

BALLANTYNE[®]

magazine



**SAVORING
OUTDOOR
LIVING**
YEAR-ROUND

**FLYING
HIGH**
PRINCIPAL
DAVID
SWITZER

FASHION:
**FALL
FUN**

PLUS

ZEST
FOR COMMUNITY
**BALLANTYNE
EXCELS**

HOUSE
DIVIDED

**OH,
BABY!**

**WHO,
WHO,
WHO**
IS LIL' URHO?

DOWN-HOME
HIP
**SAXAPAHAW,
REALLY?**

Family FLAIR

Weekday Excursion to Elon Park a Big Hit

By Michael J. Solender Photos by Shane Baskin

MICHAEL AND CYNDI CROSBY have been on more dates together than many couples their age. That's because they started much earlier than most. Both are Charlotte natives and have been married 15 years, but they began their relationship when they were

in middle school at the former Smith Junior High (now Smith Language Academy), where they met in Spanish class.

"There was a spark between us for sure," said Cyndi, 38. "We continued to date on and off through high school but kind of



Meet the Crosby family (from left): Kaley, Cyndi, Riley and Michael.



The family savors a picnic of ham sandwiches, veggie wraps, fruit and more.

drifted apart during college and lost track of each other.

"In 1996, a friend of mine told me she saw Michael working at the Chick-fil-A on Woodlawn, and I decided to go over there for a sandwich," she continues. "Michael came out from behind the counter

during the busy lunch rush, and we chatted for about 10 minutes. Five weeks and several dinner dates later, we were engaged."

Michael, 40, is now a Chick-fil-A franchisee with one store in Baxter Village in Fort Mill and another seasonal unit at Carowinds. The



Cyndi and Kaley (far left) capture the Date Night bocce ball contest.



Cyndi and Kaley enjoy time together.



Even Mom and Dad get a quiet moment together.



Cupcakes, too! Riley (left) and Kaley like the picnic's finishing touch.

couple recently moved from their Ballantyne home just south of the border to the new Indian Land, S.C. subdivision of Barber Rock.

Cyndi keeps busy working at the new house and looking after daughters Kaley, 11, and Riley, 7. The girls will attend Indian Land middle school and elementary schools, respectively, this fall.

The Girls: 'Perfect Age'

"Before we had our girls, dating was primarily about dining out," says Michael who characterizes himself and his wife as "foodies." "Our very first date after reconnecting was at the Blue Marlin on East Boulevard (the restaurant is now Cantina 1511). We're always exploring different types of cuisine and new restaurants."

These days, more often than not, an afternoon or evening out for the Crosbys includes their daughters. "The girls are just at the perfect age to go out and have fun with," says Cyndi, who indicated one mandatory element for a successful family date is planning an activity where everyone can be involved.

The Crosbys hit the proverbial home run with their recent all-family outing at Ballantyne's Elon Park. Not even a 10-minute drive from their home, the park off of Ardrey Kell Road is a frequent destination for the Crosbys. The park offers plenty of walking trails, two challenging disc golf courses, plenty of shady spots for a picnic and is pet friendly — welcome news for the family's black lab, Zoey, who joined in the fun on the weekday picnic and sporting excursion.

"It's a really fun and inexpensive way to spend time together as a family," notes Cyndi. "We can pack an easy



Michael and Riley win the disc golf competition. Cyndi and Kaley plot their revenge.

picnic, bring a Frisbee or two for the golf course and our bocce ball set, and we are ready for a great time." Cyndi estimates the cost for the entire outing at less than \$20.

Elon Park is a gem of an outdoor recreational facility. The park is open year-round dawn 'til dusk and is maintained by Mecklenburg County Parks and Recreation. Tall pin oaks are interspersed among the cedar and pine trees. A gazebo stands watch over the small pond that is home to wood ducks, egrets and the occasional heron.

The park also offers plenty of shade. The Crosbys had their pick of spots to settle into on this lazy Friday afternoon, as they had the park almost exclusively to themselves

Friendly Foes

The first order of the day was a bit of friendly competition that saw Mom and Kaley take on Dad and Riley on the Mule

Trail short disc golf course. Leaving the longer and more difficult Angry Beaver course for another day, the Crosby family dual lasted until the final hole, where Dad and Riley edged out Mom and Kaley.


Bragging rights were short-lived, however, as the team of Mom and Kaley came storming back in the bocce ball match to slip by a strong effort by Dad and Riley. The family decided to leave things all square; "who rules" would be resolved another day.

Between the disc golf and bocce ball, the girls worked up an appetite and were ready to eat as Cyndi found the perfect spot to spread out. Ham and cheese sandwiches reenergized the youngsters, and Michael and Cyndi dug into veggie wraps with hummus, lettuce and tomato. Fresh strawberries, cupcakes and pink lemonade rounded out a feast that even Zoey approved of.

After giving Zoey a good run and watching the clouds form all sorts of fun shapes, the Crosbys were ready to put this date into the books. Cyndi had just one other item that needed attention.

She managed to surprise Michael with a discrete smooch as they were packing up. Date successful!

Kiley asked this writer to "fuzz over" the mushy part of the outing. Hearing that request, both Michael and Cyndi shared a good laugh.

After all, what would Date Night be without a goodnight kiss? 

ELON PARK

11401 Ardrey Kell Road
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<http://charmeck.org/mecklenburg/county/parkandrec/parks/parksbyregion/southregion/pages/elonpark.aspx>



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