

Los ALTOS *Hills*

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*Nikki
Frelier
Andrews,*
Local Arts
and Culture
Volunteer



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Nikki Frelier Andrews, Local Arts and Culture Volunteer

By Abbie Burgess

Tech and the Arts

Los Altos Hills resident Nikki has a combined 24 years in both tech and the art world. She got her start in art as an intern for the San Jose Institute of Contemporary Art, after which she continued to help as a volunteer for different auctions and events. She graduated in 2001 with a BA of Fine Arts in Digital Media and double minors in French and Art History from San Jose State University. Soon she was a Gallery Teacher for the San Jose Museum of Modern Art, developing lesson plans and curriculums for grades K-12 and giving art history presentations in the schools.

She enjoyed a 12-year career in tech with Apple Inc., starting as a Quality Assessment Engineer then moving in to Engineering Project Management of Hardware & Software components. "For my last project as an EPM, I developed and led an innovation model for iOS, similar to a 80/20 program," she says.

Still, she kept a foot in the art world, working concurrently for a few years as an in-house curator for the diPietro Todd Salon in Palo Alto.

Family

Nikki met her husband, Jon Andrews, through Apple—sort of. At the time, Jon was living in Manchester, England and working as a vendor for Apple Computers. "I was one of the top QA Engineers, pulled from my regular projects to qualify and writing up issues for the Hardware and Software components for the Intel transition," she remembers. He knew of her, but she didn't know him. "We later formally met randomly in downtown Palo Alto, in the summer of 2005, after I recently switched roles within Apple. We dated long distance from the UK to the US for 15 months before he joined Apple as an employee. I like to joke that my husband is still fixing my issues after almost 15 years of being together (a geek love joke)." Jon is now a VP of Operating Systems/

Software Engineering at Apple, Inc. and they have two children, Max who is eight-and-a-half and Mia who is six.

With her dad a celebrity chef, Nikki was used to growing up around celebrities. But one experience from her youth that stands out was when her dad was a personal chef in Chelsea Clinton's student housing at Stanford University. Nikki worked alongside her dad as his sous chef. "I remember what a trip it was cooking amongst all the Secret Service, with their clear wires running from their ears tucked down into their collared shirts, trying to pass for 20-year-olds but obviously a decade or two more mature. I do have to say that Chelsea was always graceful, even when her family was plastered with scandal across the TV networks," she recalls. "I also like to joke that I quite 'literally' served my country."

Home on the Range

Nikki and Jon moved to Los Altos Hills from Willow Glen in 2013 in search of a shorter commute, especially with two small children. They were fortunate to find a home less than a mile away from where Nikki's grandmother Mable Frelier was still living.

"It's an area I love and grew up in," Nikki says. "My grandmother would walk us down to Summerhill to feed the horses, and I'd read Judy Blume books above the creek on Valley View, where we would later catch tadpoles in the spring. I ran and hiked the hills with my family and friends. There are so many wonderful memories that surround me here in the hills. I even lived for four and a half years at my grandparents guest house right out of college. What better place to make new memories with my own children?"



Nikki and Jon on their new deck in Montana. Image provided by Nikki Andrews.

Nikki says they are lucky to be part of a strong community comprised of neighbors who have lived here for decades as well as families with younger children. "Families will sit out front of their house talking and enjoying each other while we watch our children play. It's such an amazing experience to build such wonderful relationships with our neighbors."

Nikki, a practicing artist, shows her paintings locally and in Montana where they have a 22-acre ranch above Bozeman as a second home. Her children love art too and want to paint alongside Mom. "When I am painting, they always ask if they can paint, 'a real painting,' i.e., on canvas. While it can be distracting, I really try to make a point to nurture

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Nikki sketches in her studio, working on a portrait of her kids on the Metro in Paris. Image provided by Nikki Andrews.

their enthusiasm and talent. I really think my daughter is and will become an exceptional artist. My son is wonderful with art as well but at the moment he really excels in sports. Both are doing well with swimming and tennis. Max is also doing quite well skateboarding with Skateworks in downtown Los Altos and with Pony ball (baseball)."

"I have wanderlust—I love exploring all the fascinating places the world has to offer. I've been to over 17 different countries. One of my dream trips would be to explore Egypt, Morocco and Algiers (my grandfather grew up there when it was a French colony)." Jon and Nikki recently celebrated their ten-year wedding anniversary at the Monaco Grand Prix with the McLaren Racing team.

Staying Active

When they first moved to Los Altos Hills, daughter Mia was a month old and son Max two and a half. "I found an amazing group of women through BBC (Baby Boot Camp) who helped me regain my health and sanity. Not only were they an amazing support and fitness group, our children saw us working out and to this day, whenever I say I am going for a run or workout, they beg to go with me," she recalls.

When asked about sports and activities she does now to stay active, it becomes clear that the question should rather be what she doesn't do.

"I was a swimmer, lifeguard and swim instructor for most of my young adult life. I still love the water and all water sports," she shares. She was a founding member of the Women's Rugby Team at San Jose State University after returning from studying at La Sorbonne in France in 2008. Her father was a league rugby player who was happy to see his daughter enjoying the sport too. "Growing up, he always told me that 'Girls can play rugby too, you know!'"

The whole family after mushing in Big Sky, Montana. Image provided by Nikki Andrews.



"I was actually in professional Roller Derby for the Peninsula Roller Girls in 2004, when they still had a roller rink in Redwood City. I went by the name Tricky Nikki 6," she says. "I guess I like to keep people guessing."

You can also find her training for races, taking Pilates classes at Mixx and working out at FIT at Rancho Shopping Center.

Philanthropic Interests

Nikki enjoys an active volunteer life in our local community. In 2013, she became involved in the Cantor Arts Center and Anderson Museums at Stanford University. Among her responsibilities were planning the Art Focus Lecture Series, training volunteers in Visitor Services and is an active member of the Membership Executive Council.

As a current member and former co-chair of the Los Altos Hills Public Art Committee, Nikki shares her love of art by bringing art outreach to the community. "We have purchased a new installation of Bird Sculptures in Edith Park and have also acquired a large donation from a very supportive local," she says.

In 2018 she began volunteering at The Los Altos History Museum, where she first started helping in collections and exhibitions, working to collate and document historical relics. In a year's time, she was asked to join the Board of Directors. She helped curatorial staff with the Silicon Valley Eats exhibit, loaning some personal artifacts from her family's Bay Area Restaurants, L'omelette in Palo Alto, and Chéz Yvonne in Mountain View. This past October, she chaired a new event, If Cars Could Talk, at Auto Vino in Menlo Park. "We pulled it together in two months and raised a record breaking amount for the museum that evening. We were trying to target a different and more diverse demographic for new and active members. The Museum has some exciting ventures in the works for 2020 and on!"



Nikki at the Los Altos History Museum. By JetKat Photo.



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