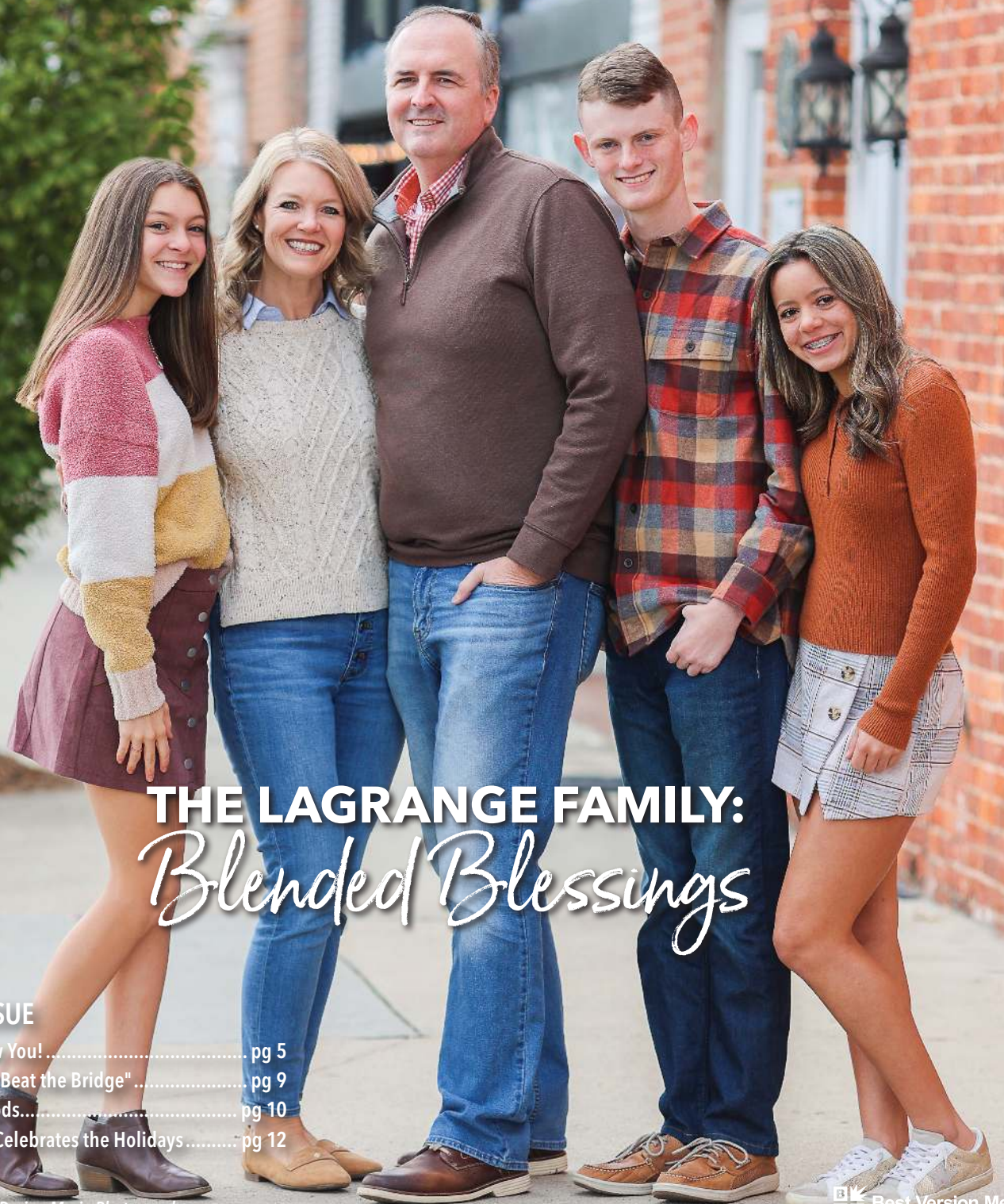


Five Forks

Neighbors

January 2023



THE LAGRANGE FAMILY: *Blended Blessings*

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Cover Photo by Darien Marie Photography

THE LAGRANGE FAMILY: *Blended Blessings*

By Shanna Walker / Photography by Darien Lewandowski
Darien Marie Photography and provided by the Lagraange Family



Whitney and Ben Lagraange found each other through a network of mutual friends on social media. They are both from Florence, SC, but did not actually know each other. Whitney recognized Ben's name after receiving his friend request, as they had both grown up within the same church. Their first date was at Papas n' Beer in Simpsonville, and they were married about a year later.

"Needless to say, the first date went well," Ben laughs.

Ben proposed to Whitney at Pretty Place, and they chose to have their wedding there as well. The wedding was in March of 2020, a date that was moved up from the original date to get ahead of pandemic shutdowns. The intimate wedding ceremony included Whitney and Ben; their childhood pastor, Jimmie Hartley as the officiant; and a close friend. Their original plan of a honeymoon trip to Cancun had to be postponed. Instead, the happy couple pivoted and vacationed in a rustic cabin in Blue Ridge, GA and had a wonderful time. They were finally able to take that trip to Cancun in March of 2022.

"Our intimate wedding and both our honeymoons are some of our best memories together. At least so far," Ben says.

Ben is a Clemson grad with a degree in mechanical engineering. For 18 years, he worked for GE Power in design, quality, reliability, and services engineering. During that time, he took evening classes at Clemson and earned his MBA. Ben enjoyed working for GE, but felt there was something more for him. In 2019, Ben, along with his good friend and GE co-worker Chris Davidson, purchased Blue Ridge Heating and Air, based out of Brevard, NC. In 2020, Ben and Chris expanded the business and brought it to Greenville. They've found that their combined backgrounds in engineering and management have been a good fit for running an HVAC company.

Whitney holds a liberal arts degree from Francis Marion University. She has utilized her art and design talents with several jobs throughout her career. In her late 20s, Whitney focused her career efforts on the nonprofit sector, most recently managing the United Way of Laurens County. She now works in economic development and is the Director of Marketing for Laurens County Development Corporation.

When Whitney and Ben married, they became a blended family. Whitney has a 14-year-old daughter, Clara. Ben has a son, Lucas (18), and a daughter, Ansley (13).

Clara is a gifted musician who can play several instruments. She even plays some instruments by ear! Clara has played the violin since she was just five years old. Her dedication to the violin has definitely paid off. She plays second violin in the Riverside High orchestra and has earned the position of second chair.

Lucas is currently in his first year at The Citadel. He's following in his dad's footsteps by focusing on mechanical engineering. Lucas is an Eagle Scout and worked at Regal Cinemas on Woodruff Road during his last summer before college.



Photo Courtesy of Kristy Kaliopie Photography



Cooper looks very dapper with his bowtie

Ansley is an all-around athlete and enjoys most sports. Right now, she's focusing on basketball and plays on the girls' team at Riverside Middle. She was a gymnast for eight years before deciding to try out some other sports.

We can't forget the four-legged Lagranges!

Gabby is a nine-year-old Boxer mix. She has the "face of an angry old person" and usually has her tongue hanging out the side of her mouth, which makes for some pretty funny photo opportunities.

Cooper is a nine-month-old miniature poodle. He's super cute, which is a good thing because it keeps him out of trouble! He's full of puppy energy and is relentless in his pursuit of attention.



Gabby is happier than she looks!



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The Lagranges really enjoy camping and being outdoors. This trip was on the Appalachian Trail.

The Lagranges live in Pelham Falls. They love the convenience of the location and the neighborly feel. They'll occasionally play tennis at the neighborhood courts, and in the summer, they spend a lot of time at the neighborhood pools.

"We especially love having the river path where we can walk or bike alongside the Enoree River," Ben says. "We just wish we had more free time to utilize it."

"It seems like most neighbors are eager to contribute and participate," Whitney says. "We also see neighbors help each other out when challenges arise, whether that be an illness, a house fire, or just the small projects that come up in a neighborhood."

Just inside the entrance of the Lagrange home hangs an engraved brass plate from Ben's grandparents' home. It reads, "But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD," from Joshua 24:15. This verse is a touchstone of sorts for the family and a reminder of their faith.

Ben goes on to say how grateful he is that his neighbors have supported him as a small business owner.

"Blue Ridge Heating and Air is our livelihood, not just a side hustle, so it means the world to me when our neighbors hire us to service or replace their equipment," Ben tells me. "I live here, and I'm accountable

to this community. We are so thankful for the recommendations we get on the neighborhood Facebook page, and it's such a great feeling to see our trucks in the neighborhood, helping our neighbors out."

Blending two families is not always easy. It requires lots of compromises but comes with rewards, too.

When Whitney and Clara moved into the house with Ben, Lucas, and Ansley, the family decided to do some renovations to the house. The updates made everything feel fresh and homey for everyone. And



since the wedding happened at the very beginning of the pandemic, quarantine provided a perfect setting for bonding as a family.

Whitney even made a compromise when it came to college football! She grew up in a Gamecock household and was a Carolina fan until she married Ben.

"I didn't have much of a choice," Whitney laughs. "It's everywhere; all of this Clemson orange and Tiger gear!"

When you think of it as a compromise that leads to family togetherness, it doesn't seem quite so hard. The blending becomes a blessing!



Happy New Year!

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