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AUGUST 2013

# NOW

## Strength in Family

Chris Johnson is a family man first and NFL football player second

## Inspiration 7,000 Miles Away

At Home With Marcus and Beth Bowen

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## ON THE COVER



The Johnsons enjoy family fun and football.

Photo by Amanda Rooney.

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## Editor's Note

*Dear Friends,*

Students will put on their back-to-school best this month and head off to meet their new teachers and see some old friends. Many parents will send their recent high school graduates off to college for the first time. My parents moved me into the dormitories at Texas State University - San Marcos many years ago. It was such a milestone in my life, and I'll never forget that feeling of freedom, wonder and a little anxiety. Over the months, that anxiety quelled. I grew to treat my new-found freedom with

respect. I had a lot of fun, but college graduation was my No. 1 goal.

As a community, we can support our students with a few words of wisdom or by simply wishing them well. Good luck to returning students and to all those first-time college students and parents. Have a great school year!

Take care,

*Amber*

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# STRENGTH IN FAMILY

— By Amber D. Browne

“To play football all of these years, and to be able to reach the pinnacle of football — Super Bowl world champions — it’s just a great feeling.”



# THEY

*Playing in the National Football League may take Chris Johnson across the country, but he always has time to sit in the stands and watch his children perform on the field. Chris grew up in East Texas and has lived in other states, but he and his family now call the Aledo community home.*

The Johnson family made the transition back to Texas in 2009. "I wanted a lot of land," Chris said, "so my kids could run around." Chris' uncle, who works in real estate, showed them several houses. The final one, just east of Weatherford, was the perfect place. "We didn't know where we were going or where we were going to end up. Before we even turned into the yard, we were like, 'Yep, that's it,'" Chris recalled. "We walked in, and we loved it."

Chris' wife, Mioshi, had done her research on the Aledo Independent School District. "I looked at the education and the demographics. We just took the plunge." She likes the small-town feel. "We're both from Longview. It's kind of like Aledo. Everybody knows each other." They've been married since 2008 and have never regretted their decision to raise their children in the area.

Although they've made their home in the local community, their home away from home is in Baltimore, where Chris plays cornerback for the Ravens. He started playing football in a Pee Wee league in East Texas. He really enjoyed the sport. "Over the years, going through high school, being able to experience different positions, I just fell in love with football." He graduated



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from Pine Tree High School in Longview and then went on to graduate from University of Louisville.

Chris played for the Oakland Raiders for five years and became a free agent in 2012. "Baltimore wanted me in 2010, when I was a Raider, but the owner didn't want to trade me. We prayed about it. I called the GM [general manager] one day, and he told me to come out and work out for him. The rest was history."

And as a Raven, Chris now has a Super Bowl win on his résumé. "Other than actually having a child, as a profession, that's probably the second best thing that can ever happen," Chris said. "To play football all of these years, and to be able to reach the pinnacle of football — Super Bowl world champions — it's just a great feeling."

"It was a long journey," Mioshi said. "Just to be an NFL wife has been exciting. To see him, after so many years of working that hard, actually achieve that goal, it was great." All of the Johnson family attended the game in New Orleans in February and got to see Chris leave the field a Super Bowl champ. "And, Aledo gave us that great sendoff."

When Chris returned home from the big game, he received a banner that had been signed by students at his sons' schools. "The school district didn't have to do it, but I appreciate them for doing it and making this home for us," Chris

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said. "The boys really enjoyed that." His oldest son, Brannon, is no stranger to the football field. He'll be in seventh grade in Aledo this fall. Christopher, Chris' youngest son, and his Pee Wee football team won their own Super Bowl last season, shortly after Chris brought home the title.

Christopher, a soon-to-be second grader in Aledo, adores his father and enjoys watching him play out on the football field. "It's pretty cool," Christopher said. "Dad comes to see everything for me. I should appreciate that and do it for him."

Besides the game of football, Chris spends time helping youngsters in the game of life. "I try to be a big brother,



almost a mentor, to these young men and young girls out here," Chris explained. "I didn't have a motivator, a speaker, to influence me: this is the right way, this is the wrong way. I just tried to feel my way through high school myself." Chris tries to give the younger generation an understanding of how to be successful. "Everybody has bumps in the road sometimes. I just tell them my story."

Chris offers guidance to the young men and women. "They don't know how to approach a person. They don't know how to shake your hand the right way," Chris explained. "The handshake is the very most important thing as a man, to be able to look a person in the eye and say, 'How are you doing? My name is so-and-so.'" Chris also reaches out to women at domestic violence shelters and founded the Showtime 37 Foundation to teach football camps in the summer.

Mioshi is no stranger to helping

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youngsters. She founded a mentoring program called Pretty Smart Girls. She has a daughter and nine nieces ranging in age from toddler to teenager. “Being around a lot of young girls in my life, I saw there was just a need for mentoring. There is not a lot of positivity portrayed in females in TV and radio. There’s a lot of good that girls don’t get to see.” Mioshi began to think about how she could empower young girls while teaching them to empower themselves. She brainstormed with her daughter Krissy, who is a sophomore in Duncanville, and her niece Sidney, who lives with them and will start 10th grade in Aledo this school year. They came up with the idea for the Pretty Smart Girls program. Besides taking care of her family and her foundation, Mioshi is also a surgical technologist and is finishing up her clinical studies.

When they get a few minutes to relax in their busy schedules, the Johnsons enjoy going out to dinner or a movie and traveling in the off-season. Chris and Mioshi recently took up ballroom dancing to help him with his flexibility and agility. “Chris is secretly a good dancer, and I’m not. But, I like to dance,” Mioshi said, grinning.

With preseason football games and school starting this month, the Johnsons will be back to a busy schedule. Chris likes flying his mom, wife and children to his games. “At a younger age, they get to see the world. All I saw was Longview through 12th grade,” he chuckled. Chris is happy to be a part of the Baltimore Ravens and looks forward to the chance to win another Super Bowl ring.

For now, Chris and his family are living life to the fullest. They enjoy the excitement of life in the NFL but cherish the time spent back in the tight-knit community they call home. **NOW**

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