

Emerald Isle

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living



Shane and Emily Gentry
Answering the Call of the Coast

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Answering the Call of the Coast

BY AARON MARSHALL, PHOTOS BY BEAUFORT PHOTOGRAPHY CO., JAMI THOMAS PHOTOGRAPHY, FUR-FETCHED PHOTOGRAPHY, AND COURTESY OF SHANE GENTRY

Eight years ago, Shane and Emily Gentry packed up their life in Raleigh to follow a call they couldn't ignore. "The salt was calling," Shane says, and they followed it to Emerald Isle. What they discovered wasn't a slower pace but a fuller life—one rooted in intention, connection, and joy.

Blending Lives, Building Dreams

Shane and Emily met online 12 years ago and are celebrating their 10th wedding anniversary this year. Their union brought together six

children from previous relationships: Izaiah, 30, general manager of a Ducati dealership; Aaron, 25, a metal fabricator specializing in luxury homes; Cyrus, 22, who specializes in industrial boilers; Dakota, 21, who works in an air filter assembly factory; Holly, 21, a senior at East Carolina University studying physical therapy; and Jaden, 20, preparing for a career in equipment mechanics after working in the restaurant industry.

"There were always adventures with that many kids," Shane laughs. One of the biggest was a 13-day family cruise to Iceland and Ireland. "I felt so bad for our travel agent," he jokes, "but it ended up being one of our best memories."

Bonding Through Dog Sports

For years, Emily and her daughter Holly have shared a unique bond through competitive dog sports—traveling the country for Flyball, Barn Hunt, and Fast CAT competitions.

"It's been such a cool way to stay connected,

do something active together, and celebrate our dogs," Emily says. Their weekends on the road built not only a strong mother-daughter connection but also introduced Emily to a



Courtesy of Fur-Fetched Photography



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Left to Right: Aaron, Aaron's Wife Taiyana, Holly, Grace, Izaiah, Shane, Jaden, Emily



vibrant, dog-loving community that helped shape her next chapter.

Rising From Rock Bottom

Shane's journey to Emerald Isle began in hardship. After 13 years as a concrete pump operator and a brief stint as a truck driver, where he sustained an injury, his world unraveled. "It was like a country song," he says. "I lost my house, my car, my relationship—everything." As a single parent, he put his entrepreneurial dreams on hold until his kids were older. In 2009, he launched Sally Said So Professional Dog Training while living in his car, staying with his mother on weekends when he had his children.

A quiet turning point came two years in, when he received a notice to renew his Commercial Driver's License. "I felt like Superman in a room made of kryptonite," he recalls. "It hit me—that license was my Plan B." He tore it up and threw it away. "I couldn't go all in if I had a backup plan."

That decision pushed him to take bigger risks. After a successful session at Clayton Animal Hospital, word started to spread. One referral turned into many. Today, Shane's company employs 16 people and serves clients across North Carolina, with expansion into South Carolina underway.

Shane recently found himself drawn to a different kind of venture—this time on the water. This year, he launched a fishing charter business, channeling his entrepreneurial drive into something that brings both joy and a change of pace.

A Creative Leap of Faith

Emily was thriving in pharmacy management when a social media post caught her attention.

A friend from the dog sport world was retiring and closing her pet treat business.

"I asked if she'd be open to selling," Emily recalls. "She agreed—and then taught me everything, from making cookies from scratch to decorating."

That leap became PupKake Pet Bakery and Boutique, where Emily's creativity began to flourish. She started selling her treats at competitions and events across North Carolina. But she wanted more—to become part of the community she loved. She began by supplying a local dog business, and after it closed, she felt the nudge to open her own storefront. With determination and the encouragement of friends and family, Emily realized her dream earlier this year, proudly launching her bakery in Emerald Isle.



Courtesy of Jami Thomas Photography

Tiki the TV Star

Of all the unexpected turns in Shane and Emily's journey, few top the moment their seven-year-old French Bulldog, Tiki, became a television star. After Shane's original dog didn't land any roles, their talent agent asked if they had another pet to consider. Shane sent in photos of Tiki, and he was soon cast in NBC's *Young Rock*, starring Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson.

That appearance led to a recurring role in Twisted Tea commercials. "There's nothing more surreal than watching TV with your dog in your lap and then seeing him on the screen," Shane laughs.

Their other dog, Lemmy, a lovable Lagotto Romagnolo, brings comic relief and solemn duty—serving as Shane's service dog. A chatty parrot rounds out the Gentrys' lively household.

Freedom in Less

Shane and Emily live in Boardwalk RV Park. Downsizing to a park model home wasn't about letting go—it was about gaining freedom. "As empty nesters, simplifying our life and downsizing was quite the relief," Shane says. "We have great neighbors in our little park model community, and we love it."



Their days are full, but they make time to give back. Emily volunteers with the Emerald Isle Sea Turtle Patrol as a Nest Responder, while Shane provides volunteer training for rescue dogs, fosters, and shelters.

Drawn to the Horizon

When they're not working or volunteering, Shane and Emily indulge their passion for travel, especially cruising. They have explored the Baltic Sea, Iceland, Ireland, the Caribbean, and Alaska. They visit Aruba multiple times a year and recently traveled to Portugal.

"We love the water," Shane says. "Just being around it is calming and humbling."

A Life Reimagined

The Gentrys' journey is about reimagining what life can be—listening to that quiet, persistent voice that says *there's more*. More to explore, more to give, more to love. They didn't come to Emerald Isle to slow down. They came to embrace the life they had always dreamed of. The salt was calling—and they answered.



Courtesy of Jami Thomas Photography