

NEIGHBOURS OF Albert St. South

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The Blakleys
Enhancing A Community Through Inclusion

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Cover photo by Parry Johnson

AN EXCLUSIVE MAGAZINE SERVING THE RESIDENTS OF SOUTH ALBERT PARK, ALBERT PARK, PARLIAMENT PLACE AND WHITMORE PARK



The Blakleys

Enhancing A Community Through Inclusion

By Tony Playter • Photos by Parry Johnson

Albert Park is known as a warm and caring community that is home to many interesting residents. This month we visit with Carla and Brent Blakley, who have called Albert Park home since 1999.

"We first looked at living in Albert Park because Brent grew up here and it was close to Whitmore Park where I grew up," said Carla. "We chose this area to be close to our families and close to a good school for the kids."

While Carla and Brent Blakley are life-long residents of Regina, they did not meet until Carla's Campbell Collegiate grade 12 graduation in 1982.

According to Carla, she first met Brent when he escorted a friend of hers to the graduation ceremony. From there a strong long-distance friendship blossomed.

"We were friends for many years as I traveled the world," said Carla. "I visited in Finland during the summer of 1982 as an exchange student, visited Indonesia in 1985 and 1986 and then at the University in Copenhagen in 1988 and 1989."

When she returned to Regina, Brent asked Carla out for lunch and the rest is history. Their relationship grew and Brent and Carla were married the following summer in 1990.



"Our honeymoon was spent driving to Waterloo, Ontario because I was going to begin my Masters of Divinity at Waterloo Lutheran Seminary while Brent was going to teach at Mentor College in Mississauga."

Education has been a priority for Brent, Carla and their four children, Janelle, Taline, Jay and Kayla. In fact, the Blakley clan collectively have eight University of Regina degrees and ten degrees in total.

Both Brent and Carla have used their education to enhance the lives of many Regina and Saskatchewan residents.

Brent continues to share his family's passion for education and sports as he has been a teacher for thirty-four years.

"Brent has spent the last ten years teaching woodworking at Sheldon-Williams Collegiate, the same school that he attended," said Carla. "He has recently retired from a long career of coaching football with the high school team, as well as in the community."

When Brent finally decides to retire from teaching, he will continue to create unique furniture in his woodshop.

Carla just recently celebrated twenty-seven years of ordination in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada.

She is currently undertaking a very unique partnership call and is serving Lakeview United Church as a Lutheran Pastor and Yellow Grass United Lutheran Partnership.

"Rather than working within one denomination, we are expanding our view to look out into the community," said Carla. "Working within communities, we strive to create a hub for inclusion and wellness, reconciliation, and deconstructing past theologies that upheld homophobia, transphobia and white privilege."

"It is very refreshing work," added Carla.

In addition, Carla is known for outstanding work in grief counselling and feels very privileged to hold space and walk with families during difficult times.

Believing deeply in an inclusive community doesn't stop with work as Carla and Brent are also avid allies for the 2SLGBTQ+ community in our workplaces and in our community.

When not sharing their talents and caring personalities with members of the local community, the Blakley family love to travel and explore various areas around the world.

"Mark Twain said, 'Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry and narrow-mindedness,' and we live this," said Carla. "Brent and I love to travel and make travel plans."

The passion for travel and learning about cultures, foods and customs has always been a family theme.

"We are a well-travelled family and often have gone to visit relatives in Denmark," said Carla. "Our kids have traveled to Uganda, Ghana, France, Finland, Jordan and El Salvador for pleasure and University internships."



Carla's other travel destinations have included Africa, South and Central America and the Middle East.

During the winter, Brent and Carla and the kids love to go to Roatan for winter holidays. It's a beautiful island in Honduras, where Carla snorkels in the pristine coral reefs and Brent deep sea fishes.

Brent adds excitement to his travels with summer motorcycle adventures and has toured across Canada and northern USA.

When not traveling, this amazing couple enjoys wearing their green and white football jerseys and cheering the Saskatchewan Roughriders on to victory or just relaxing and enjoying the beach at their Regina Beach seasonal camp site.

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For Brent and Carla their main source of pride and joy are their children. They have shared their love of travel and the importance of an inclusive society with them.

"In the 90's the use of midwives was not easily done, but all of our children were quietly and quickly born at home using midwives," said Carla.

"Our children see the world as their backyard," said Carla. "They all have a vast world view and understanding, their open-mindedness, their compassion for social justice, and inclusion within the 2SLGBTQ+ community is important to all of them."

Each of their children has found their own unique path and have worked hard to create amazing work and life opportunities.

Janelle currently lives in Ottawa and works at the US Embassy. She likes cooking, going for walks, and spending time with her dog, Toby.

Taline and Jay are continuing their graduate studies. Taline lives in Regina and enjoys playing rugby and football and loves her job working with foster children.

Jay lives in Edmonton and is an accomplished violinist. He spends a lot of time working on his camper van and camping in the summers.

Kayla is a substitute teacher with the Regina Public School Board, as she prepares to teach in Australia for the upcoming year. She likes being active, reading, and spending time with her friends.

No family can be truly complete without a dog roaming the hallways.

"Gus is our three pawed pocket beagle and he is full of mischief," said Carla. "His keen sense of smell has led him into all kinds of situations."

One day a young mischievous Gus somehow got into Carla's home communion kit. He happily ate all the communion wafers and even bit into the bottle of communion wine and managed to down about a half a cup of wine.

"I phoned the vet to inquire about his wine consumption and the vet laughed and told me, you will have a blessed,



blitzed beagle," said Carla. "She adds that we need to watch for slurred barking and Gus will probably nap for you this afternoon."

With so much history and childhood memories, Albert Park was the perfect choice to raise their family.

"We love our crescent, and it is very community minded," said Carla. "We have hosted block parties for many years, sometimes with live music and the kids always decorate their bikes for a bike parade."

Every year on December 26 at 1:00 pm, The Blakley's and their neighbours drop the puck for a neighbourhood game of street hockey. The post-game celebration is usually followed by some chili and beverages.

"During COVID restrictions many of us kept in contact by creating outside ice bars that provided lots of opportunity to safely visit outside and stay connected," said Carla.

Carla and Brent are also very proud of having an open-door policy at their house, and pre-pandemic, they entertained a great deal. Charcuterie boards, themed parties or games nights were a monthly event.

Regina and Albert Park are great places to live and raise a family because of families like the Blakleys, who go out of their way to make this amazing community inclusive for everyone.

Do you know a neighbour who has a story to share? Nominate your neighbour to be featured in one of our upcoming issues! Contact us at tplayer@bestversionmedia.com.

