

# Member in Motion: Nathan and Erin

By Elissa Gavette

Under the dimmed lights of Studio I and the glow of the holiday decorations lining the mirrors, DAC member Nathan Heide asked Erin Ward to marry him following their favorite yoga class last December. A perfect acknowledgement of their shared commitment to health and the mind-body connection that brought them together and a memory they would never forget.

Nathan had a lot of different ideas about what to do for the engagement once he had the ring, but with the help of a client from his medical practice the final idea started taking shape. "I wanted to do something special and unique, but still consistent with what we do and who we are," Nathan explains.

Nathan and Erin met at acupuncture school in the way that only happens in romantic comedies. Nathan was an Oregon native living in San Diego while Erin was looking to leave New York. She moved to San Diego to finish her acupuncture program at the same school Nate happened to be at. "We were both going to miss a practice board exam that was required by the school. Nate was going on a climbing trip in Turkey and I was going to an acupuncture clinic in Guatemala," explains Erin. "So it was actually the registrar who introduced us because we had to take our makeup exam together."

They both graduated in the spring of that year. Nathan moved up to Eugene to start the doctoral program and Erin spent time overseas. While in his doctoral program, Nathan opened Anjuna Medicine, an acupuncture and massage clinic that specializes in medical solutions to relieve chronic pain and mental health suffering. When Erin returned to the US, she moved to Eugene and joined the practice as Nathan's partner.

As a fitness enthusiast in a new town, Erin was on the search for a gym. She came into the DAC, tried the yoga classes and instantly connected with Jean, a yoga instructor. "Jean was actually the one who convinced me to get a membership here. I asked her what she thought about DAC membership versus some of the yoga studios around town. She said, well, do you do anything else, like cardio, strength training or other classes? She pointed out that if I joined the DAC I could take her classes four days a week and get all the other stuff too."

Two and a half years later, Nathan and Erin still go to Jean's classes together, so it was a natural place for the proposal. Though it might sound very public – to propose in a group exercise class – in practice, the proposal was very intimate with Nathan and Erin the only ones who knew it was happening.

It was a day just like any other day as they headed into Jean's Saturday yoga class, according to Erin. They had an upcoming trip to Greece planned and the custom ruby engagement ring they designed together was being resized. It was on her mind, but everyone assumed Nathan would propose in Greece.

When Nathan pulled his yoga mat next to Erin's at the end of class for savasana, the final pose of a yoga class meant for deep relaxation, she didn't think anything of it. They used to do this all the time. But instead of putting his palm up on top of hers, he put it palm down and there was something between their two hands. As Erin ran through all the options of what it could be, the ruby engagement ring wasn't one of them. "As he held my hand, I was thinking, it kind of feels like a ring, but it can't be that ring, that's not right. It was a very long three minutes of savasana." When the class ended, Nathan rolled over to face Erin, opened up her hand to reveal the ring and whispered, "Together forever."

As partners, the strength of their relationship has been the foundation of their business and working together might even be seen as an advantage in forging a strong relationship as they take the next step into married life. Being partners in life and business is a hard balance but they've made it work. "Working together can expose some fractures in relationships," Nathan says. "So if you think your relationship is strong, you can really put it to the test by working together for a few years."

Erin elaborates, "A lot of issues that you might normally get away with ignoring for a while get brought to the surface but I think that's healthier. With open communication, we address it and move on, which is important not just for us but for our employees."

The two greatest hurdles they've overcome in the business partnership were becoming business partners in the first place then bringing on employees.

Both agree that the biggest advantage is trust. The trust you have in your spouse or significant other as a partner is greater than you are likely to have with any other business partner in your life. "Even if there are disagreements, you know they aren't going anywhere," says Erin.

With everything in place, they've made Anjuna a place where people can seek not only treatments, but hope for a better life. "Hope is a really powerful channeling force," Nathan explains, "The possibility for a better life and quality of life, that's what our clinic stands for."

The holistic view that Nathan and Erin take in their practice is precisely what brings them back to the DAC. "If we are going to tell people they need to take care of themselves, workout, etc., the way we do that is at the DAC. Hopefully we are leading by example," shares Erin. Now the DAC has cemented a special place in their love story. "Whenever I go to Jean's class, I think of the engagement and it's truly wonderful."