



Dear Birthmother,

Our names are Mari Kate and Andy. Let us start by expressing our gratitude for the opportunity that you have given us to tell you about our family. It is impossible for us to know what you must be going through at this time, and we can only hope that you will take comfort in the fact, that if given the chance we promise to deliver countless blessings to your child in a happy and loving home with a lifetime of opportunity.

Family-In-Waiting

Andy, Mari Kate and Casey (our dog) live in a large city in the Midwest. Andy has his own business and works out of the home most days while Mari Kate works out of our home every day. Mari Kate had always imagined she would adopt a child even before we learned that we would be unable to conceive.

Mari Kate's brother Tommy is adopted so she knows firsthand that love doesn't depend on biology. It is our dream to have a child with whom we can share our love and bring into our hearts and our home.

Although we were raised miles apart, we share many of the same values. Both of us were raised with the belief that one's family is their most important gift. Our parents instilled in us a positive attitude and a great appreciation for life. These are the values that shaped us to be the people that we are today, and the values that we hope to one day pass on to our child.

Grandparents-Aunt-Uncles-Cousins-In-Waiting

Both of our families are giddy about this adoption and the prospect of welcoming a baby into the family. Andy's parents and sisters live nearby; Mari Kate's family lives near enough so that can we visit back and forth often. We are all very close.



Mari Kate: I grew up with an older sister, Belinda, and a younger brother, Tommy. Belinda is just 17 months older than I am and were only a year apart in school. We were inseparable growing up, and we're still very close, in fact she was my maid-of-honor in our wedding.

Tommy is seven years younger and from the minute he came into our family I adored him. We are great

friends now and I love to dote on his children -- Sean and Camille.

My dad retired two years ago after running his own successful company. My mother was a classic stay-at-home Mom, and we kids kept both of our parents plenty busy.

I had a wonderful childhood. I remember summer nights when I could hardly wait for dinner to end. Belinda, Tommy and I would race outside to the corner with our firefly jars to meet the other kids in the neighborhood. We'd all wait for the first firefly to appear — and then we'd begin the chase. When our mom called our names, it was time to head in. We'd fall asleep with the fireflies flashing in the jars on the bureau.



We spent a lot of our weekends at Irish dancing festivals. As I look back on it, I marvel at the time my parents spent, taking the three of us to dance festivals, going to my brother's hockey games, encouraging us to stretch our wings and try new activities. I want to encourage our child to try new things, to find their passion.

During the summer, we'd usually go on car trips— either camping or visiting grandparents and cousins. We had a pop-up camper. We'd pull into a campground and set up, and then the kids would head to the closest swimming site. I loved roasting marshmallows and listening to ghost stories. I never slept well in the camper. Maybe it was the ghost stories. Maybe it was the

uncomfortable beds. But as I tried to fall asleep, I loved looking around and seeing my whole family surrounding me. I felt safe.

All three kids went to parochial schools. I didn't understand at the time that my parents had to make sacrifices to send us to private schools. Education was a priority in our family. We were all expected to go to college. I did, and graduated with a degree in communications and psychology.

I moved to Atlanta for my first job — and shared an apartment with my brother, Tommy. We became even closer than we had been as kids. I've always said that Tommy's the best roommate I've ever had. (Well, at least he was the best until I married Andy.)

After two years at my first job, I decided to take some time off to travel. I spent four months backpacking through Europe. I enjoyed the experience so much that years later I ended up working in England and Scotland, where I made many wonderful friends. (I love the British sense of humor. I can't remember ever laughing so much as I did when I was there.) I want my child to have an international living experience, like I did. It's so important to learn about other peoples and cultures. And there's no better way than living in someone else's country. It makes you appreciate your homeland even more.

I met Andy on a blind date. He listened carefully and asked lots of questions about me. We made each other laugh-which is difficult to do on a blind date.

When I brought him home for Christmas, my 5 year-old nephew, Sean, studied Andy very carefully. I'm very close to Sean and honestly, I was worried if he'd warm up to Andy. Maybe it was Andy's magic tricks. Or maybe it was all the games he played with Sean. But I knew I had nothing to worry about when I saw Sean slip his hand into Andy's as they were talking.

My friends kept telling me that Andy was perfect for me. And I knew they were right when he cared for me after I broke my ankle after just knowing me for 4 months. It had been snowing, and I just had to walk through a mound of snow to my car. (Okay, I know I should have walked around it, but who can resist a pile of fresh snow?) I took a bad fall and ended up in the emergency room. I called Andy to tell him about my accident. He was in Canada on business, so I knew the only comfort I could get from him was long-distance.

Wrong. While my parents were driving in from out-of-town to take care of me, Andy had put his family into action. His parents took me to the drug store for my pain medication. His sister stayed with me overnight until my parents arrived. Even when he was miles and miles away, Andy was right there for me. This is exactly how he will be when he becomes a dad.

Andy is warm, genuine and affectionate. He is respectful and quick to say he's sorry. He will make a wonderful father and a wonderful role model for our child. I watch him with his family, particularly his niece and nephew, and I know that he will be a loving, patient and encouraging parent.

Andy: I am the youngest of three siblings, and the only boy. Yes, I was spoiled by my big sisters. They were always looking out for me, driving me to my friends' houses, or just helping me finish my broccoli so I could go out and play. They are still my closest friends.

We grew up in a warm and loving home. My parents were supportive of all of our activities — even my 5 a.m. hockey practices. I remember those early mornings well. It was always dark and cold. When I was young, my dad would come into the locker room with me to help lace my skates. He'd stay for practice, sitting in the stands, holding a cup of coffee for warmth. (Or maybe to help keep his eyes open.) On game days, my sisters would join my parents at the games. I had my own private cheering



section: they'd cheer when my team scored and yell at the refs if they disagreed with a call.

My dad was a manager for an oil company. My mom worked as a secretary. We moved around when I was young. So until we got to know the kids in each new neighborhood, my sisters and I were often each other's only playmates. I had a very close relationship with my grandfather because he was the one who took care of me while my sisters were at school and my parents were working. He was a wonderful man who always fixed my toys the second they broke. We also spent a lot of time with the rest of our extended family including aunts, uncles and cousins.

We spent a lot of time together as a family. I loved waking to the smell of bacon frying on Sunday mornings. My mom makes the world's best pancakes, and I could put down



quite a few in my teenage years. After breakfast we'd go to church and then come home to watch the Bears football game. Sundays don't get much better than that.

One of my favorite memories was a family trip to Disney World. It was a long trip in a crowded car. We passed the time looking for license plates from each state, playing 20 Questions and singing Elvis songs at the top of our lungs. We took lots of side trips to see the local attractions and, best of all, we'd stay at a motel with a pool each night. It

was heaven. I was only six, and I felt like I was seeing the world. I can't wait to watch our child explore new places, learn new things and wonder at the marvels around him or her.

Holidays were always a wonderful time in our family. My parents went out of their way to make them special. I have fond memories of Easter egg hunts, carving pumpkins on Halloween and Thanksgiving Day football games. But my favorite holiday, as a kid and now, is Christmas. My family has always cut its own Christmas tree, and this is a tradition we continue today. I love walking through the snow, checking out each tree and deciding which one would be the perfect tree for our family. We'd finish up drinking the hot chocolate in the barn and talking to other families who were making their own memories. We'd come home, put on Christmas music, and decorate the tree as a family. I can't wait to continue this tradition with our child.

I particularly enjoy spending time with my dad. We go fishing and play ball. When I was a kid, he coached many of my sports. He's always been my best friend, and our relationship has gotten even closer as we've gotten older. I asked him to be the best man at our wedding, and I'll never forget the look on his face. At first he thought I was

kidding, but when he realized I meant it, he teared up. And then he spent the next week calling all of his friends to tell them about it.

My first date with Mari Kate was on a cold and rainy November night. I took one look at her and I was enchanted. Everyone loves Mari Kate, but no one can love her as much as I do. Wherever she is, she's always making sure that the people around her are well-cared for and happy. She has a passion for life. She can stay out late, be the life of the party, and then be up and cheerful first thing the next morning. She's at home wherever she finds herself and makes others feel the same way. The first time she met my sisters, they all got along as if they'd known each other for years.

She will be a wonderful mother: nurturing, encouraging, and affectionate. She is a wonderful care giver, taking charge of the details and remembering that little things mean a lot. (Recently, when I was recovering from a shoulder injury, she made a special run to the store for Twizzlers. Definitely not necessary. Definitely greatly appreciated.)

Mari Kate and Andy: We live in the city in a wide-open loft in a building with a doorman; gym and excellent security. It's been perfect for the two of us. But we plan to move when we adopt. Because Andy has his own business, and Mari Kate works from home, we are very flexible in terms of choosing a community in which to raise our child.

We are looking for a home on a quiet, tree-lined street in a neighborhood with lots of children. We will make a choice based on what will be best for our child: excellent schools, parks, community programming and access to the wonderful cultural and educational opportunities available in our area.



We both love to cook and the kitchen is the heart of our home. We imagine that that will be the case when we add a child to our lives. We picture family meals at the table, discussing school and friends. We can't wait to have drawings on the refrigerator and crayons on the counter. We can almost hear wooden spoons pounding metal pans as we dance around the room. We imagine cooking homemade pasta and then laughing as more of the pasta ends up on the floor or the high chair than in our child's mouth.

We picture our house being the house where all the kids in the neighborhood gather after school to play and swing on the swings. We will learn to make the best chocolate chip cookies just for these occasions.

Our wonderful dog, Casey, is a collie and that means he naturally herds. When he plays with children, he always circles the outsiders and tries to steer them into a group. He's

sweet and loveable and likes to cuddle with everybody. We know he will be a wonderful companion to our child.

We love to go to ballgames, the opera or a church picnic. Andy likes to play softball, hockey and golf. Mari Kate loves running and yoga. We both love spending time at our summer cottage on the lake. We enjoy the star-filled sky and a crackling fire. We fish, boat and swim. It's a wonderful place to be with friends or by ourselves, recharging our batteries. We know it will be an amazing place for a child — somewhere to play in the dirt, explore in the woods and watch the leaves turn from green to red to brown.



We'd like to thank you for taking the time to read our letter. We hope that these pages have given you an idea of who we are. We could have easily written 60 pages, and would have gladly done so, if it would help.

We long to share our many blessings with a child. We promise that we will treasure your child as the greatest gift we have ever received. And we will raise your child to know of your deep and unselfish love. We will encourage your child to chase his or her dreams, knowing that we will always be there cheering.

We would be happy to send you letters and photos letting you know how your child is getting along if you wish.

If you would like to know any more information about us or would like to speak to us directly, please contact Steve or Joel Kirsh at (800) 333-5736. They will be happy to make the arrangements.

Very sincerely,