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Family Tradition

Dr. Danielle Riordan and her family
enjoy watersports and life at the lake.

Call Me Family Tradition

As a second generation dentist it is fairly obvious that my father played a significant role in instilling the passion I have for the dental profession in me. So, it is somewhat fitting that he – along with my mother – created the foundation for my other passion: watersports.

For the past 30 years I have spent at least part of every summer swimming, boating, and enjoying various watersports at the lake. My three brothers, countless cousins, friends, and I practically lived at Lake of the Ozarks throughout our childhood summers. Fortunately, my husband had a similar lake upbringing and shares my love of the lake, boating, and watersports. My dad believed in the concept of starting us young – a tradition my husband and I have continued with our own three children – so at our place it was common to see playpens on the dock, infants floating in the lake with parents, and periodically a toddler being towed behind the boat.

What could a toddler possibly do behind a boat you ask? Well, for those of us that

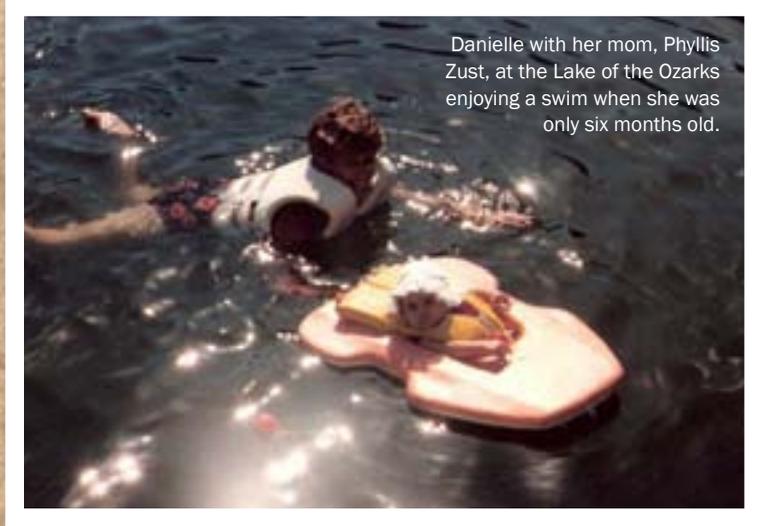
are old enough to remember Atari's release, phones the size of bricks, and a time when Justin Timberlake was part of the Mickey Mouse Club, not NSYNC, there used to be a contraption called a zipsled: basically a hard piece of plastic with two ropes – one connected to the boat and one with a handle for the rider. It was a training tool for kids that allowed them to progress from laying on the board, to kneeling, to eventually standing up with the intent to teach balance on the water – a valuable skill once you advance to other more challenging watersports. My dad had us out on the zipsled as youngsters and that started a tradition of climbing the watersports ladder at an early age.

In the late-80's and early-90's watersports were more limited than they are now. Before the advent of wakeboarding, wake skating, and wakesurfing, waterskiing was the dominant water sport. There were some trick, jump, and barefoot skiers out there, but most of us learned to get up on 2 skis (combos) and eventually progressed to 1 ski (slalom). The goal for more advanced slalom skiers

is to learn to "cut" (lean hard to one side to roll the ski on its edge) as hard and fast as possible to move side-to-side through the boat's wake.

Because of how early my parents started us, we were all skiing between the ages of 5-7 and all of us were slalom skiing by age 8. It was not uncommon for the boat to leave the dock during the early-morning hours and not be back until sunset. We absolutely loved our days filled with boating and waterskiing, but just as dental procedures have evolved over the past few decades, a shift occurred in watersport choices and popularity.

With the arrival of wakeboarding, traditional waterskiing's popularity faded substantially, kind of like the shift that occurred away from snow skiing and towards snowboarding. Wakeboarding was popular throughout my teenage/young adult years and my family and I spent hours learning a completely different sport that required a large wake – for jumping and tricks – instead of a small wake which is more desirable for sharp slalom ski cuts. We



Danielle with her mom, Phyllis
Zust, at the Lake of the Ozarks
enjoying a swim when she was
only six months old.

still have a few wakeboarders in the family and it is probably still the most popular watersport among most lake enthusiasts, but a relatively new sport called wakesurfing is gaining popularity and has become our family's favorite lake tradition.

Up until just a few years ago, I had not even heard of wake surfing. The boat I grew up on was not designed to support wakesurfing so up until my husband and I purchased our first boat a few years ago – a Tige 20v – surfing wasn't a possibility. Our old boat was like most of the smaller runabouts at the lake, a sterndrive. Sterndrives have an engine housed in a covered compartment toward the rear of the boat's interior and an outdrive connected to the stern that controls the propeller. As a result, you must ride far behind the boat to avoid the hazard of a rapidly spinning stainless steel propeller.

The boat we purchased in 2012 is a true inboard which means the prop is located under the boat rather than attached at the back of the

boat. This is an important safety distinction because in the sport of wakesurfing you ride closely behind the boat, maybe 5-7 feet. Similar to skiing and wakeboarding, you use a rope to get up and gain momentum. You float in the water with a wake surfboard lying flat on the surface with your heels positioned on the board's edge closest to you. Once the boat accelerates slowly you simply stand up and let the boat and board do the rest. As you gain balance, find the "sweet spot" on the wave, and learn to control the board with weight shifts you are able to toss the rope and let the "push" of the wave propel you forward rather than the boat and rope pull you.

In order to achieve a wake that will allow you to "free ride" (surf without a rope) a few attributes are required: weight, list, and a steady speed. In order to displace enough water to create a large enough wave to ride, we fill ballast bags with lake water – 800 lbs in the rear port ski locker on our boat – via a small 12v pump. With the added weight on the port side, the boat lists (leans)

Alice Riordan, Nick and Danielle's youngest child, posing from the bemini of their boat at the lake this summer.



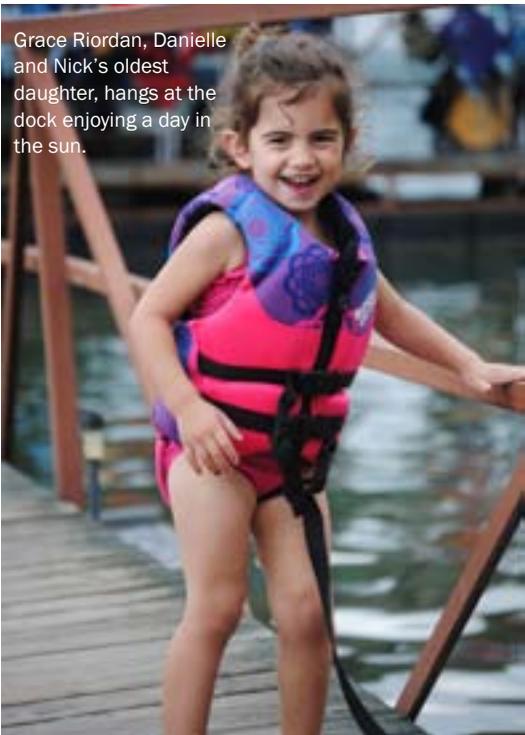
Nathan Allen, grandson of Joan Allen the Executive Director of GKAS, admires his father's moves. The young kids enjoy sitting and watching their parents ride the wake just an arm's reach.



Danny Riordan, Nick and Danielle's oldest child, shows off his skills on his ski trainer back in 2013 when he was just three years old.



Grace Riordan, Danielle and Nick's oldest daughter, hangs at the dock enjoying a day in the sun.



significantly, and shifting passengers to the same side further enhances that tilt. Finally, we use an exact speed of 10.3 mph to achieve our perfect surf wave; luckily the boat's "Perfect Pass" cruise control takes that burden off of the driver and helps maintain the precise speed required. The combination of these three factors significantly increases the size of the wake on the port side of the boat allowing a rider to surf without being towed.

Although my kids are too young to learn to wakesurf on their own, one of the advantages to wakesurfing is the ability to surf tandem with a child. I have my 4-year old son place his feet on the board inside of mine and wrap his arms around my legs. Although I do enjoy riding alone and working towards learning some tricks (airs, 360's, etc), it has been a lot of fun to bring my son along for a ride and share that experience with him. I look forward to having my girls out there with me some day too.

While spending time at the lake boating, swimming, and surfing is a lot of fun, it has also become a great opportunity to teach our children how to swim and be responsible at the lake and on a boat. It is rewarding watching them have so much fun doing the same things I did growing up

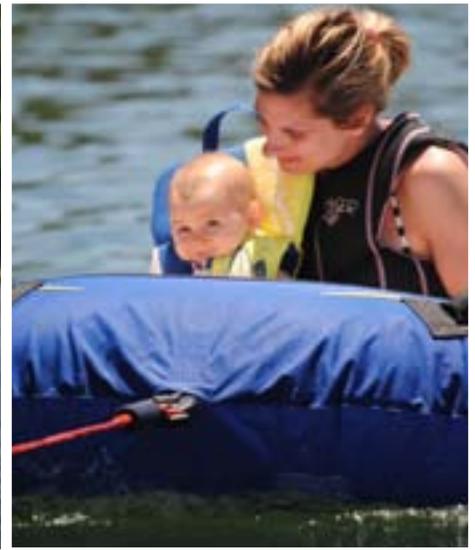
while also overcoming natural water fears and learning important skills. Also, in a world with a 24-hour news cycle, constant social media updates, and too much TV and video games, I find going to the lake, losing cell service, and unplugging from outside distractions is healthy. Our place is modest at best and does not have television service or cell signals. The kids' iPad and favorite TV shows are cast aside in favor of skipping rocks, swimming, driving the boat with mom or dad, and surfing, of course. I have no doubt that as technology continues to advance that it will be an even bigger struggle for our children to disentangle themselves from the technology web, but there is hope....

As we departed the lake for the last time this summer after a Labor Day weekend filled with our kids swimming, boating, and tandem surfing with me, it doesn't come as a surprise that my oldest kid turned to me and asked, "When are we coming back to the lake? Can we come back tomorrow?!?!?" Will one or more of my kids follow in my footsteps and pursue a career in dentistry making it three generations? Maybe.... maybe not. I do know, however, with absolute certainty that I have already passed along my love and passion for the lake and watersports to my kids. The tradition continues..... surfs up!



OUT ON THE WATER

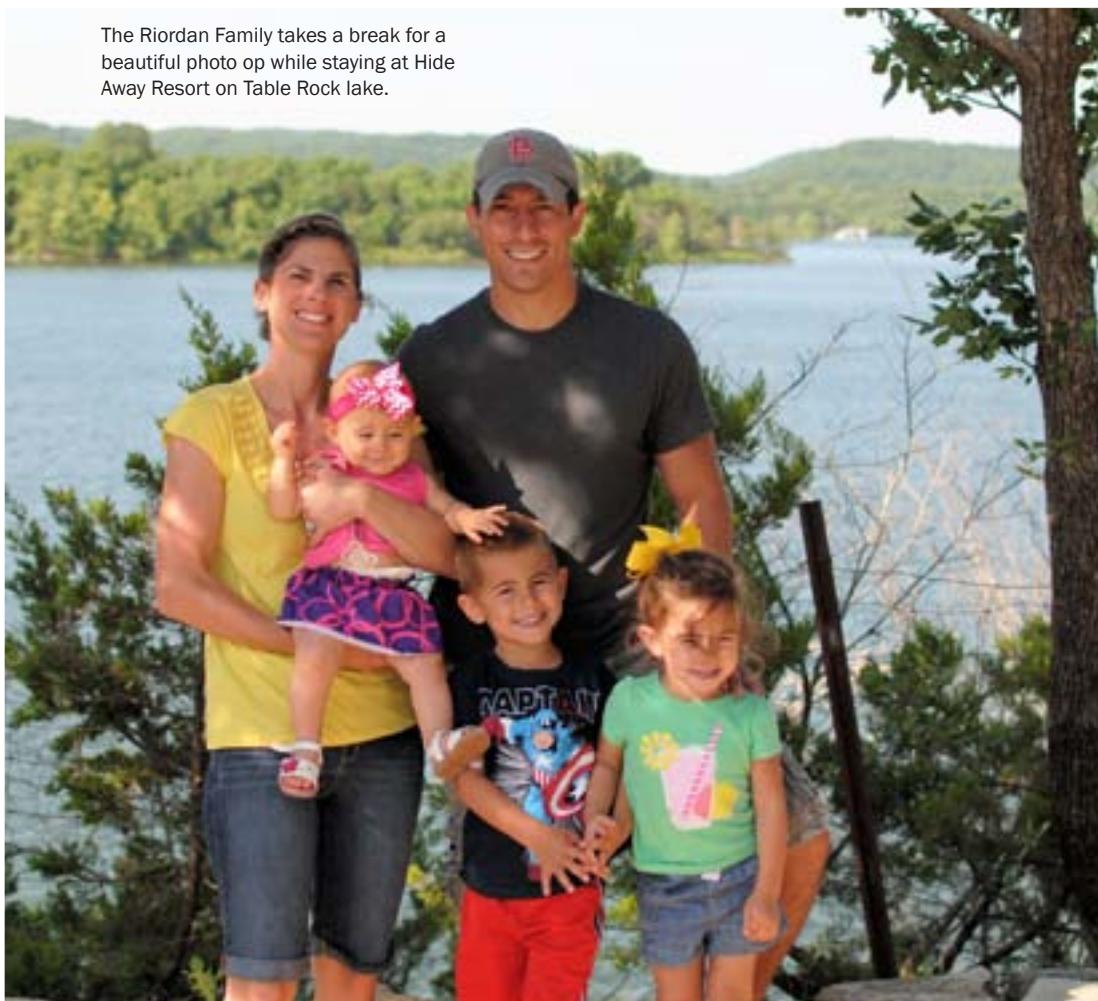
Clockwise: Nick, Danielle's husband, is the most advanced surfer in the family. Here he's gaining momentum to attempt the coveted 360; Danielle free surfing with her son Danny this past summer; Dr. Riordan enjoying a ride on the tube; Nick taking some of the cousins out for a surfing run; Clayton Cissell, family friend of the Riordan's, catches some air while wake boarding.



Danny is in his element while at the lake. He would live there if he could. His uncles and dad often send him sailing into the sky and as you can see he just can't ever get enough!



The Riordan Family takes a break for a beautiful photo op while staying at Hide Away Resort on Table Rock lake.



Dr. Mark Zust takes his first ride on the surf board. "It was a special moment teaching him to surf after he has taught me so many other valuable skills both on the water and in life," said Danielle.