ZACHARIAH’S ACRES

5K Trail Run/Walk
Saturday, October 19, 2013
Zachariah’s Acres | Oconomowoc, WI
9 am – Competitive Run
11 am – Family Run/Walk
12 pm – 3pm – Family Fall Harvest Fest
Fall Harvest Fest is exclusively for children with special health care needs and their families.

Offering respite and recreation to children with special health care needs by making nature accessible.
Tillisch family offers tips on getting involved!

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THE TILLISCH FAMILY. Eric, Deanna, Kayla, 18, Kasey, 14, and Morgan, 12, moved into Blackhawk Farms in March of 2005. “We selected this subdivision because it allowed us to build our own and amenities around their daughter, Kasey, who has special needs.”

“We greatly appreciate our neighbors’ understanding of the unique challenges we face having a child with profound disabilities,” says Deanna. “There are also many rewards.” The Tillischs acknowledge the Viehe, Kelly, Schindler and Roedenbch families who have helped them out on many, many occasions over the years.

Eric, who earned a Juris Doctor from Ohio Northern University College of Law and a BA from UW-Madison, now works as a loss mitigation specialist at Chase Bank. An avid golfer, Eric was also a stay-at-home dad for two great years.

Deanna, who has an MBA from Marquette University and a BA from UW-Madison, is the president and CEO of the United Performing Arts Funds (UPAF), a nonprofit organization that works to secure community resources to promote the performing arts in Southeastern Wisconsin. She left Northwestern Mutual after almost 20 years to join the nonprofit. “People thought I was crazy for leaving the stability,” explains Deanna. “I have never looked back a day. It is a gift to be part of an organization like UPAF.”

“People working for a nonprofit was nothing new for Deanna, who has been volunteering since she was a child. Currently, she is board president of Life Navigators (supports individuals with cognitive disabilities); serves on the board of Milwaukee Institute for Art and Design (MIAD); and is a member of TEMPO (a women’s leadership group), the Medical College of Wisconsin’s Women in Science Advisory Committee (raises funds to support female researchers and inspires women to enter scientific/medical professions) and the Greater Milwaukee Committee (a business and civic leaders organization).”

“I am deeply committed to helping families who have a member with special needs,” says Deanna. Regarding her involvement with TEMPO and Women in Science, Deanna says: “Connecting with women is important, especially when life gets busy. Both these organizations allow me to support others at various stages of their lives.”

And, since Kayla is a beautiful visual artist with Morgan following in her footsteps, MIAD is another great fit.

Deanna’s involvement has a trickle-down effect on her children, who have a spirit of giving back. “Morgan and Kayla are extremely empathetic individuals,” says Deanna, “which is also reinforced through their interactions with Kasey.”

For any neighbors interested in getting involved in the community, Deanna offers the following tips:

• First, identify your passion. What inspires you?
• Second, determine how much time you are able to commit.
• Third, identify your preferences for involvement – board/service/leadership, committees, mentoring, hands-on (sorting food, helping kids learn how to read, cleaning up parks, etc.)
• Fourth, ask family members if they would also like to be engaged in the cause.
• Finally, talk with people involved in organizations that are of interest to you.

Besides volunteering, Deanna and Eric enjoy following their alma mater – UW Badger sports. The family spends their free time golfing, playing tennis, doing Pilates, weight lifting, watching movies and playing board games on family night.

The Tillisch household is filled with the arts – beyond Deanna’s job. Kayla is attending Indiana University this fall, majoring in theater. She is active with First Stage and has performed in a school play every year since she was in seventh grade. Kayla became enchanted with the performing arts at a young age; she played the piano for several years and continues to take voice lessons.

Morgan has been an inspiring pianist since the age of five and also participates in First Stage. Kasey loves musical toys and Barney songs. And, she has received music therapy for several years, thanks to the Arrowhead School District.

Each year, the family travels to Naples, Florida, where Deanna’s parents live. These trips often include a stop at the magical Walt Disney World. Deanna’s parents, who enjoy sharing experiences with their extended family, took the Tillischs, along with Deanna’s brother and his family, to Botswana and Capetown three years ago. The trip included two safaris!

Yet, there is no place like home. Since Eric and Deanna work downtown, they relish the solitude, relaxed atmosphere and family-focused environment in Blackhawk Farms. “We enjoy the rural nature of the community, such as a large yard (especially important to our dog, Toby) and a beautiful garden. Yes, we have within a short driving distance, all the conveniences of daily living.” These conveniences include a membership at the Legends, where they enjoy the different pools and excellent food, along with four golf courses.

The Tillisch family wishes they were able to spend more time with neighbors, but having three children and a dual-career household does not leave enough hours in the day to be heavily involved in the neighborhood. “We greatly appreciate our neighbors’ understanding of the unique challenges we face having a child with profound disabilities,” says Deanna.

“Anyone can take a picture, but few can capture a moment!”

Heart & Soul PHOTOGRAPHY

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