

Dear Birthmother, ©

Hello! We are Joe and Gina. Thank you for saying YES to life and considering open adoption for your child. Even though we haven't met yet, we already know that you are a loving, strong, brave and selfless woman. We truly respect you for the decisions you're making. Despite your bravery, we can only imagine how difficult some of your decisions in this process are. Please know that we've been praying for you and your baby's future. We find peace in knowing that God has a perfect plan for both our situations. We can't wait to meet you!



We've dreamt about being parents for a long time. Even before we were married, we'd talk about the kind of parents we wanted to be. Our relationship started about ten years ago as friends and grew into love. After two years of dating, we were married on September 4, 2004. Before we were married, we participated in a weekend retreat to help us prepare for marriage. We were asked to write each other a letter about our anticipated life ahead. In those letters, we each shared the excitement we had about starting a family together, either naturally or through **adoption**. At that time, we had no idea we had fertility challenges. Once we married and found out we had fertility problems, we underwent various treatments in order to get pregnant, including IVF (In vitro Fertilization). It was a difficult and very painful period in our lives. Now we realize that adoption was always part of God's plan for our family and we feel so blessed in our marriage. It's happy, fulfilling and united; we're best friends and we love spending time together. If there's anything missing in our marriage, it's children! We can't wait to enrich our marriage with a couple of little ones!

For now, we love and spoil 'our girls', Havana and Bianca. We call them our girls, but they are our dogs. We're huge animal lovers. Havana and Bianca are Labrador Retrievers, one chocolate and one vanilla. They are very loving and family oriented. They love people, especially kids. One of our daily rituals is to take them for a walk around our neighborhood. We can't wait to add a stroller to the mix and enjoy our daily walks together!

A few months ago, we asked ourselves, "In 20 years, what do we want our kids to say about us and how we raised them? What do we want them to remember most about their childhood?" We laughed and cried and thought about lots of different answers, it helped us think about the kinds of memories and values we want to create for our children. Here's what we came up with:

- **They loved us unconditionally and they demonstrated their love for one another by example – through their marriage**
- **They taught us about God and faith**
- **They were firm but fair. They held us accountable**
- **They gave us support/encouragement to be anyone/anything we wanted to be, and just be the best we could be**
- **They let us fail and helped us learn from our mistakes**
- **We always felt loved and cared for**
- **They were fun, we laughed a lot!**
- **We spent family time together: beach bon fires, board games, BBQ/parks, and family vacation/excursions!**
- **Holidays were special and my parents created family traditions that we will try to carry on in our families**
- **Our home was filled with love, family, friends, and music! Our house was the place to be in the neighborhood!**

Our Work - We both enjoy our work very much and have financial security, but we believe in 'working to live' versus 'living to work.' We are very blessed in that we both work from home, so we get to see each other a lot. We'll have coffee together in the morning, talk about our workday, and have lunch together whenever we can. When we have kids, we plan to both be very involved in raising our children. Gina will reduce her work schedule to part time from home and full time mom/parent.

Joe's Work – I have worked in the hospitality/travel business for 18 years. In the last seven years I have worked as a Regional Director of Sales for Marriott International – Latin America Division. When I was growing up my Father always said, "Find a job you love, and you will never work another day in your life." And I love my job because I work from home and that gives me flexibility in my schedule. I am also able to work with some nice people and travel to some great places. Gina and I both love to travel, so every once in a while, she will join me on a business trip and we'll take a couple of extra days to experience a fun place like Cancun or St. Thomas.

Gina's Work – I work for a small, family owned consulting company based in Orange County. I have been with this company since 1998 and I love it! It's challenging and fun at the same time and because I work part time from home, I also enjoy a more flexible work schedule. Through my job, I've been able to travel to some interesting places, like Beijing, Germany, France, and Australia. But now, I just can't wait to be a full time mom!

Why Joe will be a great dad! - When I was dating Joe, I noticed right away, that he was going to be a great dad! First of all, he's a kid magnet. I'm not kidding! Whenever we attend any kind of social gathering with kids, all of the kids are drawn to him. It never fails (which is why all of our friends ask us to baby sit). I can see why kids are so drawn to Joe. He's like a kid himself, which is one of the reasons I fell in love with him. He's playful, creative, and has this incredible energy! He's funny and he's fun to be with. Joe has a huge heart. He's very tender and loving, and he wants to be a dad more than anything in this world. I know he will be a very involved and 'present' father and that means the world to me. - *Gina*

Our Home - We moved into our house in La Costa/CA, about three years ago. While it was being built, we dreamt about raising our children and making it a home for our family some day. We love sharing our home with friends and family, especially for special celebrations and gatherings. We have a large kitchen and family area where we love to cook, listen to music, and just hang out with people that we love. To us, breaking bread with family and friends is what makes a house a home. We live in a safe neighborhood with great schools, parks, walking trails, and a beautiful pond. We already have a special room reserved for our future baby. It's on the second floor with a view of the neighborhood and surrounding hills. We especially love this room because it gets a lot of sunshine, so it's usually very bright and happy. Often, we'll just sit in this room and dream about our future baby and how blessed we will be when our baby arrives.

Why Gina will be a great mom! - Gina has an incredible heart, and I know she will be a great loving mother. I've witnessed her love for others by the care she has shown for her Mom, who suffers from a rare and painful form of arthritis. As a result, she has been confined to a wheel chair for most of her adult life. Gina has reversed her roles with her Mom since she was a teenager, and has great patience and genuine care with her Mom. Gina has a magnetic personality and many of our friends and co-workers enjoy just being involved with Gina. I believe Gina will use all these skills in loving her children. I know our children will be blessed with having her as a Mother. *Joe*

How we spend our free time - We love spending time together at home. We love to cook, listen to music, watch movies, or read a good book. We also like exercising together - yoga, the gym, or anything outside. Joe enjoys team sports: baseball and beach volleyball. Gina enjoys running and biking. Both of us enjoy new experiences, places, and good food, and not just fancy places, but great local "whole in the wall" places too. We both love to travel and we've done a fair amount of it individually before we met and together. Collectively, we've traveled to Europe over a dozen times. Our favorite European country is Italy. We love the terrain, the people, the food, and the history! About two years ago, we stayed in a villa in Tuscany with 10 of our family members to celebrate Joe's brother and sister in law's 25th wedding anniversary! They married at age 20! It was so much fun to be there with the whole family. We can't wait to experience places and sites through the eyes of our children. We will take them to some of our favorite places, like the beach and our favorite park in Del Mar. We'll go on excursions to places like Legoland, the Wild Animal Park, and Disneyland.

Our Family - We have a typical 'less-than perfect' family, but we believe it's the perfect family for us. Yes, there's dysfunction in our families (both sides)...what family doesn't? We have become the people we are today, because of the love and nurturing we received from our parents and family members. Joe's family came from Cuba, and Joe was the first American born in the family. Gina's grandparents met in kindergarten in San Diego and have remained in San Diego for 85 years. We feel the most important thing a parent can give a child is unconditional love. We feel blessed in that we received this from our parents. Parenting children is a gift and we can't wait to love our children up! We both are native Californians. Joe's immediate family lives in Sacramento and Gina's lives in Vista. Joe has two brothers and Gina has one brother. Joe is very close with his family, and has been a part of seeing the growth of his three nieces and two nephews and remains an important part of their lives. He and his brothers also try to spend quality time together every year by taking an annual BOAT trip (Brother's Outing Annual Trip). Gina is also very close with her family. She sees her mom most often for monthly mother-daughter outings where they shop, go to lunch, or just hang out and watch movies. Our hope is that we are blessed with more than one child so our kids can grow up with siblings. We can't wait to introduce you to our family and meet yours as well.

Education - We both see the value in education and the opportunities it can offer our children. We plan to encourage our children to attend college and we have the financial ability to support them to become whatever they want to be in life. **Joe** - I graduated from Valley High School in Sacramento. When I was 18 years old, I joined the U.S. Marine Corp, where I served for five years based in the Bay area. During this time, I completed several college courses, but did not complete my degree. In 1991, I started my career in the hotel industry and have obtained various certifications within the hospitality industry. I would consider myself more "street smart than book smart". **Gina** - I attended Vista High School through tenth grade. Although my intention was to go on to college and complete my degree, I started working full time. I always felt it was important to complete my college degree, so I decided to take a sabbatical from work and in 2003 I graduated from The University of Redlands with a Bachelor of Science. I am proud to be the first in my family to graduate from college.

Faith - We saved the best for last...Faith is very important in our relationship. It is what brought us together and it continues to be the foundation of our marriage. We are both Catholic and enjoy attending Mass regularly. We do not consider ourselves "over the top" religious fanatics. We think of ourselves as two souls that are spiritually driven. We recognize the importance of faith, family and good friends to help us through life. We try to surround ourselves with good people of similar morals, values, and beliefs. We plan to expose our future family to our faith community with the hope that they too will see the benefits of faith. However, we will support our children's spiritual growth in any direction that God leads them.

Thank you for taking the time to read our letter. We find joy and peace knowing that you are carrying a special gift. We would love to meet you! If you want to meet us, please contact us through our adoption counselors at:
The Adoption Center of San Diego at (858) 535-3033.
With genuine love, sincerely ~Joe and Gina ☺