

TODAY'S WOMAN 2021

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 2021



BALANCING
ACTS

Balancing star

School volunteer and Liberator mom
Jennifer Carr makes multitasking look easy

Being more than one thing

From civic servant to homeschool mom,
Alexis Neal embraces her many roles

Prioritizing, prioritizing

Dr. Lori Cohen talks about finding
balance in her career and family life

Many hats

Coach Alicia Wollard balances
the needs of her students and new marriage

A SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT TO THE BOLIVAR HERALD-FREE PRESS

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BEING MORE THAN ONE THING

Alexis Neal

Interview and photos by Jill Way

When Coyle and Alexis Neal moved to Bolivar in 2013, they were looking to make a leap from a big city life to a small town pace.

Alexis — who was raised in suburban Ohio, attended college at Truman State in Kirksville and law school at Ohio State — was working as a tax attorney for the Department of Justice in Washington, D.C., while Coyle was teaching as an adjunct professor at a university.

Visiting while Coyle was interviewing for a job at Southwest Baptist University, Bolivar stood out as a strong community, and the pair fell in love with it immediately.

Coyle took a position as an assistant professor of political science at SBU, and Alexis took a leap into local government in 2014 when she took a seat on the City of Bolivar planning and zoning commission.

After dipping her toe into small town civics, Alexis became more and more enthralled with the ins and outs of government at the local level. In turn, she was eager to fill a vacancy on Bolivar's board of aldermen in 2017. She was officially elected as a Ward 4 alderman in 2018 and was re-elected in 2020.

And, as Alexis's civic duties increased, so did the Neal family. Coyle and Alexis are now the parents of two children — Harry, age 7, and Freddy, age 4.



Alexis Neal and her kids, Harry, at left, and Freddy, take a moment to pose for a photo in their outdoor classroom — their own front porch.

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ON THE COVER

STAFF PHOTO/LINDA SIMMONS

Dancing With The Stars, any given sport, Bolivar Booster Club, keeping in touch via phone and now getting ready for a grandbaby, Jennifer Carr has lots of things to keep balanced.

TODAY'S WOMAN

September 25, 2021

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Today, Alexis wears many different hats — wife, mother, church member, stay-at-home and homeschool mom, chair of the City of Bolivar planning and zoning commission and Ward 4 alderman, adjunct professor, women's bible study leader, occasional podcast moderator for The Christian Feminist and former attorney.

The BH-FP talked with Alexis about how homeschooling kids and being active in city government and the community can make seemingly drowsy small town life move at a faster pace.



The following interview has been edited for length and clarity.

What's your secret for keeping your life balanced?

I'm still working on that. It helps a lot that our schedules fit together pretty well; my obligations outside the home are primarily during hours when my husband is available to help with the kids. And the variety helps with mental balance as well; it's not all one thing. Sometimes I'm sweeping up goldfish cracker crumbs or trying to explain fractions; other times I'm voting on which asphalt contractor the city should use. I get to use different skills, different muscles at different times.

Growing up, people always ask you what you want to be, like there's one single right answer; nobody really tells you that you can be more than one thing. But, if you ask little kids what they want to be, they'll say they want to be, like, a firefighter AND a veterinarian AND a ballerina. And we laugh, because yeah, some of those things are really demanding, and it would be impossible to do them all professionally at the same time.

But the general principle is sound: we're allowed to be more than one thing, to want to be more than one thing. Trying to land on "one thing" you want to do all the time can be a challenge. I guess I didn't realize that you could be a stay-at-home mom who homeschools her kids AND an elected official helping shape the future of your community. But you can, and it's great.

Who's your biggest supporter?

My husband, Coyle. He has consistently encouraged me to try new things and continues to support me in whatever I do. Also his employer, SBU, is incredibly supportive of families and community involvement, and that's made such a difference for us.

How have the last few years — including taking on city leadership, beginning to homeschool kids, living through a pandemic — changed how you keep things balanced?

In a weird way, the pandemic made some things easier; for example, our calendar emptied out quite a bit, leaving me plenty of time to really focus on homeschooling. And yard work.

But sometimes fitting everything in feels a bit like a game of Tetris.



Alexis Neal is sworn in as a new city alderman by then-city clerk Natalie Scrivner in April 2017.




CENTER: Alexis Neal, fourth from the left, takes her seat at her first board meeting as a newly appointed alderman in April 2017. Also pictured, from left, are Mayor Chris Warwick, alderman Steve Sagaser, alderman Thane Kifer and former alderman Vicky Routh.

BOTTOM: As Bolivar's planning and zoning commission chair, Alexis Neal, center, leans in and addresses the audience in a June 2019 public hearing regarding medical marijuana. Also pictured are, from left, Ed Kurtz, Matt Rice and Steve Sagaser.




Growing up, people always ask you what you want to be, like there's one single right answer; nobody really tells you that you can be more than one thing. But, if you ask little kids what they want to be, they'll say they want to be, like, a firefighter AND a veterinarian AND a ballerina. ... But the general principle is sound: we're allowed to be more than one thing, to want to be more than one thing."

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What's your favorite thing about working with the city?

Can I have two favorite things? One is getting to work with a group of people (both staff and elected officials) who genuinely want Bolivar and its citizens to thrive and are committed to serving and improving our community.

Another favorite is getting to participate in solving real problems that affect real people in practical ways — roads, sidewalks, water and sewer, police and fire service, code enforcement, youth sports, parks ... we have a real chance to affect people's lives for the better every day, and that's an incredible gift.

Why is civic involvement important for women?

Well, to begin with, we make up half the community; it makes sense to have our experiences and needs represented in government, to be included in the conversation. And women have skills and gifts that can and should be used to serve our communities. When those skills and gifts aren't being used, we all miss out.

Bolivar has benefited greatly from the leadership of women like city administrator Tracy Slagle and Bolivar school board member and former planning and zoning commission chair Paula Hubbert, to name just two.

Best part of homeschooling? Best part of teaching at the collegiate level?

The best part of homeschooling is getting to be with my kids and participate in their education — to watch them learn and discover and make connections. And a lot of the time I'm learning right along with them, which is just an added bonus.

Whether I'm teaching my kids or lecturing to a room full of college students, I love getting to explain the material in an accessible way, watching the click of comprehension in their eyes, and knowing that the idea makes sense to them.

Do you ever feel overwhelmed? How do you deal with that?

I don't know anyone who doesn't feel overwhelmed from time to time, especially with everything that's gone on in the last year. I'm blessed to have encouraging people in my life, who can reassure me that I'm doing OK, the kids are



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO/ALEXIS NEAL

The Neal family shares a laugh while posing for a photo. Pictured are Coyle, with Freddy on his shoulder, and Alexis and Harry.

“There are so many ways to serve and so many needs to meet — jump in!”



Harry, age 7, talks about the purple trellis, painted his favorite color, and the plants — especially the lilac bush — next to his house.

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learning, they're well fed and mostly clean, etc.

And ultimately, of course, it helps to know that everything doesn't depend on me; I can trust the sovereignty of God, and things that upset my plans never upset His.

It also helps a lot to be part of a team — with my husband, in marriage and parenting and homeschooling, and, in city government, with the other aldermen, commissioners and city staff. Belonging to a team and working together toward a shared goal really alleviates a lot of the strain and stress and isolation that can lead to feeling overwhelmed.

Best way to maintain relationships and friendships in the chaos of life?

If you figure it out, let me know. The best advice I've received is to focus on "being" a friend, which requires intentionality, patience and creativity, especially in the midst of a pandemic, but that's my goal.

Advice to other women wanting to get involved in homeschooling?

There are many homeschool families in Bolivar who are incredibly generous with their experience and advice, so if you have questions, just ask! (And if you can't find an answer locally, there's always the internet.)

It doesn't look the same for everyone; pick what works for your family and your kids. And make lots of use of the public library! If the Polk County Library doesn't have a resource in their collection, they can often borrow it through the Missouri Evergreen system or an interlibrary loan. They've been a godsend to our homeschool.

Advice to other women wanting to get involved in civic leadership?

Find out what's going on in the area you're interested in, whether it's city, county, school district, etc. — attend the meetings (or watch them online, if that's an option), read the agendas and packets online, and then reach out to folks in leadership to let them know you're interested and ask how you can help. There are so many ways to serve and so many needs to meet — jump in!



Something piques Harry's interest, drawing his gaze toward "The Burgess Bird Book," while his mom Alexis reads to him and his brother.



The best advice I've received is to focus on *being* a friend, which requires intentionality, patience and creativity, especially in the midst of a pandemic, but that's my goal."



Freddy, age 4, shows off some of his latest artwork.



Grabbing a seat on the front porch, Harry picks up a copy of one of his favorite books, "The Wizard of Oz."

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From left to right; Terri Cloyd, Myrta Hall, Deborah Coble, Ally Murray, Sarah Watson, Patty Jones, Barb Haynes, Michelle Woods, Leslie Cantrell, Sammy Burks, Hannah Toombs, Anita Ellis, Janice Walker and Cindy Young

PRIORITIZING FOR BALANCE

Dr. Lori Cohen

Interview and photos by Linda Simmons

While she has the professional title of "doctor," Lori Cohen, M.D., also has other titles that are just as important to her and she takes very seriously — wife, mother and friend. Striving to balance each one can be tough sometimes, but keeping life balanced for herself and her family always comes first.

The BH-FP sat down with Lori and had her give us her thoughts on keeping life balanced.



The following interview has been edited for length and clarity.

What's your secret to keeping your life balanced?

I think it is very important to be intentional with your time and your choices. Having a life purpose or a vision statement can help you focus on what is really the most important thing for you so that when you have to make snap decisions about what to spend your time on, you stay consistent with your priorities. I heard it said that every "yes" is saying "no" to something else. We are all limited beings so we have to make our "yesses" count for the most they can.

Who has been your best adviser?

My husband Eric is my go-to man and adviser on everything. He hears me venting and encourages me daily. On a larger scale, my relationship with Christ/God is the definitive authority in my life. I filter everything I do through my lens of faith.



Dr. Lori Cohen pauses for a photo in front of the Bolivar Family Care Center.

“I think it is very important to be intentional with your time and your choices.”



Part of Dr. Cohen's daily duties is keeping her patients on track and making sure they are taken care of.

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How have the last couple of years changed how you keep things balanced?

It has changed the dynamics of my work and my family life somewhat. In some ways, we had to be a lot less active and do more distancing and quarantines. We have to make harder choices about what is safe to do and the best way to spend our time. I had to think a lot at first about how to keep my family safe from me possibly exposing them to the virus.

How did the pandemic change your way of balancing your professional versus your personal life?

The pandemic did make me take a close look at what is really important and all the simple things that I often took for granted.

What's your favorite thing about working in the Polk County area?

Absolutely the people are my favorite thing about the Polk County area. I have had the opportunity and privilege to be a part of people's lives for the last 20 years and this area is very dear to my heart. It is a loving and bright community.

How do you find the energy to do all that you do?

I have been blessed with good health, and I try to take care of myself fairly well. I make sure to get 8 hours of sleep at night as much as possible, and I like to walk on a regular basis. I think these things keep me going.



“I can't be everything to everyone but I can do my best every day.”

Dr. Lori Cohen aims to keep her life balanced while helping others.

What advice would you give other women that want to work in the medical field?

The medical field is incredibly rewarding and it is a great career to choose. There are definitely compromises you must make to work in medicine. I think that a woman considering medicine should really investigate the career options and what they involve and determine if the workload and hours are a good investment for her lifestyle and choices.

How much time does it take to still keep things running smoothly with your large family?

I still aspire to keep things running smoothly!! Every day brings its own craziness and chaos and joy. Between work and my family, that pretty much takes up all my days. My hobbies and interests are things I share with my family and kids so that when I am doing those things, we are spending time together. Also, sometimes things just don't happen or get done. My house is not a paragon of spotlessness — it is often a real mess! When prioritizing things, sometimes the housework is going to come last.

What are the demands on your personal life?

It's mostly relationships really — I have five teenagers, an amazing husband, an extended family that lives locally and some amazing friends. Relationships are the most important thing to me and that is what takes up the most of my



Lori and Eric Cohen are happiest when they are surrounded by their kids, Alex, Rachel, Katherine and Danny.



Keeping her eye on her family is a priority for Cohen.

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personal time. Otherwise it is just the mundane, necessary tasks of daily living in a fairly big family.

What does a balanced life mean to you?

I would truly love to be perfect and just nail it at everything I do. That is not real life, however, and certainly NOT me, so balance to me is living my priorities. I want to be there for my family and my patients when they need me the most. I want to live a life that brings glory to God and makes a difference for eternity. I can't be everything to everyone but I can do my best every day.

Thinking back, who were some of the people that helped you develop your ability to balance your life on a daily basis?

Dr. Louis Harris was a mentor to me from the time I was in medical school. I learned so much from him about work and life balance. As my life and career progressed, I gained friends and colleagues like Dr. Laura Vance, Dr. Mary Hogan and Dr. Hillary Glauser-Patton (best friend and professor/mom extraordinaire). They have all taught me so much about how to be a working professional mom and about how to do life in general. I am so very thankful for them.



The Cohen family spends time at home. Pictured are Katherine, Eric, Rachel, Lori, Danny and Alex with Charlie and Cooper. Keeping everyone in line can be a joint effort.



filter everything I do through my lens of faith."



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Alicia Wollard stands with her softball team, a softball and glove taking center stage.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO/ALICIA WOLLARD

WEARING MANY HATS

Alicia
Wollard

Interview and photos by Brittany Gilbert

Alicia Wollard is the head softball coach at Fair Play High School — but that's not all. She is also a new wife to Jared Wollard, whom she married July 4. On top of that, she is a ninth through 12th grade English and dual-credit speech teacher, as well as a basketball coach.

With long hours — which she seems to run out of — and growing tasks, she said she finds herself exhausted with the responsibility of it all. She credits a good support system with keeping her going.

Wollard took some time out of her busy schedule to discuss with the BH-FP the challenges of her own balancing act and her sense of determination.



The following interview has been edited for length and clarity.

Who is in your family?

I now have a husband, three dogs and a cat!

What are the responsibilities you take on in your life?

I balance being a new wife, teaching, coaching (softball and basketball).



Front row: Abby Ball and Jenna Viles Back row: Donita Pirkle, Cheyanne McGinnis, Whitney Copeland, Tammy McClure, Kim Segui, Madison King, Beverly Smith, Jeannie Brown, Tina DeGraffenreid Not Pictured: Delpha Jones, Macy Legan, Rachel Evans and Carole Gray

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How much of your time does it all take?

I feel like I could use a few more hours in the day. I come to school at 7:30 a.m. and teach a full day until 3:30. I then go to practice from 3:45-5:45. I do get to go home afterwards, but then there are times where you are grading papers or preparing for a game, so there are some late nights!

What does a balanced life mean to you?

I feel like a balanced life is one that you are able to effectively manage so that all parts feel like they are getting the attention needed. I think there has to be a balance as well for family, friends, and your own time, too; otherwise, you can lose yourself or get burned out.

What is your secret to keeping your life balanced? How do you find the energy to do it all?

I think a huge key to balancing life is that you have support. I have the best support system with my husband, family and friends, but also my administration and colleagues. With all of the support, it keeps me going. I am not sure where my energy comes from, but I love what I do, so instead of all these hats I wear, I feel like they are all a part of me.

Do you ever get tired?

EXHAUSTED! It is a hard thing for me to shut my brain off! Coaching is something that comes home with me a lot. After a loss, I am thinking of what we can do to change for the next game or what I need to do better; with a win I can get so excited that I just think about how proud I am of all my girls. My mind just keeps going!

Who has always been your biggest cheerleader?

My family. My mom always texts me "go Hornets" on game days because she is always rooting for me and the girls. She believes in me so much and is proud of all that I do so it does help keep me going. My grandmother (who has passed) was a huge cheerleader for me when I played sports, and she makes me want to give that to my girls. As a coach, I want them to know that I am always cheering for them.

How have the last couple of school years changed how you keep things balanced?

I think that with COVID, a lot of things changed with the unknown. There is some balancing in making sure that my girls are safe and healthy, but there were many times that along with practice, I would have to do virtual practices with girls. Being flexible was a huge change because there were times that we would have to change days or reschedule games due to numbers. Getting married has really changed my balancing act because now my life is mixed with his and not just me to think about, so I try to make sure that he isn't getting short changed!

What is your favorite thing about being a coach?

Being able to watch a group of girls come together as a family and work together for the same goal. Sports are about wins and losses to some, but for me that experience of belonging is what I want my girls to remember.



FILE PHOTO/BH-FP STAFF

Fair Play coach Alicia Wollard coaches both basketball and softball, on top of her also being a teacher.

“hope that the mark I leave is that she loved the game, but she loved her kids more!”



have also learned that it is ok to say, 'Time out, I need just a minute for myself,' and that is OK!"



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO/ALICIA WOLLARD

ABOVE: Alicia Wollard smiles with her husband, Jared Wollard, whom she married July 4.



Alicia Wollard stands with her speech class after having students give a show-and-tell speech.

PHOTO/FACEBOOK

Do you ever feel like you are going in circles?

I have learned that you have to stay on top of things or it piles up fast and you feel like you're never going to catch up, but finding the balance, you learn how to handle everything. I have also learned that it is ok to say, "Time out, I need just a minute for myself," and that is OK!

Advice to other women wanting to get into coaching?

I think that having strong, confident women in coaching is important. I know that showing young girls that you can wear more than one hat is important to me. I want them to love the game, but I want them to remember the bond we have as a family. Coaching is a way to make a difference in young lives, and I hope that the mark I leave is that she loved the game, but she loved her kids more!



Fair Play High School softball coach Alicia Wollard stands with her team, softball bats balancing on their palms. The team's members are, from left, back row – principal Randy Lightfoot, Riley Tennyson, Meghan Hoxsie, coach Alicia Wollard, Jaden Dollar, Katherine McDougal and Donna Miller; front row – Alexis Francka, Grace Harmon, Anna Grove, Amanda Scarbrough, Chloe Foster and Ashlyne Kirksey.



Alicia Wollard poses with a few Fair Play High School seniors in 2017.



Alicia Wollard participates in her own speech class' challenge at the beginning of the 2021-22 school year. She had her students bring an item and give a speech on how the item represented their character.

“Sports are about wins and losses to some, but for me that experience of belonging is what I want my girls to remember.”

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- Sondra Rogers- "Being a lifelong resident of Polk County, my kids and grandkids all live here. So the thing I love most about Polk County is that it is 'HOME'." (18 years in Banking)
- Kelly Barnhouse- "I love Bolivar and Polk County, the people, friends, customers. I wouldn't live anywhere else." (44 years in Banking)
- Darlene McBride- "I love the friendly, caring people of Polk County." (36 years in Banking)
- Lori Rice- "I love our sense of community. The community involvement, the great schools and all the wonderful people. This town has provided many blessing for my children and me." (13 years in Banking, 9 years in Insurance) #MyTownProud
- Shelley Choate- "What I love most about Polk county is that I have 5 lakes to choose from if I want to fish or go boating within driving distance." (10 years in Banking)
- Mary Brummett- "What I like the most about Polk County are people and the farming community." (29 years in Banking)
- Cassie Prikryl- "What I love most about Bolivar/Polk County is the small town feel and the close-knit community." (6 years in Banking)
- Katelynn Nelson- "What I love most about Bolivar is how the community is always committed to helping each other for any need that may arise. It is a privilege to be a part of such a strong, supportive community" (3 years in Banking)
- Maddison Anderson- "I appreciate the willingness from individuals to lend a helping hand to someone in need that comes with belonging to a smaller community." (6 months in Banking)
- Laurinda Gipson- "The people in Bolivar are great!" (17 years in Banking)
- Jane Francka- "Small town atmosphere is all I've ever known. I like to know and recognize people when out and about." (13 years in Banking)
- Teresa Cone- "I am a transplant from Kansas City. Having lived in a larger city most of my life helps me to really appreciate the beauty and neighborly feel of the community I'm thankful to call home." (20 years in Banking)

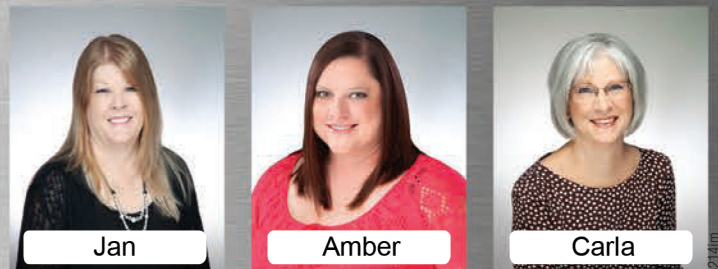
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- Jan Wilson- "What I love most about Bolivar is that it feels like a small town even though it's not really a small town. The people are so friendly and caring that it feels like home and family." (36 years in Insurance)
- Amber Cline- "Having lived in Bolivar/Polk County all my life, I love our love and support for each other in our community. From business to a family in trouble, your locals always come through when there is a need and we take care of each other. (16 years in Insurance)
- Carla Fuller- "I love the fact that we have a town that is multi-cultural due to Southwest Baptist University, but we still have century farms with family names who have been here over 100 years. I am amazed with individuals, whom I meet, who move here simply to enjoy the proximity of our lakes, schools and a slower pace of life in general." #BolivarProud (31 years in Insurance)

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Dancing With The Stars, any given sport, Bolivar Booster Club, keeping in touch via phone and now getting ready for a grandbaby, Jennifer Carr has lots of things to keep balanced.

ORGANIZED BALANCED STARS



Jennifer Carr

“A balanced life to me is making it all work together.”

Interview and photos by Linda Simmons

If the words “Jennifer Carr” were in the dictionary, the definition would have to be: energetic, outgoing, busy, organized, female whirlwind.

Taking care of the Bolivar Booster Club, working with other community fundraisers, being a wife, raising three sons and soon adding a granddaughter to the mix, Carr has had to learn how to juggle and balance her time in order to do justice to all counting on her. Last year’s winner of Dancing With The Stars, Kyle Lancaster, described her as “upbeat with tons of energy that makes the experience a complete blast.”

“Her dedication and passion for making it the best event possible allows everyone involved to be proud of what is accomplished,” he said. “Her hard work and organization makes a huge community event go off flawlessly. The school district and community alike are fortunate to call her one of our own!”

The BH-FP sat down with Carr and found out her thoughts on how she manages to balance her life.



The following interview has been edited for length and clarity.

What is your secret to keeping your life balanced?

My life is definitely not 100% “balanced,” but I have learned a few tricks over the years to help keep things a little less chaotic. My boys tease me for having lists and notes everywhere, but making lists and having notes and pre-planning and organizing things as much as possible ahead of time really helps. I’m notorious for being late, so anything I can do in advance helps me manage my time.

Family is the most important thing to me. We spend a lot of time together as a family, so I try to complete as many of my volunteer tasks during the day that I can.

Who has always been your biggest cheerleader?

Rick and my boys and my friends and family have always been huge supporters. I know I can count on them to support me or to help me with anything at any time. I’ve also been blessed with amazing help from other moms. They understand the purpose and goal for what I’m trying to accomplish and are always willing to jump on board with just about any big, crazy idea I throw at them!

I couldn’t do the things I do without all of those people. It truly does

take a village, and I've been blessed with an incredible "tribe."

Also, I have always felt very encouraged and supported by our community. I've always felt like anything we take to the community, whether it's a huge last minute fundraiser for a family, a new community/school event or a big school fundraiser, it's been well received and strongly supported. We have very generous families and a giving, supportive community!

How have the last couple of school years changed how you keep things balanced?

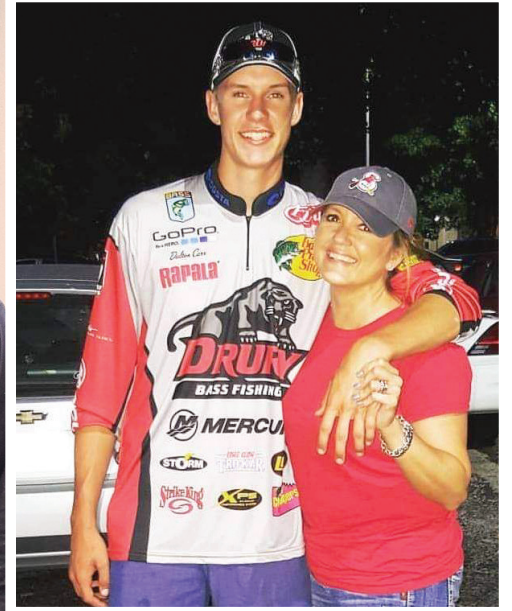
Our youngest son is a freshman in high school and the only boy we have at home now, so things are a little easier and also a little crazier at the same time. He's more independent and can do things for himself, but he's also very active and involved and plays three sports. He's old enough to help with a lot of the things and enjoys helping me or helping out at home when our schedule gets crazy.

What is your favorite thing about working with the Booster Club?

Getting to know the athletes, parents and coaches, and that the coaches know they can come to us for support for their programs. It's very rewarding to see the time and effort we pour into Booster Club have a direct impact on our athletic programs. We may spend every night of the week going to parent meetings at the beginning of the season, or spend hours working in



Jennifer poses with her biggest supporters, Riley, Dalton, Rick and Remmer.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

Dalton and Jennifer enjoy taking part in fishing tournaments.



Youngest son, Remmer, keeps the Carrs busy with a variety of activities.



Jennifer enjoys working with the teachers on lots of various activities and fundraisers and is proud to call all of them friends. She is pictured here with Sandy Krueger and Robin Campbell.

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the concession stand or preparing for a Friday night football game, but then we see all of that hard work and support from our time and memberships pay off when we are able to buy 15 new golf bags for the golf team, watering stations for football or help with a video system for soccer. Part of the reward is seeing how excited and thankful the athletes and coaches are to have their new gear or equipment.

I also love sharing our athletes' accomplishments on our Facebook page. My friend started our Facebook page years ago, so it's important to me to make it as great as possible.

How do you find the energy to do all you do?

I like to stay busy and enjoy having lots of projects, so I guess my energy comes from interacting with people and doing all of those things. I also love to "help" and do positive things in our school and community, so helping with anything positive gives me energy.

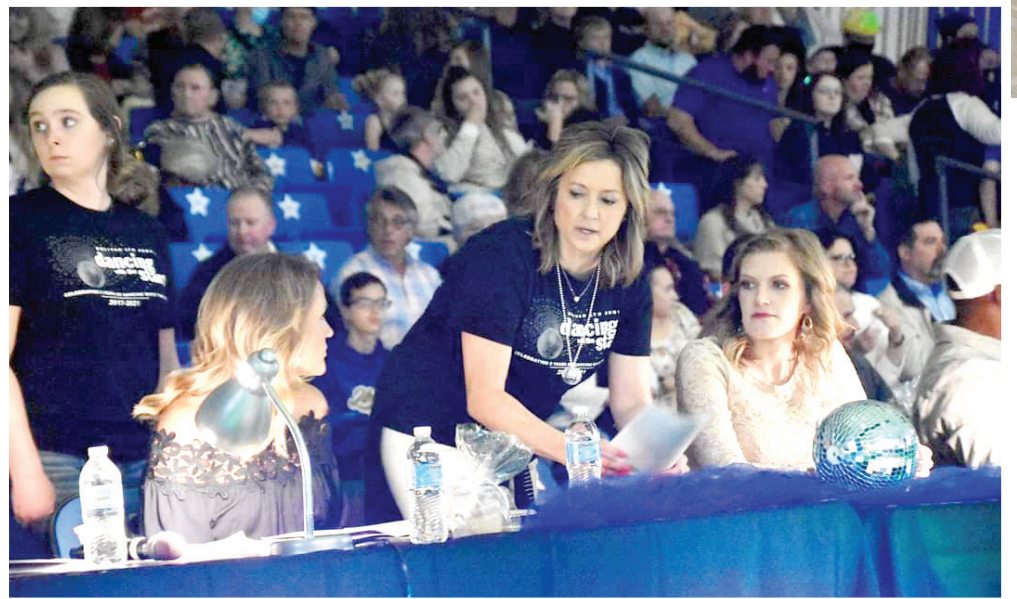
Advice to other women wanting to get involved in activities/clubs like the Booster Club?

The school is a great place to get involved. That's how I got involved when we moved to Bolivar from Springfield 25 years ago. I didn't know anyone here, so I got a part time job at a clothing store and volunteered at BPS.

The best way to get involved at school is to become a room parent, volunteer with PTA, WatchDog Dads, FFA, band or help with Momerators.



At the biggest event and fundraiser of the year for Bolivar High School, Dancing with the Stars, Jennifer sits surrounded by the 2021 teams and crew that helped make it happen.



Jennifer works behind the scenes the night of Dancing With The Stars to keep things running smoothly, going over entries with Angie Smith and Justine Conley.



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Front Row, Left to Right: Becky Jones, Deanna Moore, Melissa Burks, Mary Coursey
Back Row, Left to Right: Amanda Petit, Cindy Davidson, Linda Simmons, Jessica Whalen, Megan Huebner, Pam Rice
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Jennifer always enjoys representing the Liberators Booster Club in the annual homecoming parade.

AT RIGHT: Cledas Manuel with Modern Woodman presents a fundraiser check to Simon Bolivar and Jennifer.



How much time does it take to keep things running smoothly?

I enjoy having lots of different projects so I spend a lot of time volunteering, but that doesn't mean you have to spend a lot of time volunteering to give back. When I first started volunteering I spent a couple hours a few days a week helping in my son's classroom.

Now, Lisa Pyle and I spend about eight months working with our dancers and coaches planning Dancing With The Stars.

What are the demands on your personal life?

Finding a balance! Time management is the biggest demand. Making sure I have the time to take on a commitment without taking away from family time.

What does a balanced life mean to you?

A balanced life to me is making it all work together — balancing family time and projects. It can get tricky at times if my husband is travelling for work and we have sporting events and a volunteer meeting all at the same time, but thankfully we've managed to make it work so far.

Thinking back, who were some of the people that "trained" you and helped you develop your passion for this job?

When I moved here I met several people that were very involved with the school and helped me become involved. Sue Roweton, Marla Kemp, Kelly Archer and Connie Falleson were all very involved with the school. We all had kids about the same age, so they introduced me to other moms and helped me get involved at school.

One of the first big events I volunteered with here was the Fall Festival. I was only involved with very small projects the first year, but that was an eye opening, huge fundraiser experience for me. I was also part of the Genesis Club and made some great friends and enjoyed working and volunteering alongside some amazing and inspirational ladies in our group. One of my favorite things about Dancing With The Stars is meeting the students, coaches, volunteers and dancers from the community that I would never have had the opportunity to meet. After eight months of working together, you build a friendship with them and you've shared memories with them that they'll never forget!

“Part of the reward is seeing how excited and thankful the athletes and coaches are to have their new gear or equipment.”

How do you think social media has helped organizations like the Booster Club and, on the flip side, how does it make life harder?

Social media is an amazing resource for Booster Club, Dancing With The Stars, school groups, sports, events and fundraisers! The only way that I even can think that social media might make life "harder" is just trying to keep up with it!

I can still remember ALL the notes we had to send home to parents to get the word out for the parties and events we had years ago! Social media has made life so much easier as far as making people aware of events and activities. It's also fun to share pictures and celebrate our athletes' accomplishments on social media!

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Left to right: Frances Harrison, Kim Jenkins, Giana Andrews, (Photo Bomber, Scott Sanders), & Amy Bayless.

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