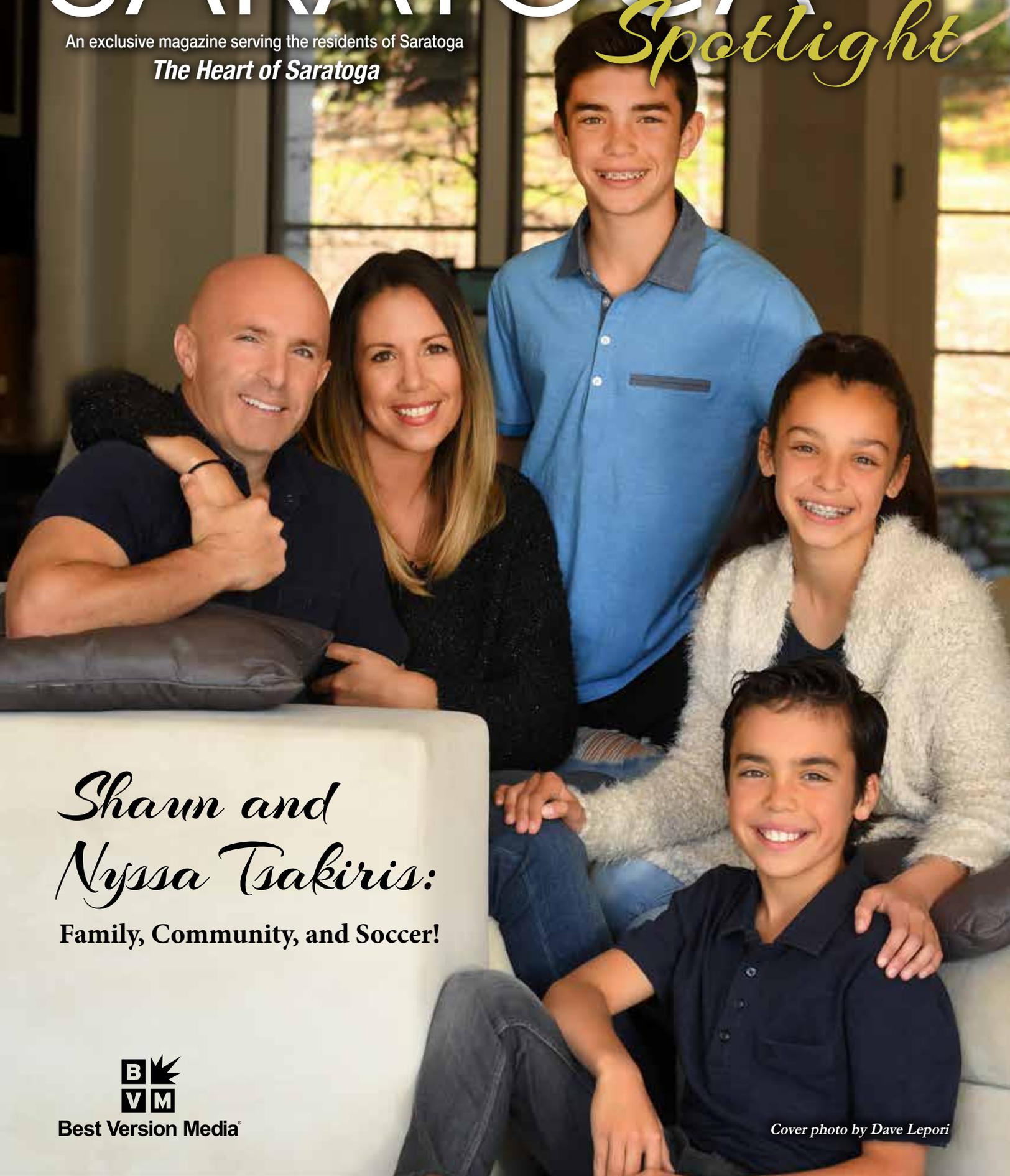


# SARATOGA

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An exclusive magazine serving the residents of Saratoga  
*The Heart of Saratoga*

*Spotlight*



## *Sharon and Nyssa Tsakiris:*

**Family, Community, and Soccer!**



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Cover photo by Dave Lepori



# Shaun and Nyssa Tsakiris:

## Family, Community, and Soccer!

### By Genevieve Laucher

Shaun and Nyssa Tsakiris and their children Niko, Kai, and Mateo love spending time together as a family. Although Shaun has traveled extensively in his dream job, nothing beats being home in Saratoga.

Shaun Tsakiris grew up in Saratoga, attending Saratoga schools and Bellarmine for high school. With European parents, soccer has always been a big part of the family. Following in his two older brothers' footsteps, it was clear from a young age that Shaun would have a very bright future in the game. Earning CCS MVP and player of the year awards at Bellarmine College Prep, he was a high school standout. He also played on our US National teams at each youth levels, including the Under 20 FIFA World Cup. Shaun's ability on and off the field drew the attention of many and was later recruited to #1 ranked UCLA.

Shaun's time at UCLA turned out to be a fantastic experience for multiple reasons. He received a full-ride scholarship and played all 4 years even earning MVP honors. Winning the National

Championship his freshman year in 1997, his impact to the team was an immediate success. A bigger success in the same year, Shaun met his wife Nyssa. A native of San Antonio, Texas, Nyssa was studying Geology. Earning both her Bachelors and Masters degrees at UCLA, Nyssa is currently teaching at Fisher Middle School.

After a successful career in college, Shaun was drafted to the New England Revolution, a Major League Soccer team. Soon however, Shaun signed onto another team, the Rochester Rhinos, where he enjoyed 4 successful years. Because of his strong family values and desire to make a difference in other peoples' lives, Shaun's time in Rochester was also impactful in the community as well. As Shaun explains, "Cancer has always been a big part of our family's life, so it made the most sense to help people affected by this terrible disease."

They had multiple family members, including aunts, uncles, and Shaun's father, who passed away from cancer, and Shaun's mother is a two time cancer survivor. Shaun wanted to make a difference, and so he visited children in the hospital in Rochester every week during his time with the Rochester Rhinos. He really connected with the



people in the community, and enjoyed spending time off the field as well as on.

2005 was a pivotal year for Shaun and Nyssa. In the fall, after Shaun's 4th year in Rochester, Shaun was diagnosed with aggressive testicular cancer that had already spread to his stomach, lymph nodes, and lungs. His doctors told him that he would no longer be able to play

soccer, and would never be able to have kids, something that Shaun had always wanted. It was a difficult and uncertain time, and Shaun had to undergo surgery and chemotherapy right away to beat the cancer. Rochester and the fans rallied behind Shaun and were so supportive during this challenging time. Additionally, Nyssa moved from Los Angeles, where she was teaching high school, to New

*Continued on next page...*



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York to be with Shaun, and she was his rock. Shaun says, “Nyssa has always been an incredibly strong person. She is an amazing woman, mother and wife, and I will forever respect and love her for that.”

As if times were not difficult enough, soon after Shaun’s diagnosis, Nyssa found out that she was pregnant. Despite what the doctor had said, Shaun and Nyssa had their first child, Niko. He was a healthy baby born on Father’s Day morning. Because of what the doctor had said, they thought Niko would be their only child, but they had their daughter Kai the next year and their son Mateo the year after that!

Shaun and Nyssa moved back to Shaun’s hometown of Saratoga when Nyssa was pregnant with Kai. Shaun’s family was still in Saratoga and it was nice living close to them again. His mother and brother own Michael Anthony’s Salon in downtown Saratoga. Nyssa loves working with young people and helping to provide a foundation for them, so she continued her career as a teacher at Fisher in Los Gatos. She has been teaching there for eleven years now. Since Shaun was no longer able to play soccer, he began what he thought was the second best job, being a coach and giving back to the sport that has been so great to him.

Shaun took his experiences as a player to grow into the best soccer coach he could be. For the last 4 years he has coached the Under 16 National Team /Under 17 National Teams, including the U-17 FIFA

World Cup last year. He was named Coach of the year twice, and has been recently named in the top 10 up and coming coaches in the country.

Recently, the National Team offered Shaun another four-year contract to coach for two more World Cups, but to the surprise of many of his friends, Shaun turned the offer down and resigned from that coaching position in January. Although the past five years coaching has been wonderful for him and he has amazing relationships in the soccer world, he felt like he was missing out every moment that he wasn’t with his family. He is a dad and a husband first, and his family is his foundation. He wants to be a part of their lives as much as possible.

The perfect opportunity opened up for Shaun with Los Gatos United, a youth soccer club. He still gets to coach soccer, but this time, it is in his community with his kids. “It has been an unbelievable experience and opportunity to represent our country as a coach and a player. However, I am a husband and father first, and I simply was not spending enough time with my crew. This simply makes the most sense for myself and the family at the moment and I am extremely excited to be a part of this project,” says Shaun. Niko, Kai, and Mateo are now 13, 12, and 11, and all enjoy playing soccer like their dad. For the Tsakiris family, spending time together will always come before anything else.

***Do you know a neighbor who has a story to share?***

**Nominate your neighbor to be featured in one of our upcoming issues!**

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