

Jim, Victoria, Joseph & Grace

Dear Birthmother,

Our names are Jim, Victoria, Joseph & Grace and we're very excited about expanding our family through adoption. Thank you for taking the time to read our letter and get to know us. We know you love your baby very much and want the best for him/her, and we admire your courage in considering an adoption plan. With your help, we would love to give your baby a wonderful home with all the love and support he/she could ever need.



We love Harry Potter!



First Day of School

The Jim and Victoria Years

Jim says I'm the writer in the family so when you read this it may sound like I'm the only one talking, but rest assured he's supplying plenty of content. Anything witty or funny is definitely from him. His quick wit and goofy sense of humor were a big part of why I fell in love with him when we met on a blind date 12 years ago set up by a mutual friend.

I resisted my friend's matchmaking at first because I was so sure the setup would be painful and fruitless, but in the end something told me to meet this man. The date was a family dinner at our friend's house and I was impressed with how kind and attentive Jim was to me and how comfortably he played with our friend's children. When we finished dinner and sat in the living room for coffee, he asked me if I'd like some and brought it to me which I found very sweet. It was obvious to me early on that we shared the same values and commitment to family and I knew I wanted to build a life with Jim.

Jim says he knew pretty quickly when we met that he wanted my number and to set up a second date. He says he was struck by how easy-going I was and how smoothly the conversation flowed.

The funny thing is our friend made a point to tell me Jim was bad at making the first move. She said if I liked him, I'd have to give him my number instead of waiting for him to ask for it.

Well...I didn't have to force my number on him...he was quick to walk me to my car when I left (I love how gentlemanly he is) and ask me for my number. We had no idea that one little blind date would change both our lives forever. I'm so thankful that something told me to accept that date!



Date Night

Building our Family

Jim and I were in our mid 30s when we met and wasted no time starting a family. Despite a few miscarriages, our son Joseph was born 2 ½ years after we married. After his birth, despite many attempts, we were unable to conceive again. We both have ties to adoption and fostering (my father was adopted as an infant and Jim's extended family fostered when he was a child). We decided to become foster parents knowing we could provide a loving, supportive home for children who needed it.



Proud Daddy (pre gastric surgery) with newborn Joseph



Proud Daddy holding newborn Grace in NICU



Big Brother Joseph & Mom bathe Grace 1st day home from NICU



Grace making goo goo eyes at Mommy while feeding in NICU

Our daughter Grace came to us as a premature newborn in 2014. She was very small and spent 2 months in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit. Grace was 3 weeks old when we met her and as we walked into the NICU, the nurse was changing Grace's tiny diaper. Even though she only weighed 3 pounds, she had her eyes wide open and was kicking her legs so hard the nurse was having trouble getting her diaper on. We immediately fell in love with her and she's been just as spunky every day since.



Big Brother Joseph helping Mom feed newborn Grace

We then fostered two more babies that returned to their family or were adopted by other relatives. While we were proud of our family's commitment to these babies, it was heartbreaking to let them go. Those experiences led us to consider private adoption. Jim, Joseph, Grace and I would absolutely love to bring another baby into our world and give them all the love and attention we have to give.



Joseph & Grace watching over their Foster Brother

We've had a number of family meetings to discuss adding to our family. Joseph says he is absolutely okay with helping another baby even if we don't get to keep him/her because these babies need us and what we do for them is very important (WHAT?? Not gonna lie...proud parenting moment there).

Grace's initial response is that she wants a baby sister because "Girls RULE!" Of course, then Joseph said he wants a baby brother because "Boys RULE!" Then when we talked about one of them sharing a bedroom with a new sibling, they both reversed course and started hoping for a baby of the opposite sex. And then they reversed course again when they learned that the shared room would get bunk beds. Kids are so funny!

What would this adoption look like?

Now that's an excellent question. In the name of honesty, we're a bit uncertain how to best support your transition after your baby is born and at the same time begin this new chapter for our family. I've heard from other adoptive moms that they attended medical appointments and went shopping for maternity clothes with their birthmothers, which I would love to do with you, but only if that's something that you'd like to do. I truly want you to let us know what you want/need and the role you see us playing.

We do know that we want you to have the space and time you need to say goodbye to your baby and know in your deepest heart that he/she will be well-taken care of. If you're willing to share your baby's birth with us, we'd be more than happy to be at the hospital with you. But, again, we're looking to you to set the tone for that. As for down the road, after your baby's born, we'd be more than happy to send you an occasional picture if that's something you're interested in.

Learning and what we do every day

Jim and I believe in the power of education to create life opportunities and are doing our best to instill that in our children. Jim has completed his Associate's Degrees in Accounting, Business Administration and Computer Information Systems and holds a number of computer certifications. He started working for the New York Stock Exchange when he was still living in New York, and for the last 13 years he's been a Computer System Administrator with a local municipality here on the Central Coast.



Spunky Grace & hard-working Joseph helping Daddy renovate bathroom



Grace helping Daddy at work

I started my career as a middle school teacher before eventually winding my way to Nursing. I have a Bachelor's degree in Education, a Bachelor's degree in Nursing and a few years ago I completed my Master's degree in Nursing to give myself a few more career options in the future. I've been a Registered Nurse for 16 years and at my current hospital for 11 years.

My nursing background has been very helpful in our fostering, especially with Grace who medically-fragile early on and needed ongoing medical care. I feel like I can identify concerns early and more easily navigate the medical system to get what our children need because I work in the medical field.



Tiny Grace holding Mommy's finger in NICU

Jim and I both came from families without the means to pay for college, so we worked hard to put ourselves through school. We want our children to experience the joy and freedom that learning brings, so we contribute monthly to college funds for Joseph and Grace.

This Spring I put my teaching skills to work with distance learning at home and it was amazing. We had a front-row seat as Joseph and Grace expanded their learning. We enjoyed every minute of it from researching new ideas on the internet to planting a vegetable garden to baking bread and learning about how yeast rises to reading every book we could get our hands on.

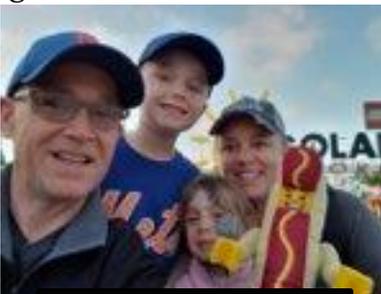


Grace & her carrot seeds



Joseph & Grace baking bread

And Jim and I look for learning outside the classroom too whenever we can find it. We love exposing Joseph and Grace to new experiences and activities. We believe that sort of self-discovery is just as important as school learning. Over the last few years, we've taken the kids skiing, boogey boarding, on trips to the zoo, Moxi Museum, Monterey Aquarium and Legoland.



Family trip to Legoland



Joseph's first ski lesson



Family train ride at zoo

Our Home Base & Our Expectations for our Children

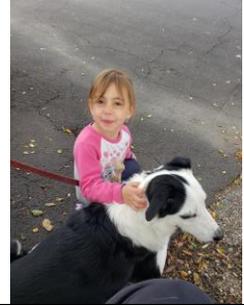
Two years ago, Jim and I moved our family (including our hound dog Auggie, our Border Collie Murphy and our African tortoise Flash) to a new neighborhood in search of better schools and a stronger sense of community. We found both in a safe, family-filled neighborhood on the Central Coast with large yards and wide, quiet streets.



Grace playing dress-up with Auggie



Just hanging out with Flash



Grace & her sidekick Murphy

As a family, we love helping our community. Some of our favorite family times include collecting food for a local food drive. I serve on the Executive Board of our local sports league, and I coach Joseph's and Grace's teams. Joseph gets up and dressed by 7am on Sports Saturdays and helps me set up equipment and fields and will stay out there all day helping because "our hard work gives all these kids a chance to play and have fun, Mom". I'm thrilled that he understands he has the power to make his community better. We're thrilled to be able to raise our children surrounded by great families and friends.



Aunt Jessie visits & Joseph's soccer team places 2nd



Grace & Mom on the Flaming Cheetos T-ball team

Since Joseph was born, Jim and I have arranged our work schedules so one of us is always home and we can avoid day care. I've also taken 12 weeks or more off work with every child we've had in our home to focus on getting them settled. Both our job schedules are flexible and allow us to take time off for family events and trips whenever we want.

We're able to be very hands-on parents with this approach, helping in their classrooms and staying in close contact with their teachers so we have a good sense of what's going on with them, how they're doing in school, what challenges they are facing and what's troubling them. My teaching background allows me to support and supplement Joseph's and Grace's learning at home.

Jim and I believe in teaching them manners, responsibility, kindness and that working hard can lead to a happy, fulfilling life. We want them to understand what it means to work hard and earn something and not take their fortune for granted.



Our family loves BIG hugs!

Joseph and Grace have daily chores and get an allowance each week. Every 6 months or so we go to the bank and deposit their earnings into their accounts. Our Joseph is so serious that on the last bank trip he asked what an apartment costs each month because he wants to make sure he has enough money for rent when he eventually moves out.....in 10 or so years. LOL. That's our Joseph, such a responsible planner!

Grace asked how much a lego kit costs because she wants to save her money and buy her "awesome big brother a lego because he like to play with me and share his cool toys." We love that Joseph and Grace are so close and spend so much time playing together and looking out for each other.



Joseph sharing his LegoCamp creation with Grace

We also believe in giving our children a lot of structure. Jim and I are very clear on behavioral expectations, rewards and consequences. Our discipline usually takes the form of time-outs and they both lose privileges when necessary. Jim and I both grew up in households where we were expected to be kind, share, look out for our siblings and others and show manners, especially when in public.

We strive to teach all of that to our children and we believe that starts with expecting those behaviors and then reinforcing them consistently. We have the normal parenting hiccups like anyone else, but overall we know our children are kind, considerate, hard-working, funny kids (and we're not just saying that because we love them more than anything else in the world).

Extended Family

Jim grew up in Staten Island, New York with his parents, 6 sisters and 2 brothers, and I grew up in Wisconsin with my parents and 2 sisters, so we are both transplants to California. The big city Irish guy met a small-town country girl with German roots. We travel to Wisconsin nearly every Summer to catch up with my family, and we've been to New York twice with the kids to see Jim's family.



Summer baseball in Wisconsin with Aunt Denise & Mitchell



Manhattan with Aunt Jessie



Mom, Joseph & Grace on Staten Island Ferry, Statue of Liberty in the background

My sister Jessie and her husband John live in New York and travel to California a few times a year. They're very close to Joseph and Grace and love playing board games and doing art projects with them.



Chilling with Uncle John at home in CA



Snuggling with Aunt Jessie on Staten Island Ferry



Girls' dinner with Aunt Jessie in CA

Jim's sister Beth, husband Davie and daughter Delilah also live in New York and we visit them whenever we're there. We also stay in touch with them frequently via videophone so the cousins can stay close.



Joseph, Grace & Cousin Delilah playing with penguins at NJ Zoo



Cousins sitting on the polar bear at NJ Zoo



Dinner with Aunt Beth & Delilah in NY after visiting Natural History Museum

Jim's parents live in New York, too, and we were able to visit with them last Fall also. It was beautiful to see Joseph and Grace play and laugh with Nanny and Da (Irish for Grandma & Grandpa) now that they're older because on our last trip back to NY Joseph was only 5 months old.



Visiting Nanny & Da in NY



Feeding ostriches with Uncle Mikey



Christmas in CA w/ Uncle Mikey & Aunt Felicia

Jim's brother Mikey and wife Felicia live in Virginia but have been to California a few times to visit, too. They took young Joseph to the Ostrich Farm near our house years ago and spent a Christmas with us when Grace was a year old. Jim and I love that the kids know their extended family and are close to them despite the distance between us.

We are also very close to my college roommate Denise and her family who live near my Mother in Wisconsin. We vacation with them in Wisconsin nearly every summer, spending time on the lake kayaking, fishing and swimming. They also travel to California regularly and we've gone to Disneyland and Universal Studios with them. Joseph and Grace love going to Wisconsin and hanging out with their Aunt, Uncle and "cousin" Mitchell.



1st kayak voyage



Uncle Tom teaching Joseph to fish



Uncle Tom & Aunt Denise teaching Grace to drive the boat



Aunt Denise & Family in CA for Universal Studios

We also make a trip to my grandparents' dairy farm when we're in Wisconsin to see the animals and catch up with all of my cousins (my Mom has 4 brothers and I have 14 cousins). We spend time with my mom and usually take the kids on a little adventure in my hometown.



Visiting Uncles Mike & Steve in WI on the dairy farm



Joseph feeding baby calf with Cousin Barb



Grace feeding baby goat with Mommy at the farm

We're actually headed to Wisconsin this summer and plan to take Grandma Tina and the kids on a tour of a WWII submarine (which Joseph and Grace are super excited about). I love having such strong roots and being able to share the most important parts of my childhood with Jim, Joseph and Grace.

Jim's mother Ann grew up in Ireland and as a child Jim spent a few summers there fishing with his uncles. Next summer we're planning a trip to Ireland to see his family there and introduce Joseph and Grace to their extended Irish family. Jim and I want our children to know where they come from and who they're connected to. Our adopted children will know their heritage and where their biology comes from (for instance Grace is half-hispanic and will be starting a Dual Language Immersion Spanish program at school this fall)...Jim and I will make sure of that. And we also want them to know the loving connections they've gained as part of our family.



Jim's Maternal Irish
Granmother Nanny



Jim's Irish Uncles
& his Mother Ann

In addition to our family far away, we have a strong and devoted circle of friends here in California that feel just like family. My best friend Erin (who happens to be adopted and is our best source when we have questions about helping Grace understand her beginnings) has two boys that Joseph and Grace have known their whole lives. We all play together every week and share lots of fun adventures together. We spend holidays and celebrate birthdays with them and Erin's parents and in-laws have "adopted" Joseph and Grace so they're lucky to have 4 different sets of Grandparents.



Neighborhood Halloween posse. Mom & Grace were Elsa & Anna. Joseph & Dad are dinosaurs.



Bday celebration with
Erin & family



Thanksgiving with
Erin & family

Religion

Jim and I were both raised in the Catholic faith. And while we're not a part of a church community now, we believe in raising our children with an understanding that there is a God and there are things in this world that are bigger than us that defy our understanding. We believe in human goodness and striving to be the kindest versions of ourselves possible. You could say we live by the golden rule of treating others as we would like to be treated and having faith in the inherent goodness of people.

Hobbies

With busy work and family schedules, Jim and I don't have a lot of time for hobbies. We usually spend our time with Joseph and Grace in our backyard on the swing set or taking bike rides. We roam around the neighborhood, and Grace charges around on her bike with absolutely no fear. She recently got a new pedal bike from Easter Bunny, and when we took her out for a ride, she got frustrated with Dad cautioning her to pay attention. In her super-feisty, independent way, she turned to her Dad and said, "Dad...would you just let this girl do her thing!". Well....I nearly fell off my bike laughing uncontrollably. Grace is a force to be reckoned with, and we love that she lets nothing stop her from being herself.

When I can, I love to read and I've taken up yoga. Jim likes to putter in the garage and work on his 1966 Mustang (he and Joseph are refurbishing it). Joseph loves sports, riding his bike, swimming, playing with model trains and building legos and model kits. Grace loves to read, swim, dance and sing, paint and draw. In the Winter, we love to take trips to the mountains. We hope if we get up there this year, Grace can take her first ski lessons.



Cruising the neighborhood



1st time skateboarding-
no fear!



Joseph & Dad build shelf
for model train cars



Joseph & Dad working
on the Mustang



Fun in the snow



Their favorite place
in the Summer

Wrap-Up

You have a big decision to make and we want you to know that we are just your average, financially stable, middle-class working family that loves to hang out together. Jim and I are both in excellent health and we are careful about protecting our family (besides college funds, we also have retirement funds and life insurance).

We embrace new experiences and actively love each other as fiercely as possible. The connections Jim, Joseph, Grace and I have mean everything to us. Our world starts right here at home with the four of us, and we'd love to bring another baby into our open-hearted family. If you choose us, we promise you we will do everything we possibly can to give your baby the loving, joy-filled, support-you-through-the-rough-spots sort of life that we believe you want for him/her.

Sincerely,
Jim, Victoria, Joseph, Grace, Auggie, Murphy & Flash



Love this sweet girl!



Joseph is in heaven checking out airplanes at the air show



Hamming it up in the mountains
