



## Take a Chance ON THE MOORES

By Teresa Sellinger | Photo by Megan O'Keeffe Photography

Growing up in the small Texas town of College Station, Erin Moore always felt “different.”

“There was a lot of sameness in Texas,” Erin explains. “I never felt like I fit in. I always wanted something more, something bigger.”

So when a chance to move to New York City presented itself, Erin took it.

“I was in dance my whole life and I modeled as a teenager. My acting coach told me there were auditions happening to study musical theater in Manhattan and I said, ‘But I’m not a singer!’”

That didn’t hold Erin back, though. She traveled to Houston, auditioned, and was offered a position in the American Musical and Dramatic Academy (AMDA).

“At the age of 19, on July 1, 2000, I moved to Manhattan. I had \$250 in my pocket. I had never been there. I didn’t know anyone. It was terrifying, dirty and loud. I cried every single day for weeks.”

Erin lived in a student housing building on West 70th Street and Broadway that doubled as a home for mentally-ill elderly people.

“It was student housing up to a certain point,” Erin explains. “We (students) formed friendships with many of the residents. Frankie lived on his own and he was very sweet. He would knock on your door and say, ‘I

heard you practicing your song and it was really good!’ But a lady who lived there used to throw cans and bottles at us when she heard us practicing. We were like, ‘Why does she hate us?’ It was a real New York experience.”

For the first three weeks, Erin called her mother every day crying and asking if she should just return home.

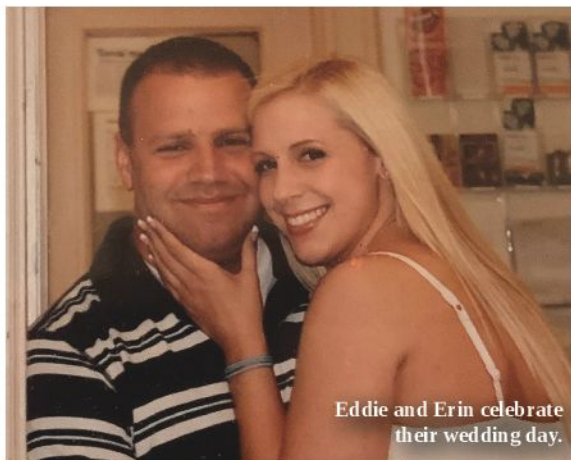
“She’d say, ‘You’re good! You’re good!’ As a mother now, I realize how hard that must have been for her.”

Erin eventually left AMDA due to their policy of not allowing students to audition for shows outside of the school, but she remained in New York City.

“I was a waitress. I was a nanny. Then someone recommended emergency medical technician (EMT) school,” Erin recalls. “I Googled LaGuardia Community College EMT programs and called and they said, ‘Actually we have a grant program for unemployed or low income women.’”

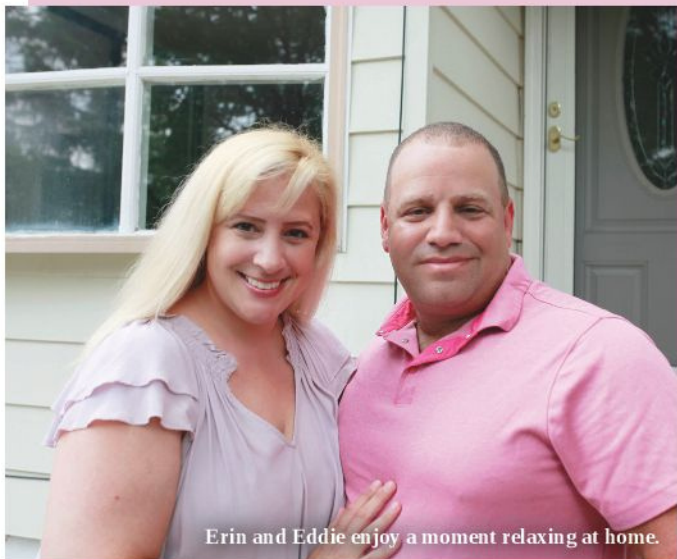
Again, Erin took a chance, applied and was accepted.

“It was a phenomenal program giving underserved communities a stepping stone,” Erin says. “I was valedictorian of my EMT class, which surprised me because I had never been good at school. I struggled in high school. I dropped out of college at home. Then I went to this program and became class valedictorian!”



Eddie and Erin celebrate their wedding day.





Erin and Eddie enjoy a moment relaxing at home.

After completing the program, Erin secured a position at a 911 hospital (acute care) in Brooklyn, which is not common.

“Usually EMTs drive people around for a while before getting a job with a 911 hospital, but I managed to get hired by Victory Memorial Hospital,” Erin explains.

Erin was living and working in Brooklyn when she met her future husband Eddie who, like Erin, ended up as an EMT by taking a chance.

“I’m a Brooklyn boy. I grew up in Bensonhurst, Bay Ridge, with a single mother who recently passed away due to cancer,” Eddie says. “My kids torture me for my accent! My summers were playing in the fire hydrants, hanging out in front of the candy store sitting on milk crates. Typical Brooklyn. I loved it.”

In his late teens, Eddie started working for an oil company, installing and servicing boilers, but like Erin, Eddie knew he wanted something more. Then a friend of his made a bet with him. If Eddie lost the bet, he would have to train as an EMT. Eddie took his chances and lost the bet.

“So me and two good friends went to EMT school,” Eddie laughs. “But I’m the only one who made it through!”

Eddie became an EMT in 1997, working for a private ambulance company.

“It gets your feet wet and lets you learn the terminology,” Eddie explains. “Then I got a job working for Victory Memorial Hospital, and that’s where we met. Erin was working a different shift. I was an overnight guy so we’d see each other in passing and I thought she was kind of cute.”

Due to a case of mistaken identity, however, Erin was not immediately impressed with Eddie.

“I thought he was another guy, one of the most obnoxious guys that people would talk about,” Erin admits. “So he tried for two years!”

“At the time she had a boy friend who worked there,” Eddie says. “Fast-forward 15 years, that guy ended up being my EMT partner and now we’re good friends.”

After two years of getting nowhere with Erin, Eddie happened by chance to attend a wedding Erin was also attending with her ex-boyfriend.

“My ex and I were together at the wedding and my ex was in a horrible



Erin pauses for a brief second at work in the hospital.



Eddie prepares to board the ambulance for work in New York City.

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Erin and Eddie prepare to coach a Sparta flag football game.

"It was a top-notch paramedic program and I was lucky enough to be accepted. We rode with St. Vincent's paramedics and learned from incredibly-skilled clinicians."

During this time, Victory Memorial Hospital closed, and Eddie began working for St. Luke's Hospital, now known as NYU Langone Medical Center. Then 9/11 happened, placing Eddie on the front lines.

"There were a lot of terrible things to see," Eddie says softly.

"He's not an emotional person," Erin adds. "But what I will say is 9/11 is not something he's told me a lot of stories about. We talk about our work--sad, funny, bad stories--but not 9/11."

Erin and Eddie shared another difficult experience together in 2008 when Erin was diagnosed with cervical cancer.

"When the doctor performed surgery to remove it, he told me 'I don't know if you can carry a pregnancy. You may get pregnant and lose it,'" Erin recalls. "At the time I didn't want to get married. I wanted a kid, but didn't want to get married. I was devastated. Then, I came home one day from work and Eddie said, 'I've been researching and I know you want a baby girl. Maybe we can adopt?' It was adorable and so sweet. He's not a touchy-feely person, but right there he showed me how much he cared. What guy does that?"

So, Erin took a chance and proposed, "Maybe we should get married."

Eddie responded, "Alright."

Erin and Eddie eloped on the day of Erin's graduation from medical school.

"My sister and niece came up for the graduation and I said, 'We're making a stop on the way. We're going to City Hall.' I ran into a florist for a wedding bouquet and the florist panicked, yelling 'I can't make a bridal bouquet now! No! No! No! No!'" Erin laughs. "But she did make one in 10 to 15 minutes and it was lovely!"

Erin wore a white sundress, Eddie wore a polo shirt and cargo shorts, and the couple married at Staten Island's City Hall. Why Staten Island?

"Because we heard the lines were shorter there," Eddie explains with a smile.

"I have zero regrets," Erin adds. "I didn't want a big wedding."

Erin and Eddie did take a honeymoon one year later: a 10-day trip to the Dominican Republic.

"We called it our 'Honeymooniversary,'" Erin says with a laugh.

After their honeymoon, the couple returned to Brooklyn and began scouting for a home outside of New York City.

"I refused to raise children in Brooklyn," Erin says. "But I wasn't feeling Westchester. Where I grew up with my mother and older sister was great. College Station is a safe, quiet town even though it's a college town. I wanted my children to have that secure feeling. I wanted that same vibe. I wanted safe and friendly public schools. I wanted them to be able to ride their bikes down the street."

mood," Erin explains. "And Eddie was at the bar, so we ended up talking and chatting for 45 minutes. When I went back to my ex he said, 'What? So you're done talking to Eddie now?'"

Eddie and Erin started dating, and Erin enrolled in medical school through St. Vincent's Hospital in Manhattan.

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Then they discovered Sparta.  
 “I found a home online located on East Shore Trail,” Erin recalls. “We drove along Winona Parkway after a snowstorm and it looked like a postcard. I turned to Eddie and said, ‘This place is going to have to be a shack for me to not want to live here!’”

“She fell in love at first sight,” Eddie remarks. “But I’m a Brooklyn boy. It’s what I know and love.”

Erin eventually convinced Eddie to take a chance on Sparta, and they moved on Valentine’s Day 2010.

“We started living the ‘hashtag lake life’ and we’ve gone to beach four ever since,” Erin says. “We moved to West Mountain Road for a year, but I said, ‘I can’t live like this!’ so we returned to the lake. Lake Mohawk is magical!”

Erin became pregnant with daughter Rylee in 2010, and because she was still working in New York City and had continued to visit her Brooklyn obstetrician, Rylee was born in Brooklyn.

“When I was in labor, I drove myself to New York Methodist Hospital at 3:00 a.m. Eddie was at work,” Erin explains. “My doctor said, ‘You drove yourself here? And you stopped and got gas on the way? Most women in labor can’t get themselves a glass of water!’”

Now 9 years old, fourth-grader Rylee attends Helen Morgan Elementary School where her favorite subject is “free time.” Rylee also loves going to water parks and Great Wolf Lodge.

“She’s outgoing and friendly,” Erin says proudly. “She’ll say, ‘That looks amazing. I’m doing it!’ She’s our little ray of sunshine.”

“I really love playing flag football,” Rylee adds. “And I really love having my dad as coach!”

In fact, both Erin and Eddie coach Sparta flag football. Erin acts as assistant coach, handling offense while Eddie tackles defense.

“We got Rylee involved in flag football and she guilted me into three seasons of being a coach,” Eddie admits. “I actually love it.”

Rylee also swims competitively for the Sussex County Sharks, and feels she’s strongest in the breaststroke, although Erin thinks she’s better at freestyle.

“She was born to be a mermaid,” Erin laughs. “I tell her, ‘I was pregnant and you were in my belly when I was in the water, and that’s why you love the water!’”

“It burns off a lot of energy,” Eddie adds.

“It helps with her anxiety over COVID-19,” Erin explains. “Getting back in the pool has been lifesaving. She also did Girls On The Run and she loved it. It’s such a wonderful program. I did a 5K with her and almost died! She was holding my hand in the beginning but she left and finished 15 to 20 minutes before me!”

Daughter Mackenzie was born in 2014.



Rylee and Mackenzie relax with their family dog, Lexie.

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"She was due on Halloween, but born October 27," Erin says.

Now 5 years old and in kindergarten at Alpine School, Mackenzie recently broke her arm falling from the monkey bars at Lake Mohawk pool.

"Mommy gets to sign my cast first," Mackenzie dictates. "I want Mommy to sign our kitties' names, too!"

According to Erin, Mackenzie tends to be shy, quiet and reserved. Her favorite way to spend family time is family dinner.

"Mommy's not a big cook," Erin laughs. "We're good at supporting local businesses by ordering food!"

Both Rylee and Mackenzie love when family visits.

"My mom loves coming up for the girls' birthdays or for holidays," Erin exclaims. "My mom is a single mom so we have a unique bond. My niece and nephew visited recently too and it was a tight fit but it was really awesome."

While Eddie continues commuting to New York City in his position as an EMT, Erin now works in New Jersey.

"I became a nurse, but left the EMS in 2018 because my partner had been my father figure. He passed away in February," Erin explains tearfully. "He was the greatest human being that ever walked this earth. He was basically the girls' grandfather, the only grandfather they ever knew, and my father figure. After that, I worked at Bristol Glen, then went to Skylands Pediatrics and they were amazing. They couldn't have been more welcoming. Now, I work in the pediatric emergency room at Hackensack Meridian Health JFK Medical Center in Edison and I love it. I love taking care of kids. I love being there for them at a time when they're really scared. I love it because I'm a mother so I know how to be there for the parents as well. It's equal parts. Kids are resilient, so sometimes the parents need more because they're terrified. I can break it down on a human level. I absolutely love it."

Erin pauses, takes a deep breath, and continues.

"Then COVID-19 hit and they took all the kids away, so the pediatric nurses were taking care of adults with COVID-19. You couldn't get an ICU bed, so we were holding kids in the emergency room. I was taking care of patients on drips and losing them. In my absolute worst work moments, I would have families ask to Facetime with a patient and have to explain to them, 'You wouldn't want to see them like this.' Or I'd listen to a grown man sobbing as he said his good-byes to his father. I walked out every single night and cried in my car. Everywhere I looked it was sickness and death."



Rylee and Mackenzie while away a summer day playing in Lake Mohawk.

Returning home from work to Eddie, Rylee and Mackenzie involved strict safety precautions.

"Everything came off in the garage, then I would walk through the house not touching anything," Erin explains. "I'd take a shower on the hottest setting, then go back and wipe all the handles down, then sit and cry, worrying, 'Am I going to give my kids COVID-19?' Then, before I left for the hospital again, I'd take wipes and wash down everything: my pen, my measuring tape, the bottoms of my shoes, my stethoscope. I'd still always wonder, 'Am I protected enough?'"

"We lost a close friend to COVID-19," Eddie adds. "It's just sucked."

Due to their recent experiences with overwhelmed hospitals during COVID-19 and their past experiences with the closing

of vital local hospitals at which they worked, Eddie and Erin have become strong advocates for the funding of hospitals.

"We've seen too many hospitals close because of a lack of funding," Erin says. "I wrote an editorial when they were bailing out the auto industry but not the hospitals, explaining that we need human lives and that's healthcare. It's horrible that they're closing these small, community hospitals. Healthcare is never a priority in this country. It makes us angry because we see firsthand what these people need. They call 911 because they don't have anything else."

"In New York City, we'll typically get 3,000 to 4,000 911 calls per 24-hour period," Eddie adds. "When COVID-19 was at its worst in the city, we'd average upwards of 7,000 calls. It was a lot. There were times when I'd finished work but I had to stay and help out if I could."

With both Erin and Eddie working tough hours and Erin also acting as a substitute nurse for the Sparta school district, how do they manage childcare?

"We balance our shifts," Erin explains. "Even before COVID-19, we've had a babysitter maybe twice."

"One of us is always home," Eddie says.

Living in a wonderful community helps.

"Our neighbor is so sweet and so kind," Erin says. "He's just so wonderful. He gives the girls cupcakes. And the beach is our happy place. It's great family time."

"They know the regulars," Eddie says. "We don't have to keep an eye on them 24/7. It's such a great community."

The Moores plan to take one more chance, moving to a new, bigger home. Of course, it's only five minutes up the road, and of course, it's on Lake Mohawk, a chance that will most certainly pay off.

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