



# The Privott Family

## *World Travelers*

BY JENNA CAPUTO  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY ZANE KRUMANOCKER

### The Privott family has a motto – “Live YOUR Life.”

“We encourage ourselves and others to fulfill the purposes ordained for living the very best life. Although we reside in Niskayuna, we are citizens of the world,” they say. Literally, as well as figuratively.

Jay and Deb Privott met in grad school at the University at Albany while they were working as members of a team in the Department of Residential Life. Starting out as friends, things slowly began to change. “My mother passed in 2003,” says Jay. “Deb was a great source of strength and support during this difficult time. She helped plan my mother’s special home-going ceremony and more. We learned so much about one another during this time. From that moment on, I knew I would ask her to be my wife. We wed in 2006 at the Belhurst Castle in Geneva, NY in front of family and friends. We honeymooned in Ghana and South Africa.”

They have taken at least one trip each year that they have been together to the places of their hearts’ desires. Their first international trip together was to the Bahamas and Cuba in 2004. Since then, they have visited places such as St. Lucia, Bermuda, KMT (Egypt), Canada, London, Paris, Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Turks and Caicos Islands, the Grand Cayman Islands and several locations throughout the U.S., including their favorite theme parks and beaches in California

and Florida, as well as Martha’s Vineyard, including the Oak Bluffs and the sacred land of the Wampanoag people.

These trips have created many lasting memories. “Jay has traveled the world over as part of Semester at Sea, Peace Corps, Operation Crossroads Africa, and self-travel. Deb lived in Asia during some of her formative years. These experiences have shaped how we experience life, as well as the unique ways in which we see ourselves and the world. As a family, we engage in experiential learning as a way to teach knowledge of self and to enjoy quality family time. For instance, traveling through KMT was a special way to share Africa’s contributions with the world. We can recall moving through Luxor, marveling at the



immense statues and obelisks created more than 2000 years ago. We marveled at these same statues and obelisks that were brought to places like Paris and London. We also found it imperative to share these experiences with students to enhance their learning and to encourage thinking beyond Niskayuna or North America. For example, Jay has led a group of students on a learning experience throughout South Africa, and Deb teaches a Collaborative Online International Learning Course with partners in Tianjin, China, encouraging students to think globally. Each semester, we find ways to internationalize the curriculum as we aim to do our part to contribute to the truly higher learning of students," they explain.

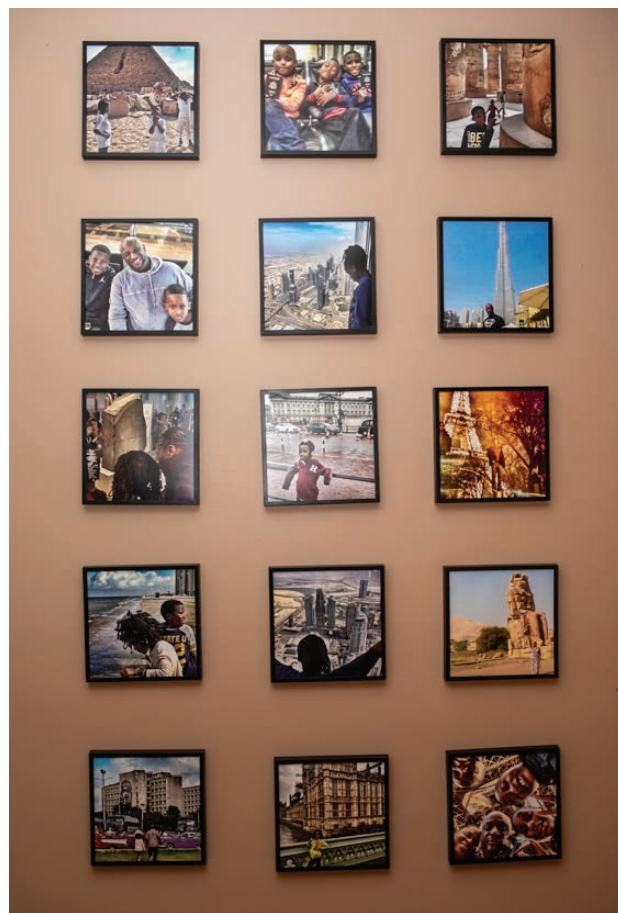
Their travel experiences have expanded with their family, which now includes Jace (12), Jaya (10) and Jelani (8). Jace is an advanced level Lego builder and even has his own YouTube channel showing his "builds." He is a member of the Student Council at his school and wants to someday be an actor. He loves following some of his favorite Disney kid actors and studies karate while waiting for his big break! He is now a blue belt. His favorite trip so far was to Dubai.

Jaya is also a blue belt. She is developing her leadership skills in her two Girl Scout troops and has a passion for community service activities. Her favorite activity so far has been working with Jazzy Sun Birthdays, personalizing a birthday party for a homeless/low income child. She also enjoys gymnastics and creating travel films. Her favorite trips were to Dubai and Grand Cayman.

Jelani has a passion for basketball. Along with his extensive basketball trivia knowledge, he plays with the Niskayuna Youth Basketball Association with Coach Christopher Ingemie and all his wonderful teammates. He also works out with Coach Hood from Hood's House of Hoops. His favorite players are LeBron James and James Harden. His favorite trip was to St. Lucia, where he was able to see the school his dad helped build nearly 20 years ago when he was serving with the U. S. Peace Corps.

Jay completed two masters degrees and is currently working on his Doctorate in Educational Leadership at The Sage Colleges. He is currently the Executive Director of the Higher Education Opportunity Program at Russell Sage College.

Deb has an MA and PhD in Criminal Justice and serves as the Assistant Dean of Public Engagement of the College of Arts and Sciences and the Director of the University of the High School Program at the University at Albany. She serves as a Board Member of Girl Scouts of Northeastern NY and AVillage, Inc. She



became a member of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Incorporated at Spelman College, which is known for producing "Women Who Serve" the community.

Along with their travel, the Privott family strives to empower others around them as well. Each year, they support students traveling through Operation Crossroads Africa – a cross-cultural exchange and service-learning program started in 1958 that served as the predecessor program to the U.S. Peace Corps. The students travel in groups of 8-10 with a group leader and serve for five weeks in a community working on projects related to healthcare, construction, education and more, then travel the last week of the program.

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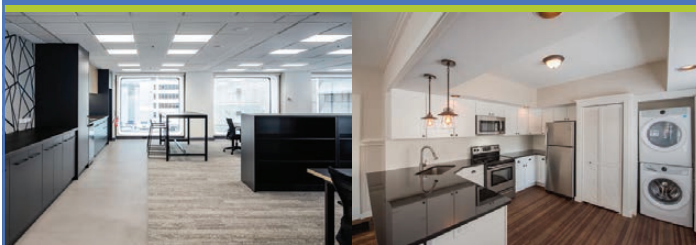


The Privotts also co-founded the Leaders in Service Program (LIS) and worked with student volunteers from 2009-2018. LIS is a community service and learning program designed for the University at Albany community to immerse students in community service so that it becomes a regular part of their lives, wherever they are in the world. Members participate in the service projects as well as leadership development and mentorship opportunities.

The Privotts are active in their church community as members of the Metropolitan New Testament Mission Baptist Church in Albany, and when they're not traveling the world, they enjoy the outdoors right here in the Capital District – especially the many wonderful lakes like Sacandaga and Lake George. "We previously had a boat that we would sail to Sand Island to totally disconnect and relax. Self-care is important and lakes of NY give everyone a chance to find peace."

They adore living in Niskayuna and have lived here for over 12 years after first visiting their friends' Niskayuna home. "We fell in love with the Niskayuna community at that very moment. We have always appreciated them for their support and encouragement," they said. "Our children said it best when they described the 'quiet' that they enjoy in the neighborhood. We have GREAT neighbors and adore them all for the flavor they bring. We especially enjoy the group trick-or-treating, the annual block party and the other get-togethers at someone's home that bring the community together. This is what we love most! We adore all our neighbors. They make living here a wonderful experience!" ■

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