

Mackenzie & Dave

...and our seven — Grier, Ford, Webb, Bo,
Tully, Pike & Lawson



Dear *Friend*

Hi. We're Mackenzie and Dave.

We don't know your name yet, or your story, or what brought you to this page today. But we know that choosing to look at families, even for a few minutes, takes something. So before anything else: thank you for being here.

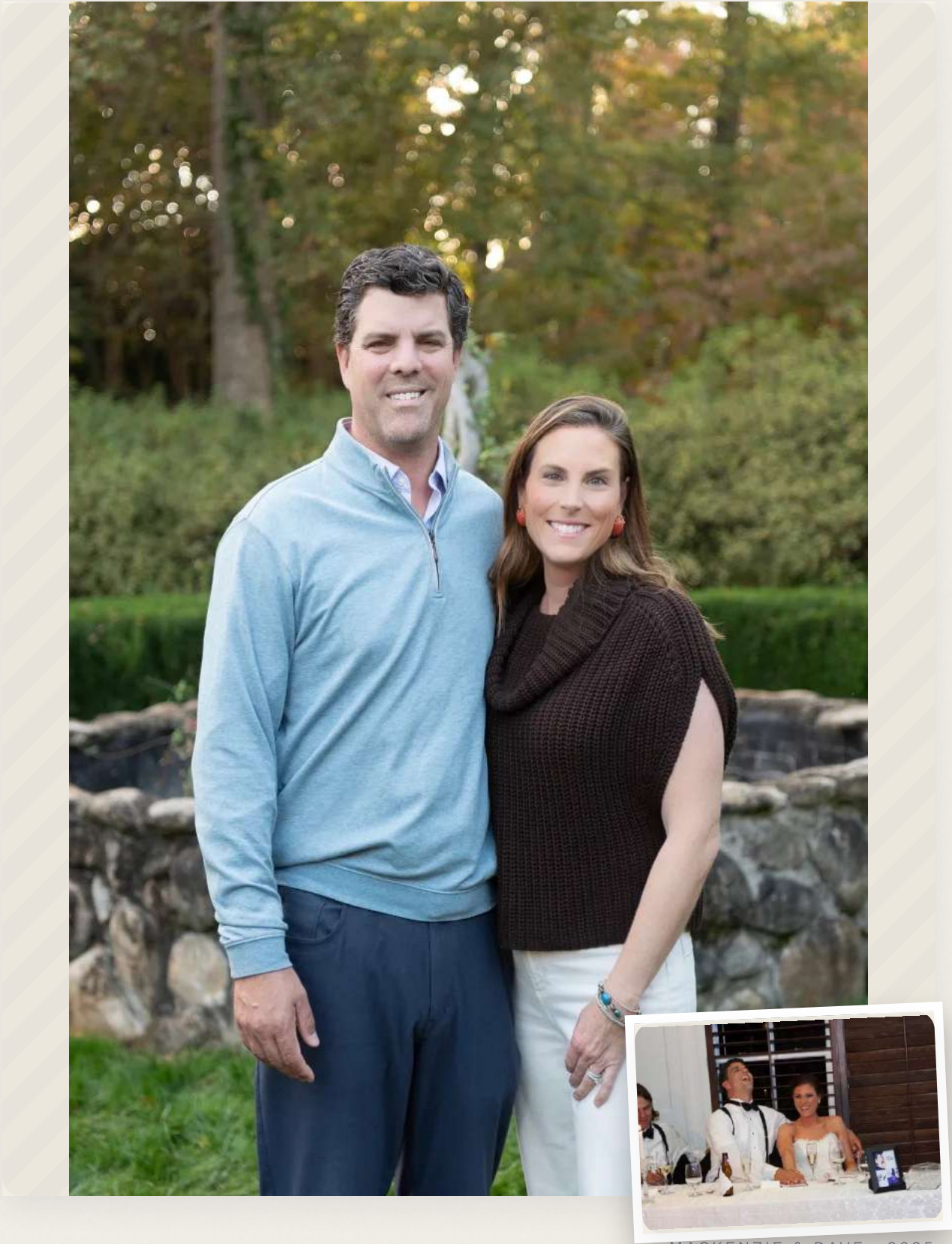
We want to be honest with you from the start. We've been on the other side of this letter once before. A little over a decade ago, a woman we will always think of with quiet gratitude chose us to raise her son. His name is Ford, he is now twelve, and he is woven into every corner of our lives. He has taught us what it means to love a child whose beginning isn't the same as ours — and to honor that beginning, not paper over it.

We are a busy, loud, faith-rooted family of nine. Seven children, two parents, one cavapoo named Dolly Parton, and a calendar that mostly runs on school plays, sports practices, and Sunday Mass. We love it. We have more than enough love, time, and life to share with one more child.

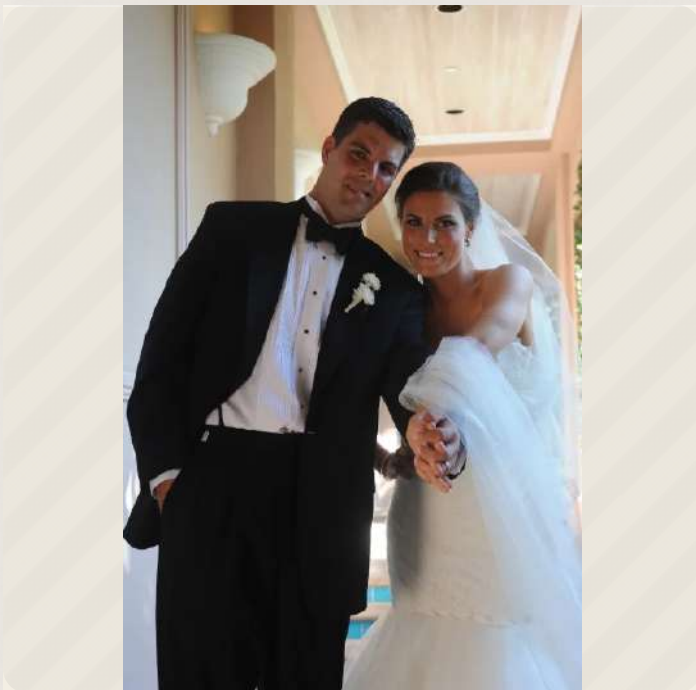
If you keep reading, you'll meet all of us. You'll see our home, our people, our ordinary days. We hope something in here feels like it could fit your hopes for your baby. And if it doesn't, we mean it when we say we wish you peace and the right family at the end of this.

With care,

Mackenzie, Dave & the seven



MACKENZIE & DAVE • 2025



Our Story

We met twenty-one years ago over a foosball table, when Dave asked Mackenzie if she had change for a dollar. (She did. He still owes her.) Several dates later we were inseparable, and we've been building a life together ever since.

We are very different people on paper. Dave is steady, deliberate, the long-game thinker who keeps a household of seven children moving in roughly the same direction. Mackenzie is the spark — full of ideas, quick to plan, always seeing the next adventure or the next person who could use a card in the mail. What we share underneath is what matters: a quiet, durable faith, a belief that family comes first, and a stubborn conviction that life is meant to be lived fully, not carefully.

Before children, we imagined a big family. We didn't know then how that wish would unfold. Our daughter Grier was born in 2011, and two years later our son Cauley joined us. Cauley was with us for only a few months — he was born with a condition the doctors couldn't name in time — and he passed away in our arms. We still miss him. We talk about him. He is part of the reason we became the parents we are, and he is part of why our family keeps making room.

Ford joined us in 2014 through adoption, and that's a story we'll tell on its own page. Then came Webb, Bo, Tully, Pike, and Lawson — each one his own gift, each one stretching us in new directions. We are now a family of nine, and we have learned that a full house is not the same as a full heart. There is still room. We feel it.

*“A full house is not the same as a full heart.
There is still room.”*

Mackenzie

— written by Dave

The thing you notice about Mackenzie first is that she is paying attention. Not in a watchful way — in a curious, generous way. She asks questions because she actually wants to know the answer. She remembers what you told her last time. She is the friend who sends a card for no reason, the mom who notices which kid needs a quiet ten minutes today and which one needs to be tossed in the air.

Mackenzie was, in her own words, born to be a mom. Watching her with our seven is the closest thing to evidence I have for a soul's purpose. She is silly and tender in equal measure — she can belt a Disney song and kiss a scraped knee in the same breath, and she has done so approximately ten thousand times. She is also, quietly, the engine of this household. The Christmas traditions, the birthday rituals, the random Tuesday s'mores in the fireplace — those are her.

In the last few years, Mackenzie has come back to the part of herself that existed before all of us. She is an artist — abstract painting, mostly — and her work has found a real audience. She also hunts down undervalued pieces at auctions and brings them to friends through pop-up sales, which has become its own quiet community of people who trust her eye. Watching her step into this part of her life has been one of the joys of my last several years.

“She is more herself than she has ever been.”

She is also, for the record, still going to beat me at any sport we play. Some things don't change.

— Dave



NOTABLE

- Grew up in Princeton, New Jersey
- Lived & studied in Southern Spain
- Business and Art degrees
- Played college lacrosse
- Abstract painter — MMerrittCollection
- An eye for undervalued art at auction
- Two sisters and a brother — close
- Christmas music starts in October
- Ornaments from every place we travel
- Favorite weeknight meal: canned pork & beans



NOTABLE

- Lived in Australia after college
- Captain of his college lacrosse team
- Founded an inner-city lacrosse league
- Head of School at an independent school
- Runs marathons — first one with his brother
- The chef of the family — famous Beef Wellington
- Has an older sister and a younger brother & sister
- Family Thanksgiving has a costume theme
- Paints, too — surprising but true

Dave

— *written by Mackenzie*

Dave is the steadiest person I know. In a house with seven children, that is not a small thing. He is the kind of man who, when something gets hard, gets quieter and more focused rather than louder. He doesn't flinch. He shows up.

By day, Dave is the Head of School at an independent school serving children from preschool through high school. He loves this work in a way that surprised even him. He believes deeply that good schools shape good communities, and he has poured himself into his community in the Upstate of South Carolina — into its families, its teachers, its kids. All seven of our children attend the school he leads, so he sees them in the hallways, at chapel, on the fields. Their lives and his work are stitched together, and he wouldn't have it any other way.

At home, Dave is the dad who notices. He notices when Pike needs a quiet word before a game. He notices when Webb has been working on a stage routine and wants someone to watch. He notices when Bo, mid-imaginary-game-winning-shot, needs an actual basketball partner. He is in the bath-and-bed-time trenches every night, still — seven kids in, that has not changed.

And he is a wonderful father to Ford. From the very first hours at the hospital, Dave was all in. He has been the one who, year after year, has gently checked in with Ford about what he wants to know, when, and how. He has held space for Ford's story without rushing it. That patience is one of the truest things about him.

“He doesn't flinch. He shows up.”

Also: he runs marathons now. Which I think is showing off, but I let him have it.

— *Mackenzie*

Our Children

Seven children. Seven completely different people. We marvel at this constantly.

Grier

ENTERING 9TH GRADE

Our oldest. A hard worker who wants to be the best and is willing to do the work to get there. Loves debate and a good intellectual argument. She has been asking for a little sister for years.

Webb

ENTERING 5TH GRADE

The all-American kid. Every sport in season — and a few out of season. Just played Daddy Warbucks in the first ever lower-school production of Annie Jr. Curious about the world; unafraid to look silly.

Tully

ENTERING 2ND GRADE

Our creative one. As happy tinkering as drawing. His pretend play has the most elaborate plots in the house. Tully sees angles the rest of us miss.

Lawson

ENTERING THE 3S

Our baby. Also, somehow, the boss. Unafraid to wield power over his older brothers, and they more or less accept it. The comedy of our household.

Ford

ENTERING 6TH GRADE

Our second child. Funny in the way that catches you off guard — dry, observant, perfectly timed. Huge heart for his family and our animals. He pours himself into whatever is in front of him.

Bo

ENTERING 3RD GRADE

One hundred miles per hour, all the time. Lives and breathes sports — watching, playing, replaying the imaginary game-winning shot for the seventeenth time today. Wakes up with a plan.

Pike

ENTERING KINDERGARTEN

Wants to be an athlete like his brothers and absorbs every game he sees on TV. Also our most sensitive child — feels things deeply, and we are working hard to honor that in a house full of brothers.

Cauley

IN OUR HEARTS • 2013–2013

Our second child by birth, with us for only a few months. We talk about him. The kids know him. He is part of why we know what a gift each day with a child really is.





Our Home & Daily Life

We live in the Upstate of South Carolina — a small, growing community near the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains. We moved here in the summer of 2023 when Dave became Head of School at an independent school, and the place has fully claimed us. It's the kind of community where people show up — at games, at school plays, on the sidelines, at church on Sunday.

Our days are a series of overlapping circles. School — where all seven of our children attend with their dad — is the biggest one. From there we radiate out into rec leagues (baseball, lacrosse, basketball, flag football), school plays, music lessons, art classes, and the steady cadence of parish life at our local church. Faith is the quiet through-line of our family — not flashy, but present. It anchors how we mark time and how we treat each other.

On weekends we're usually outside. The Upstate has miles of walking trails, and there's a nearby state park that's a favorite for family hikes. We travel when we can — vacations are how we collect memories, and we try to take the kids somewhere new every year. The beach, the mountains, small towns off the main road. Mackenzie still finds a Christmas ornament wherever we go.

Our home is a comfortable, full, lived-in place. There are art supplies on the counter, a basketball on the stairs, and Dolly Parton — our cavapoo, a surprise Christmas gift to the kids in 2024 — is usually underfoot. (Our beloved old bulldog, Aggie, is now retired in Los Angeles with a former babysitter and has, somehow, become an Instagram personality. People don't believe us.)

“A walk after dinner, an afternoon on the porch, the slow Saturday morning when everyone ends up on the same couch.”

It is a busy life, but it's not a frantic one. We don't want it to be.

A letter about Ford,

and about you.

We want to tell you a little more about our experience with adoption, because we think you deserve to know what kind of family you'd be choosing.

Ford came to us as an infant. From the first hours at the hospital, we felt the depth of what was happening — for him, for his birth mother, and for us. We knew, even then, that being his parents meant being honest about how his story started. Over the years we have asked Ford, gently and on his own timeline, what he wants to know about his birth mother. He isn't ready for more yet, and we have followed his lead on that. When he is ready, we will be too.

We have stayed open from our side. Ford's birth mother has chosen, in recent years, not to be in active contact, and we have respected that — without closing the door. We still hold her in our minds and in our prayers. We believe that openness is not a contract; it's a posture. It's about being available, on her terms, for as long as it serves the child.

WHICH BRINGS US TO YOU

- We will tell your child their full story, with love and without shame, on a timeline that fits them.
- We will keep the door open to you for as long as you want it open. Letters, photos, updates — whatever feels right and safe to you, now and in the future.
- We will never frame your decision as anything other than what we believe it is: a hard, brave, deeply loving act.
- If you change your mind during this process, we will hold what we feel privately and wish you well genuinely.



— a quiet moment, the Skeens —

There is one more thing we want to share, and we hope it doesn't feel like too much. Whoever this little one is, they will be the apple of our eyes. Grier has been hoping for a younger sibling for years. And Ford would have, in this child joining our family through adoption, a sibling who shares the shape of his origin story — a person who would understand a piece of his life from the inside.

Whatever you decide, and whoever you choose, we are rooting for you and for your child.

With love and respect, Mackenzie & Dave Skeen

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO KNOW MORE

Please reach out to our agency.

[AGENCY NAME & CONTACT INFO]