

ERICA & RICHIE



with Winston and Jane



Hello

Thank you for spending this time with us! We hope this book gives you a good feel for who we are and how much we hope to grow our family. We know families are made in many different ways and we are grateful to be a part of this loving decision you are considering. If you choose us, we are committed to providing your child with a loving home and a deep sense of grace and comfort in knowing their story. We are thinking of you with lots of love.



ABOUT Us

We love to make things together, mostly DIY projects around food and home. Last year we went to a cheesemaking class in town and learned how to make mozzarella, ricotta, and parmesan. In the weeks after class, we learned how to care for cheese as it aged. This turned out to be trickier than we expected but as with most things, we got better with time. Your child will grow up in a family who loves learning new things together.



Richie looks forward to being a stay at home dad. He is often the one people pass their crying babies to for a break and he's just so great with kids. At our family gatherings, the kids stick to him like magnets. Erica works from home so we will have lots of time to be together. Your child will have family who is happy to be around.

We love plant life! Pretty green things in the home and tasty green things outside. A few years ago the labels for our seeds got wet so the plant set up in the garden became a fun mystery to figure out as they grew. Richie grew up farming and could figure things out before Erica, but he let her taste her way through until she knew too.



ABOUT ERICA *by Richie*

One of the first things people notice about Erica is that she is warm and easy going. She tends to make people comfortable right away and strangers and friends open up to her quickly, even before learning she is a nurse. People in our life have let Erica be there for them during difficult and vulnerable times. A friend of ours learned her young son has a terminal illness and Erica kept them company when no one knew what to say or do. Your child will be well loved and cared for in times of joy and pain.



Erica is **creative** and the children in our lives totally love this about her. For one of her nephew's birthdays she collected rocks for a few months and brought them over to paint together. Once they were painted, we made up scenes to act out. Being a group of little boys, most of the stories involved dinosaurs and robots and fart perfume, and we loved our evening spent covered in paint and smiles.

One of Erica's favorite hobbies is fermentation. She makes sauerkraut, kimchi, kombucha, sourdough, feta cheese and her favorite, a fermented rice water hair tonic. On a date, she once brought me to a fermentation workshop by one of her heroes in the field. After making sauerkraut together, we waited in line for an autograph and she geeked out so hard that I had to do most of the talking! The book she brought for him to sign was dog eared and stained with food and water smudges; it showed how much she had followed his teaching to get messy, not be afraid to fail and have fun.



ABOUT RICHIE *by Erica*



Richie is **a kind hearted, gentle soul**. We moved to our neighborhood a few months before the pandemic started and we had not yet met our neighbor across the street. She is in her 90s, lives alone, and speaks very little English. Richie noticed she may need a hand sometimes so he dropped a card with our numbers in her mailbox, offering to bring her food and supplies in those weeks when stores had empty shelves. This bloomed a sweet friendship; They regularly check in on each other and she cooks for us at least once a month. In that same time, he ended up befriending many of the older residents on our street and now he makes his rounds, fixing things for people, setting up their ring cameras and coming home with homemade treats.

Richie **loves martial arts**. He grew up in rural Jamaica, watching old kung fu movies with his friends. Without any gym equipment in town, they used banana trees as punching bags because they were softer than most trees. Their favorite spot to train was a local farm with lots of fruit trees but the farmer who owned the land did not appreciate this so they filled rice bags with sand instead. Today he has a punching bag in the garage but he never forgets those early days.



Richie **stays connected to his faith, his heart and his inner strength**. For a few years as a child, Richie's mom had to work far away and he was informally fostered by a family who did not treat him very well. One day, around age 10, he felt it would be best to change things up. He sat outside not knowing what to do but trusting things would work out. After a few hours, he met an old man who lived with his wife and it was decided he would move in. Richie was happy to live with them and they took great care of each other for years. Richie has other stories of hardship but you wouldn't guess it because he doesn't hold onto things. Your child will grow up with a dad who chooses love and joy.

OUR Story



Erica's friend worked in a barber shop across the street from Richie's job. When Erica would go to meet her friend, she would often end up waiting outside, reading in a chair. Richie noticed her and liked how she didn't seem to be looking for attention. We became acquaintances and soon formed a friendship. Neither of us were looking for a relationship but we started to realize there was more there. When Richie finally asked for Erica's number, she started to say 'no thank you' without thinking about it much but **thankfully she noticed a carpenter's pencil in his ear and a green butterfly barrette in his hair.** He was living with his sister and nieces at the time and didn't realize one of them had dressed him up that morning! She said 'yes' and we never looked back.



We come from different backgrounds, ethnicities, cultures and religions. In some ways we have a lot in common and in other ways we don't. Without all the shared subtle contexts and assumed cultural understandings, our differences have led us to communicate clearly and often. **Embracing our differences has helped us appreciate each other as we are.** When we first moved in together, being very organized, Erica remembers feeling shocked as she watched Richie mix both of our clothes in the same drawer, long sleeves and socks and randoms all together. Something that would normally irritate her made her smile instead. Erica has learned to be more flexible with her environment and Richie has learned to tidy the bleep up! We are most grateful that we've learned to love each other through conflict, give each other the benefit of the doubt, and take on life as a team.



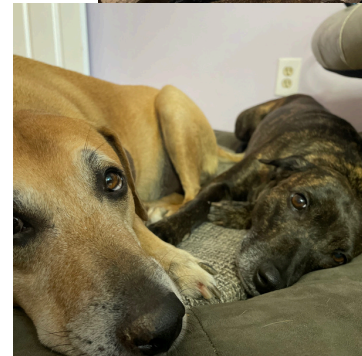
Infertility totally sucks. And yet, this path has brought us closer together, and it is bringing us to you and your child. For this we are truly thankful and trust that this is the most beautiful way to build our family. We wouldn't have guessed at the time, but allowing our hearts to break made room in us for more love, more connection, and more peace. Becoming parents remains a dream in our hearts and we hope to get the chance to nurture your little one and devote this love.

Jane AND Winston



We grew up with animals and love having them in our lives. Erica grew up with dogs, cats and bees. Growing up on a farm, Richie had dogs and cats, but also had chickens, rabbits, goats, pigs and donkeys. Our dogs are Jane and Winston and we brought them home with us from Jamaica. We volunteered with an organization to help stray animals on the island and fell in love with these two at first sight. Our 'island dogs' are the best!

Jane is our princess queen. One of her favorite things is to be dried off with a towel. When Winston goes out in the yard while its raining, she will usually choose to stay wrapped up in her warm blankets, but when he comes in and gets dried off, she lines up to be towel dried, too! Lifting each leg daintily, one by one, it always makes us laugh. **Winston is the most patient, happy, and chill dude.** When he wants to go out or come inside he doesn't bark or scratch at the door he just stands there, wagging his tail, no matter how long it takes us to notice. We've learned to pay extra close attention to make sure he gets what he needs, especially if he is not with his very vocal sister.



Our dogs are great with kids and love lots of play time with our nieces and nephews. They especially love to play hide and seek and lay in cuddle piles. It's been so cool to see how gentle they can be, even with kids climbing on them! Our dog walker comes when we are gone for long stretches and she often brings her young son who has autism. We haven't needed as many walks since Erica started working from home so now we make sure to schedule regular visits with him just because we know how much they enjoy each other.

OUR FAVORITE Things



We love DIY projects. To be fair, Richie does most of the hard or skilled work but Erica brings a lot of ideas. Recently, we built a sauna in the backyard and redid our bathroom; Figuring things out step by step and sometimes undoing steps and starting again. While working on our bathroom, Richie had to climb under the house to connect the new tub to plumbing. It turned out beautifully! The space under the house is only 18 inches high and Richie is a large person so **he had to squirm through on his belly and his back amongst the bugs!!!** Your child will grow up in a family that loves to make things better than we found them as best we can.

We love to go on day trips to explore the surrounding areas, especially dog friendly beaches and hikes. One year we met a group of fisherman who let us take turns casting a line. **Richie caught a baby shark!** It was so cool to meet that little guy before we **released him back to the ocean.** Your child will have fun adventures.



Like many people, we love to try new foods and restaurants from other parts of the world. Sometimes we set a theme and try a few restaurants in a row, ordering one thing to share so we have enough room to keep going. Our favorite is to go on **dumpling tours** but we've also tried doing this with pizza, burgers, Indian and Ethiopian food so far. Richie has been telling his coworkers about our tours at his Monday team meetings and they recently gave us an assignment for our next theme - tacos! **We ate our way through many taco spots** and found the best ones at a food truck caddy corner from a Home Depot. We may not have thought to stop at the food truck otherwise, but now we know better. Your child will grow up in a family that appreciates trying new things from other cultures.

We love to ride our bikes. When we lived on the east coast, we both used to bike to and from work, even in the rain and the snow. Now that we are west coasters, we've gotten used to this beautiful weather! **We tried to train our dogs to run next to our bikes but they were like "Are you crazy?"** Our neighborhood has wide streets and lots of pretty flowers and trees. Riding together with no destination or rush helps us unwind and get outdoors, in every season.



We love to cook together and do so most evenings. Richie learned from his mom and he is by far the more talented chef in the house but Erica comes through and keeps getting better. On the weekends, we like to try new things like bagels or dumplings and sometimes these experiments make it into our regular rotation. A few months ago **a friend came and taught us her Polish grandmother's pierogi recipe.** We made hundreds! Weeks later when we took some out of the freezer for dinner on a busy night, we felt taken care of by our friend and her grandmother in a delicious and nourishing way. Your child will grow up in a home with healthy and delicious foods, cooked with lots of love.

We get crafty, making cards and gifts for people. Erica loves working with textiles and she's gotten interested in weaving floor mats out of old sheets and scraps. We've been collecting wood and Richie is making her a basic loom to get started. She's been **saving her dad's old jeans for years and she plans to make welcome mats out of them** for her mom and sister as a surprise the next time we celebrate his birthday together. Your child will grow up in a family that gets creative together.



Family

*If you choose us, your child will grow up with two grandmas, seven aunts and uncles and **sixteen cousins!** Both of our dads unfortunately passed away too young. Their lives have shaped who we are and we carry them with us.*



Our family likes to go **berry, apple or pumpkin picking**. Once we went berry picking and the fields were so full we had more than we knew what to do with. We started making jam but had so much we still needed to find new ways to eat it, like with our pancakes and oatmeal. This has become such a favorite with the kids that they regularly ask us to make jam together and find new things to eat it with. **Our house has mature fruit trees** - blood oranges, meyer lemons, figs, pomegranates, peaches and plums so we have lots of flavors for jam!

Something beautiful we appreciate about our families is that **its easy to be around each other; It's ok to be quiet, it's ok to be loud. It's ok to be different, to speak your mind or take care of your own needs.** The first day Erica met Richie's mom, they went with Richie to a courthouse where he was contesting a parking ticket. They ended up waiting for him in a crowded lobby for several hours and Erica felt insecure about running out of things to talk about and what kind of impression she was setting. Erica later learned that Richie's mom was far more interested in observing the way she dealt with things and she appreciated the way Erica was relaxed and considerate to others. They ended up bonding that day more than Erica initially understood and soon had lots and lots to talk about. Your child will be celebrated for who they are, as the are.



Our family is **generous with each other**. When we moved to California we stayed with Erica's mom, sister, brother-in-law and three young nephews for 6 weeks. We had four dogs and 2 cats between us. It was a very full house! Its not easy to have guests for that long but everyone was able to be easy on each other even though we sometimes stepped on each others toes. The kids made it more fun and kept us focused on what was most important; keeping things silly! We made up songs together most mornings so the giggles started early.

TRADITIONS

Every Christmas, no matter where we find ourselves, we always go looking for the neighborhoods that are known for their **over the top Christmas light decorations**. In our town we have three main neighborhoods to choose from and children set up hot chocolate stands for the crowds of people coming through. Cars drive slowly by, blasting holiday music and everyone sings along. You end up talking with the other families walking at your pace. Last year we saw dogs in Christmas costumes and **we definitely plan to up our game**.



In our multicultural home, some of **our family traditions have blended!** Richie was raised in a Christian family in Jamaica and Erica was raised in a Jewish family in Maryland. We are grateful that both of our families have welcomed us warmly and have been excited to join in each other's worlds. During the holiday of passover, Jewish families eat **Matzo ball soup**, which is chicken soup with balls of seasoned dough. With Richie's influence, **we now put coconut milk and ginger in ours** and it quickly became a widely loved favorite. On Christmas Eve, many Jewish families go out for Chinese food and some of Richie's family have started to join us, enjoying not having to cook that night. We look forward to learning about your traditions so we can include them for your child.

One of our favorite family traditions is having an **Iron Chef Potluck**. One ingredient is picked and then we are each assigned either a main course, side dish, desert or beverage. Last year the theme was berries and the meal was breakfast. We made a quiche with fried chicken and blackberries in it. Erica's mom made a non-alcoholic sangria inspired fruit filled drink and Erica's brother in law made blueberry and peach muffins. The kids in the family are always the judges. We don't always call a winner, but no one even notices.



HOME & NEIGHBORHOOD

Our home is in a suburban neighborhood in Northern California. Our favorite spot in the house is our open living room and kitchen. When we come home from a long or difficult day, the most comfortable thing is to lay on the couch, feet up with the dogs, while the other makes a meal or snack. **Richie makes a great pot of soup** that always makes Erica feel better. One time he even did this for her in the middle of the night when she wasn't feeling well. Your child will grow up in a family that loves to make things cozy.



We spend a lot of time outside in the neighborhood. There are two parks close by with walking and bike trails, and we love how easy it is to make this part of our daily life (The dogs make sure of it!) There are **families of wild turkeys who have their babies near these trails** and we love when we get to see them, although we make sure not to get too close. Your child will grow up with family who appreciates the nature around them.

We live near a local watershed area. Two years ago we signed up to go kayaking with a group at sunset, spending a few hours on the lake under the stars! **Erica was nervous about tipping over into dark water at night** but ended up getting comfortable as soon as we got started. Your child will grow around people who are willing to get out of their comfort zones and try something new.



Weekdays



Erica is a nurse practitioner. She's worked mostly in HIV and substance use. She is passionate about non-judgmental community health care and how we can support ourselves and each other through rough times. She nerds out about microorganisms and our immune systems but what she loves most about this work is getting to be a part of people's journey towards self acceptance and resilience. She **works weekdays from home** and is able to make her schedule **flexible**. Your child will grow up with a mom who is close by and will always make time to be there.

Richie is a carpenter who works for a family company doing home remodels and repairs. He loves creating, working with his hands and finding structural solutions to many kinds of problems. His team always sends him out on the complicated repairs because he is the most likely to find a way. Because he's so good with people and cares so much about a job well done, he's also one they trust most to ensure a client is left happy. A few months ago we were on assignment in the same neighborhood and didn't realize it until we bumped into each other on a lunchtime walk. Richie plans to be **a stay at home dad** for a few years so we can both be home as a family. Your child will grow up in a home with parents who will make every effort to be around for them.



Every night after dinner we take the dogs out for a walk. Sometimes we stop to chat with the neighbors or we catch up on our days together. Other nights, we sing; Richie teaches Erica songs he grew up singing in church and Erica teaches Richie Beatles songs she grew up singing with her dad. The other night our neighbor stopped us to admire how well behaved our dogs are. We had a good laugh because we think it's more that they are just super focused and serious about their walks. Your child will have daily quality time with family.

Thank YOU

Thank you for taking the time to get to know us. We have desired to grow our family for a long time and are hopeful this can come true through adoption. We would be so honored to be entrusted with the gift of your child and would love them unconditionally. **We are committed to maintaining an ongoing relationship with you, guided by your comfort level.** We are open to in person visits, video and phone calls, letters and photos or other moments you would like to share. We're sending our thoughts and prayers to you, and hope that you are filled with deep peace and comfort.

Richie & Erica

