

MESA VERDE

Living

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BY DARREN CROTEAU
PHOTOGRAPHY BY
SHASTIN FLETCHER AND
THE HAYES FAMILY

When it comes to purpose-driven families, the Hayes family—who live by the motto “Always do your best, no matter what you are doing”—provides a roadmap for us all to follow. Though the phrase is simple, Samantha and Michael Hayes, and their children Olivia (7) and Cole (3), use it as a guiding principle that shapes everything from parenting and entrepreneurship to community involvement and everyday life in Mesa Verde.

A Story That Comes Full Circle

Samantha and Michael’s story began in their early twenties when, as they put it, “we were still kids.” They met serendipitously at a bank (remember when you went to those) in 1999, where Samantha was a teller and Michael was her customer. That chance meeting sparked a relationship that now spans almost 30 years.

After a few years of dating as “kids,” they parted ways on a 15-year quest for personal maturity and growth. They stayed in touch during this period, but were never romantically together, and sustained a solid friendship, foreshadowing the foundation of a future, more serious relationship.

Then came the pivotal moment. While

3,000 miles apart, Michael received an unforgettable birthday call from Samantha while on a road trip. They talked for over an hour, but little did they know that this call would alter the course of their relationship. After that fateful phone call, both

single and ready for a serious relationship, Samantha rendezvoused with Michael in



MEET THE HAYES FAMILY: *Entrepreneurship and Integrity in Mesa Verde*

California. As they say, the timing was right for both of them, and they began their lives together.

Parallel Paths of Growth

Although both Samantha and Michael originally hail from Michigan, their lives took very different paths in the intervening 15 years between their first meeting and that life-changing phone call.

Samantha pursued an academic path, with stints at Western Michigan University, the University of Missouri–Columbia, and Lindenwood University. Along the way, she earned a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education, a Master of Arts in Special Education (with an emphasis in Gifted Education), and a Doctorate in Educational Leadership. Her lofty resume propelled Samantha into a 20-year career in

education as an instructor, administrator and senior leader in higher education.

But Samantha’s resume goes beyond her work as an educator. She co-founded the Resilience and Wellbeing Network, a nonprofit that empowers individuals

to build resilience, nurture wellbeing, and create lasting positive change through accessible, high-quality learning resources. In addition, Samantha founded Beyond the Screen Families, which encourages and

empowers families to create meaningful, screen-free moments together.

The inspiration came when Samantha observed parents in her daughter’s kindergarten class and their desire to jettison screens from family life. She noticed screens replacing real-life interactions in families:





dinners focused on devices rather than the people around them, and kids preferring phones over friends, leading to behavioral issues. The trend reminded her of Wall-E, and she was inspired to seek a better way for her and other families' kids.

From Marines to Master Builder

Michael's journey led him to California to join the Marines. After serving honorably for four years, he attended Orange Coast College, with an eye for film school and, ultimately, film production. Though the dream for film school was still alive, Michael shortly after began a career in maintenance and ultimately construction.

Bothered by questionable business ethics he observed in the industry, Michael went out on his own and founded Nexus Building and Design in 2014, on the core values of

honesty and integrity. A trusted custom home-builder in Orange County, his business grew from small kitchen remodels to full home renovations. More than a decade later, Nexus continues to thrive on the same principles that inspired its founding.

Life in Mesa Verde

Familiar with the homes in Costa Mesa, Michael dreamed of settling in Mesa Verde's Upper Bird streets—a dream realized four years ago when the Hayes family found their home there. They love the true subdivision feel, the calm neighborhood vibe, and the friendliness of their Mesa Verde neighbors. It



is this sense of community that reminds them "It's a special place."

Completing their lives in the Upper Birds are their children Olivia and Cole. Olivia attends Davis Elementary, where her favorite subject is science, and Cole attends Harbor Trinity Preschool. Both are quite active, with Olivia's packed schedule including AYSO soccer, gymnastics, dance and swimming. Of course, Olivia loves spending time with her friends too.

Cole follows in both his sister's and father's footsteps—playing AYSO and always building something new in the garage. Rounding out their household is Lucy, an 11-year-old mixed breed who has a knack for seeking out treats and has developed a special relationship with their neighbor.



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Everyday Joys and Local Favorites

Weekends for the Hayes family often start with breakfast outings at favorite spots like Breakfast Republic, Black Bear Diner, or Broken Yolk. For dinner, they love biking to Al Forno Caffè for pasta and a peaceful evening out. Their favorite Costa Mesa tradition? The OC Fair, hands down. When it comes to parks, it's hard to choose from all the beautiful parks they love, including Tanager Park, Canyon Park, and Fairview Park, where Samantha often runs.



Doing Their Best, Every Day

As they continue building their lives in Mesa Verde, the Hayes family stays focused on their motto: *"Always do your best, no matter what you are doing."* Whether it's family life, parenting, or running integrity-driven businesses, the Hayes family reminds us of the success one can have with well-grounded morals and drive.





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WEEKLY EVENTS



HAPPY HOUR FOOD SPECIALS! MON-FRI 3PM-6:30PM, SAT 8PM-10PM
TRIVIA NIGHT! TUESDAYS 7PM - 9PM
OPEN MIC NIGHT! WEDNESDAYS 7:30PM
KARAOKE NIGHT w/DAVID SOTO! THURSDAYS 8PM - 11PM
KARAOKE NIGHT w/BOBBY VEGAS! FRIDAYS 9PM - 1:30AM
COMEDY NIGHT! SATURDAYS 7PM - 9PM
KARAOKE NIGHT w/KJ ANJELI SATURDAYS 9PM AFTER COMEDY



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