

# NORTHLAND

## Neighbors



Meet the  
Moran Family



# The Moran Family Stars in Their Own Hallmark Movie

BY NIKKI SWARTZ

PHOTOS BY NATALIE CARVER AND THE MORAN FAMILY

**T**he story of how Melissa Steele met Keith Moran sounds a lot like a Hallmark movie.

During Melissa's senior year in college, her middle sister, Jenny, said she had a dream about Melissa marrying a tall, blonde man. "I can't wait to meet him," Melissa remembers thinking. She didn't have a good track record with marriage to that point. A prior boyfriend – who had even asked her to buy a dress – ran off and married someone else in a shotgun wedding in the South. But the following month, Melissa and Jenny went on a Catholic retreat for 18-22 year olds. Suddenly, Jenny yelled, "There he is – the guy in my dream!" Just as Melissa turned to look, however, a young girl jumped into the man's arms and hugged him. "Well, maybe not," thought Melissa. Then, as people started to sit around in a big circle, Melissa noticed a tall guy sitting next to the only two other people in the room she knew. She decided to walk over and meet him. But when she approached, one of her acquaintances said, "Melissa, meet Keith Moran. He's a seminarian." Melissa replied, "Aw, man. All the good guys want to become priests!" She recalls hearing Keith's big, hearty laugh as she ran off to meet her sister.

Fast forward two months. A coworker kept inviting Melissa to the adult version of the retreat, and she kept saying no. But then, for some reason, she said yes. She parked her own car and carried her suitcase up a hill and

met several guys waiting to play valet. Everyone introduced himself except for the last guy. That tall guy just said "hi." Melissa immediately realized he was the guy in her sister's dream. At the end of the retreat, everyone went to the local pizza place before heading home on Sunday night. The tall guy (named Keith) sat with Melissa, and as they stood at the check-out counter, he told her, "You'd make somebody a great wife." Melissa simply replied, "Yep."

Melissa drove straight to her mom's house that Sunday night at 10:30pm to share the good news. "I think I met the guy I'm going to marry," she said. Melissa and Keith were married November 7, 1987, in St. Joseph, Missouri, at St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church. Melissa wore the same \$135 wedding dress she had purchased prior to their meeting.

## Adventure & Passion

Keith is originally from Tulsa, Oklahoma, and is the oldest of four children. He graduated from Bishop Kelley High School and went to St. Gregory's University in Shawnee, Oklahoma. Then, he went to Conception Seminary College in Conception Junction, Missouri, where he earned a bachelor's degree in philosophy.

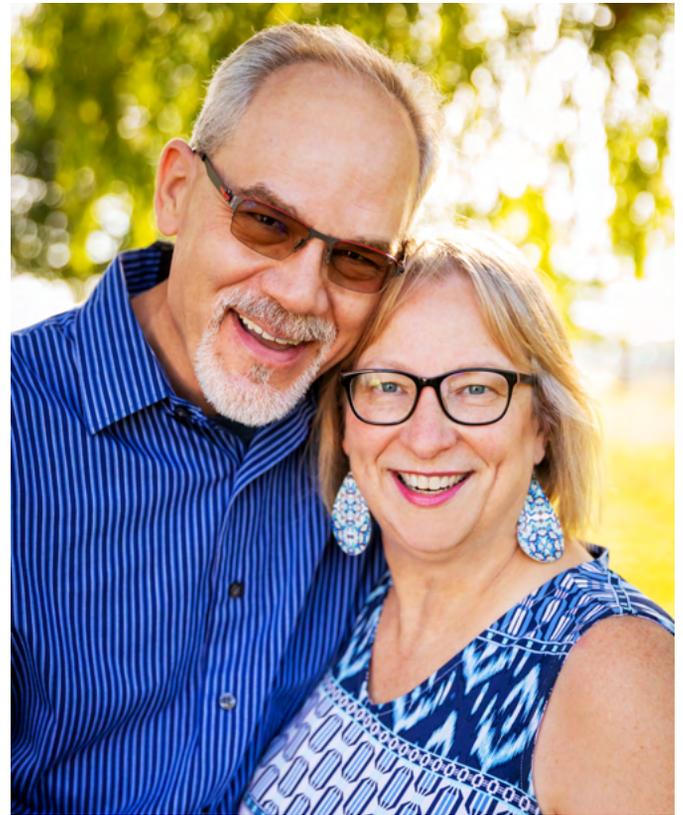


From there, he earned his MBA in accounting from the University of Missouri-Kansas City, and passed the CPA exam, all four parts, in one try. Keith also has a Master of Divinity in education from the Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City. He worked as a financial analyst for Sprint, Black & Veatch, and others before opening Bookkeeping+.

Melissa grew up in Agency, Missouri, as the oldest of six siblings, and attended four high schools in Kansas and Iowa. She considers herself a Hawkeye, as she went to the University of Iowa for three semesters and said she "lived more those months than this small-town girl could have ever dreamed." She tutored future famous football players, had season tickets to football, basketball and the theater, and stayed busy dancing four nights a week. She once drove six girls, including her 15-year-old sister, Kristi, across the country to Pasadena, California, for the Rose Bowl. Later, she moved back to Missouri and attended Missouri Western State University in St. Joseph, where she completed her Bachelor of Science in Business Administration degree.

Melissa has built multiple successful businesses over the years, including Senior Helpers and Bookkeeping+, as well as financial and estate planning, real estate and wholesale distribution companies. Since 2008, she and Keith have co-owned Senior Helpers of Kansas City North, which helps seniors and people with disabilities live independently wherever they call home. It has won "Best of the Northland" honors in the home care category six times, including in 2023, as well as "Great Place to Work" recognition since 2019. Melissa is a Certified Senior Advisor and Qualified Dementia Care Provider. Melissa and Keith also co-own Bookkeeping+, which has provided taxes and business support for small business bookkeeping clients since 2019.

The Morans strongly believe in giving back and being involved in the Northland community. They share four passions: time, talent, treasures and travel. Melissa serves on three boards: A Turning Point; Northland Professionals in Aging, where she is the current president; and Parkville Area Chamber & EDC (PACE), where she is current Chamber board president. The couple enjoys teaching. Melissa holds dementia classes throughout the Northland and teaches the Next Steps class at Discover Church KC, where Keith also serves as a small group leader and has taught Financial



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Peace University. They give to Discover Church KC, Hillcrest Platte County Ministries, Compassion International and participate in many annual fundraisers, including the HPC Gala, PACE Gala, the Angel Flight Wine Flight and Northland Shepherd Center events.

Another passion is their home, which they often open to guests as part of their volunteer work. Melissa and Keith host the monthly “Dinner with Pastors” for 20-30 people who want to know more about their church. From there, people are invited to a four-class Next Steps course that Melissa helps facilitate. The couple also entertains friends for Chiefs games, cards and games of all kinds. Their downstairs is always decorated for the Chiefs and Christmas, year-round.

“My senior clients taught me that your home is a museum of your life, so fill it with things you love and the memories you have made,” Melissa said. “I have a huge amount of handmade Longaberger baskets and a significant

elephant collection. Many are from our travels.”

The Morans also love traveling with friends, road trips and camping with their grandkids. Some of their favorite road trip destinations include Branson, especially at Christmas time, and Arkansas, where they love to hike. With their travel friends Eddie and Deena, Melissa and Keith have visited Aruba, Padre Island, Hilton Head, Las Vegas and Cabo over the past six years.

### The Supporting Cast

Melissa and Keith are proud of their growing family, which includes 15 members at present. They have two kids, Kenzie and Spencer. Melissa said her kids never wanted to wander too far from home, and they haven’t. They all live within a triangle at present, and it takes no more than 15 minutes to get to each other.

Kenzie Dice helps her parents as billing and payroll manager for





Senior Helpers. She also owns Hung Right Trim, Windows and Doors in Platte City. She and Mike Brower are parents to seven kids: Nicole Brower (21), Gage Brower (19), Lily Brower (18), Jacob Brower (11), Mathis Dice (7), Hudson Dice (5) and Finley Brower, who is almost 3 years old. Nicole has a 6-month-old son, Mavrick. Melissa calls Mike's kids their "bonus grands." She said Kenzie always wanted a lot of kids, and now she is "raising his, hers, and their kids in a big house with a dog." Mike has been a carpenter for more than 20 years and loves to design custom cabinetry. He recently joined the 1,000-pound club in weightlifting and is a blue belt Jiu Jitsu. Mike and Kenzie are remodeling their 1883 Victorian home in Platte City a block from the court house.

Spencer, Kenzie's younger brother, takes after his mom and dad and likes to work with numbers. He loves golfing, cooking and being a dad. He and Caitlin Nell have a 2.5-year-old daughter, Faye. Caitlin is an architectural

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designer at CRB Engineers & Architects in Kansas City and is working toward becoming a licensed architect. She also works at The Peanut at 64th Street on the weekends. Spencer and Caitlin plan to get married in Cancun on April 24, 2024.

Melissa said traditions have changed as the kids have grown up, and now there are new traditions with the grandkids. One of her favorites is the entire family dressing up for Halloween and walking around the neighborhood together. For Christmas 2022, the grandkids all dressed up in matching pajamas with Melissa.

### The Happy Ending

In the summer of 1986, Melissa and Keith were looking at an apartment off of I-70. Melissa's aunt, Judy Riga, instead found their next four homes in Platte County. On their 10th anniversary, they moved back to Agency to care for Melissa's grandparents. Five years later, they returned to Platte County.

"We have always lived in Platte County, claiming Parkville as our home since 1986, including eight years in the Countrywood subdivision with my parents who had to have an acre garden," Melissa said. Her parents sold bread, pies and cinnamon rolls as "Backdoor Bakery" at the Parkville Farmers Market between 2009 and 2014. Melissa and Keith downsized to a ranch by Menards seven years ago.

Some of their favorite places in the Northland include Senor Tequila on North Oak Trafficway and La Costa Mexicana in Parkville for Mexican food. They also love steak night Mondays with friends at Nick and Nino's off Ambassador and I-29.

Melissa said her favorite thing about the Northland is people's willingness to help each other no matter the reward. "I even encourage helping our competitors, as this makes our industries grow so that it helps all of us," she said.

Melissa and Keith encourage people to get involved in the Northland community and their neighborhoods.

"You have one life to live, so give it your all," Melissa said. "Help the single mother next door or just be the friendly face saying 'hi' while others walk by. Keep the Northland a great place to work and live. Helping others is a great way to live without regrets."

From their rom-com movie-like beginning to their current script, filled with a happy home, fulfilling work and close friends and family, the Morans don't regret a thing.

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