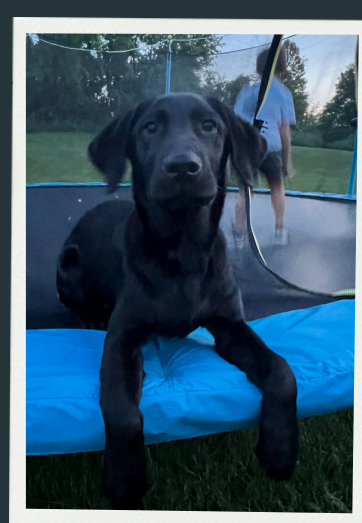




JUSTINE, BROCK,
Olen, Archie,
and Birdie!



HELLO!

Thank you for taking the time to learn about our family. We so appreciate you for considering us in the future of your child. We hope you feel supported during this process. If chosen, you will always be admired and lovingly included in our conversations with your child. Having seen the benefits of openness in the adoptions in our family, we are happy to find a level of ongoing contact that you are comfortable with. We wish you strength and peace in your journey.

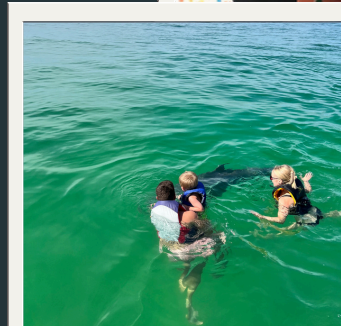


ABOUT US



We live in a small, country town with a lot to offer. Our land is spacious for children to play and run, and the community is tight knit and focused on families. There are arts programs, youth sports, farm animals, lake beaches, and arguably the best baked goods in Ohio. Recently, Olen and Archie picked donuts and a petting zoo for a day out. After the boys rode ponies, we watched as a goat gave birth to triplets! Olen and Archie squealed with excitement, and we had quite the educational conversation afterward!

We value experiences and exploring the world with our kids. We both grew up in families that traveled a lot, so now, when our kids show interest in a place, we look for it on the map, try out recipes from that destination, read about the culture and customs, and if we can, we visit a historic site or find a related museum exhibit. Last year, we visited Justine's uncle in Florida. The boys were very into aquariums and sea life, so once there, we went on a dolphin-seeing cruise. We hoped we'd get a few pictures of sea life, but our captain urged us to get right in the water. We jumped off the boat, and, to our amazement, dolphins swam right up to us! It was one of the coolest experiences! Your child will experience the world far beyond our small town.



Skiing and hiking are our favorite outdoor hobbies. While we often do these things close to home, we enjoy hiking in National Parks and skiing with Justine's brother and his partner at their place in Colorado. Justine prefers to cruise down the slow and steady green paths and Brock likes to try to keep up with his brother-in-laws on the black diamond runs. Last winter, we split up at the top of the mountain so we each could go down the trails we were comfortable with. When we met up for lunch, Brock's hood and goggles were covered in snow from a tumble he took. He said, as he always does after a tough run, "I had no business going down that hill!"

MEET JUSTINE

by Brock

Justine is a **curious, life-long learner**. She is always planning trips to amazing locations with thoughtful itineraries. These trips have broadened our family's view of the world. Whether it is a weekend trip to a museum or a multiple stop expedition, Justine is always leading our family on great journeys that bring us closer together. We recently made a family trip to the Great Lakes Science Center and the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame. We realized our kids did not have much knowledge in music history when Olen pointed at a picture of John Lennon and asked if it was Harry Potter! Your child will be encouraged to be curious and ask questions.



Justine's passion is teaching social studies, to our children and to her classes. As a part-time college professor, she keeps students engaged and is an amazing story teller. Once, she dressed as a member of the president's Secret Service to introduce a unit on the presidency. She is currently working on taking the boys to every former president's house or museum site. Their favorite so far was George Washington's home because they felt they were stepping back in time. We read about George and Martha before our visit, and Justine used this as an opportunity to discuss how complex history can be. Washington is a great example of this as he is remembered as an American hero, but also enslaved human beings. The idea that two things can be true at the same time is something Justine emphasizes to our children and to her students.



Justine is **reliable** and is counted on heavily by all members of our family and members of our community. She attends every school event and field trip and often fills in for other moms who work full time. She also volunteers at the boys' schools helping students, making copies, and planning events with the Parent Teacher Organization. She was recently asked by her students to be a local "celebrity" showman at this year's county fair. She was very nervous to do something so far out of her comfort zone, but she studied and practiced with friends' animals. Her students were so glad she participated and the boys loved watching her facial expressions as she tried to lead around a horse and pick up a duck.



MEET BROCK

by Justine

Brock is **creative and artistic**. He often does art projects with the boys and introduces them to his love for music. I remember being so impressed when we were in college and went to see Brock's cousin play in a band. His cousin asked him to come on stage, handed him a guitar, and Brock jumped in, playing right along. When Brock's uncle, a locally celebrated musician and painter, recently passed away, Brock was given two of his guitars and he has started teaching the boys how to play. Your child's creativity will be fostered and encouraged.



He is **as thoughtful as he is hilarious**. You never know what Brock will give as a gift. Recently, after I could not think of anything I wanted for my birthday, Brock surprised me with a royal family portrait he ordered online with our faces. The boys helped pick out our outfits and couldn't wait to show me. My jaw nearly hit the floor when I saw it, as it was the last thing I ever expected! I got him back on Father's Day with a royal portrait of Birdie! They hang in our basement, and we still can't look at them without laughing!

He is **extremely innovative**. There is no project Brock cannot handle! With my ideas, Brock renovated our old home and built shelves for our new one. He's lovingly known as Mr. Fix-it. Anytime we visit the home of a friend or family member, they have something they need Brock to "take a look at." Recently, Brock (and Archie) redid our flower beds with stone. It took a long time, especially with Brock patiently explaining things to Archie and letting him try himself, but Archie now beams with pride when he tells people that he helped lay all the rocks. With our family, your child will have a hands on father.

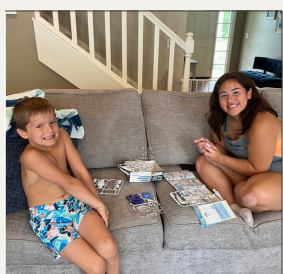


US AS A COUPLE



We first met in the dining hall in college, introduced by Justine's roommate who was from Brock's hometown. While it wasn't love at first sight, we slowly built a friendship which developed into a relationship. Without cars on campus and with little spending money, our first date was at a Frisch's across the street from Brock's dorm. Fairly early in our relationship, we talked about marriage and children, but being very young at the time, we committed ourselves to finishing school and finding careers before getting married. Through long distance, internships, and student teaching, we wrote each other letters and spent hours on the phone. We finally found jobs in the same place- Brock's hometown!

While our values are the same, many of our interests and strengths are not. Justine loves art and history, while Brock loves science and engineering. When we travel, we think it's very funny to compare our reactions to the same place. Last year, while we were in Bar Harbor, Maine, Justine asked questions like, "Which house belonged to former Vice President Nelson Rockefeller?" and "What year did Acadia become a National Park?" Meanwhile, Brock stomped around on the huge rocks and commented about how difficult it would be to put a pipeline through them! We feel **our differences encourage us to learn, consider other perspectives, and balance each other out** as parents and as individuals.



Our family has been built through adoption. We have cousins who are adoptees and cousins who have adopted, both internationally and domestically. Justine's adopted cousin is very dear to us. We travel together, and she even sang in our wedding. **She has been able to build a relationship with her birth mother** and her biological siblings, and from that, we have seen the benefits that openness can offer a child. Brock's sister also recently opened her home to a teenaged neighbor in need. We were thrilled to gain a niece and a cousin for our children. She currently drives our old car and will be a bridesmaid in a family wedding this year. Recently, she helped Olen put together his new Pokemon toys at his birthday party. Adoption has reinforced our belief that love is stronger than biology, and we are hopeful to learn how our journeys have brought us together.

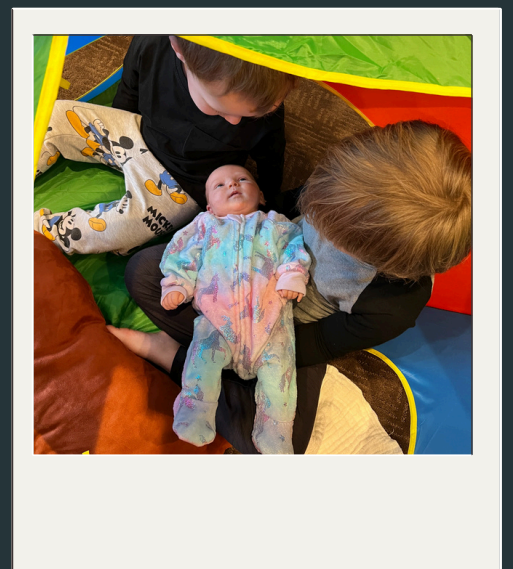
MEET OLEN AND ARCHIE

Olen is a **sensitive, caring, and giving** big brother. He feels deeply and loves hard. He often shows up at school with a bouquet of flowers or a picture he's made to give a teacher or friend. To help with his big feelings, we started taking him to play therapy so he could learn to process his emotions. It has increased his confidence and general well being, and it has helped him tune in to the feelings of others. When our 2 year old neighbor was crying because it was time to go home, Olen told her, "It's okay, I used to be sad leaving my friends' houses too. You can come back soon, okay?" Your child will grow up surrounded by a family who values and supports their interests and needs.



Archie is a **fun and spirited guy!** He is often seen in costume, practicing karate moves, or inviting his entire preschool class to our house for a sleepover (without consulting us!). Once he insisted on wearing his Flash uniform to our local ice cream shop. He told the employees that he was there to save the city! Your child will grow up in a home filled with imaginative play and be encouraged to express themselves, through clothing or otherwise.

Your child will grow up with two loving and protective big brothers. They already have practiced the role with their baby cousin! They play nicely together, hype each other up to try new things, and look out for each other in social settings. Recently, Brock helped them practice shooting a basketball. Olen was very frustrated when he couldn't make a basket, and Archie cheered, "You got it, bro!" **Their sibling bond makes us think of the close relationships we share with our siblings.** We encourage each other, communicate constantly, and feel that having siblings gives us a lifelong team and built in support system.



OUR FAMILY

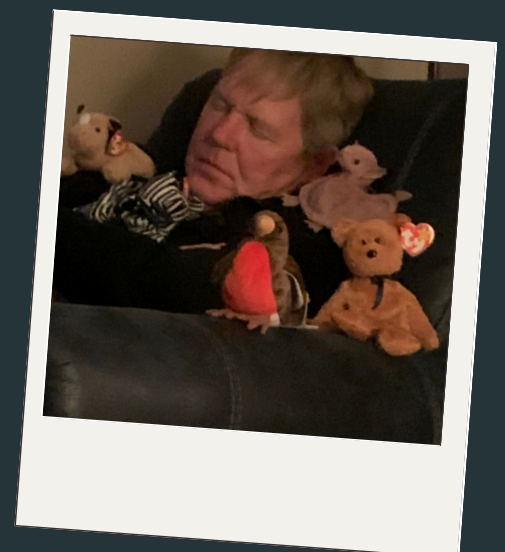
If you choose us, your child will have one great-grandmother, 5 very involved grandparents, 11 aunts & uncles, and **13 cousins**.

Our family is **close, by proximity and by connection**. No matter the time or situation, there are multiple local family members we can meet for breakfast or ask for help. Once, Justine and Olen came home to find a bird flying around inside the house! Not a fan of outdoor animals in the house, Justine called Brock, who was unfortunately stuck in meetings. She quickly texted Brock's dad, brother, and nephew. Grandpa was closest, so he rushed right over. With some creative maneuvering with a broom and a blanket, he was able to shoo the bird out and save the day! Your child will have family close by to spend time with and to offer extra support.



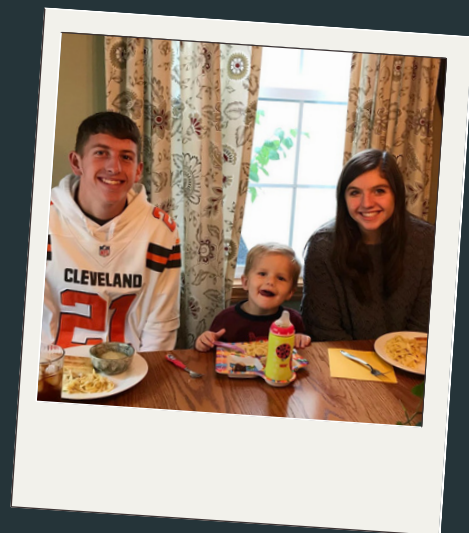
Our family is **adventurous**. Last summer, we traveled just across the border to Niagara Falls. We visited an aquarium that featured beluga whales and we went on a boat ride that went right up to the falls. Grammy remembered riding it many years ago and didn't remember getting super wet. Well, we got SOAKED. Afterward, our nephew kept making the WHOOSH sound the water made as we went through it, and we all laughed as we squeaked along in our drenched socks and shoes all the way back to the car.

Our family is **playful**. One tradition we love is waiting until Justine's dad falls asleep and then stacking items on top of him. We cannot explain why we think this is so funny, but it never gets old to us. Though Papa sometimes grunts and groans about it, he is in on the joke. He sometimes pretends to still be asleep so the grandkids can finish their stacks! Once, Brock fell asleep on the couch, and Justine found him covered in toys. Olen and Archie had given him the Papa treatment!



OUR TRADITIONS

A few weeks before Christmas, Justine's parents host the **annual Cookie Bake**. We dress in our most obnoxious Christmas gear, we all bring treats to share and swap, and we decorate dozens of cut out cookies. Usually more icing ends up on the kids' tongues than on their cookies! While it started as a way to stay connected to Justine's 19 cousins and their kids, because it is at Grammy and Papa's house, anyone and everyone is welcome. Some years we have friends, neighbors, friends of cousins, or foreign exchange students at our table. We know no strangers! This tradition started when Justine's grandma lived with her family and it is bittersweet to think about those early Cookie Bakes. Justine, her mom, and sister take turns wearing Grandma's aprons and using her old kitchenware. It helps them feel close to her and hold her memory tight.

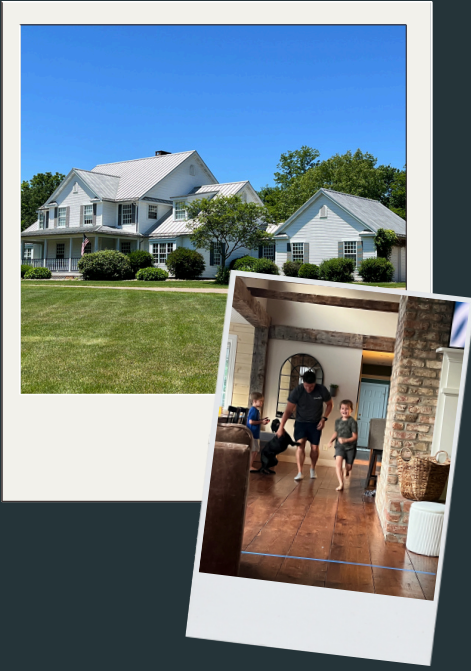


Nearly every **Sunday**, we have **lunch at Grandma's**. Whoever is available comes at noon for a full spread. Our staples include homemade bread, jam, and baked goods. Sometimes, there are ten of us, sometimes twenty! We love connecting with each other before a new week starts, making plans, and playing with cousins. Olen and Archie are the "little cousins," so they get plenty of attention. They often refuse to leave until they've had a multiple round wrestling match with their cousins and uncles!

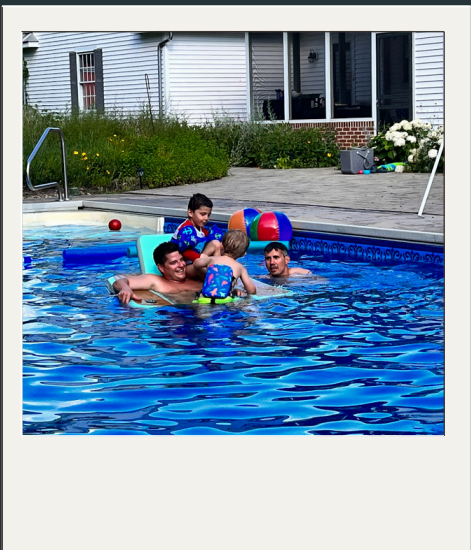
On **Friday nights**, we order pizza and get together **with our closest friends**. We rotate houses for hosting, all the kids run around, and we often stream the high school football or basketball game. We love cheering on local kids and unwinding at the end of the week. Once, it was such a nice night out, Brock decided to take advantage of the pleasant weather and set up a TV on our back deck. The kids were thrilled and we loved that we could watch the game and let the kids run themselves ragged! We look forward to learning about your favorite traditions and including them in your child's life.



OUR HOME



We found our Ohio dream home by attending a graduation party of one of Justine's former students. We told the family how much we loved the home and how we hoped to raise a family in a place like it. Two years later, they contacted us and offered to sell it off market. Justine's student joked that we owe him a commission! We love the kitchen and living room, as it is a great place to gather with friends and family. This summer, we got really into watching the Olympics. Inspired by the track and field events, Olen challenged Brock to a race. **Brock put down painter's tape to mark the start and finish lines and Olen sped by him to victory!** This was very memorable not only because it not only was a fun moment in our home, but also the tape took the finish off our wood floors!



Growing up in the suburbs, Justine wanted neighbors. Growing up in the country, Brock wanted land. We found the perfect balance. We have acreage and privacy, and **our cousins and friends live just next door!** Our kids can get to friends' houses on paths through the woods, and the moms run a carpool for all the school-aged kids. Brock's cousin Billy and his son Bodie come over often to swim, explore, and just hang out. Last summer, Brock and Billy were relaxing while the kids were out of the pool. Relaxation was short lived when Archie and Bodie snuck up and cannonballed on top of them! The dads yelped with surprise, and we all thought it was hilarious. Your child will have space to run and friends just steps away.

Our woods have space to hike, build forts, and ride our side by side. We like to take the kids on trails and go for rides with our friends. Justine's friend and her kids came from "the city" recently and went on their first side by side ride. Our **neighbors said they could hear the squeals and giggles all the way at their house** as Brock zoomed them through the woods.



OUR COMMUNITY

Our community has a small lake that we frequent in the summer. We love to go on Grandpa's boat and swim and picnic on the beaches. **It feels like a day on vacation rather than a spot just ten minutes down the road!** When Archie was a baby, his little sunhat blew off his head while we were boating. It slipped beneath the water, never to be seen again. It is an ongoing joke that it'll pop up one day or the boys will catch it when they go fishing. Your child will have a fun place nearby to make special memories.



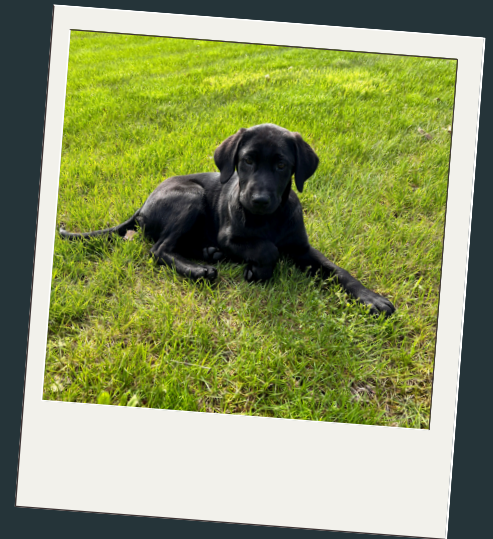
Our county fairgrounds frequently holds kid-friendly events. The biggest event of the year is the county fair. We love to go eat fried food, see the show animals, and ride the carnival rides. This past year, Archie wasn't quite big enough to ride the rides without an adult, so Justine jumped on too. The next thing we knew, a few kids from Archie's preschool class came on the ride next to us. **Their moms had pointed to Justine and told the operator, "these kids are with her!"** We ended up with quite the preschool crew and Justine's face hurt from laughing so hard!

Our community and surrounding towns have wonderful parks and playgrounds. The boys love visiting different playgrounds in the afternoons and in the summer. Their favorite is "the one with the animals," which we now know means the playground with little sculptures of animals hidden throughout! The boys play pretty independently now, but they often call us up on the equipment or have us join in on the fun. Once, at "the one with the animals," Olen wanted to be king of the castle. He decided he needed royal subjects, so **across the bridge and into the castle Justine and Archie went!**



BIRDIE!

We both grew up with dogs. We got a dog (Pippa) when we were first married, and she was a dream but she unfortunately passed much too soon due to lymphoma. As the boys grew older and we found our forever home, we decided it was time to get a new dog. Brock found our puppy, Birdie, Justine picked the name, and the boys have welcomed her with open arms and puppy-level energy. They are always trying to get her to sleep in their rooms. One evening, during the bedtime routine, we discovered they had snuck Birdie into their bed and wrapped her in blankets to hide her from us. While we noticed right away, we of course played along and let them think they pulled one over on us!



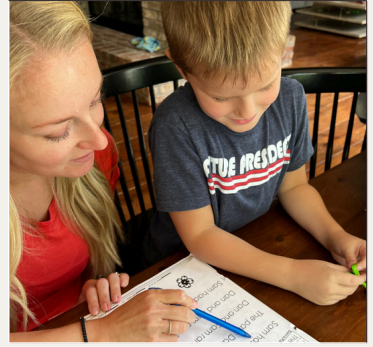
Birdie loves kids and thinks she is one of them. If they are on the trampoline, she is on the trampoline. If they are eating apple slices, she is eating apple slices. Recently, we had friends over to swim. Brock put out a big raft for all the kids to sit on. Within 1 minute, Birdie had launched herself off the side of the pool and right into the middle of the raft! All the kids screamed but immediately started giggling and hugging her.

Birdie keeps us laughing! As a rapidly growing lab, we joke that **she doesn't quite know her size**, especially as she tries to jump up on furniture and squeeze herself into tight spots to be closer to us. Recently, she went to work with Brock, jumped up on his desk, and fell asleep. He sent Justine a picture which we all got a kick out of! Birdie has endeared herself to all of Brock's co-workers and is a very welcome guest. There is never a dull moment with Birdie- even when she is taking a snooze!

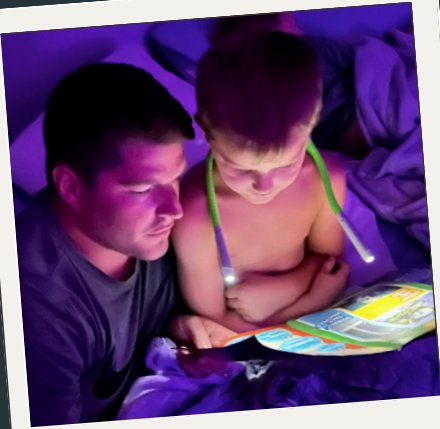


OUR WEEKDAYS

After teaching high school history and government full time for years, Justine gave up her job a few years ago to have more time with our kids. Last year, she was offered a **part time** position with a university, and it has been great for our family. She currently teaches as often or as little as she wants, which, at the moment, is one or two classes, three mornings a week. As needed, Justine can also **work from home** by teaching online or take a semester off.



Brock owns and operates a pipeline company. He **makes his own schedule** and can often **work from home**, bring the dog to work, or meet us for lunch. Even after a long day, he always has energy to connect with the kids, and every night, he reads with Olen and Archie. Your child will have a devoted and focused father, and **will always have family care** between the two of us and Brock's mom.



In the evenings, **we talk about our days, play with Birdie outside, and then start dinner.** Brock always grills or smokes the meat, and Justine and the boys make the other dishes. Sometimes the kids are very helpful and sometimes they do their own thing. They really like surprising Brock with unique culinary creations. A recent highlight was a piece of bread topped with Cheez-its...and chocolate syrup. Brock is a good sport and will try whatever they come up with, but that dish was admittedly not one of his favorites! We enjoy the routine of our evenings, working around the kitchen together, and connecting over a home cooked meal. Your child will have family dinner every night and focused conversation.



THANK YOU

Thank you so much for your time and consideration.

We hope this book gives you an idea of who we are and the life that we could provide for your child. One full of opportunity, fun, and unconditional love. **We hope to share a level of openness, ongoing contact, and shared traditions** that you are comfortable with. You and your child are in our hearts and our prayers. May you have peace of mind and hope on this journey.

Be justine

