

## The Sibos Family of Windsor Park When You Know, You Know

By Cheryl Wooten

**T**om and Bridget Sibos aren't normally impulsive. But when it came to deciding where to move in northwest Indiana, it only took one trip to Valpo to make up their minds.

The Sibos were living in LaGrange, IL when Tom's new employment meant relocation. They checked out St. John, Schererville and Chesterton but for Bridget, having always lived in the Chicago area, "moving here was scary. It felt like country living. I wasn't used to cornfields and cows. Just looking around, made me anxious."

But Tom is originally from Valparaiso and was aware that since he'd been away, Valpo had undergone a remarkable transformation. "I knew it was up and coming with a quaint downtown similar to the downtowns in some of Chicago's westside suburbs. I wanted to show Valpo to Bridget." The couple drove around and liked what they saw, especially the many parks and Central Plaza splash pad. As Bridget recalls, "It felt like home."

After a nice dinner downtown, they were driving towards Highway 49 when Bridget turned to Tom and said, "You know what? Let's just do it!" Tom couldn't believe what he was hearing. He really wanted her to like Valpo and the fact that she did bowled him over. "I guess when you know, you know," says Tom. "You go with your gut."

Their instincts proved correct and since 2014 they've settled into a comfortable life in Valparaiso. They found the perfect home in Windsor Park and love everything about it. "It's a very family friendly neighborhood and everyone looks out for each other," says Tom. "There's a real sense of community here with the 4th of July and other holiday gatherings. We also like that we can get on our bikes and go anywhere in Valpo with the new bike path connecting our subdivision to Keystone." The Sibos' home is also close to St. Paul's Catholic Church where they are parishioners.

In Windsor Park, it's common for neighbors to join one another for campfires and s'mores or to just hang out. Tom's



Tom and the girls at the Valpo Ice Rink.

enjoyed golfing and fishing with some of the guys in the subdivision and Bridget has spent several evenings with neighborhood friends doing scrapbooking, crafting and wine and canvas nights. Tom gives a shout-out to his neighbors when he says, “You all rock and we couldn’t ask for a better group of people to live by!”

When Bridget and Tom met, there was no doubt about it--they were immediately attracted to each other. “From the moment I met Bridget, I knew I liked her,” Tom shares. They met in 2006 at a mutual friend’s Halloween party and really hit it off. Tom was told she had a boyfriend, so out of respect, he didn’t make a move. Then, fast forward to another friend’s party on St. Patty’s Day where they ran into each other again. After talking for over six hours, Tom said, “You know, Bridget, your boyfriend’s a lucky guy.” With a puzzled look, Bridget replied, “I don’t have a boyfriend!” That’s all Tom needed to hear. By their second date they were picking out names for their future kids. In 2009, they were married in the Oak Park, Illinois church that Bridget grew up in.

It’s been eight years and the Sibbo family now includes their three adorable daughters: Makenzie (5), Fiona (4) and Savannah (18 months). “Makenzie is a gentle soul,” Bridget says. “She loves school, puzzles and is just starting to learn dance and cheer. She attends kindergarten at Memorial Elementary. Fiona is the strong-willed one. She enjoys pre-school, learning her letters and numbers in English and Spanish and is looking forward to indoor soccer and basketball this winter. Savannah is a total people person. She loves to connect with folks when we’re out. She’ll look at people until she can make eye contact and then act like she’s shy when she’s really not at all.”

No family is complete without a furry friend. Rocky, their six-year-old rescued Boxer mix “loves being around kids and other dogs and had tons of fun at the Valpo Pooch Parade and Harvest Festival in October,” says Tom.

In addition to her busy job as a mom, Bridget, with a degree from the University of Illinois, works full-time as a clinical manager at Dockside Services, a social service agency in Highland. She oversees the clinical program, supervises therapists and performs parenting and mental health assessments. Her job offers a flexible work schedule,



Bridget with Savannah, Makenzie and Fiona in Greenville, SC.

and as a mom, she appreciates this arrangement. Bridget enjoys cooking, baking, scrapbooking, crafts and outdoor family adventures.

Tom, with an MBA from the University of Notre Dame, is a CPA, consultant and the owner of Sibbo & Associates, LLC in Valparaiso. Additionally, Tom is a speaker, mentor and executive coach with a passion for championing financial literacy. “People make better financial decisions in their



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Tom and Bridget



Savannah and Rocky at the downtown Pooch Parade.

lives when they consider all the aspects involved,” he shares. “Financial topics don’t have to be complex. I like to make things more relatable and understandable so people will get it.” As a mentor, Tom is simply paying it forward. “I played football at VHS with Mark Hoffman as my coach. He was like a second father to me and he gave me a solid foundation for some of the successes in life.” Tom’s hobbies include learning to play the guitar (self-taught), fishing, golfing and following his favorite sports teams. He is also very active in the Valpo Chamber of Commerce and will be doing a Business Valuations/Appraisals workshop on December 13th for them.

The Sibos love their life in Valparaiso. “We’re close to the Indiana Dunes for hiking, yet we have the big city vibe of Chicago right at our fingertips,” says Tom. And with family-oriented events like the Popcorn Festival and ice-skating at Central Park Plaza, they’ve started new family traditions that will last for years to come. “It’s a quieter, slower-paced life,” says Bridget. Tom echoes that sentiment, “It’s been a nice change because life’s going fast enough as it is.”

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