



Raised on the East Coast,

by Matt Beardmore | photos by Maija Martin Photography

The East Coast calls every summer, but with friends and so many fun activities in and near their West Lake View neighborhood, Chicago has become home for Meaghan and Joseph Levenstein and their two young children.

Meaghan and Joseph Levenstein have lived in West Lake View for more than five years. Jobs and friends brought them to Chicago after both grew up and attended college on the East Coast. Meaghan, a native of Richmond, VA, graduated from James Madison University in Harrisonburg, VA, with a major in Business Marketing and a Minor in Dance, while Joseph Sr., who is from Simsbury, CT, is an alum of the University of Connecticut where he majored in Finance. The two met on Match.com (before there was even an app for the service) in 2013 and

were married before friends and family five years later in Sedona, AZ, a place Meaghan says is "pretty special" to them.

Meaghan and Joseph have two children—4-year-old JJ (Joseph Jr.) and 1-year-old Ford, who both recently celebrated birthdays. JJ attends soccer and swim classes and is "incredibly into sea creatures and all-things construction," Meaghan said. "He's a "big boy" around the house, helping out with his baby sister and being very sweet with her."

One of his favorite pastimes is visiting the local parks, as well as the Shedd Aquarium, Field Museum of Natural History and the Lincoln Park Zoo. JJ also loves music, including the Rock and Roll Playhouse shows at Thalia Hall.

"Ford is crawling like crazy and is taking her first steps — she needs to keep up with her brother!" Meaghan said. "She is an easy-going baby who is full of laughs and a sense of humor."

JJ and Ford had plenty of kids to play with this summer as the Levenstein's continued their tradition of spending a week every year in Nantucket with three other families. "We all have young children, so it's a lot of fun for the kids as well," Meaghan said. "This summer, there were 10 kids under 11 years old under one roof!"

The Levenstein's were also fortunate to take a few weekend trips this year to visit family and friends across the country. "Our family is still on the East Coast (in Virginia, Connecticut, and North Carolina), and we



Right at Home in Chicago

miss them all the time, but they also enjoy visiting us!" Meaghan said.

Along with hosting family, the Levenstein's enjoy an active life here in Chicago. This past summer, Meaghan and Joseph Sr. attended several concerts, ranging from Taylor Swift and Beyoncé to Bruce Springsteen and The Dave Matthews Band. Chicago street festivals, especially the Southport Art Fest & Retro on Roscoe, are musts for the Levenstein's.

The family has their favorite NFL teams (Go Jets and Bears!) and MLB teams (Red Sox and Cubs!) to cheer for, but they also enjoy staying active. Meaghan, a former yoga instructor at CorePower before she had JJ and the pandemic began, still loves to practice yoga and she works out at Power Sculpt Fitness on Lincoln Avenue.

"The in-person — and virtual — classes are incredibly efficient, which I appreciate more than ever being a mom with a full-time job outside the home," she said.

Joseph Sr. enjoys his time on the golf course—his favorite courses are in Wisconsin and North Carolina—and he is doing his best to squeeze in as many rounds as possible before the summer ends.

Meaghan and Joseph also like trying new restaurants—as well as long-time trusted spots.

"We're a huge fan of Eden, which is not too far away in neighboring Avondale," Meaghan said. "Shout out to Doppio Coffee House on Greenview and Barry — one of the very best coffee houses around!"

Meaghan is passionate about her monthly book club, which meets at friends' homes and parks. Her favorite recent book is Elin Hilderbrand's *The Five-Star Weekend*, which is set on Nantucket. Every year while on Nantucket, Meaghan and her friend enjoy going to Hilderbrand's book signing.

Back home in Chicago, the Levenstein's can't say enough good things about the life they have built in Lake View.

"We like the walkability and how many of our friends have moved to the area," Meaghan said. "It's a family-friendly neighborhood, and it's fun to have so many others with kids nearby. There are great parks, restaurants, and it's centralized."