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MEET BENAS &
STACEY VEIKALAS

Shooting for Love, Scoring for Life



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Meet Benas & Stacey Veikalas

SHOOTING FOR LOVE, SCORING FOR LIFE

For Benas and Stacey Veikalas, love presented itself in a very different light. Remembering that pivotal moment in their lives, Stacey shares about the day she met Benas, who was an aspiring professional basketball player, in Downtown Denver. "I was driving my little Mercedes convertible when his entire team jumped in front of my car, stopping me," she laughs. "He proceeds to tell me that I had to pick one of the teammates to go on a date with before they would move from in front of my car. After a brief hesitation, I picked Benas and we eventually went on a date, and that was that! I remember him telling me, in his extremely thick Lithuanian accent, that he would become a professional basketball player, and would marry me and take me to Europe. To be honest, I might have rolled my eyes," she says. "Now, almost 25 years later, here we are. He played pro ball, and we lived overseas for 12 years in seven different countries and have visited more than 50! We have been fortunate enough to see a lot of the world through his professional basketball journey!"

Originally from Lithuania, Benas came to America on a full ride scholarship to play basketball, playing for Metro State

in Denver, a team that had just won back to back national championships. Upon graduating college, he was offered an overseas contract, prompting not only a marriage for him and Stacey, but the beginning of an adventure of a lifetime together. The two were married in Brighton, Colorado and off they went around the world and back. Benas played professional basketball for teams in Lithuania, Czech Republic, Germany, Italy and played in countries across Europe in the European League such as Russia, Israel, Turkey and Spain. His job was to be a sharpshooter, the 3-point guy who made that last shot to win the game with ice in his veins. He was named to the All Star Team in three different countries and named to the German Legend All Decade team, helping take his team in Czech, Germany and Italy to the playoff rounds every year. He was even named to alternate to the Lithuanian National Team for the Summer Games in London.

Stacey, who was born here in the United States, also had a passion for playing basketball and attended the University of North Carolina on a scholarship. She later went into the Air Force, becoming the third generation of her family to serve in the military. Upon getting out of the service, she returned



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home to Colorado and followed her mother into the mortgage industry. "My Mom nicely told me to get a job," she laughed. "And of course, I assumed the job she wanted for me was to originate loans, sales, glory and glamor." Her mother, who owned a training company specializing in the mortgage industry, had different ideas, and made Stacey learn all aspects of the business, processing, underwriting, closer, auditor, bulk purchasing underwriter, originating and eventually teaching and training in the mortgage industry. At the time she was not ecstatic, but now after 30 years she appreciates the knowledge and the amazing people and experience she learned along the way, making her one of the best at what she does. Most importantly, being back in Denver is where she met the love of her life.

The Veikalas family has grown to include three children, two college-aged sons named Vincas and Anthony, and an eight year old daughter, Amber, that was born in Germany. All three children have dual citizenships in both Lithuania and here in the United States. Thanks to their travels and residing in various countries, they all can speak several languages. Benas, having grown up under Russian regime, can also speak Russian, as well as Lithuanian, English and German, and both sons are fluent in German. In addition to English, Stacey speaks fluent Spanish, and is well-versed in a few other languages. "Raising Amber here in the states is making it a bit more of a challenge to teach her other languages, but it's a work in progress!" Stacey says.



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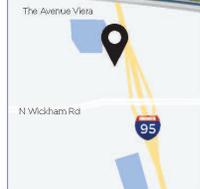
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Vincas, who has loved basketball since the day he could walk, has intentions of following in his father's footsteps and playing European basketball as well as studying mortgages much like his mother, in hopes to eventually go into the business when his basketball career is over. He is currently on a full ride basketball scholarship in Ohio, beginning to realize his dream of playing basketball at a high level. Stacey coached Vincas when he was younger overseas, at school and as part of

his travel teams, and Benas coached him through high school as a coach on his AAU team, of course with a long list of other coaches and experts who helped him get to college.

Anthony, who attends UNLV, played basketball and ran track, but his first love was music and really focusing on his artistic abilities. His aspiration is to become a DJ in the EDC space. He writes, produces and DJ's his own music. He has a great ear for music and is super talented.

Amber is the one they consider the "prodigy" of the family and is expected to outperform them all. "She plays all kinds of sports and is phenomenal at all of them," Stacey says. "We are trying to get her to try everything and find out what she loves." She does seem to have a love for basketball, so she is pursuing that at the moment. This summer, her father and brother coached

a team for Viera Rec, where 80 kids tried out, only 12 of them being girls. They took all the girls and put them on a team, many who had never played, and these girls were amazing, eventually winning a few games against the boys' teams. "We were secretly hoping she picked golf or tennis," Stacey laughed. "But during the summer, she caught the basketball bug, so we are now putting together an AAU team of her girls her age, under a local program here, and Benas will be coaching her basketball at Viera Charter this upcoming season."

The family also has one fur child, a Malti-poo named Cupcake.

So how did this family of travelers make it back to the United States? Well, as one would assume, a life of frequent moving might grow old after a while – and this rings even more true when you're an adolescent in high school hoping to set your roots and establish friendships. "The pro basketball life was a blast, but it was also a very hard life," Stacey admits. "Our experience was also significantly different than when you go in the NBA; when you are drafted to play in Europe, you leave with your clothes and nothing else because they provide it all for you. You stay in one place for nine months, and the next move might be staying for a second season, or it could mean moving to another country. We basically lived as gypsies for 12 years, and we always told our kids when they were older and tired of always having to move, that we would consider moving back to the United States and Dad would retire his basketball shoes."

With Anthony beginning his junior year and Vincas entering as a freshman in high school, the boys had their hearts set on attending school here in the US. Having cousins in Vegas, they decided to move there after spending a summer in an Airbnb. "Benas still had a contract to play in Germany, and we had arrangements to return to Europe at the end of the summer," Stacey recalls. "But I made the decision to stay with the kids while he went back to play for as long as he was able to."

And then life took an unexpected, drastic turn. By the end of summer in 2017, Stacey suffered a brain aneurysm. By the

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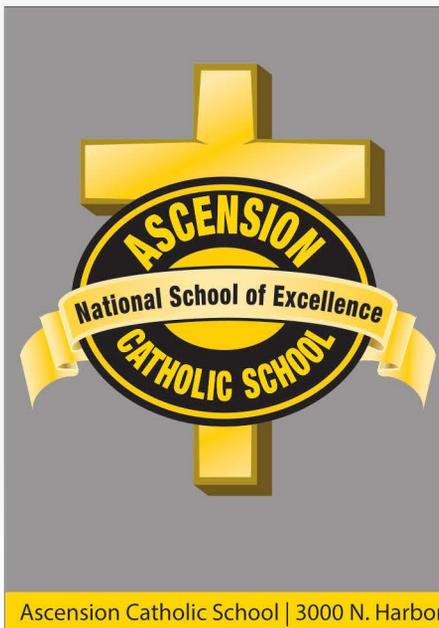
following November, the family decided to apply for Benas's Green Card and that it was time for him to hang up the pro basketball jersey for good.

Throughout the family's time in Europe, Stacey worked in the mortgage business as a consultant, an industry she was quite fond of, having been raised by a mother who was president of Mortgage Bankers back in the 80s. "Essentially, I have been in the mortgage business since I was five!" she says laughing. While in Vegas, her brother, who also works in the industry, ran into some old friends who run the Bank of England Branch out of Colorado, and told them his sister was back in the USA. They flew to Vegas, determined to see Stacey upon learning this. "I immediately told them, 'I am not going back in the business, so don't come to Vegas,'" Stacey chuckled. "Well, they came anyway, and over the course of lunch convinced me to open a Bank of England branch for them in Vegas!" Needless to say, the Veikalas family decided to stay, and were able to finally obtain Benas's Green Card after a grueling two-year process. Benas also later became licensed in the mortgage industry and today, they work as a team.

"I feel like we have lived a thousand lives with how much we have seen and done over the years," Stacey says. "Our whole lives have been focused on my husband and his career. Now that we are here in Viera, we are enjoying the mortgage business and specialize in helping veterans, first time home buyers and of course relocating families get into homes. Stacey also spends much of her time teaching mortgage lending and is certified

in the state of Florida and Nevada to teach CE classes to real estate agents. She still runs her mortgage business back in Vegas, and owns a school where she teaches mortgage lending and provides insight for other loan officers to understand the 'why' and 'how' behind what they do. "I am thankful for having an incredibly knowledgeable mother who always encouraged my steps in the mortgage process," says Stacey. "She truly helped me become a great loan officer, and now I get to teach my husband and other LO's the trade as well."

With one son finishing college and the other out of the nest in Ohio, it was finally time to plant their roots. Stacey's parents live here in Titusville, and they were anxious to allow Amber the chance to live near family and be stationary throughout her last years of school, something the other two children never had the opportunity to do. Though they had just established a business in Vegas, Benas and Stacey's hearts were set on finding a home here in Viera - even if doing so meant starting over in the mortgage business building an entirely new network and relationships. . They have called Viera home for a year as of September. Stacey just had total replacement hip surgery so many of the neighbors are now seeing her out with Benas walking the neighborhood slowly but surely on the road to recovery. The Veikalas family aren't sure if they will ever utilize their dual citizenship and move back to Europe someday, they are thoroughly enjoying being closer to family, the beautiful Florida weather, and the new friendships they are establishing. "We are here for the long term!" Stacey adds.



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