

FRANKLIN

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NEIGHBORS

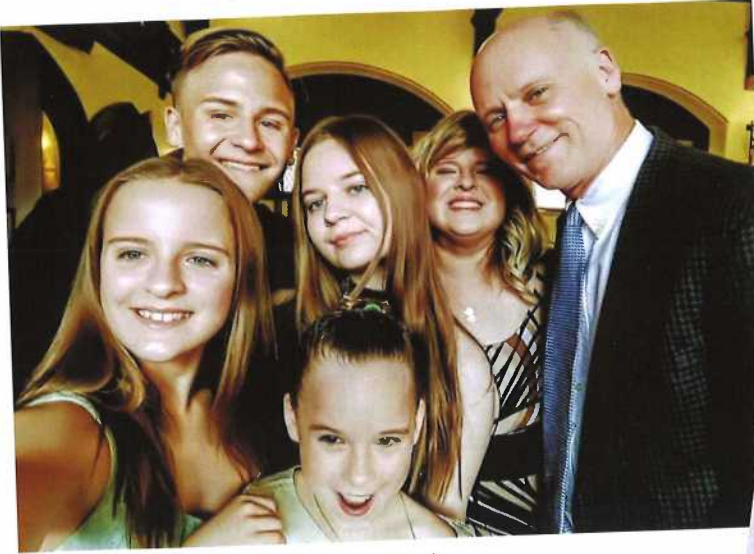


Allen and Lisa Ratkowski's
FAMILY CIRCLE

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AN EXCLUSIVE MAGAZINE SERVING THE RESIDENTS OF FRANKLIN'S FINE NEIGHBORHOODS

By Karin L. White



Allen and Lisa Ratkowski's FAMILY CIRCLE

Allen and Lisa Ratkowski's motto is, "A family is a circle of strength, love and laughter." It is obvious that this is the beacon that guides their entire family each and every day.

The Ratkovskis lived in an older section of Franklin from 1994 until 2005, when they decided they wanted to build their own home. Their oldest child, Alyssa Noelle, was only six at that time, so their family has truly grown up in Woodlands of Franklin. "Our children have roamed the streets of our subdivision, playing with the neighborhood kids for years," their mother beams, "in addition to being in Scouts, Little League and Altius Gymnastics together."

Allen and Lisa and their four children truly love the neighborhood. "It is the perfect place to raise children," Lisa enthuses. "It's quiet and peaceful, has little or no traffic, and is very safe." The Ratkovskis live right next to the Xaverian Missionary and the protected wetlands preserve there. "An amazing perk is the summer Xaverian Missionary festival," Lisa reveals. "There are games, raffles, live music, a giant rummage sale, baked goods galore and a great spaghetti dinner. It's so much fun to have the entire neighborhood come out and have an amazing time, while supporting the Missionary."

Lisa was fortunate enough to have spent 18 years as a stay-at-home mom, so she is well familiar with all the neighborhood's attributes. "At any time of day," she relates, "you can glance outside and see families on walks, pushing strollers, riding bikes or walking their pets. Everyone is incredibly respectful and kind, and they keep our neighborhood as wonderful as it is. We want to thank them for making this such a lovely place to live."

Being at home with the kids was a way to enrich all of their lives. The Franklin Public Library and parks offer so much to the community, and in addition, the Ratkowski children took classes with the Franklin Parks and Recreation department and Franklin Academy of Performing Arts. They also love the Milwaukee County Zoo and Betty Brinn Children's Museum. In fact, this family is largely centered around the children and their activities.

Lisa and Allen both grew up in Greendale, but did not meet until 1986, when she started work for Sears Southridge Customer Service and Catalog department. They married in September of 1993. Daughter Alyssa, now 21, was born in 1999. Then they were blessed with a son, Ryan Allen in 2003. He is 17. The year they built their home, 2005, brought Julianna Rose, who is currently 15, and in 2009, Claire Marie joined the family. She is ten, and just as active as her siblings.

"Most of my free time, and Allen's" Lisa tells us, "goes into supporting the passions of the kids." Those passions are many and diverse. Alyssa, who graduated from Forest Park Middle School with high honors, went on to be part of the first group of Freshmen students at Franklin HS who were allowed to take Advanced Placement classes. There were only four of them, and Alyssa graduated with AP Honors. She is acquiring a degree in Early Childhood Education from Columbia College in Chicago. "Alyssa and I both work as Teaching Aides at St. Alphonsus," Lisa confides. "I work with second graders, and Alyssa works with 3K and 4K students. She was also selected to be a preschool Teaching Aide at Greendale Playschool."



Alyssa also has been a Kindergym coach at Altius Gymnastics, and an individual coach for special needs children. When she was a young girl, Alyssa was involved in theater arts. "She performed in the Franklin Summer Recreational Theater program," her mother smiles, "and choirs, plays and musicals at Forest Park and Franklin High. She then moved on to roles at Sunset Playhouse and the Milwaukee Youth Theatre, which led to First Stage Theater." There, she had a role in the World Premiere of *Sherlock Holmes: Bakes Street Irregulars*, and then in *Lilly's Purple Plastic Purse*, and the World Premiere of *Robin Hood*. "She was the youngest cast member in Delafield's SummerStage production of *Little Women*, where she played Beth March," Lisa grins.

Alyssa also spent four years on the High School cross country team, took classes at Next Step Dance and Franklin Academy of Performing Arts, was a girl scout from kindergarten through senior year in high school, volunteered as a Program Aide at Camp Silverbrook, and worked as a counselor at Camp Alice Chester.

Ryan, 17, graduated from Forest Park Middle School, also with honors. He is currently a junior at Franklin High School, and is a member of the Milwaukee Junior Fire Institute. He works at Altius Gymnastics Academy as a Ninja Warriors and Boys' Gymnastics Coach. "He worked at The Rock as a tubing attendant," his mom explains.

Ryan also played soccer and flag football with the Franklin Park and Rec Department, and baseball with the Franklin Little League. After several years qualifying for the Little League All Stars, he played for the Milwaukee Baseball Academy, and multiple years for Prospect Training Academy, Franklin Sabers Freshman Baseball Team and the Franklin Crew. "Ryan began playing soccer with the Croatia Eagles at the age of eight," Lisa says, "and qualified to run on the Sabers Varsity Cross Country team, as a freshman which he has continued to do through his sophomore and junior years. He also has been in Boy Scouts since Kindergarten, and is a Senior Assistant Patrol Leader."

Julianna is 15, and graduated from Forest Park Middle School with honors. She is a sophomore at Franklin High School. "Julianna has

been a Team Gymnast at Altius since she was eight years old," Lisa declares. "She was the 2013 Wisconsin State Level 3 balance beam champion and 2014 Wisconsin State Level 4 uneven bars champion. She was the first gymnast from Altius to qualify to compete at the United States of America Gymnastics Western National Championships in 2018 (age 12) and 2019 (age 13) and won the Altius Pioneer Award in 2018 and the Most Dynamic Award in 2019 for her participation in the nationals."

Julianna also was ranked nationally by the USAG in 2019 on Vault, Balance Beam and All Around. She is currently training USAG Level 10. She has also played fast pitch softball with Franklin Little League and Franklin Flame, and Soccer with the Croatia Eagles. She has been a girl scout since Kindergarten.

Claire is the Ratkowskis' youngest child. At ten, she is in the fifth grade and is participating in Franklin's Virtual Learning program. "She is the fourth Ratkowski to attend Pleasant View Elementary school," her mother asserts. "She was a Team Gymnast at Altius from 2017-2020 (USAG level 6), and was the 2017 Wisconsin State USAG Level 3 Floor Champion. She has played fast pitch softball with Franklin Little League for several years, and has been a girl scout since Kindergarten. She and Alyssa are taking ballet, jazz and hip hop dance lessons virtually through a dance academy in Seattle, Washington.

So, where do such high-achieving children come from? High-achieving parents, of course! Lisa, for her part, graduated from St. Alphonsus School, then Greendale High School (with honors, of course!) and acquired a Bachelor of Science degree, cum laude, from Marquette University. She went on to earn a Certified Public Accounting license in 1997. In the course of her career, she has worked for Price Waterhouse Coopers, CNH Global and Mayer Ventures.

"I was a member of Elmbrook Church Women's Ministries Inspiring Moms Bible Studies for 19 years," she points out. "I also volunteered for 14 years at Martin Luther High School in Greendale and was a parent helper/chaperone for multiple years at the Greendale Playschool, Pleasant View Elementary and Forest Park Middle School."

FEATURE Story

Allen, meanwhile, graduated from Greendale Middle School and Greendale High School (with honors, what else?) and then earned a Bachelor of Business Administration in Economics from the University of Wisconsin. He graduated Magna cum Laude. From there, he went on to the University of Wisconsin-Madison Law School where he acquired his Doctor of Jurisprudence degree, cum Laude. He is using that degree well in his position with the Waukesha Court of Appeals.

As if all of that isn't enough, this amazing family cares for five – count them – five pets. Sir Jackson Hobbs (a/k/a Jack) is a mellow-yellow Labrador Retriever. Their Norwegian Forest Cat, Rhubarb (a/k/a Ruby) was a working barn cat in the Wisconsin Dells at the Thunder Valley Inn Bed and Breakfast (highly recommended) before they adopted her. Skye is a white Flame Point Siamese cat with blue eyes they rescued from the Wisconsin Humane Society, who was a stray from Green Bay. Pippin is from Green Bay, too, but his story is sad. He was rescued by the Humane Society from an animal abuse situation, and was recovering from several medical issues when they adopted him during the quarantine. He was terrified of people. We know the power of love, and feel certain Pippin has found it. Last, but not least, there is Eli, a Californian White rabbit, rescued from the Wisconsin Humane Society.

And what do these people do for fun? “Every summer our family spends three weeks in the Wisconsin Dells, where my father has a villa,” Lisa reflects. “It is definitely the highlight of the summer. It’s three weeks to spend time together as a family; board games, crafts, making s’mores, attending the Big Sky Drive-In, visiting the Thunder Valley Inn farm, exploring the Downtown Dells, and of course, lots and lots and lots of swimming!”



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