors (and their pets) because of our daily walks in the park with Buddy. We spend a lot of time in the park — from walking Buddy there every day, to playing tennis or visiting the pool. We take our nieces & nephews to the playground at the park whenever they visit. The playground is incredible and even has a water area for kids to play in the summer time.





## What Type of Parents

We are a couple who is going into this together. We are a couple who has been together happily for 11 years. We are not perfect, but we love each other. We are committed to spend the rest of our lives together and are ready to raise a family together. We are looking forward to the 2 am feedings, first smiles, laughs and tears. We want to console them after their first nightmare, bump on the head or the first time they strike out at baseball (girl or boy!!). We want to celebrate their first step, the first day of school & the first time they ride a bike. We want to share our traditions, to teach them from our experiences and watch them grow. We want to love a child unconditionally as a mother, a father, a family. We'll make mistakes, but we will make them out of love. Our family is supportive of our decision to adopt and they can't wait for us to be parents. They see how much we enjoy all of our nieces & nephews.

## Holidays

We love them. Our holidays are filled with traditions that we have created together, old & new. As we wrote this letter, we realized just how many special times that we have each year with our family, that revolve around holidays. Christmas time is one of our favorites. The house is always decorated right after Thanksgiving. Rachel always makes cookies with her best friends (and every year they are devoured almost immediately), and we always wait to go Christmas shopping together for presents until right before Christmas! Joe's family has a Christmas party every year for the entire family. The night revolves around the kids anticipating Santa's arrival, while they sing Christmas carols, construct a Ginger Bread House and make Christmas ornaments. All the adults play games and laugh, while we watch the kids running around us. Our favorite memories always involve Santa — from one of the kids spotting him out the window, to them each sitting at his feet waiting for their name to be called so they can have a moment on his on his lap to receive a gift. Joe is the family favorite as Santa — ho ho ho! Every holiday has meaning and is celebrated with the same spirit.



## The Future

We will tell your baby how much he or she is loved by you, as well as anything else you would like him or her to know about you. We will also look forward to staying in touch with you and sharing pictures and information about your child, if you wish.

Thank you for reading this letter. If you would like to know more about us, talk with us by telephone, or even meet us, in person, please let Steve and Joel Kirsh know. You can reach them, at any time, at 800-333-5736.

We hope to hear from you.

Rachel & Joe

