



COVER STORY

Heather Morrison Oppedisano

Making a Difference One Storm at a Time

*By Jenna Caputo
Photos by Niki Rossi Photography
Necklace courtesy of S. Saxon Jewelers*

Heather Oppedisano has always been fascinated by weather, but she didn't know just how much it would end up playing into her life.

Always an active girl, Heather was a leader from an early age. She played little league for several years as the only girl on the team. She participated in various clubs in high school and also helped form the first female lacrosse team at Columbia High School in East Greenbush, where she was recently inducted into the Alumni Hall of Fame.

She knew from a young age that she wanted a career in broadcast news and wasn't afraid to work hard to reach her goal. Her first stint on air was for WRPI radio at the age of 18. She then put herself through college by taking on several jobs throughout her academic career. Heather started in the radio-television broadcasting program at SUNY Adirondack before finishing her BA degree in film, video and media studies at Western Michigan University.

While completing her degree in Michigan, she worked on campus as a digital television director and assisted in commercial shoots for the Post Cereal Company. Shortly thereafter, she landed her first job working for ABC in Battle Creek, Michigan before becoming a director at the CBS affiliate in Lansing, Michigan. She then went on to UPN 9 in New Jersey as a weather assistant. Now a charter employee of Time Warner Cable News, Heather is going on her 14th year as a meteorologist for Channel 9.

Heather began creating weather graphics while working at ABC. That hands-on experience inspired her to continue her education and pursue meteorology. While at CBS, the news director found out she was back in school and gave her a shot to be on air as a fill-in weather anchor. It was Super Bowl Sunday and blizzard-like conditions outside. "My news director called it trial by fire – when you put on a microphone and go

for it," says Heather. "I absolutely loved delivering weather on air and I am forever grateful that she gave me a shot." She continued her education while working and finally made it official after completing the Mississippi State University Broadcast Meteorology program.

She's busy providing us with our weather, too. On a typical day, she does the forecast for at least three Time Warner News stations for Albany, Middletown/Poughkeepsie and New York City's NY1, as well as providing radio forecasts for several markets across the entire state seven days a week. Locally, she broadcasts throughout the day on Talk 1300AM and B95.5FM. She also emcees many charity events and mentors college students throughout the year.

Her husband, Tom, is a decorated, certified PGA golf pro and they have two boys – Thomas, 12 and Vincent, 10. Their family has had experience with the autism spectrum and it has taught Heather a few lessons. Expect the unexpected in any situation is one lesson, but it has also demonstrated what it means to have passion.

"Our children have incredible talent and strong passion in certain areas of their lives," Heather explains. Thomas is a strong academic and also is a talented freehand artist, concentrating on drawing movie monsters. He recently created his first HD stop motion animation monster movie, which was shown on the big screen at Proctors GE Theatre during "ICFS It Came From Schenectady's Godzilla Night." He's also an animal expert and is often invited to a behind the scenes tour when they visit animal attractions across the country. Vincent is a big gamer and easily masters anything digital. An avid cat lover, he also has a great sense of humor, an ear for music, dances and is very athletic.

Heather says the guidance and support their family has received from the boys' schools has made a huge impact on their success in life. They started at the Helping Hands Preschool in Clifton Park and were instantly drawn to the bright, engaging and energetic environment. Deciding to give the boys an alternative atmosphere for the rest of their education, they have since been attending the Saratoga Academy of the Arts & Sciences, also in Clifton Park. Heather says that the Saratoga Academy "lends itself to a positive, whole-person learning, in



which the students are appreciated and encouraged. The results of such a well-rounded education are incredibly talented, smart, well-mannered, kind students."

The Oppedisano family was so inspired by their experience in a school where the children are not stuck at their desks all day, encouraged to think outside the box and experience learning in different ways that they decided to start their own non-profit foundation – ABLE: Alternatives for Better Learning Environments. "ABLE is a scholarship foundation created to help kids find an alternative to public school that really need something different and cannot afford it. We define special

needs on both ends of the educational spectrum, the kids who learn differently and the gifted who need a little more. There are other options where children can thrive in an educational environment in a happy and successful way, but families are not always prepared for the cost of an independent school. This is what ABLE strives to help with," says Heather.

When she's not predicting the weather or working for ABLE, Heather and her family are very active. They love nature and can often be found hiking in Kinns Road Park or enjoying a visit to their favorite eatery, Venezia Pizza. They donate time and resources to several charity organizations, and try to attend shows at SPAC and Proctors whenever they can.

Heather classifies herself as a lifelong learner and is always seeking to continue her education. She loves jazz music and would like to learn how to play an instrument. She is passionate about her life and continuously says

how grateful she is for all they have.

Heather and her family have lived in Clifton Park for nine years now and love it. "We are fortunate to have settled down in such a beautiful community," she says. "We have GREAT neighbors here. We are proud to call Clifton Park our home."

Heather's job may be about predicting the storms, but stormy weather won't stop her from enjoying her life and making a difference along the way! ■

Do you know a neighbor who has a story to share? Nominate your neighbor to be featured in one of our upcoming issues! Contact us at jcaputo@bestversionmedia.com.