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Nashville lovebirds share two backpacks, one dream

Local lawyers to wed Sunday, then spend yearlong honeymoon as volunteers around the globe

By BONNA JOHNSON • Staff Writer • August 17, 2010

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And so began the swift romance of Nashville attorneys Derek Hughey, 35, and Shanna Singh, 29, who met two years ago at Cabana restaurant.

On Sunday, they're getting married in Michigan, then three days later jetting off on a yearlong honeymoon that will take them to about 30 countries throughout the world.

"He's been planning a trip around the world for years," Shanna said. "I was in the right place at the right time. I get to help him fulfill the dream of his lifetime."

He's quitting his partnership at Bass Berry & Sims, the law firm where he has worked for 10 years, and leaving behind the charming cottage he bought four years ago in Hillsboro Village. She's delaying for a year a job at the O'Melveny & Myers LLP law firm in Washington, D.C., a city she says she loves more than any other place.

Derek won't have a job lined up when they return, figuring his zeal for travel and cooking may lead him in a direction away from law. "I'm going to take the opportunity on the trip to try and figure that out," he said.

For the next 12 months, the newlyweds will indulge in their passions: seeking out remote corners of the globe, dining adventurously and trekking far off the beaten path.

A plan to give back

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the romantic sights before making their way through Asia, South America, South Africa, the Middle East, eastern Europe and other spots their hearts may lead them.

Along the way, they'll weave in weeks of volunteering, their chance to help make the world a better place.

"We feel so incredibly blessed to be doing this," Shanna said of the trip. "And we feel lucky to have met each other in the first place."

Their global good turn will be a continuation of the volunteer work they've done in Nashville, such as tutoring and Big Brothers and Big Sisters, she said.

They plan to work with homeless children on the beaches of Cambodia, AIDS patients in South Africa and, while in India, volunteer with the Grameen Bank, a Nobel Peace Prize-winning microfinance organization.

"Service work should get us closer to individuals and help us to understand them and their situations a little better," Derek said.

They'll blog about their journey at their website, www.oneyearonearth.com. (The name they initially picked out was far less lyrical and had something to do with lawyers and backpacks, they laughed.)

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They see a year filled with unknowns as a great foundation for a lifetime together.

"To be able to spend a year, 24/7, with my new wife is pretty amazing," Derek said. She added, "Think of all the memories we'll have together."

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Derek Hughey

Age: 35

Hometown: Nashville

Occupation: Just quit his job as a partner with Bass, Berry & Sims law firm, Nashville

Education: Bachelor's degree, Lipscomb University; law degree and MBA, Duke University

Travels: 44 countries, including a 7-month, around-the-world trip as part of a study-abroad program. He usually takes two trips a year, and they have included spots like Burma, Morocco, Jordan and Cambodia.

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