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# After the Aisle: Brittany DeKnight '07 & Nick Kline '07

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**J**ohn Campbell, a 20th century American writer and lecturer, was most famous for coining the phrase “follow your bliss.”

But he also wrote, “When you make the sacrifice in marriage, you’re sacrificing not to each other but to unity in a relationship.”

It’s a sentiment that **Brittany DeKnight ’07** and **Nick Kline ’07** have lived since the couple began dating during their sophomore year shortly after setting eyes on one another by accident.

DeKnight was going through sorority rush and was forbidden to speak to sorority members during the short bid period in the winter term. As she explains, some sorority friends were in her Introduction to Politics class. Instead of speaking, she waved and smiled to them each morning as she entered the class. Kline, who sat nearby, mistook DeKnight’s gesture.

“He thought I was waving to him,” laughs DeKnight. But soon, she began flirting for real.

Career-minded professionals with advanced degrees, both have taken sidesteps to give their partner a step up. After earning a master’s degree in social work from the University of Georgia in 2010, Kline limited his job search to Greenville where DeKnight had landed a plum first job as the associate director of the Shi Center for Sustainability.

Both had endured the travails of long-distance dating and had come to the same conclusion: If they were going to make it work, they had to do it together.



### **Brittany DeKnight ’07 & Nick Kline ’07**

*It took seven years for their careers in social work to intersect.*

By John Roberts

So while DeKnight, who earned a master’s degree in sustainability from Arizona State University, managed the student fellows program and coordinated community outreach for the Shi Center, Kline took a job with Furman’s catering services.

“It was important for me to move to Greenville and put the time into the relationship.

It was tough because I could not contribute to the household (income) as I would have liked,” says Kline, who played rugby at Furman and earned a B.A. in philosophy.

In 2012, Kline was offered a job in Lexington, Virginia, as a program manager for Father’s First. He would be in charge of seven staff members, manage a healthy annual budget and

develop outreach programs to help fathers separated from their children develop healthy family relationships.

The couple, married in 2013, moved to the scenic Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia, and DeKnight took a job as a restaurant server and hostess.

“We had always agreed that both of our careers are equally important and that, at times, we would each have to take time and sacrifice for the other,” says DeKnight.

A little more than a year later, their professional careers finally intersected when Kline was promoted and the couple moved 45 minutes away to Roanoke, Virginia, where DeKnight took a job as program manager with the United Way of Roanoke Valley. A political science and earth and environmental sciences major, DeKnight manages a program that works to improve the health and wellness of low- to moderate-income community members. Kline continues to work with men, many of whom have served time in prison, to improve parenting and secure employment.

An affable giant with an easy smile, Kline helped connect them quickly to neighbors in their urban neighborhood, which offers a scenic view of the city. And DeKnight has made connections through her work with the United Way.

Now Kline, who grew up in Indonesia and New Orleans, and DeKnight, a Columbia, South Carolina, native, have made Roanoke theirs.

“We have really developed a close community of friends here,” says Kline. “It feels like home.” ●