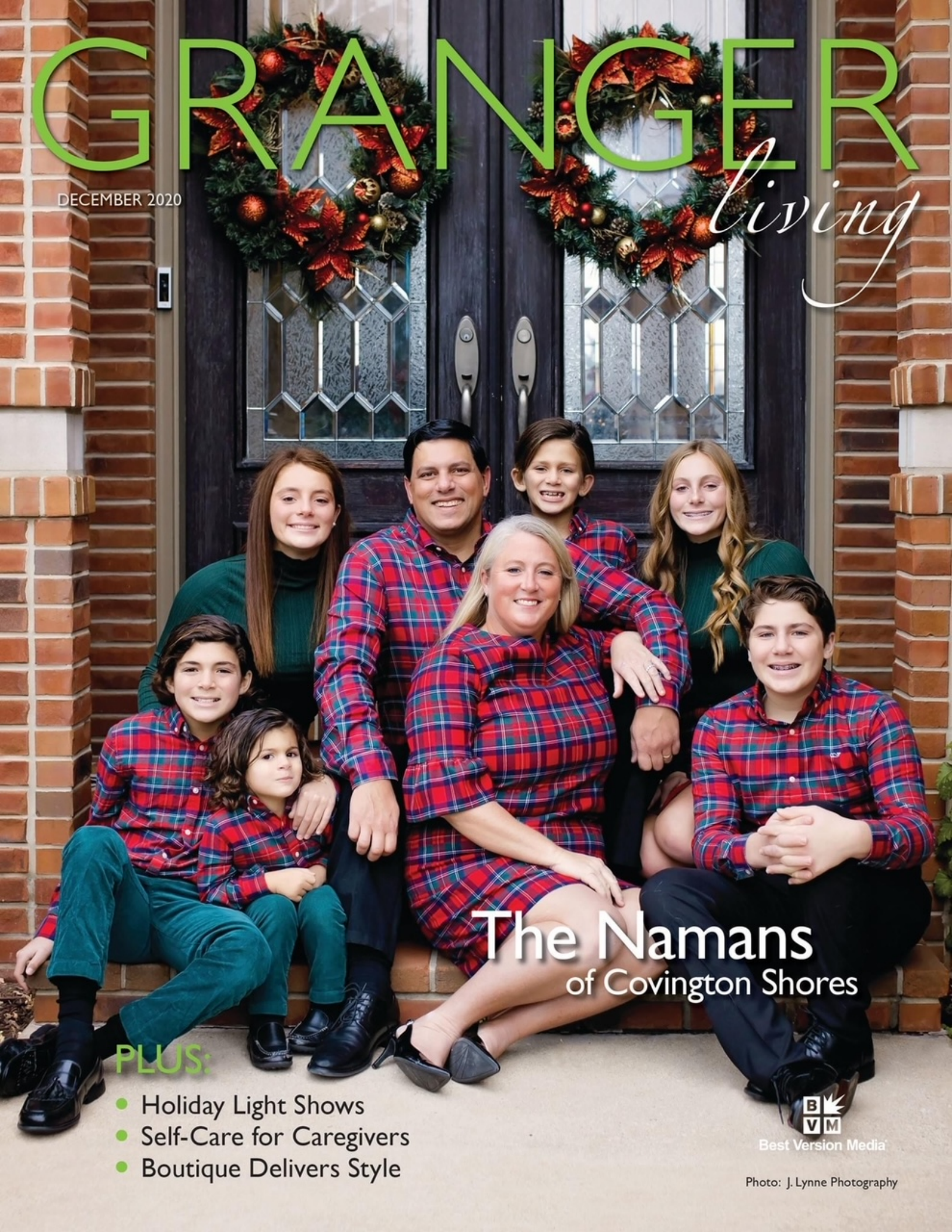


# GRANGER

DECEMBER 2020

*Living*



## The Namans of Covington Shores

### PLUS:

- Holiday Light Shows
- Self-Care for Caregivers
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Best Version Media

Photo: J. Lynne Photography

# SPREADING WAVES OF WELLDUING

The Namans of Covington Shores



Maryse and Mark Naman

Inset: (L-R) Mason,  
Mia, Marco, Madison,  
Matteo, and Michael

It all started with a text. Maryse Naman (pronounced “Mareesa Nuh-mon”) received a group text from a family friend seeking donations for a local food pantry at the start of the pandemic. The text sounded urgent, and Maryse read it aloud to her daughters, 17-year-old Mia and 15-year-old Madison. The Northeast Neighborhood Food Pantry at 803 Notre Dame Avenue in South Bend was struggling to meet the sudden increase in demand. The pantry desperately sought food donations for the next day. Mia and Madison said to their mom, “We can help,” and started texting.

Mia and Madison texted their contacts, school friends, teachers, friends from their sports teams, family friends, families they babysat for and offered to pick up donations from people’s homes the following day to deliver to the pantry. The community was under quarantine so they asked people to set the items on porches or driveways and they would pick them up. Responses poured in to such an extent that the girls’ dad, Mark Naman, searched for a logistics app to map out their pickup route. The next day, with Mia at the wheel, the Namans spent seven hours collecting donations from 52 homes across St. Joseph County filling two large family vehicles with over 1200 items. To say they were surprised by people’s generosity is an understatement. Their response? Let’s do it again next month! In April, they collected donations from 68 homes, and in May 81 homes participated.

For eight months in a row, Madison and Mia have led a monthly food drive primarily benefiting the Northeast Neighborhood Food Pantry that has relaxed its normal 46617 service-area boundaries to serve anyone who comes to their doors. The pantry provides people with fresh, frozen, and non-perishable goods. Maryse noted how widespread the pandemic’s economic impact has been. “Many people you wouldn’t expect have lost their jobs,” she said. Madison and Mia have moved beyond their own contact lists and one month partnered

with St. Pius X Catholic Church to run a neighborhood food drive supporting St. Vincent de Paul. With the help of two of their brothers, the girls stuffed fliers into every newspaper shoot in their neighborhood of Covington Shores and offered contactless collection options for people to participate. They witnessed an outpouring of support from their neighbors who generously gave food and cash donations. The girls followed up by delivering handmade thank you cards to express their appreciation.

Mark and Maryse are proud and supportive of their daughters’ ongoing response to what continues to be a growing community need for food assistance, but they are not necessarily surprised by their actions. Maryse, who spent a career as a licensed social worker in New Jersey, said they are raising their six children to view service to others as a normal part of life. The Namans moved from New Jersey to Granger six years ago and found common ground among a community of people equally service-minded at St. Pius X Catholic Church, where they are parishioners, and also at their children’s schools. Mia is a senior and Madison is a sophomore at St. Joseph High School. Mason is in the 8th grade and Matteo is in the 6th grade at Discovery Middle School. Michael is a 2nd grader at St. Pius X Catholic School. And 3-year-old Marco is in pre-school.

Mark feels it is important to remind their children that material possessions do not matter, and, as he says, “It’s not always about us.” He speaks from personal experience. When he was 9 years old, he carried his possessions in a backpack as his family fled civil war in Beirut, Lebanon in the mid-1980s. His family, practicing Catholics, moved to the United States, then to Saudi Arabia, and returned to settle in Maryland where Mark attended 7th through 12th grades.

Mark and Maryse met while he was a student at the University of Notre Dame and she attended Saint Mary’s College. Maryse’s career in social work began in

South Bend where she worked with families and children. When she and Mark returned to the East Coast and later married, she began working with her favorite age group, adolescents, as a high school social worker. “At that age, you can really help shape them into who they will become,” said Maryse. Mark worked in New York City’s financial services industry for Gerson Lehrman Group, a technology startup. He contributed to the company’s growth from 5 to over 750 employees globally but eventually felt ready for a change of pace, shorter commutes, and more time with his family. The Namans relocated to Granger after Mark was recruited to work with Notre Dame’s Department of Development. Now, Mark runs his own consulting business in technology and product management.

When the Namans relocated from the city of Marlboro, New Jersey to Granger, one of their biggest adjustments was adapting to the change in scale. In New Jersey, the children played on travel sports teams, but due to the population density, teams only had to travel 15 minutes in any direction to participate in tournaments. Here, in the spacious Midwest, teams travel an hour or more for tournament competition. Here, people retreat to small inland lakes or Lake Michigan in the summer, but in New Jersey, everyone heads to the ocean. Summers on the ocean is one thing the Namans have not given up, and they head back every summer for surfing, seafood, and frozen delicacies like “water ice” you just have to experience to appreciate.

The Namans’ love for where they came from makes them no less appreciative of or engaged in the community that they now call home. The whole family has gotten involved in Mia and Madison’s acts of service and dream of doing more under an initiative the family has named “Waves of Welldoing.” Mark even created a website, wavesofwelldoing.org, to help people work together to spread waves of kindness throughout Granger and beyond. ●

By Shannan Miller

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