



The Sniders: Living the Pura Vida

By Cheryl Wooten

Photo by
Aspen Studios

If your idea of fun is zip-lining through the jungle, cliff diving or plunging down rock water slides into the rapids, let me introduce you to the Snider family.

Shayne, a Hammond native, was an All-American football player, graduating from Valparaiso University in 1995. At Purdue he earned his Bachelor's in Political Science and Master's in School Administration and History then went on to doctoral studies at Indiana State University. Amanda grew up in Portage, graduating from high school there and then continued her studies at Purdue where she earned both her Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Bio-Technology.

In their early 20s, Amanda and Shayne met when Amanda lived in Chicago and worked for a medical device company as head of their sales division and Shayne was a teacher and head football coach at Hammond Gavit High School. They were friends for quite a while before dating and eventually married in 2005 beginning an exciting new journey.

While both were successful in their respective careers, nine years ago Amanda decided to open their furniture store, Homenclature, with the intention of creating a company where it would be possible to bring the children to work every day. For the first six years the store was in Munster but three years ago they moved to their current location in Valparaiso (360 S Campbell St). The store holds a mix of discount designer furniture including pieces from around the globe.

In 2014, Shayne accompanied Amanda on a buying trip to Asia. It was while relaxing in the hotel's pool-- carved into a cliff, overlooking the ocean—that he caught a glimpse of what life could be like beyond an administrator's desk. With an exit strategy in place, Shayne left his position as Assistant

Superintendent at River Forest Community Schools and went all-in with the furniture store. "It's been one of the best decisions I've ever made," remarked Shayne.

Their dynamic family includes son Jake, and daughters Olivia and Micah. As a sophomore and Pre-International Baccalaureate student at VHS, Jake keeps busy with his studies, yet finds time to participate in Drama Club and work at the family store. About a year ago, Jake and three of his close friends started a band named Fayde, with Jake singing lead and playing rhythm guitar. You can check out the band's Facebook page at: facebook.com/faydeofficial.

Olivia is a smart and energetic 5th grader at Cooks Corners elementary where she is a member of the Math Bowl Team, Spell Bowl Team and Student Council. When she's not hitting the books, you can find Olivia kicking it on the soccer field and playing all after-school sports.

The youngest of the Snider clan, Micah absolutely loves softball and was a Valparaiso Softball All-Star this past season. A 4th grade student at Cooks Corners, Micah is a member of the Spell Bowl Team and Student Council. Like her sister, she is involved in all after-school sports and plans on playing basketball and volleyball this coming year.

The Sniders truly enjoy their beautiful home in Vernon Woods. "We lived in Schererville but knew we wanted to move to Valpo for the amazing schools, vibrant downtown, eating options and our neighborhood," explains Shayne. Over the last nine years they've transformed a 3.2-acre

yard full of poison (ivy, sumac and oak) into their dream yard. "Our goal was to create a yard that our kids could use as the neighborhood congregation spot. We have a pool, soccer field, basketball court, softball batting area, trampoline, and trails cut all through our woods."

In Vernon Woods, they love that the homes are spread out and are one acre or larger which, according to Shayne, is a rare find. They've enjoyed meeting neighborhood families much like theirs--young professionals with school-aged children and similar interests.

This active family includes two dogs, one cat, a bearded



They pulled their peacock float in the 2015 Popcorn Fest parade, but the bird was originally part of a parade float from India.

dragon and a 250-gallon freshwater aquarium filled with colorful South American cichlids. Six-year-old Scout is a rescued Burmese Mountain Dog/Australian Shepherd mix and is like a mother to two-year-old Piper, a Toy Australian Shepherd. Their 15-year-old cat, Mia, gets along well with her canine friends. Chalupe is a bearded dragon and the family's newest pet.

Chalupe may have exotic origins, but his passport would pale in comparison to those of the Snider family. They've traveled the country and the world looking for amazing products for their store. As a family they've gone to Mexico and Costa Rica. Amanda and Shayne also go on a yearly buying trip to Asia and have tremendous respect and pride for the craftsmanship of the products they import from Bali, Vietnam and Thailand. They hope to travel to India soon for even more product.

"Our kids love to travel and their favorite place is Costa Rica," Shayne says. On vacation this past March, they got to spend the day with an indigenous Costa Rican family high in mountains near the Arenal Volcano. To reach the family, they had to hike up a mountain trail, cross over rapids, transverse a ravine using a hand-powered cable trolley, then hike some more. After a delicious lunch with the family, they enjoyed the natural hot springs then rock climbed, cliff dived and rode down a natural rock, waterslide into a river. "All five of us are fearless and like adventure," says Amanda. "No one says, 'I can't,' whether it's jumping out of a plane to sky dive or zip-lining through the jungle."

For their annual Christmas trip, they alternate between warm and cold destinations. When it's a "cold" year, they always make sure to go skiing. "And instead of making wish lists, the kids ask, 'Where are we going?'" laughs Shayne.

In Costa Rica, they came across a saying which they model their lives after. It is "Pura Vida" which means "Pure Life." "We are attempting to give our children a global perspective of the world and to appreciate the differences in people and cultures throughout it." Whether in Indonesia or Valparaiso, the Sniders are making life an undiluted adventure.



Amanda and Shayne by their Bali inspired pool.
Photo by Aspen Studios



The Sniders enjoyed a hike to the Arenal Volcano and hot springs--mud included!

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