

October 2018

Garnet Valley LIVING

When Family Extends
Beyond the Four Walls
of a Home



Cover photo by Claire Bunn Photography



Best Version Media

When Family Extends Beyond Four Walls of a Home



Having grown up in Glen Mills, Kristen Randel Wilson knew she lived in a particularly unique community. In eighth grade, her science teacher, Mr. Stan Shepanski, took her class into the large grassy knoll behind the Garnet Valley Middle School (the area that now is part of the Rachel Kohl Library community trail) and pointed to all the green space stating, "Look around. This will all be homes in the next five years." At that time, in 1993, Kristen and her fellow students couldn't imagine how their community would grow over the next decade. Nor could she imagine how integral that community would become to her family.

After graduating from Garnet Valley High School as valedictorian of her class in 1998, Kristen left the area to pursue her Masters of Science in Physical Therapy from Ithaca College, only to return to Glen Mills following completion of her degree. "I always knew I'd return to the area. This has and will always be home for me," reflects Kristen. Upon returning, she took a position as physical therapist at Bryn Mawr Rehabilitation Hospital in Malvern where she not only built the foundation of her physical therapy skill set, but also met her friend, now business partner, Kathy Dixon.

"I remember the minute I met Kathy. It was like one of those movies where time stops for a second. I knew instantly we'd become friends. Little did I know she'd become practically family!" states Kristen.

Over the next few years, Kristen and Kathy began planning their outpatient physical therapy practice, Action Potential, as they concurrently built their own families. Kristen married Michael Wilson, fellow physical therapy classmate from Ithaca College, currently Regional Manager of Physical Therapy for Premier Orthopedics. And Kathy married Ryan Dixon, a graduate of West Chester East and an Installation Technician for Comcast, who she met while the two were students at Shippensburg University. Quickly the families began to grow as children entered the equation.



The Dixon and Wilson boys



Action Potential staff gets ready for the Turkey Trot



Clockwise from top left: Mike Wilson, Nathan Risley, Carol Slack, Anthony Sinacore, Sarah Homan, Ryan Dixon, Kathy Dixon, Liam Dixon, Cain Dixon, Graham Wilson, Nathan Wilson, Kristen Wilson, Soren Wilson

By Kristen Wilson and Kathy Dixon | Photos: Claire Bunn Photography and Turkey Trot

"Kristen and I always laugh when we reminisce about founding Action Potential. We sat for our bank loan at nine months pregnant. We're convinced the officer gave us the loan just so we wouldn't go into labor in his office!" jokes Kathy Dixon.

In 2011, six months after Kristen gave birth to her second child and Kathy gave birth to her first, they opened Action Potential's doors, and since then the family has continued to grow. Kristen's family has grown to include three boys: Nathan, age 9 who loves soccer, baseball, and running; Soren, age 7 who enjoys taking photographs, playing soccer and cooking; and Graham, age 4 whose main job is to make everyone in the family laugh. Kathy's family includes Liam, age 7 and Cain, age 5 and Nike, the greatest dog on earth. Kathy's boys like playing ice hockey, bike riding and taking Nike on nature walks.

But the growth didn't stop there. In 2012, shortly after opening their business, Carol Slack, Kristen's aunt, came to Action Potential as office manager. That same year, Lorie Coole Foust, a co-worker from Bryn Mawr Rehab and a friend for over 10 years, joined the team. Six years later, the Action Potential team includes Physical Therapists Sarah Homan and Anthony Sinacore and Administrative Support Team member, Nathan Risley, who works in the office and also serves as nanny for the AP kids.

"When Kathy and I started Action Potential, we were given a lot of advice about starting a business with a friend. In fact, most people thought we were nuts to go into business together, assuming we'd end up hating each other. Not only have we survived

and thrived as business partners and friends for seven years, but we've built an entire team out of people that we have prior personal relationships with. I really can't stress how fantastic it is to literally work with family every day! It makes the hard times tolerable and the joys so much sweeter," shares Kristen.

Surrounded by family and friends, Kathy and Kristen knew they wanted to expand their appreciation to their community by creating an event that would bring together families of the Glen Mills and surrounding areas for a good cause. In 2013, after two years of planning, the Action Potential Turkey Trot was born. Hosted on Thanksgiving morning at Garnet Valley High School, the charity 5K run and 1Mile walk has become a staple in the community.

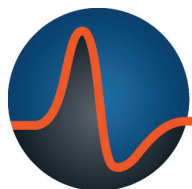
"The Turkey Trot brings together families from all over the county, offers an opportunity to give back, and highlights the heart of our community," notes Kathy. "We couldn't be happier with the reception the race has received over the years."

Now boasting almost 1000 runners, the Turkey Trot has become a fixture in the Glen Mills community. The race unites community members and local businesses around the shared goal of giving back to those in need. For the past four years, the beneficiary of the race has been Safe Harbor of Chester County, an organization that provides shelter, food, and counseling to the homeless of Chester County.

Judy Jeffords-Homitz, MSPH, MBA, Chief Executive Officer of Safe Harbor for Chester County, Inc. is grateful for the support provided to her organization from

About Safe Harbor

Safe Harbor operates a low-demand, emergency housing providing for the needs of homeless men and women who, because of addictions or mental health issues, do not qualify for other shelter programs operating in the area. Safe Harbor is willing to serve those with no place else to turn while maintaining a level of expectations that seeks to build self-esteem and empower individuals most in need. Safe Harbor's goal reaches beyond just feeding the homeless and providing housing. We seek to understand each person's background, define short term action plans designed to address his or her challenges and needs, and monitor his or her progress. Our goal is to help rebuild lives and life skills, reestablish self-esteem, and help people overcome the issues that prevent them from leading independent, productive lives. To learn more about Safe Harbor's mission and how you can help them achieve their goals visit <http://safeharborofgwc.org/>.



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RESIDENT FEATURE

the proceeds of the Turkey Trot event.

"As the largest homeless shelter for single men and the only homeless shelter for single women in Chester County, Safe Harbor is a beacon of hope and help for our most vulnerable citizens. We also provide a community lunch program and pop-up food pantry for more than 10% of our county population that is food insecure," explains Jeffords-Homitz. "Having to raise almost 90% of our budget from private funding sources, community partners such as Action Potential and the annual Turkey Trot are critical to helping Safe Harbor fulfill its mission. We are truly thankful for the generous spirit shown to us."

The Turkey Trot couldn't exist without the help of Kathy and Kristens' families. Mike and Ryan set up the race course. Carol, Sarah and Nate man the registration tables. Even the kids help. In 2017, Nathan, Liam and Soren worked the check-in table, passing out t-shirts and taking registrations. Kristen always jokes that on the Wednesday before Thanksgiving most kids are busy smelling pumpkin pie and picking out their turkeys while her kids are watching porta-potties and race equipment

get delivered! But in the end, the strange race-day traditions are worth it.

"The Turkey Trot was a dream of mine that has come true beyond my wildest imagination. I knew I wanted to give something to the community that has supported me my entire life, and finally I feel like I succeeded. When the starting gun goes off on race day my eyes always fill with tears as I watch my community run by. It never will get old," shares Kristen.

While the Glen Mills zip code has grown significantly since 1993, the uniqueness of the community remains intact and thriving. There is an old adage that states, "It takes a village to raise a family." At Action Potential, Kathy Dixon and Kristen Wilson believe it takes a supportive family, whether in or out of the office, to raise a community to reach its potential.

For more information on participating in the Action Potential Turkey Trot, or if your business is interested in sponsoring the race, check out the race website at www.GVTurkeyTrot.com. See you on Thanksgiving morning!



Owners, friends and Turkey Trot organizers, Kristen Wilson and Kathy Dixon

Do you know a neighbor who has a story to share? Nominate your neighbor to be featured in one of our upcoming issues! Contact us at jconnors@bestversionmedia.com.

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Spectators cheer on runners at the Turkey Trot at the starting line at GVHS



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