

NAPLES

ILLUSTRATED®



HOME
FOR THE
HOLIDAYS

*Happy Hosting
& Decorating*

+

SHOP
NAPLES
GIFT
GUIDE

ANGELA BRUCKNER

FROM THE EDITOR

A Christmas Story

There I was, brand-new to Naples and my job as editor in chief of *Naples Illustrated*, attending my first in-person event representing the magazine. It was a blazing hot summer day, and I was glad to be inside the AC at Kunjani Craft Coffee while getting a much-needed caffeine jolt. The event was hosted by Vera Jaye of Jaye Design, and in an effort to help us mix and mingle, in a socially distanced way, Vera had us make our own name tags. I went the extra mile and wrote my name plus “New Editor of *Naples Illustrated*,” hoping to spark some conversations. One of the first gals who came up to me was wearing “Teresa Mayor” on hers, which I assumed was her first and last name, so I politely asked her what she did. She responded, “I am Teresa, and I am the mayor of Naples.” Even though I felt awkward for not knowing who she was, the mayor gracefully skimmed over my faux pas and we glided into a fun conversation about our kids, each of us having three.

Next, I turned my attention to Vera, and she introduced me to her client, Angela Bruckner, who ended up becoming our cover girl for this issue. That afternoon, it was obvious that not only did Angela and Vera have an easy, friendly chemistry, but they were thrilled with how well their partnership had panned out. Angela was amazed with Vera’s thoughtful designs in her home, particularly when it came to the way she transitioned her two sons’ surroundings, helping them to develop into young, independent men of character. I had to see this home for myself, and as soon as I did, I knew we had to shoot the Bruckners at home for our Holiday Issue. I hope you are as enchanted with it as I am.

If you care to travel farther away than Naples via our pages, check out a trip to Door County, Wisconsin, on page 96 or read about Naples artist Carmelo Blandino’s journeys home to Italy, and the charming town of Lucca in particular, on page 64. Or learn how chef Andy Hyde of Hyde N Chic celebrated in Germany and Ghana on page 29.

We may be bopping down to the Keys with the kids this year during Christmas break to hang out with my husband’s sister and her family. There, it’s all about boat time, fishing, manatee watching, floating in the pool, and relaxing on the porch as the sun sets. It’s a far cry from the way we used to spend our holidays in New England years ago, but change can be good. For instance, when my son, Thomas, was 2 and a half, he knocked over our freshly cut Christmas tree on two separate mornings while I was upstairs getting ready for work. His twin sister, Remy, quickly appeared in my bathroom with her mouth and eyes wide open, and that’s how I knew I had a mess waiting for me downstairs. Now, at almost 6 feet, Thomas is plenty tall enough to pick candy canes off our tree without having to climb, branch by branch, to retrieve them.

I couldn’t be too mad at him, however. Tree-knocking was a genetic trait he inherited from me. I took one down when I was 10, during a dance contest at my friend Debbie’s house. We were blasting the Alvin and the Chipmunks Christmas record, and I wanted to pull out a unique move that would catapult me into a victory granted by our discerning judge, Beth, Debbie’s little sister. I closed my eyes, started shaking my booty, and proceeded to dance backwards...right into their tree.

Here’s hoping you find joy this holiday season, no matter how or what you celebrate.

Christina Cush

Christina Cush
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REMY CUSH



ME WITH MY KIDS REMY, THOMAS, AND PIPER AT A CHRISTMAS PAST



VERA JAYE (RIGHT) WITH ANGELA BRUCKNER AT THE BRUCKNER HOME

AUDREY SNOW

ESCAPE



QUICK TRIPS

SERENITY by the Sea Florida cool meets coastal elegance at *THE SEAGATE* Hotel & Spa

By Abigail Duffy

Even though it is nestled off bustling Atlantic Avenue, The Seagate Hotel & Spa in Delray Beach feels worlds away. The boutique property marries beachside sensibility with contemporary luxury, and it's all just steps from one of the Palm Beaches' most enchanting shores.

The 7,000- and 2,500-gallon exotic fish and shark tanks personify The Seagate's South Floridian magnetism as their marine inhabitants and ethereal indigo glow transfix guests who pass through the hotel's common areas. The coastal influence carries across breezy Bahamian accents and creamy colors, an aesthetic sure to lull guests into the relaxed state of mind that a weekend at The Seagate elicits.

The same Bahamian design elements are apparent in The Seagate's plush, sanctuary-like rooms. The 500-square-foot deluxe king and



queen rooms come with a choice of a walk-in shower or a bubble-jet tub (or both if you can't decide), plus Egyptian cotton sheets (imagine slipping into those after a long day at the beach). For guests celebrating momentous occasions—such as that first post-pandemic vacation—The Seagate offers welcome amenities, like Champagne and wine to toast to the deserved getaway. They are best enjoyed on a private balcony overlooking Atlantic Avenue, with glimpses of the ocean in the distance.

If a hedonistic day of pampering is in order, the 8,000-square-foot Seagate Spa boasts a refreshing menu, including custom massages (the Rain Massage will melt away any hint of stress), potent rejuvenating facials, and invigorating body treatments. Lounging poolside under a canopy of palm trees is the perfect follow-up activity.

also opt to ride in one of The Seagate's white Cadillac Escalades to and from the hotel.

Epicurean travelers will meet their match at The Atlantic Grille, which specializes in seaside fare for breakfast, brunch, lunch, and dinner. Guests can dine alfresco or alongside the resto's famous moon jellyfish floating inside a 450-gallon aquarium, all while indulging in modern preparations of classic dishes and South Florida's freshest seafood. For those looking to fuel rounds of golf and afternoon swims with a quick bite, the hotel's Etc. Café stocks pastries, sandwiches, organic coffee, and more.

The Seagate Hotel & Spa achieves a resort-meets-retreat balance, complete with sumptuous accommodations, unforgettable dining, and fun-in-the-sun activities in a comfortable, personable environment. (theseagatehotel.com) ◀◀



CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT: THE SEAGATE BEACH CLUB; HOTEL LOBBY AND POOL; PARLOR SUITE; SPA SUITE.





Holiday **MAGIC**

An angelic Naples mom creates a happy Christmas dream team with her sons, some stylish friends, a fab florist, and a cake maker

By Christina Cush | Photography by Audrey Snow



OPPOSITE PAGE:
HENRY, ANGELA,
AND HARRISON
BRUCKNER AT HOME
IN NAPLES

VERA JAYE OF JAYE DESIGN IN NAPLES CREATED A CUSTOM WALL OF MODERN WREATHS TO ORGANICALLY MELD WITH THE WALNUT FLOATING-EDGE BAR.

BELOW: JAYE CRAFTED THIS BLUE AND GREEN STAINED-GLASS MOBILE BY HAND.



When Angela and Robert Bruckner moved to Naples from Dallas almost eight years ago, it was really more of a homecoming. Robert, now vice president of Roofcrafters Inc. in Naples, attended high school here before relocating to Texas for college. Years later, he met Angela in Dallas, and they married in Naples in 2006. Their two boys, Henry, 10, and Harrison, 13, were born in Texas, but when the timing and opportunities were right, the Bruckners loaded up their Suburban and drove to the Paradise Coast from the Lone Star State for good.

Angela Bruckner, a leadership and sales coach through her business, Constant Pursuit, notes that the move came with many benefits for her young family, including being close to Robert's mother, who lives in town. In the summers, the Bruckners spend a couple months with Angela's parents in Minnesota. In return, her parents visit Naples during Christmas.

With their imminent arrival, Bruckner is pulling together an intimate gathering. As a coach, she knows when she needs help, so she called upon Kaleidoscope Floral for the greens, Mikkelsen's Pastry Shop for butter cookies and Buche de Noel cakes, Sarah LaMont at Why Style for wardrobe, and Dani Taverna from Duality Artistry for hair and makeup. On speed dial, Bruckner has Vera Jaye of Jaye Design, who helped to renovate her Weber Woods home into a serene and timeless family oasis.

Jaye pops by the Bruckners' before the other guests arrive for a Christmas celebration. She and Bruckner work in harmony to finish up last-minute details, such as setting the indoor dining table and moving an old farm table from the patio to the middle of the three-acre lawn for





JAYE AND ANGELA BRUCKNER DESIGNED THE DINING ROOM TABLE DECOR TOGETHER, USING GRAY LINEN NAPKINS TIED WITH RAFFIA, ACCENTED BY A CINNAMON STICK AND A PEPPERMINT CANE. THE CASCADE OF GREENS IS FROM KALEIDOSCOPE FLORAL IN NAPLES. JAYE FABRICATED THE WHITE TWIG AND CLEAR ORNAMENT CHANDELIER SPECIALLY FOR THE HOLIDAYS, WHICH SHE LOVES AS A CONTRAST TO THE MODERN ART IN THE SPACE.



ABOVE: ANGELA BRUCKNER PUTS THE FINISHING TOUCHES ON THE OUTDOOR COCKTAIL TABLE, READY WITH FESTIVE DRINKS AND SNACKS FOR HER GUESTS. BRUCKNER APPRECIATES HOW THE GREENS ON THE TABLE ARE NATIVE TO FLORIDA.

RIGHT: JAYE FOUND THIS METALLIC AND CREAM WRAPPING PAPER IN TOWN.

hors d'oeuvres. Jaye labored for hours to create many of the custom Christmas decor pieces on display, including a blue and green stained-glass mobile for the living room niche and a repurposed wood door that was painted white, fabricated with faux tree limbs, and topped with two owls representing Robert and Angela.

Jaye's long career in interior design brought her here from California six years ago. When Jaye is in the Bruckner family mix, with the boys sitting on the kitchen counter finishing up their favorite family tradition, making holiday wreath cookies made from cornflakes, marshmallow, and some green dye, everyone is at ease. "The Bruckners are a great family," Jaye says. "I love that their kids were a priority in their design decisions."

Bruckner and Jaye are collaborating to finish the last bits of the Bruckner home redo, including installing Henry's queen-size bunk beds, finalizing the outdoor pool, and converting the yard shed into a man cave for Robert to share with his sons.

"Vera came into this project knowing the house wasn't ideal for our growing boys," Bruckner says. "She created a separate space for each of them to study or entertain friends. But they are also responsible for keeping their areas tidy."

In addition to establishing a boys' laundry room, Jaye gave lots of consideration to the kitchen area, opening it up to ensure that all four Bruckners can be in there prepping, cooking, and cleaning simultaneously. "Vera helped us take down walls and create a galley sink, the key to our efficient design," Bruckner adds. Jaye convinced the family to swap out small existing win-



dows for large sliding doors with sidelights to bring in light and greenery from outside. "Looking out, it's a painting of Florida," says Bruckner.

Working with a company in Bonita Springs, Bruckner and Jaye found a walnut slab with a raw live edge—another homage to nature—for the foyer. Always striving for organization, Bruckner wanted everything to have a place, so the slab is for keys. Another one of the home's most striking features are the front doors. "I had two plain fiberglass doors custom-painted and added polished nickel hardware for a tailored look," explains Bruckner.

She and Jaye conspired on echoing the family's love for the outdoors in their holiday decor. "For the entryway, I found



JAYE BUILT THIS CHRISTMAS TREE WITH SOME WOOD THE BRUCKNERS REPURPOSED FROM A PREVIOUS FAMILY HOME. SHE PAINTED THREE HEAVY PANELS WHITE, FASHIONED THEM TOGETHER, AND ADDED PINE BRANCHES AND OTHER WOOSY ELEMENTS, INCLUDING A PAIR OF OWLS ON TOP, REPRESENTING ANGELA AND ROBERT BRUCKNER.



hand-carved bowls and a vintage bushel basket, pieces that have a story and are a nice contrast to this home, which looks sleek and perfect,” Jaye says.

Back in the kitchen, the Bruckner boys are ready to sample their cookies. A student at Big Cypress Elementary School, Henry loves football, animals, and playing outside. Harrison also enjoys sports and pushes himself to excel on the field and at Oak Ridge Middle School. Whether watching them bake sweets or do chores, their mom looks on with pride. “They tackle our yard. It takes three hours to mow, but they make it fun.”

Bruckner’s favorite holiday to host is Thanksgiving, which Robert’s side of the family usually attends. She goes bananas with a theme, interactive games, and meal-planning. Her Christmas celebration is intentionally toned-down. “It’s a quiet time filled with traditions established when I was very

young,” she says. “It’s special that my kids get to see my parents.” As she eagerly awaits their arrival, she checks on the smoked prime rib and scalloped potatoes.

Going to church plays a central role in the Bruckners’ Christmas. They attend Moorings Presbyterian, a place where Bruckner has devoted several volunteer hours, especially when she first moved to Naples. “I was on a mission outreach committee. We did hands-on research in the trenches to learn where the biggest community needs were and how money should be distributed to maximize benefits.” More recently, she’s been distributing weekend meals or “power packs” from her church to school kids who struggle with food scarcity. She also cares for a neighbor. “I give a lot of my time to her,” she says. “I try to be as helpful as I can, but I’m also trying not to spread myself too thin. I am a coach, so I have to take my own advice.” ‹‹



FROM ABOVE:
ROBERT AND ANGELA
BRUCKNER ARE READY
TO WELCOME HER
PARENTS FROM
MINNESOTA FOR A
LOW-KEY HOLIDAY
CELEBRATION IN
THEIR HOME; DRINKS
TO TOAST TO A
MERRY CHRISTMAS.

OPPOSITE PAGE,
FROM TOP: AN-
GELA BRUCKNER
WITH SONS, HENRY
AND HARRISON, BOND
OVER THEIR FAVORITE
TRADITIONAL SWEET
WREATHS IN THEIR
SUPER FUNCTIONAL
KITCHEN, WITH
BAKED GOODS FROM
MIKKELSEN'S ON THE
COUNTER; HENRY
TRIES TO SNEAK A
TREAT.



FAVORITE THINGS



VICKI BAKER WITH DAUGHTERS MAIYA AND MADISON

Vicki Baker, the founder of *Naples Hidden Gems* and Hidden Gem Photography in Naples, feels comfortable behind the lens. Amid raising her two daughters, ages 16 and 23, the 18-year Naples resident squeezes in time to write social media posts for her local blog and create podcasts for *239 Uncensored*. Baker hails from Maine and says, "I grew up in Old Town and am a member of the Penobscot Indian Nation. I attended elementary school on our reservation and am very proud of my heritage." A graduate of the University of South Florida, she started her career teaching, but shifted to something more creative seven years ago. "I changed my life and made it what I wanted. I volunteered doing nonprofit shoots and then landed freelance jobs. Finally, I met Charlie McDonald and he needed someone to run his photography company. I jumped at the chance and only recently went back out on my own." Her nonprofit passion is currently focused on helping Youth Haven, Champions for Learning, the Immokalee Foundation, and the Boys and Girls Club through her photography work. Her dream photo shoot location is Wiggins Pass. "It provides the perfect variety of beach, woods, boardwalk, and driftwood," she says. Below, her top spots to...



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1. Have a business coffee: Kunjani. It's a wonderful shop with feel-good vibes.

2. Be pampered: The spa at Naples Grande

3. Dine with her daughters: Barbatella. During Christmas, we get a table on the patio.

4. Shop for her girls: The Old Naples Surf Shop. They love everything there.

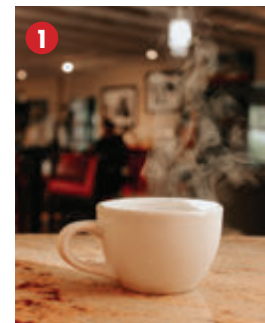
5. Grab lunch: Sea Salt. I order the chicken Milanese "Vicki style."

6. Buy flowers: The farmers market at the Shoppes at Vanderbilt or off Third

7. Take visitors: Isles of Capri with lunch at The Fish House

8. Sip cocktails or wine: Sidebar. It's a hidden gem with terrific people.

9. Enjoy date night: Bodega Ole. It has amazing food, wine, music, and atmosphere. —Christina Cush



MICHAELA MILLER



TINA SARGENT

Go boating: Keewaydin via the Hemingway Water Shuttle

3



5



7

CAPRIJARED



4



6



8

Snag hostess gifts: The new shop at Home and Salvage