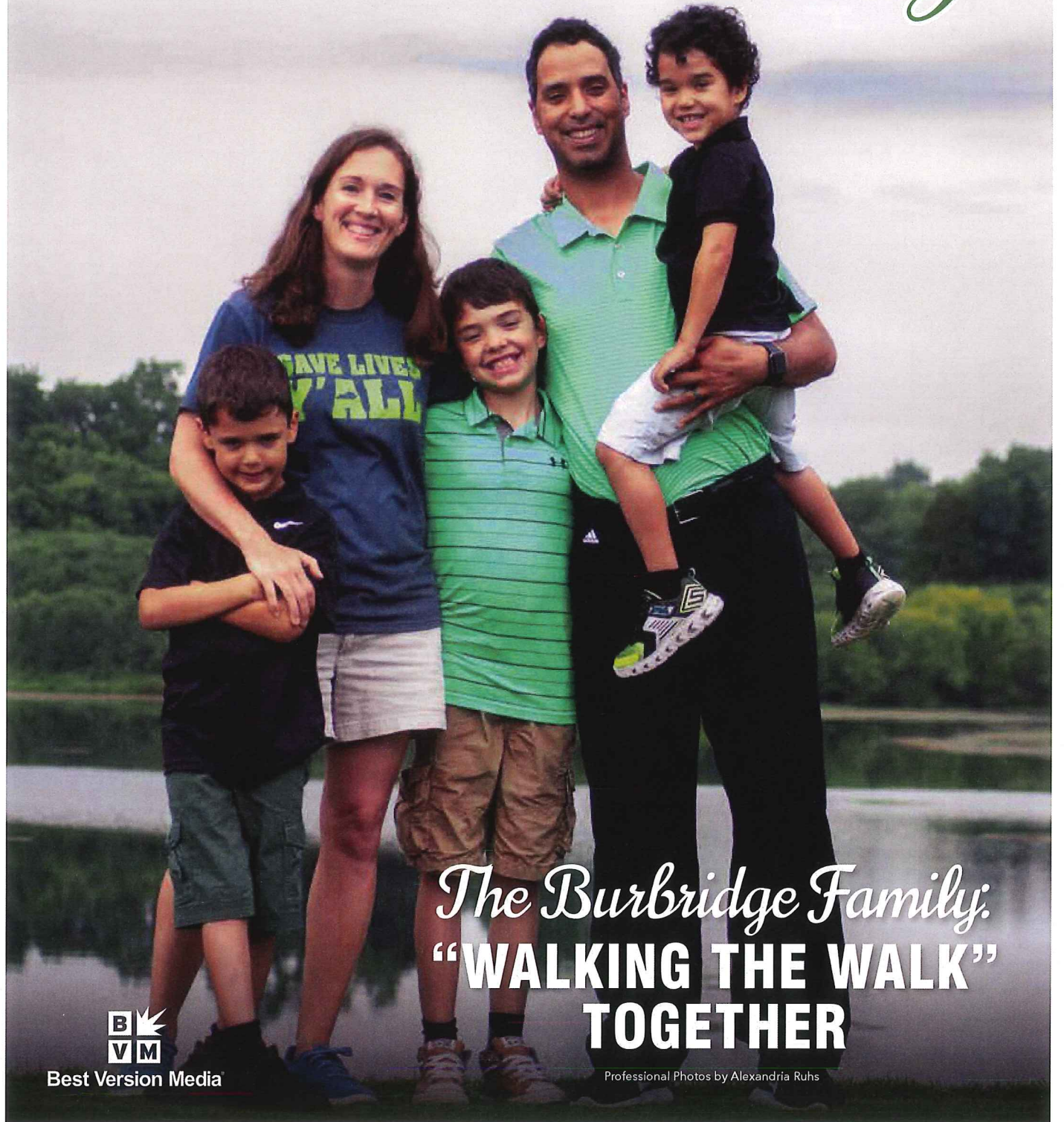


East End Living

AUGUST 2019

An exclusive magazine serving the residents of Louisville's East End



The Burbridge Family:
**“WALKING THE WALK”
TOGETHER**



Best Version Media

Professional Photos by Alexandria Ruhs



The Burbridge Family: “WALKING THE WALK” TOGETHER

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When mother-of-three Beth Burbridge saw her Polo Fields neighbor’s plea online for a kidney for his son, she was intrigued. She read the story of how his son had struggled with a genetic kidney disease for most of his life. She read about how none of their family members could donate due to the genetic component of his disease; and that Jackson Alldaffer would certainly suffer an untimely death without a new kidney.

Then she turned off her computer and went on with her day. But her mind stayed with Jackson. And then her mind turned to her own three sons, aged 9, 7, and 4. What if it was one of her boys with a kidney disease and she was helpless to save them? How desperate would she be to find a stranger to save her own son?

And that’s how Beth Burbridge started walking down the path to doing something that most of us would consider unthinkable: donating a kidney to a complete stranger.

“I think my dad said it best when I told him about her decision to donate her kidney to a person we don’t know,” says Nick Burbridge, Beth’s husband. “He said, “Now that’s walking the walk!” Spot on, Dad!”

Nick says his first reaction when Beth told him she was considering kidney donation was concern for his wife’s well-being. Then, he was concerned for their own children, and if they needed a kidney in the future. But the more he researched and learned about kidney donation and that the likelihood that one of their own boys would need one was extremely low, the idea grew on him.

“There are many people who say the right things, but when you see someone put themselves in harm’s way to benefit a stranger it is powerful,” says Nick. “Beth did something so special it’s difficult to describe. Her level of empathy and selflessness was on full display.”

Beth went through many weeks of questions and medical testing before she found out she was a match to donate a kidney to Jackson. In the meantime, she was rallying support from her family.

“I knew I would need Nick. I would need help from his parents. I would need help from my parents. I needed help taking care of my boys and taking care of me,” says Beth. “I knew I couldn’t do it without total support from my family.”

It was total support she received. Her husband, her in-laws, and her parents were all invested in helping Beth make this incredibly selfless donation. So she got to share the news with Mindy and Derek, Jackson’s parents.

“It was like Christmas,” says Beth. “Their reaction was amazing. They went from knowing that their son had a death sentence to possibly having a full life ahead of him... it is easily one of the best experiences of my life.”

Beth got to meet Jackson while they were in the hospital, and she continues to get updates on how he’s doing post-surgery. The procedure went remarkably well for both of them, and Jackson is thriving with his new (to him!) kidney.

“You have to understand,” says Nick, “I wasn’t shocked at Beth doing this for someone, even someone she doesn’t know. She does things all the time for people and charities. She takes our kids to hospitals to give sick children gifts during the holidays. Doing things for others isn’t new to her.”



The Transplant Team: (L-R- Dr. Erica Sutton (surgeon), Beth, Dr. Shawnda Alexander (donor coordinator), Nick.

Beth's friend, Meghan, made special "kidney cookies" to share with the medical staff at the hospital on transplant day.

Their 9-year-old son, Nicholas says wrapping presents and delivering them to children in a pediatric wing of Frazier Rehab Institute is his favorite memory of serving others with his mom. Beth says she made a lot of community service connections during her time as a member of the Junior League of Louisville (she's a sustaining member now).

The Burbridges' sons are Nicholas, who is going into 3rd grade, Rodney, who is going into 2nd grade, and Henry, who is in preschool. All of them will be attending Stopher Elementary next year.

The Burbridge boys (Nick included) love to be out on the golf course, and sometimes they golf, too.

"My dad loves golf and we became golfing buddies when I moved home," says Nick. "Now I try to get my sons into the sport. I've had limited success with getting them to play, but they love to go out on the course with me and mess around. They search for golf balls, find animals, help drive the cart, and sometimes they putt."

"He wins Dad of the Year for trying!" laughs Beth. "I don't see how he does it!"

The family has lived in Polo Fields for 11 years and one of their favorite things about the neighborhood is that Nick's parents live less than 5 minutes away.

"It's been wonderful to have them around the kids as they grow and really great for us to have help with the kids and their activities," says Beth.

They also look forward to dressing up and trick-or-treating for Halloween, enjoying brunch at the clubhouse for Christmas and Easter, and the neighborhood fireworks show. Beth says she's also been able to build great friendships here.

"There's a group of neighborhood moms that I go to dinner with every month and sometimes we get our families together," says Beth. "Many of our kids are in school together and it's been a lifesaver

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to text each other about late-night school projects! Nick also has a friend from high school and a friend from college in the neighborhood and we enjoy going to New Year's Eve and Derby parties with their families around the corner. We are blessed to live so close to so many wonderful people."

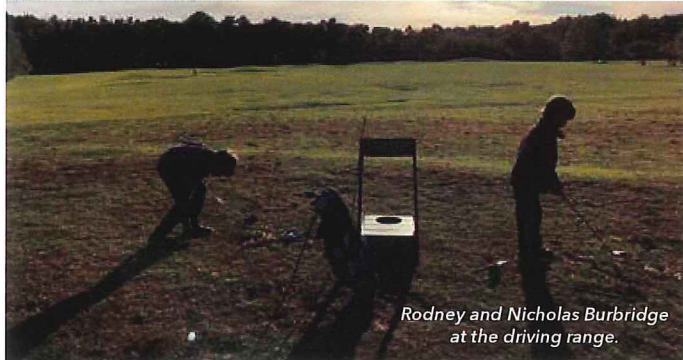
The Burbridges wanted to say thank you to their community and *East End Living* for the donation of gift cards to area restaurants during Beth's recovery from surgery. In those days when she was recovering, depending on her community of support and trying to heal, their dishwasher broke and the gift cards were a helpful way to get easy meals for the family.

"The support from our neighbors, even ones we don't know, has been amazing," says Beth.

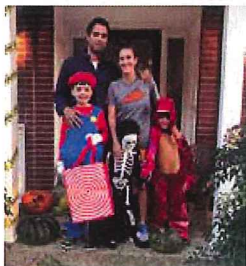
What an example of self-sacrificial love to display for the young Burbridge boys. They saw their mom love a stranger as if he were her own son. They saw their dad caring for them and caring for their mom, and supporting her in a decision that some husbands might have struggled to understand. They saw their grandparents rally to the family's side to provide support. They saw friends and neighbors far and wide find ways to pitch in, wherever they could. They saw how to walk the walk their parents have been teaching them for years.



The Burbridge children at their favorite vacation spot: Seacrest Beach on 30A.



Rodney and Nicholas Burbridge at the driving range.



Halloween trick-or-treating is one of the Burbridges favorite days in Polo Fields.



Beth's friend Bethany sent her these shoes, with her transplant date written on the side, when she learned how important it was to get up and get moving after surgery. Beth says she's worn them on every walk since.

MORE WALKING THE WALK...

Beth learned during her donation process that Kentucky is one of the few states that offers little to no benefits to living organ donors. In fact, Beth had only a few days of recovery time before she needed to be back to work, because paid medical leave was unavailable to her. She's been working to have the state's laws changed to reflect those of other states that offer benefits to those who choose to donate an organ to someone else.

She has met with State Representative Jerry Miller and communicated with Senator Julie Rague Adams. Both have indicated a willingness and intent to pursue adding a bill for living organ donors in the next legislative session. Beth is also partnering with the National Kidney Foundation, KODA and Kentucky Circuit Court Clerks' Trust for Life to gain support for the possible legislation.

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- Judy P.

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- Paul & Pam H.



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