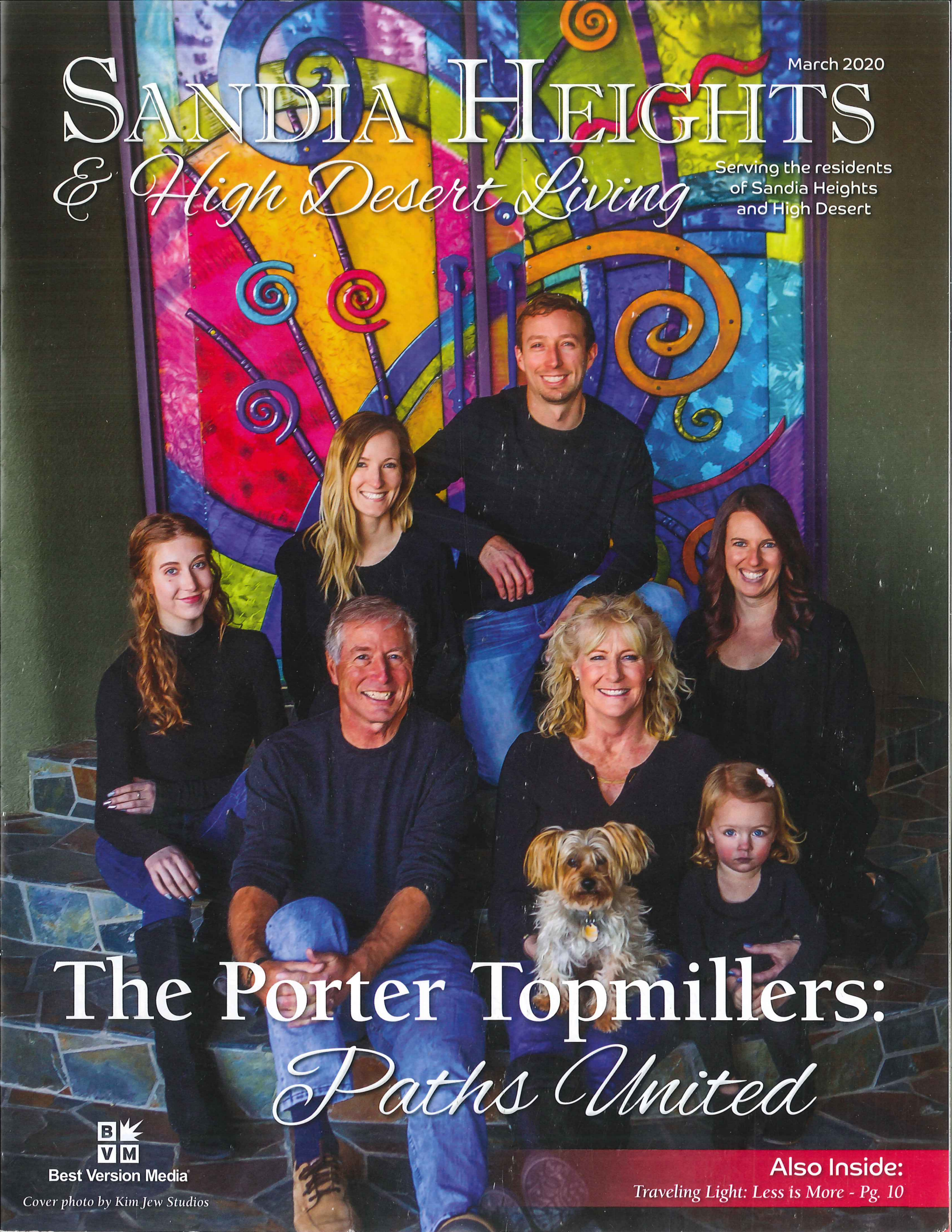


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The Porter Topmillers: *Paths United*



Best Version Media

Cover photo by Kim Jew Studios

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The Porter Topmillers: Paths United

By Marie Cimarusti | Photography by Kim Jew Studios



On August 19, 2016, a new family was created. That was the day Trish Porter and James Topmiller got married. The two were introduced through a mutual friend, Dale Dekker. Dale's matchmaking instinct was spot-on and it was four months later when James and Trish became husband and wife.

Before they met, James and Trish had led very accomplished lives. James is now semi-retired from his position as a partner at *Bohannon Huston Inc.*, a consulting firm specializing in engineering, spatial data, and advanced technologies. He worked there for more than 30 years with his focus during the later years being on master-planned communities. One of his projects is particularly special to him because it is the community he and Trish call home: *High Desert*. James, who moved from the Northeast Heights, recalled working on the early planning stages of the special place where he hoped to someday live. "The idea then, and now, was to fit a new community as seamlessly as possible into the beautiful natural environment of High Desert. I believe High Desert achieved that easily." In agreement, Trish added, "I love the proximity to Sandia Mountains, Bear Canyon, along with the city view, night lights and incredible sunsets. It's amazing eye candy and I've seen nothing else like it."

Trish's background is in writing and she is the successful author of two books. Her most recent is the award-winning, *King Here*, published in 2019. It is Trish's tribute to her father in which she shares his "inspiring, yet tragic life story." Ultimately, it is a story of hope as revealed in the book's subtitle, "Never Too Old, Too Rich or Too Anything to Meet Jesus."

In her 2010 book, *Rekindle Your Dreams*, Trish writes about her amazing journey as an athlete. She shares stories like the one when her 8th grade teacher told her, "Don't ever become a high jumper because you'll never be any good." Another story related to the same sport happened years later when she heard the thrilling announcement that she'd made the U.S. Olympic Team and would be competing at the 1988 games in Seoul, Korea. In 1994, Trish had to step away from competing due to a bad neck injury. Then, at age 40, after the births of her two children and having gone 11 years without competing, a friend asked Trish if she'd consider training with her and, in time, she agreed. She described the great things that happened next: "I competed for nine years and stopped in August 2011. I jumped 5' 9¼" (the same height I jumped in high school); was a four-time World Masters Champion; the world record holder for age 40-44; and a

twelve-time U.S. Masters National Champion for my age group." Trish rekindled her dream and she gives readers her formula on how they can, too.

Sadly, the lives of James and Trish before they met also included the deepest of losses. In 2015, James lost his wife, Linda, after 33 years of marriage. Trish's loss happened in 2012 when a plane crash took the lives of her husband of 20 years, Pat Porter, their 15-year-old son, Connor, and Connor's close friend and classmate at *Albuquerque Academy*, Connor Mantsch. The three were returning from a "guys' trip" to Sedona, Arizona, but tragically, Pat's plane when down during takeoff.

Trish said she made it through each day because of her deep belief expressed through her words, "I trust you, Lord." She explained, "My faith in Jesus Christ and knowing Pat and Connor were in heaven because of their belief in Jesus meant one day we'd see them again. For this, I am incredibly thankful."

James shares Trish's strong faith. Regarding their first meeting, James said, "I knew early on that Trish and I would enjoy spending time together, not knowing then it would eventually lead to our marriage. From the start, I enjoyed her laughter, her athleticism, and her willingness to try new things, and explore new places. Most importantly, we both loved our Lord Jesus, deeply." When I asked Trish about James' special qualities, she said, "He is incredibly kind and patient. He is a strong leader of our family. The Lord, family, and people are his priorities. He is adventurous, loves being active, is athletic, and he makes me laugh." Together, they attend *Sagebrush Church* in Northeast Albuquerque.

James and Trish have found such joy in the blending of their families. James' son, Justin Topmiller, lives in Albuquerque with his wife Bethany and their almost 3-year-old daughter, Felicity. Justin, a graduate of the *University of New Mexico*, works at *Sandia National Labs* as a software systems engineer. Bethany stays more-than-busy being Felicity's mom and preparing for the arrival of their new baby!

James' daughter, Lindsay Topmiller, also graduated from *UNM* and lives in Albuquerque. She is the office manager at *Bernalillo Pet Care Center*. James said, "Both at work and home, she enjoys time with her furry friends!"

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Shannon Porter, Trish’s daughter, is a freshman at the *University of Colorado* in Colorado Springs. She attended Albuquerque Academy until her junior year when she switched to online studies at *The Keystone School* so she could focus on her training. She is a figure skater who has competed at several U.S. National Championships. Shannon comes from a family of super-athletes. In addition to her mother’s feats, her brother was a U.S. Fencing National Medalist and her father was a two-time Olympian, in 1984 and 1988, and an eight-time U.S. National Cross-Country Champion. The Porter family has quite a list of stellar athletic achievements, but Trish’s priority on family is clear: “I call Connor and Shannon our two gold medals!”

Shannon was only 18 months old when she first stepped on the ice and she loved it from the beginning. She made her college selection with the goal of getting a quality education while still being able to continue her training full time. Regarding career plans, she said, “As of right now I don’t know exactly what I want to do for my career, but hopefully I will be able to utilize my business degree and potentially work in real estate or marketing.”

Shannon shares more than athletic skills with her family. She also shares a deep faith in God. She said, “By being open to Him and willing to put forth effort into the life He has granted me, only then can I have a truly joy-filled and meaningful life.”



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With Shannon being away at college, Trish and James are now empty-nesters. Well, sort of. The other family member is *Theo*, their sweet “Yorkie-Poo.” Ten years ago, little Theo lived with family friends who owned four other dogs of the large variety. That made him want to spend a lot of time outdoors. Connor fell in love with Theo and brought him home for a visit, begging to keep him. It didn’t take much convincing!

For the last 21 years, Trish has lived in High Desert. Her original home, however, is a bit farther west. Trish was born in Menlo Park, California, and that’s where she lived until leaving for the *University of Oregon* in Eugene where she earned her bachelor’s degree in Business Marketing. Trish has many fond memories of her childhood. “When I was young, I was a total tomboy complete with competing against my brothers in all sports whether I was playing football or snow skiing.”

I asked Trish if there were any other interesting or fun facts she could share. I learned that she is the *U.S. Olympians and Paralympians Association* New Mexico Chapter President. She also told me, “I was the first girl in *Little League Baseball* in Northern California.” When I asked James the same question, he said, “Nope! I’m not that interesting, I’m afraid!” Not true, James! He was born in Owensboro, Kentucky, but it was just months later that his family moved to Labelle, Florida. James said, “Childhood memories began there: Playing in the wind and rain of the hurricanes, enjoying our horse named *Blue* (more white than blue!), pet alligators (small ones!), riding on the backs of large turtles at the edge of the swamp, an absolutely

fun swamp-buggy with oversized balloon tires, eating swamp cabbage and growing up with two brothers who did everything together.” When he was about age 7, the Topmillers moved to Silver City, NM, near his grandfather and family. That’s where his sister was born and where he finished high school. He graduated from *New Mexico State University* in Las Cruces with a bachelor’s degree in Civil Engineering. Later, he received his master’s degree from UNM in Albuquerque.

The members of the Porter Topmiller Family have achieved things that some only dream about and they’ve suffered through the saddest of losses. But they never lost hope. Trish said that encouragement sometimes came through the appearance of double rainbows: “The day after the plane accident, out of the accident site there was a gorgeous double rainbow.” Double rainbows also appeared at the celebration of what would have been Connor’s 16th birthday, on Trish’s first date with James, and during their wedding rehearsal dinner. Trish said that they gladly share their stories in the hopes that others may also find encouragement there. Or as they state in their family motto: As Christians, we want to love others, impact others for Christ, and make a difference in this world.

Trish’s books can be found at www.amazon.com & www.barnesandnoble.com

King Here by Trish Porter Topmiller

Rekindle Your Dreams by Trish Porter

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