“Life moves pretty fast. If you don’t stop & look around once in a while, you could miss it.”

~ Ferris Bueller
Ferris Bueller’s Day Off (1986)
Hello

Thank you for taking the time to get to know us! We cannot begin to imagine what these days are like for you and it would be unfair to say we understand what you are going through. We recognize that your feelings are unique to your experience. And we want you to know that we believe that the story of YOU is worthy of being heard. You are facing a great deal of decisions for yourself and for your precious baby and we want to honor that.

Though we haven’t met, please know that we have the utmost respect and admiration for you. Our heart in putting this book together was to let it show you what life in our family would look like for your little one if you would choose to have us join your story and theirs through adoption. We do not come to you assuming that we are offering your child a “better” life, but simply a different one full of abundant love, acceptance, and adventure.

As you read through the pages of this book, our hope is that you feel the love we have for each other and our friends, and the confidence we have that God is directing our steps and yours, guiding us both to the right paths for our lives. Regardless of your final decision please know that we are cheering you on! We hope you feel empowered as you educate yourself on all of your options, and have peace in whatever decision you make. You’ve got this!

From our hearts,

Jon & Zuly
A Real Life Love Story...

Like the best romantic comedies - our story started with each of us ready to give up on love. That all changed when Zuly saw Jon on a dating app and thought “He’s kinda cute, what do I have to lose?” Jon responded thinking she was a stunner and was surprised to receive a message! A couple of messages, texts and phone calls later we went on our first date, dinner at a local sports bar, (that restaurant is still our favorite neighborhood go-to!) and we have been inseparable ever since!

Eight months later, Jon proposed while we were on vacation with his family in Florida. It was an easy yes for Zuly. We both knew that our lives, personalities and priorities matched up perfectly. We had lived life long enough on our own to know what we wanted and we were ready to settle down. For the next 14 months, we continued to grow our relationship, making memories at concerts, football and baseball games, traveling with family, and holidays. In 2018, we got married at Zuly’s college. Our wedding day was magical and wonderful, but it was just the beginning of our story together.

Over the last few years, we have learned how to be a team. We make sure to spend a lot of time laughing together and above all, we work everyday to continue building our relationship on a strong foundation of faith, love, and above all else, friendship.
I AM A SURVIVOR - and that reality has deeply impacted what I value most.

My sense of purpose - that wakes me up each day, keeping me focused on striving to meet my goals and fulfill my dreams (even if that day’s goal is simply to relax and have some fun) is what helped me survive a life-altering experience while in college and it’s what keeps me going every day.

I entered college with a goal of becoming a teacher. That dream was side-lined when I suffered an aneurysm. After recovering my health I discovered that my passion for teaching had shifted and I moved into a customer service career which suits my personality well. I enjoy helping people and it’s something I get to do everyday!

My priority is being with my family and friends, caring for them, and laughing with them as often as possible. I view each day as a gift to be enjoyed and the people I love are my whole world. In our house, I’m the morning person and I love getting up early to make coffee for Zuly - it’s a simple way for me to express my love to her on a practical level. I call my Dad almost everyday to make sure my parents are doing well. And, in the evenings I enjoy relaxing with Zuly, enjoying a home cooked meal, watching a show, and talking about our day together. I can’t wait to add a little one to our home, and have a child’s voice at the dinner table and our evenings change to include kids shows, playing ball in the yard, building with blocks in the living room, and coloring at the table.

Music is part of my life...

When my twin brother and I were 10 years old, our Grandfather picked up his guitar and taught us our first three chords. That day my passion for playing the guitar and songwriting was born. With the busyness of life I neglected the guitar for awhile but over the past few years I’ve gotten my guitar out again and I’m loving playing and am building my skills on this instrument again.

I Look Forward to Being a Dad

I love kids and can’t wait to have a child to raise, teaching them right from wrong, how to be kind, and show respect to other people.

I want to teach my kids to play the guitar or support them when they find a different instrument they want to learn.

I’m no longer an athlete but I am a great spectator of sports! I want to teach my kids the rules of the games, the way to play them, and the benefits of athletics. I may not be the best coach, but I can be the loudest cheerleader.

As a kid I loved chasing fireflies in the backyard while my dad grilled out. I decided back then that the best smell in the whole world was freshly cut grass. I want to see my children discover the joys of playing outside too, laying in the grass, staring at the stars, and chasing the moon - maybe they can catch it even though I never could.
ZULY

I AM A DREAMER - with a deep curiosity
that makes me want to explore the world

Hi! I’m Zuly, and I usually have the camera…
which makes it hard to find pictures of myself
that are not just selfies!

I’m also a planner always thinking about
where we could take a vacation to next…
Italy, The Galapagos, Spain, the list can
go on and on. I take my dreams and start
planning how to make it happen, checking
out Air B&B’s, finding activities, figuring out
transportation, and then seeing who could
go with us to make the adventure that much
more fun.

But, since I married Jon, I’m remembering more
and more how much I loved having quality
time at home with my family when I was a
child, so I’ve begun decorating our home
as a warm, cozy space, filled with laughter,
baskets of blankets, good smells, and all the
people we love. Our house is always open
and it’s not unusual for us to have friends
and family stop by for a meal or to just
hang out together.

I’m also a complete extrovert which works
really well for me in my career as a teacher
and vocal coach working with multi-linguage
learners and the music program at
the school I teach in.

I love to travel, going to concerts, museums,
zoos, and other events but when I’m ready
to settle in at home I enjoy cuddling under a
blanket with a good book.

See... I'm a Selfie Queen!

My favorite place to be:
North Topsail Beach, North Carolina

Coolest Experience:
Singing at Carnegie Hall in New York
City, to open the 2016 Holiday Season.

Something serious about me:
I am proud of my heritages as a first
generation United States Citizen

I Look Forward to Being a Mom

My family is my life! I’m very close to my mom and talk to her every single day, I talk to
my nieces and nephews all the time too - and they know that Tia Zuly will show up to
make things FUN! When I think back to being a kid I remember always being surround-
ed by family - long road trips in the summers and big family gatherings at the holi-
days. I can’t wait to recreate those memories with my own children. I’m excited about
seeing the wonder and amazement that only a child can have when we go to visit
favorite vacation spots or seeing my little one running and playing with all of their
cousins when we gather together for a big family celebration.

But more than those big experiences, I’m looking forward to the everyday things
- conversations at the dinner table, tickle wars in the living room floor, and Friday
nights with pizza or pan nachos on the coffee table in the living room while we all
watch a movie together surrounded by pillows and blankets. I’m excited about play-
ing in the park and seeing how high the swings will go, teaching my child how to be a
good friend, sharing my heritage with them, and learning all about their heritage too
- celebrating the things that make us different and the ways that our stories are the
same.
Jon is my best friend.

Jon is one of the kindest souls you will ever have an opportunity to meet. He is 100% genuine and always (and I mean ALWAYS) has a smile on his face. Jon works in customer service and encounters a lot of people in the community we live in. When I’m out and about with Jon, I often feel like I’m with a local celebrity! People love to stop and tell me how wonderful it is to know him. During the holidays it’s not unusual for Jon to come home with gifts and cards from the customers he serves all year round. I think he gets more gifts from them than I do from my students! (And that’s okay!) We have a lot of nieces and nephews and all the kids love Uncle Jon. He makes funny noises, gets down on their level, talks with them and plays whatever game or toy they pull out. At a family gathering, if Jon goes missing, it’s because one of the kids has snatched him to play! When he’s not working or getting kidnapped by nieces and nephews, Jon enjoys sports and trivia games. He is a huge movie buff, and can find a movie quote to fit nearly every situation. At Christmas time, you will find him quoting “National Lampoon’s Christmas Vacation” or “Elf” every time he has a chance to. If someone says something that remotely sounds like a song lyric, Jon will just continue it. The whole room will burst into laughter! Jon’s superpower is making people laugh.

Jon brought balance to my life and a partner that is my sanity’s saving grace. His joyfulness, his loyalty and his sense of humor brighten my life. He is a walking miracle, and I’m thankful to be his wife.

Zuly loves with her whole heart.

Zuly thrives on making the people around her feel special. She loves with her whole heart. When I get to meet one of her students they often tell me that they are “honored” to meet their favorite teacher’s husband. Watching Zuly interact with her students and seeing the love and respect they have for her combined with knowing the great relationships she has with all of our nieces and nephews has made me excited to see her become a mother, our family is going to have so much fun with Zuly planning our days!

Zuly is the queen of surprises. One time, I bought an album on my iPhone just to find out that she had already purchased tickets for us to go to the concert! Zuly values time and memories over material things so she plans for us to make memories - big adventures like going to Africa and simple day-to-day things like heading to the farmers market to put together a picnic on a beautiful day. We both love our local sports teams and spend many happy hours cheering them on!

Zuly is a creative woman with an adventurous spirit, who loves spending time with family, and enjoys cooking, baking, and crafting. She has brought a sparkle to my life and I’m thankful to be her husband.

PASSIONATE, GIVING, & STRONG

LOYAL, LOVING, & FULL OF JOY
We live in a historic town just 30 minutes outside of a major metro area. Jon grew up in this community, and Zuly has come to love it. Within a short drive, we have a cute historic downtown area, mountains and parks, as well as all the city has to offer. Our neighborhood sits atop a mountain and has views of all the biggest landmarks in the area. We are super excited about trick or treating the hills and valleys of our neighborhood!

We love the diversity in our neighborhood. There are families from all over the world and from all seasons of life. Neighbors are always walking in front of our house, saying hello and loving each other’s dogs.

The schools in our area are award-winning and offer an internationally-minded, whole child approach. Zuly is a teacher and made sure that our home was in the very best school district when we were home shopping. We are looking forward to high school football games in the fall and enjoying the homecoming parade every October.

“A house is made of brick and mortar, but a home is made by the people who live there.”

~ M. K. Soni

We Love our Home & Community in the mountains

Our home is a three bedroom, two and a half bath house. We are lucky enough to have a finished basement with another room. We can’t wait to turn it into the perfect playroom one day! We have a large back deck and lower patio that overlook ivy-covered trees in our backyard. We are looking forward to fall evenings spent grilling outside with a football game or movie playing on the outdoor projector. Most of our time is spent in a spacious family room that connects to the large kitchen and eat-in space. Our front yard is an open space perfect for playing games and meeting neighbors. The side yard has a hill perfect for sliding if we ever get snow!
We are incredibly blessed to have an extra family home on the east coast. It is a small cottage just steps from the beach. We spend time there with Zuly’s entire family every summer.

On the first morning someone always goes into town to buy donuts for everyone but most mornings we just start our mornings slow, sitting together, enjoying coffee on the front porch looking at the ocean while the kids run around on the deck under the house playing games, gently hinting that they are ready to go to the beach.

Once everyone gets moving, we spend a lazy day going back and forth between the house and the beach. When everyone comes in and gets cleaned up, we will chase the sunset to some of our favorite overlooks. We cook dinner as a family, talk and play games with the kids, and settle around the house.

There is always laughter and it is always loud. Sometimes, we will go downstairs after dinner to hang out in the hammocks and chairs under string lights. On clear nights, some of us will walk over to the beach to stare at the stars.

Our typical vacation isn’t extravagant, but it is simple, quality time, spent with the people we love.
Both of our families enjoy vacationing together so when we travel, we get to go as a big group and it’s so much fun! The year we got married we spent three weeks with Zuly’s family in South Africa. Jon hadn’t traveled much and Zuly had a blast playing tour guide and showing him how to be an international traveler! During a layover we spent eight hours running around London and we spent Jon’s birthday in Johannesburg walking with elephants and playing with 3 month old lion cubs at the safari park. We spent the next week sleeping in a clay hut in the middle of Kruger National Park making new friends and taking daily drives to see whatever wildlife was out there. Next, we traveled to Zimbabwe to see Victoria Falls and enjoyed the sunset on a dinner cruise of the Zambezi River. We ended our adventure in Cape Town, enjoying the culture, food, scenery, and wild penguin colonies. That trip was Jon’s first international vacation and he is looking forward to more in the years to come!

Every year we go to the beach with Jon’s family, cooking dinners together each night with each household being responsible for one night’s menu. Zuly brought Cuban sandwiches her first year vacationing with the family and now that is what everyone requests that we bring! Our oldest nephews asked Zuly to teach them how to make the sandwiches and they always help her now.

Jon Says’s...
I enjoy traveling with my wife. It is such a passion of her’s and it has opened my world to so many cool new experiences. When we travel, we do our best to bring home a token that we can add to our Christmas tree. When we put up the tree every year, it’s like a scrapbook of memories as we unwrap each ornament and remember those trips.

With Zuly’s family we always enjoy our annual vacation at the beach cottage and every few years we go on a big adventure with them. Summer of 2023 will see us traveling to Iceland with the whole family (kids included) for ten days of road tripping across the country.

As a couple we enjoy taking shorter vacations and day-trips, traveling to attend concerts of our favorite bands, visiting museums, and experiencing the culture of different areas of our country.
Zuly comes from a big, loud Cuban family. Her parents are both immigrants who came to the US as kids. She is the oldest of three kids. Her sister is a proud dog mom and aunt. Her brother is married with a son, daughter and a third on the way who know us as Lala and UnJon. Zuly also has an extra “brother”. A good friend came into a situation where he needed support, and Zuly’s parents took him in. He quickly became a part of the family, and has added a wife and twin boys to the family. Fun fact: Jon is also a twin. Jon and his twin share a birthday with our twin nephews.

Our Village

We could not have a more supportive group of family and friends. We say friends are the family we choose. Also, we are both very lucky to be close with both sides of our families.

Several of our friends come from a group we are involved with at our church. They are more than fellow church members - they are some of our closest friends! There are about ten couples with kids ranging from newborn to seven years old. The first Friday of every month, we get together at someone’s home with all the families for pizza and fellowship. It is utter chaos, and we love it! We all look out for each other, the kids treat each adult like an extra aunt or uncle, and we pass around babies to allow parents time to have a free hand. We spend time together on weekends at birthday parties, hanging out at each other’s homes, and even taking short weekend trips together. We are also incredibly blessed to have many lifelong friends from school and church who are very involved in our stories past, present and future. We spoil their children every chance we get, and love doing life together.

Both of us also have a large number of aunts, uncles and cousins scattered across the country. Zuly’s parents are very close to other Cuban immigrants who moved to the area, and they have always been a part of her life. Jon is very close to his cousins, and we spend time with them routinely. Most of Jon’s family is still in the area.

Jon also comes from a big family! His parents live only 7 minutes away in the house where Jon and his siblings grew up. Jon is the third of four kids. His oldest brother is married with two boys. His sister and her husband share a daughter. Jon’s twin brother (Jon is a whole minute older) lives nearby with his wife and two girls.
MORNINGS
Jon is an early riser! He is up first, makes coffee, gets breakfast ready and greets Zuly with a kiss and a cup of coffee when she gets up a little bit later.

OUR DAYS
We both work close to home and get to be carpool buddies! Zuly drops Jon off then heads to the school where she teaches music.

When we add a little one to our carpool we have several options and will pick the one that works the best for our baby.

We’ve looked into our church’s nursery and having an in-home provider. Jon’s parents are eager to help care for the little one too! Jon’s schedule is a bit more flexible than Zuly’s, during the school year, and he is looking forward to some of those weekdays when he will be able to stay home and build his father-child relationship, making memories, and having fun.

Zuly can’t wait for all the memory-making fun she can have with a child during the summer when she has a break from her teaching schedule.

EVENINGS
In the evenings Zuly makes dinner while Jon takes care of things around the house until we sit down together to eat and talk about our days.

After dinner we clean up together and then enjoy the sunset from our back deck, watch a movie, read, or play a game. Our weeknight evenings are pretty simple and quiet, a good time to relax and recharge for the next day and to prepare for our busy & fun weekends!

Weekends
On the weekends, we are busy going to events with friends and family. There’s a lot of time spent with both our families including extended cousins, aunts and uncles. We try to get to the aquarium at least once a month as we have annual passes.

During the school year, our life is fairly routine. In the summers, we tend to be more adventurous. We will go and try a new restaurant and walk on the square, go enjoy a movie, drop in on our parents and hang out.

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At the holidays, we host Cousin Camp for Zuly’s side of the family. We take our nephews and spend a weekend with them. Each of the boys have traditions they always ask for:

- drive thru Christmas light displays
- their favorite dinner from Lala Zuly
- making treats like reindeer food
- watching Elf snuggled up on the couch with UnJon
- and lots of laughter!

We always end the weekend at Waffle House. The boys return home exhausted, but begging to do it again next year. Cousin Camp has become our favorite holiday tradition.
Just like every family, ours each have their own traditional Holiday meals!

**NOCHEBUENA**
(or Christmas Eve) is Zuly’s big family holiday every year. We enjoy a traditional Cuban meal of black beans and rice (arroz y frijoles), roast pork (lechón), spicy Spanish potatoes (papas bravas) and salad. Zuly’s mom makes a huge tray of bite sized desserts too.

**SOUTHERN FOOD**
Jon’s family does traditional Southern food for every holiday - Christmas, Easter, Thanksgiving, anytime we are getting together! We have strawberry pretzel salad, sweet potatoes, turkey, dressing, ham, deviled eggs, and cranberry sauce, and desserts too.

**BIRTHDAYS**
We love to celebrate each other and birthdays are a GREAT time to do that! We have a lot of shared birthdays in our families, so we celebrate each person while also celebrating together. We even have a shared birthday between twins! Jon, his twin brother and Zuly’s twin nephews all share a birthday. If we happen to be on vacation while it is someone’s birthday, we make sure to go and celebrate big!

In addition to all the regular annual holidays, the First Friday of every month is a holiday for our friend group:

We gather with our friends and their kids to enjoy an evening of beautiful chaos and pizza. Whenever we get together, we are terrible about taking pictures because we are chasing the kids and enjoying our conversations!

**HOLIDAYS FOOD + FAMILY & FRIENDS = GOOD TIMES!**
There are so many reasons we want to adopt. The most obvious is that we both love children. Zuly works with kids, teaching them music and being a mentor for them, and then comes home and embraces every opportunity to love on our nieces and nephews. Jon is a kid-magnet! All the kids in our family, our friend group, and our church love him. He’s always willing to get on the floor and play with them, answer their questions, and has so much love to give.

As a couple, we have suffered multiple miscarriages, and eventually came to an infertility diagnosis. Knowing that we would not be able to have biological kids was hard to accept at first, but now it now feels like something that is an intricate part of our story. We’ve never felt that family was limited by DNA, being able to adopt lets us spread the love to more than just a child, but to their birth family as well.

We know that our traditions and life experiences will become even more rewarding with a child joining our family and we’ve already seen how rewarding it can be to welcome a child into your home. In high school Zuly had a friend who came to her family needing a mentor. Zuly’s parents took him in and he quickly became a part of the family. He is now very much a brother, loved by our whole family, and his kids call us Tia Zuly and Uncle Jon.

Our whole life is built around doing life as a family, we are excited for the day that our family becomes bigger than just the two of us.

Our Family Motto: All in, All the time, NO MATTER WHAT.
Thank you for taking the time to meet us here.

We hope that you’ve been able to see our heart for our family, growing our family through adoption, and our hopes for the future. We have always seen our home as a happy place filled with love, adventure, a strong support system, and an optimistic outlook on the future. Should you consider adoption with our family...

- We promise to teach your child about love, acceptance, kindness and worthiness.
- We promise to love your child as our own without condition.
- We promise to practice kindness and generosity from an early age.
- We promise your child will know the importance of education and the value of hard work.
- We promise to build a strong support system to lift your child to reach their hopes and dreams.
- We promise to teach your child to be proud of who they are, where they come from and where they are going.
- We promise to laugh, go on adventures, play music, and dance through life.

We know you are facing life changing decisions. When we have been faced with those kinds of decisions, we have leaned on our hope that things will work out in the end, that our ending has already been written for us, and that no matter what decision we make that there are people in our life who will love and support us through the next chapter. We have faith that your story will end in such a way that leaves you with confidence and peace. Please know that we are rooting you on, and we believe that you will make the best decision for you, your child and your future.

With much love,
Jon & Zuly