



Dear Expectant Mother,

We are John and Michelle. We live on a farm outside a city in the Midwest. John raises soybeans and corn. Michelle is a family practice doctor. Most of our extended family lives nearby.

We are unable to conceive a child, but we know that adoption is a wonderful way to create a family. Both John's father and Michelle's mother were adopted, so this step came quite naturally to us. The adoption of our son, Luke has proven how amazingly right we were!

Luke:

Every morning seems like Christmas morning. John and I both go down to Luke's room when we hear him talking. When we open the door, he is sitting or standing in his crib and smiling, waiting for us! Luke is a very happy child who loves people and animals. He loves to be outdoors, whether we are swinging, playing in the sand, hiking around the fields or



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in our woods or spending the afternoon at one of the many state parks near us. He enjoys being pulled on his sled in the winter. He loves water and swimming in the summer. In the house, we enjoy reading together or dancing, Luke loves music and has great rhythm! He and his cousins like playing trains most days of the week.

We are amazed and delighted at how smart he is and how quickly he learns things. He will watch us do something, and then he will try it. He usually gets it right on the first or second time! If he sees something new, he picks it up and studies it until he can work it. We have enjoyed learning sign language with him.

Even at a young age Luke had a sense of humor. When learning to say “Daddy” and “Mama”, I would ask him to say “Mama” and he would look at me, smile, look at his dad, say “Daddy”, and then laugh! What a stinker!

He brings joy to every day and we can't thank his birth mom enough for the huge gift she has given us and Luke. Every couple of months we send her a letter telling her what he is doing and how he is growing along with photos so she can watch him grow, too. I am sure she is as amazed and delighted as we are!

We cannot wait to add another child to our family. We have plenty of room in our hearts and home to love, nurture, and guide baby through life's journey. We want your child and Luke to have the benefit of growing up with a sibling, as did John. Besides, Luke will be an awesome big brother to his little sister or brother.

John:

I am one of six children. I grew up on the family farm and had a wonderful childhood. We sat down for family dinner every evening. Each Sunday during the summer, we would pack a picnic and go to the beach right after Mass where we would meet up with our cousins, aunts and uncles. We'd spend the day playing in the sand and water then head home as it began to get dark. We would wind down by watching Disney on television and munching on popcorn.

My parents encouraged all of us in school, sports and other activities like 4-H and Future Farmers of America. My mom is wonderful. She's always helping



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other people. She taught me right from wrong, responsibility and the importance of a good work ethic.

We all helped out around the house and on the farm. We raised livestock, and I had a pet pig named Arnold. After my four older siblings went off to school, I helped my dad in the fields and the shop.

Dad died when I was 15. It was a terrible blow to the family. But we have the most wonderful memories. There's a story that my mom tells that sums up my dad's character. One night for dinner, she prepared him a steak. It was meant to be a special treat because he had been working long hours just to make ends meet. She served the kids and herself hot dogs. Dad sat down at the table, looked around and then cut his steak into pieces and put a piece on each person's plate. He hugged my mom and said, "Dear, I eat what they eat." I want to be just like him.

After my dad's death, I took on most of the responsibilities of the farm. My older siblings were in college, working or had their own families. It was a lot for a teenager, but it helped me mature and become self-reliant. It also taught me the importance of hard work and commitment.

I'm close with all my siblings, and all of their children. And there are a lot of children. I have 20 nieces and nephews, ranging in age from eight months to 25 years old. I see my brothers and sisters and many of their kids about once a week. My brothers and some of my nephews work with me on the farm. We often vacation together.

I'm lucky to be able to continue many of my family traditions with Luke and, hopefully, one day with your child: large and boisterous family gatherings with cookouts, baseball, horseshoes, water balloon fights, and drawing on sidewalks. In the winter, we'd have large bonfires, go sledding, bake cookies and play board games or cards. I can imagine doing all of these things with your child and



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more. We have big heated barns, perfect for winter basketball games and working on craft projects.

I met Michelle through a Catholic singles group. We have so much in common. We both love to travel. We enjoy exploring the world with our son, meeting new people, tasting new food, getting to know other cultures. Luke is a great traveler, we have been Hiking in the Colorado Rockies, Swimming in the ocean in Hawaii and watching the animals at Busch Gardens in Florida! We enjoy outdoor adventures and quiet evenings at home. Your child will fit right in and have a blast with us.

Michelle is so welcoming. She's always quick to include others who might feel left out. Like the time she invited a coworker and her family to Christmas dinner at our house. They couldn't go home to their family for the holiday, so she welcomed them into ours.

I love my work. The best part about my job is that I'm always home. The worst part of my job is that I'm always at work. It's a balancing act that I've learned to manage. I value my leisure time, and I know that the flexibility I have been even more important now that we have a family. I plan on coaching, cheering and assisting our children in academics, sports and other outside interests. I want to encourage exploration, learning and fun.

Our son has brought us so much joy, we can't wait to have another child. I love taking Luke for a ride on the John Deere tractor. Showing him the farm and, later, reading a John Deere storybook. There won't be any question about our family roots.

I hope our children love the land. But more importantly, I hope our children find a passion and chase that dream, whatever it may be. I will always be there, cheering on the exploration, encouraging the chase.

Michelle:

I was an only child. My parents wanted lots of kids, but they couldn't have them. In fact, they were beginning the adoption process when I was born. It's funny that I now have such a big family, with all of John's brothers and sisters, nieces and nephews.

I grew up in Michigan. My dad worked as an analyst for Ford Motor Company. My mom worked part time after I began school. I always knew my parents loved me, and each other. I think one of the reasons I have



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a successful career as a doctor is because my parents always encouraged me to try whatever interested me. They assured me that I could be whatever I chose, as long as I worked hard for it.

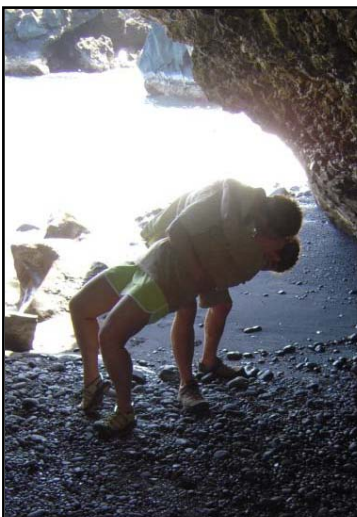
We went on many family trips. Traveling to our destination was often as much fun as what we did once we arrived. My dad would bring home a travel pack from work, filled with toys and games. If we drove, we played I Spy and sang songs. If we flew, I was always given the window seat.

We would go places that all of us could enjoy. On a trip to Disney World, we'd go on rides during the day. But in the evening, we'd all dress for dinner and go to a nice restaurant. I liked getting all dressed up, and I was always included in the conversation.

Christmas was spectacular in our house. We'd get together with our extended family on Christmas Eve. My parents would scramble to get everything ready by mid afternoon, and then my dad would put on the Christmas music, light up the tree and my mom would bring out a treat. We'd each get to open one present. Then we'd get dressed up, go to the big family party, followed by midnight Mass.

As I got older, I learned to work the system on presents. We each got to pick out which present would be the one we'd open before leaving for the family gathering. I realized that if I didn't choose the one my dad wanted me to open, he'd let me choose another...and another, until I selected the one he wanted for me all along. If I played my cards right, I'd get to open all the gifts before we left the house.

My birthday is on Christmas, but my parents made sure I never felt cheated. We opened Christmas presents in the living room on Christmas morning. Later in the afternoon, my grandparents would come over, and we'd go to the family room where my birthday presents would be waiting for me. It was very cleverly orchestrated: two different events, held at two different times, in two different rooms.



We always worked as a team. I would help my mom get dinner ready, and my dad would help me with the clean up. If Mom and I went to church together, Dad would clean the house while we were gone, so we could all play together in the afternoon.

Both of my parents have died in the last seven years. I miss them. I know they would have loved to share in our joy of creating a family. I will tell our children the stories of their lives and stories of my childhood, keeping their memories alive.

I am a family practice doctor. I love my work. I solve mysteries: I figure out what's wrong with someone from their symptoms. When my parents were sick, I cut back on my work hours to care for them. I now

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work only 20-25 hours a week, which gives me lots of time to enjoy Luke. John cares for our son while I'm at work. When he's not available, his sister, Barbara, helps out. He loves playing with his cousins! Your baby will, too!

I have always loved animals and being outdoors. When I'm not at work, I help out on the farm. We have a co-op garden with a few of our friends.

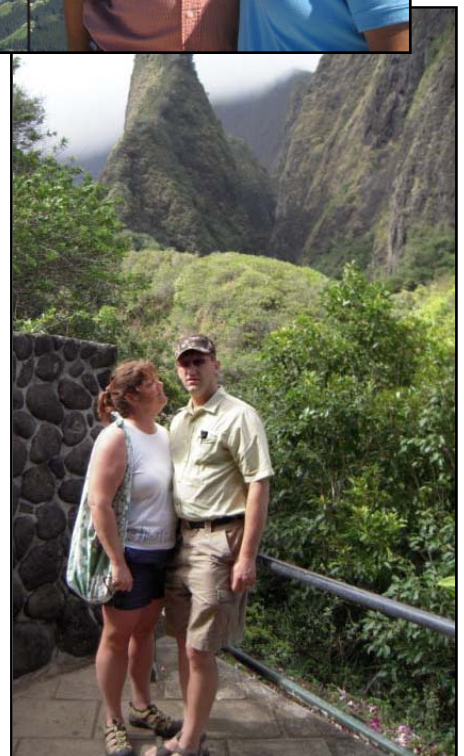
I can't imagine my life without John. We have so much in common and so many shared experiences that it feels like he's always been a part of my world. It doesn't matter if we're out to dinner, cooking at home, traveling, or working on a home project—we talk to each other. It's really wonderful being best friends as well as husband and wife.

John is hard working with a deep sense of responsibility. He's caring and compassionate. When we were dating, he helped me care for my mom. And, I admire the way he cares for his mom now. I love watching him play with our son. He can draw out a shy child, who quickly recognizes that John is kind and "safe." I remember visiting at the home of friends, who had a timid granddaughter over. She watched us from around the corner, but wouldn't come into the room. John grabbed a pillow, hid behind a bookcase and peeked back at her. A short time later, they were on the floor, working together on a puzzle.

I am always up for trying something new. I love to bicycle and hike. In the summer, I am happiest in the water. During the winter, I like to cross country ski or snowshoe. When I'm at home, I like to curl up on the couch and read or cross stitch. I've saved my favorite childhood book, *Puppy Dog Tales*, and love sharing it with Luke. (I know John prefers *John Deere Tales*!) I love to read. and I'm looking forward to lots and lots of story times.

John and Michelle:

We like to go for long walks on the beach or in the woods. We have a dog, Laurel, who loves to walk with us. She loves kids, having grown up with our nieces, nephew, and now our son. We often have friends and family over. Sometimes we just have dinner together. Other times we'll work on a project with the kids, like building a ginger bread house.



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John, Luke and I love long walks on beautiful fall days. We like to play in the mud and make sunflower playhouses and runner bean teepees. We go sledding and sing songs. We live in a wonderful community. It has all the amenities of a city with a smaller town feel. People are friendly and family oriented. We have theater, restaurants, professional sports teams, concerts, a zoo, a skating rink, and endless children's activities. There are many nearby parks. We have community fun runs, fairs and parades. The schools, both public and private, are excellent.

Our home has been in John's family for generations. It's two stories with four bedrooms. Our favorite room is an enclosed porch that overlooks the fields. We have a fenced back yard, perfect for children. Michelle has a very large veggie and fruit garden. We are creating a water garden, butterfly garden and children's garden adjacent to a new deck off the house. It's a child-friendly home, meant for living in, not just show.



We are eager to open our home and our hearts to your child. We will cherish your child and raise him or her to know of your unselfish decision to find a stable, secure and loving home for your child. We will keep you updated with letters and photos if you would like.

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