

CLIFTON PARK

JULY 2023

Neighbors



Amal Tlaige
Stepping Out of Her
Comfort Zone with Faith



Best Version Media

PHOTO BY BROOKLYNNE BEEBE PHOTOGRAPHY



Stepping Out of Her Comfort Zone with Faith

By Jenna Caputo | Photos by Brooklynne Beebe Photography & Contributed by Amal Tlaige

Amal Tlaige is a first-generation American-Lebanese, growing up in Troy, NY before her family moved to Clifton Park. Her mother, Sonia Tlaige, first came to America at seven years old. She later returned to Lebanon where she met Emile, who was a part of the Lebanese forces. After they married, they immigrated back to the states to be near Sonia's family in Troy. Emile opened a hit billiard business, but eventually, he transitioned into the car business. Amal has four sisters: Mariam, Jennifer, Ronda, and Zahra. They enjoyed a fun mix of their American and Lebanese cultures while growing up. "As a kid growing up in the '90s, it was simpler times," Amal says. "I enjoyed selling lemonade outside our home, buying the newest ice creams from Mr. Ding-a-ling, playing our versions of *Fear Factor* in the backyard, riding our bikes around the block—normal kid stuff. We have strong Lebanese roots. I remember much of our childhood was spent going to 'Hafis,' aka Lebanese parties, either in nearby states or traveling up to Montreal. We always enjoyed the live singers, being with our family, and enjoying authentic Lebanese food, which there is a lot of in our culture! That's how we show our love—through food. Tabbouleh, labneh,

stuffed grape leaves, babaghanoush—maybe I'm a little bias, but I truly think Lebanese food is the best!"

Initially, Amal wanted to become a dentist, but she realized science was not her strong suit. She went to the College of Saint Rose and switched her major to Communications with a focus on broadcast journalism. During her sophomore year, she won a journalism scholarship from WTEN, never imagining she would eventually end up there one day. She first took a job as a Senate photographer, which allowed her to learn many of the lawmakers, policies, and the Capitol building. She also had the honor of photographing celebrities like Ben Stiller when he visited the Capitol. It wasn't until March of 2022 that she took a journalism job. She's now a Capitol Correspondent for all Nexstar Stations across New York, including WIVB in Buffalo, WYSR in Syracuse, WPIX in NYC, and WTEN right here in the Capital District.

"It's a really great experience being a reporter in New York's capital. I get to inform New Yorkers on all the latest changes in New York laws, where their tax money is going, political



candidates, the NYS budget, and more. I think my favorite part of my job thus far was covering the Governor's election. That's when I felt the most 'reporterish.' I was covering Republican candidate Lee Zeldin in Manhattan. I was nervous, but proud of myself for reporting on something pretty big. That's another aspect I appreciate about being a reporter—it forces you to do things outside your comfort zone, shows you what you're capable of, builds your confidence, and can even break your confidence, but you always get back up, even when things are tough." Amal loves having the ability to share other people's stories and to let New Yorkers know what's happening in the state. "Knowledge is power," she says. "And the more accurate we present information to the public, the more in the know they will be."

Amal still keeps up with her photography, too. She started out as an assistant photographer for a wedding studio in Saratoga, but now shoots on her own through her business, Amoulies Photography, which includes all types of photography like weddings, engagement shoots, and portrait sessions, but Amal especially loves shooting couples and portraits.

Amal is very involved with the Starpoint Church, which is prominent in the Clifton Park community, providing meals, doughnuts to local businesses, hosting holiday celebrations at Clifton Commons, and other community events. Her faith is very important to her, and Amal strives every day to be a good steward of what God has given her. She holds closely to 2 Timothy 1:7: "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, love, and a sound mind," and Romans 12:2: "Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think." She participates in an ongoing Bible study and strives to be closer to God in the future, putting more trust in Him and using more time for prayer and the Bible than for screens.

Amal is also passionate about music and listens to it constantly. In addition to worship music, she loves Arabic music and hip hop and R&B from the '90s. She's known for her Britney Spears and Shakira impersonations and has even created a Christian rap for her church. Music also plays a large role in her workouts—another important part of her days. No matter how long of a day she has, she will always hit the gym



where she concentrates her workouts on strength training and HIIT workouts.

Her family and culture are very important to her. "I very much appreciate the fact that my parents raised us in our culture," she says. "We were raised to love and help one another out always—family is everything. I remember being picked on as a kid in middle school and high school, but I always had my sisters to back me up. The food is also a plus." She and her sisters still band together, often helping out with family projects any way they can. Amal describes her mother as a very hard worker who is an amazing cook. Her father is the shoulder to lean on in their family, with his advice that he dispenses through old Arabic riddles. "He taught me what it means to put in a hard day's work," she says. Their family is looking forward to her sister's wedding in Lebanon this coming September.

As a kid, Amal took a combination of ballet and gymnastics classes and can still walk on her hands. Now, she's a self-proclaimed "coffee snob" and enjoys trying out all the different coffee shops in the area. When she's not slugging down the java, she enjoys being out in nature, hitting up the different trails and parks in the area with her Yorkie, Sarge (who loves chicken and needs a girlfriend). She also likes to travel and has visited places like Jamaica, Cancun, California, Nashville, and of course, Lebanon, which is still her favorite travel destination. "It's a country rich with history, culture, and it's on the Mediterranean Sea, so it's gorgeous," she says. "One of my favorite hidden gems in the mountains of Lebanon is the Afqa waterfall. It has beautiful caves and crystal-clear waters."



She also strives to make those around her happy with a life full of laughter. Since *Aladdin* is her favorite Disney movie, she



often jokes that she's from Agrabah. "Sometimes they believe me!" she laughs. But making her family smile is her number-one goal. "I thrive for my family to be happy. Like sometimes, I purposefully make jokes just to get everyone in a good mood. I think I'm the funniest and most sarcastic one in my family." To get herself laughing, she'll watch bloopers of shows like *Friends* or *The Mindy Project*. "It is the best medicine—you should try it!" she urges.

Amal strives every day to continually challenge herself and to step outside her comfort zone, secure with the knowledge that God will lead her way. "Life is short, and every day is a gift. Don't spend it living in fear or worry. Love God, love others."

For more information about Amal's photography, visit www.amouliesphotography.com.

