



Dear Birthmom,

We are Michael and Jennifer, and we are so happy to be able to tell you about our life and our family. Michael is a doctor, and Jennifer is a former teacher, current stay-at-home mom. When we met in college, Michael was a fun-loving, pre-med student who managed to be a fixture in the library as well as in his fraternity house. Jennifer, on the other hand, was a shy, English major who blushed every time she got the near the fraternity house. What we soon discovered, however, that despite our initial differences, we both wanted the exact same thing in our future.

When we talked about where we would be in fifteen years, we both had the same vision: We both pictured our house as the one in the neighborhood with all the lights on at night. Our house would be the one where you could see children laughing around the dinner table, chasing each other through the family room, and reluctantly trudging up to bed. We knew we'd have the house with bikes on the

sidewalk, a basketball hoop in the driveway, and skates on the front porch. We thought for sure that house would be filled with a zillion kids.

We have always known we wanted to be parents. When Jennifer chose a major in college, she knew immediately it would be education. She knew, from the time she was a very small girl, that her life was going to be most happy spent around children. And when the time came for Michael to choose the type of doctor he wanted to be, he made certain to choose a specialty where he could be home every night by 5:00.

Fifteen years later, we have dedicated our life to building the family we always dreamed of. We have three children, Caroline, Luke, and Zeke, who help make our house warm, happy, and loving. We live across the street from our kids' school on a wonderful street filled with children. In the back yard we have a tree house, a swimming pool, and, of course, a basketball hoop.

But for years we have longed for another child. We (all five of us) have waited with anticipation to be blessed with another family member. Through infertility and miscarriage, we realized that God had a different plan for us. Without hesitation, we knew that adoption was the answer to our prayers. We knew this from a bit of personal experience since Jennifer was adopted by her father as a small girl.

## Jennifer's Story ~

My biological father was a minor-league baseball player, and he and my mom married very young. Soon after they married, I was born and tensions started to rise between my parents. They had a lot of stress: my dad was making very little money; he had plans of going to law school, but no ideas how to make it happen; and he was very young to have so much responsibility so quickly. He and my mom divorced and for a year or two I saw my biological father sporadically. The very best decision my biological father made in those early years was to allow me to be adopted by my mom's second husband. I never saw my biological dad again after the adoption, but I have never for one minute had any bad feelings for him. My adoptive dad gave me the best childhood I could have asked for. He was our high school football coach and my mom was a teacher, so we spent our entire summers boating and traveling together.



*Fun in the backyard.*

He and my mom gave me a sister with whom I am extremely close. I have never thought of my sister as a "half" sister, nor has she ever considered me her sister "by adoption". My new dad's family immediately took me in with no distinction ever made between myself and their other grandchildren. My adoption and my biological father were never "secret things" that we didn't talk about. I had a fun, secure, stable life where my parents assured me that the story of my adoption was not scary or bad. We simply came together as a family in a different way. And I have always been grateful to my biological father for giving me that opportunity.



*Jennifer's family at a family reunion in Texas.*

Our children have always known the story of my adoption as well. My kids know that my biological dad was very courageous and loving to allow me to have a wonderful childhood while he sorted his life out. They know that family is a big word that means most simply, the people who love you. And they know that everyone who comes into our family by means of adoption, marriage, birth, etc...is a blessing to us.

## Michael's Story ~

My story is different from Jennifer's, but very much the same. I grew up in an all-American/Irish family. My parents were married over forty years before my mother's death, and I have two older brothers. I spent my childhood wrestling with them, getting sunburned at the local pool, and playing kick-the-can in our neighborhood at night. I always knew I wanted to be a doctor. I love being around people, and I truly love having a job where I can make a

difference in people's lives. I still make a lot of time for fun, however. I like to play tennis with my daughter, build things with my middle son, and play catch with my youngest son. Jennifer and I like to play golf together, go to movies, and take long walks with the kids on local trails. Pretty much everything I do in my free time, I do with them. My family is my most fun hobby!



## About Michael (from Jennifer) ~

I read recently where people are either an "Eyeore" or a "Tigger". Michael is definitely a Tigger. The thing that first attracted me to him was how funny he is. When I met him in college, he was always getting his friends to do goofy things. He would convince his fraternity brothers to join in the local, children's pet parade down the main street of our college town. The kids in town loved him and his "pet" praying mantis. Later in medical school, he would gather his fellow students together to get their picture taken with Santa or to celebrate a birthday at Chuck E. Cheeses.

And yet, through all that craziness, he remained one of the top students in both college and medical school. He was

accepted to a very prestigious residency program at the Mayo Clinic, where he was, again, one of the top residents. He has been with his current physician group since graduating from Mayo and is consistently one of the most requested doctors in our part of the city. In fact, Michael pretty much saved our daughter's life a few years ago.



*Our dog, Leroy, in his favorite chair.*

In a freak accident, Caroline slipped off the monkey bars at a friend's house next door. She didn't have a single mark on her – no bruise, no scrape. But she said her tummy hurt. Michael did a quick examination, and immediately diagnosed her with a ruptured spleen. I didn't think that was possible – she looked fine from the outside. Michael rushed her to the hospital, got her in instantly, and eventually (after a week of intensive care) she was just fine. If not for his quick thinking, she could have had internal bleeding for days before I would have known anything was wrong. I think that's what I love best about him. Michael is smarter than anyone I know, and he takes his family and his patients very seriously. But he does not ever take himself too seriously. He remains fun, positive, and the anchor of our family.

### **About Jennifer (from Mike) ~**

I read what Jennifer wrote about me, and if I'm "Tigger" then she must be "Kanga". Because she's a teacher at heart, she's very patient, gentle, and even-tempered. Nothing ever gets her too flustered. But because she's a football coach's daughter, she's no push-over. She knows how to light a fire under the kids when it comes to things like their homework, their messy bedrooms, etc. . . She always manages, however, to do it with a sense of humor. If you ask her friends for one word that describes Jennifer, they all will say "funny". She's very funny in a quiet kind of way. Jennifer tells great stories about her crazy family and even about herself. She has a great way of keeping a room laughing with her memories of trying to highlight her hair at home (it wound up striped), trying to microwave a potato (it exploded), and of trying to hide a ripped dress at a wedding (she didn't hide it very well and flashed the guests).

The way she tells such stories about herself, people who don't know her would never guess how smart and accomplished she is. She was the Teacher of the Year while teaching junior high (before we had kids), she coached multiple championship volleyball teams, and she has organized and run countless festivals and fairs at our children's school. But she won't tell you any of that. She prefers to quietly go about doing what she loves doing most of all: Jennifer keeps our home filled with laughter and love, and that's what I love best about her.

### **About our Family ~**

We know this is a very difficult decision for you, but please be assured that our home is filled with love and laughter. Our daughter said it best a few days ago when somebody at the park asked her what her house was like. This girl

knew that Caroline's dad is a doctor, and she assumed that we must have a fair amount of money, but instead of describing anything material in our home, Caroline simply said, "We have a happy house."

The beauty of being married for over 15 years and parents for over 13 years is that we feel we have learned a lot. We not only *want* to be a good family, but we feel like we have gathered the right tools over the years to *be* a good family. We have learned to let our children be individuals, to support and encourage them, and to not take things too seriously.



*The pool, with the automatic cover, is on of our favorite summer spots.*

We are very loud when it comes to Guitar Hero competitions and home ping-pong tournaments, but we don't yell out of anger. We would rather discuss a problem over an ice cream cone.

We support our kids academically and look forward to their graduation from college someday. We offer them the chances for art classes, music lessons, sports teams, etc. . . But we're just as happy plopped in front of the T.V. every Tuesday night for American Idol.

And we are very blessed to have the financial means to travel, go boating, go to Disney, etc. . . And because Michael's job gives him 11 weeks of vacation a year, we do a lot of these things. But we would really rather stay at home, swim in the backyard, have driveway basketball games, and eat hot dogs and hamburgers on the screen porch.

## About our Future ~

We are very, very lucky that Michael's job will afford him the luxury of semi-retirement in the next ten years. Even now, we are lucky that Michael has 11 weeks of vacation a year. When people ask what we will do with all this "free" time, we always think of the kids. We imagine taking the baby to the older kids' sporting events – the official, little mascot, sitting on the bench with the big kids. We imagine Michael finally being able to be the "room mom" and attend all those class parties he's missed out on over the years. And we imagine taking the baby to all our favorite vacation spots (the zoo, baseball games, Disney, Yellowstone) that we can't wait to revisit.

One of the blessings of being a parent for the past thirteen years is that we know how fast time goes by. And we look forward to soaking up every minute with every one of our children because it all slips by too fast.

Thank you for reading our letter. Please know that your baby will be immediately loved by our family just like Jennifer's new family immediately loved her all those years ago. Know that we will keep you in our hearts just like Jennifer keeps her biological dad in her heart. And know that we will provide this baby with financial security, but more importantly, we will give this baby a loving, warm, funny, and secure home. . . a home where all the lights are on at night. Additionally, we would be happy to send you letters and photographs letting you know how your child is getting along, if you wish.

If you have more questions about us, please feel free to call Steve and Joel Kirsh at 1-800-333-5736. If you call after regular hours, they will be paged and will return your call as soon as possible. Please know that by calling, you are not obliged to do anything at all. They will simply help provide you with any other information you might want.

Thank you again for your consideration. We wish you only the best.

Very truly yours,

