

Life

HARVARD WESTLAKE

Love is in the air this Valentine's Day, especially for all of our Harvard-Westlake alumni couples who are dating or married. This year the Alumni Relations team sent Valentine's Day cards to 112 couples, a record number. Today we share the story of six of them. Whether they began dating as students or connected years later, the common denominator is their love for HW.

Happy Valentine's Day!
Ed Hu, Head of External Relations

LOVE 101



Julie Merson Rothenberg '86 and Richard Rothenberg '85

We met at a Harvard/Westlake party somewhere in the Valley. He was the boy my best friend had a crush on—and he was very cute. Our first kiss was in 1984 listening to Prince in the back seat of Liz Pryor's (class of '85) car. We both remained close with Liz, so we ran into each other over the years, but really reconnected again in 2010. I had moved back to LA from NY and was having a tough time at work, while Richie was grappling with some serious health issues. Liz told me to go see Richie, and it changed my life forever. Even with his health seriously compromised, he had the most positive attitude. He was completely at peace, and it put everything in perspective for me. He was funny and open—and still incredibly cute. Right away I felt completely comfortable with him.

Within a month of the surgery that gave Richie a second chance at life, we went on our first real date at a karaoke bar, where Richie sang Prince's "Kiss," and we kissed for the second time, 27 years after our first kiss. We were married on August 25, 2012, in front of our closest friends and family, including at least 20 of our classmates from Harvard and Westlake classes 1984-1986. We now have 11-year-old identical twin girls (Harvard-Westlake Class of '31?) as well as two adult kids from Richie's first marriage.

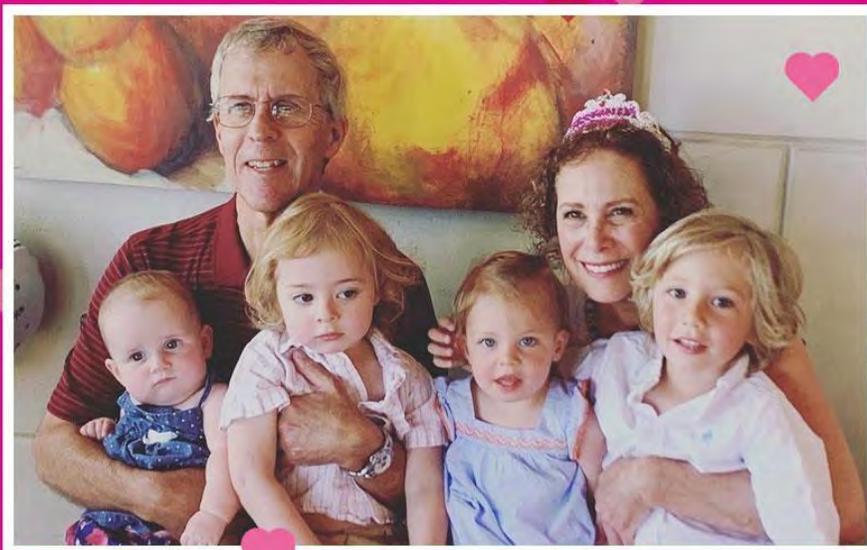


Miles Cardillo '22 and Willa Fogelson '22

We met in seventh grade in Keith Jordan's community service class, but we weren't friends at that point. I don't think seventh graders are capable of love at first sight. The first real connection either of us remembers is a lab in Mr. Fromme's eighth grade science class, taking turns using light-refracting goggles and attempting to toss a ball back and forth. There wasn't anything exactly momentous about the occasion, but that was probably the first time we spent extended time together. Over the summer between eighth and ninth grade, we would go on very old-school dates (movies, bowling, that sort of thing) but pretend they were entirely platonic. The first outing we went on after we officially started dating in ninth grade was to Disneyland on the Madrigals/Symphony joint competition trip in May (we were very cool).

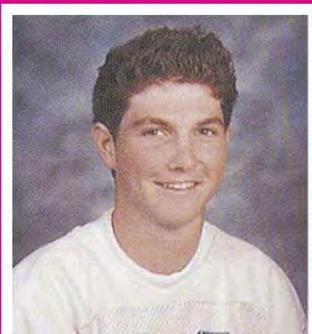
Our universities are 15 minutes from one another (Harvard and Tufts for Willa and Miles, respectively)

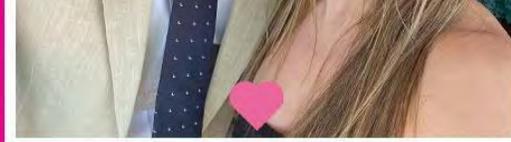
and we're about to move into an apartment together! Also, [middle school math teacher] Mr. Ross, if you're reading this, we know you still claim responsibility both for the existence of our relationship and its longevity. We celebrate our five-year anniversary this year, so congrats to you.



Ron Kaplan P'96 P'00 and Karen Stern (former HW math teacher) P'98 P'01

Karen and I were both single after long marriages. We “met” on an old online dating site called matchmaker.com, talked on the phone, and discovered that we had a Harvard-Westlake connection: Not only was she an HW middle school algebra teacher, but her two children and my two children had attended the school in overlapping years. That was an excellent icebreaker! Talking further, we discovered that our daughters were on the swim team together and in fact shared a lane in swim practice, and that Karen's department head (Sue Olson) was my older daughter's longtime Girl Scout troop leader and knew my family well. So Karen asked Sue about me before she would agree to meet me in person! Apparently I checked out, because we met for drinks at the Century Plaza lobby bar, then walked to dinner at Houston's, and have been together ever since (now 22 years). Karen retired in 2019, but we still read the *Chronicle*, follow HW sports, and go to HW events. Thanks, Harvard-Westlake!





Miles Soboroff '03 and Shana Tavangarian '12

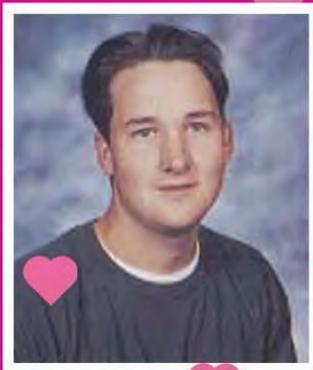
We met in July 2017 at a charity volleyball tournament. Shana was managing the event, and I was mesmerized by how she dealt with people while being equally commanding and graceful. We realized when we were first introduced that we shared a connection; my sister (Leah Soboroff '12), who was briefly at Harvard-Westlake, was one of Shana's best friends. Shana used to go to my house all the time but had never met me since I was already off in college when she was in middle school. You should have seen my mom's shock when she found out we were dating.

Growing up, our houses looked at each other across a canyon in Pacific Palisades, so it was full circle when we started to date. Our first time returning to Harvard-Westlake together was to see my brother, Jacob Soboroff '01, speak at Ted Walch's celebration of life event, which was very meaningful to both of us. We got married in May 2022 surrounded by several of our closest high school friends. Honestly if we didn't make the connection from the beginning that both of us went to HW, I'm not sure we would be together. We're so grateful.



Ryan Rabin '04 and Kyly Zakheim '05

Although we've officially been together since 2005, we've known each other since 1988, when we met as two- and three-year-olds in the toddler program at the Center for Early Education. Our first memory of each other is probably seeing the other one running around the play area at the CEE. Our parents were friendly, but we only got to know each other better once we both started attending HW and socializing in similar circles. For our first date, we meant to meet up at a party but just missed each other, so we decided to get super late-night food at a 24-hour diner in downtown LA. We got married in 2016 and welcomed our daughter Rio in September 2021.



Kelly Ayers '00 and Scott Briggs '96

After a year of lockdowns and quarantine, Kelly and I met online in early 2021. I was living in Santa Monica and Kelly was working around the corner at a family office, so we decided to meet up for lunch. We continued to date and quickly knew that we were a perfect match. Our relationship feels so natural —like we have known each other forever. We eventually discovered that we both went to Harvard-Westlake, grew up a few miles from each other in Santa Monica and Playa del Rey, knew a lot of the same people (Scott's brother, Kyle Briggs '06, knew Kelly and her sister through volleyball circles), but had never crossed paths before. We were engaged within a year, got married, and had our son, Charlie James Briggs, on October 24, 2022.

If you would like to see your story featured next year, please reach out to us!

Although we don't have room to include every story, we read them all and may use them in a future edition!

Correction: In the January 26 *HW Life* email on the HW Debates, Jacklyn Wang '24, a member of one of the two HW teams who finished as semifinalists in World Schools debate, was listed as Nathan Wang '25. We sincerely apologize for the error.

Check out past issues of HW Life!

Head of Communications: [Ari Engelberg '89](#)

Creative Director & Designer: Liz Welchman

Content Director & Editor: [Elizabeth Hurchalla](#)

Archivist & Editor: [Alexis Sherman Arinsburg '98](#)

Production Director: [Shauna Altieri](#)



HARVARD
WESTLAKE
S C H O O L