

suburban life



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page 62

+
**Also
Inside:**
Top attorneys,
back to school,
and more

Lara Aman Matthey (left),
CEO of Ivory Tree Portraits,
with Kaeleigh Butyinskyi,
Creative Director

Making MEMORIES

Busy parents turn to **Ivory Tree Portraits** for timeless, natural photographs that capture the uniqueness of each child. **BY LEIGH STUART**

AS any parent knows, it's not always easy to gather the kids for a family portrait worth framing.

That's why so many parents in the Philadelphia area rely on the expert photographers at Ivory Tree Portraits to come in and save the day.

With two locations—a flagship in Wayne and a Newtown studio established in 2021—Ivory Tree Portraits is the fruition of Lara Aman Matthey's wish to make family photography seamless and easy for busy working parents.

"We have a kid-led philosophy," Matthey shares. "We have done a lot of research around the philosophies that work for kids. We take their lead. If they're shy, we give them space to warm up. If they have sensory issues, we help them understand their surroundings. We really give kids time and space and meet them wherever they are."

Matthey, a former vice president of marketing for an international corporation, purchased her first Wayne studio even

though she had no prior experience in photography. She went on instinct and a drive to fulfill an unmet need—to offer a welcoming space for families who want to capture timeless images of their kids without having to spend hours and hours in a studio.

“Because I come from a corporate background, I built this business for busy working parents,” she says. “When you’re in the corporate world, on calls from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., there’s no time in the day to stop and schedule family photos, so in order to get that done, the process has to be fast and easy—not one involving 15 phone calls back and forth.

“When you invest in family portraits, you want to know you’re going to get images you’ll love,” she continues. “Really, that’s what we specialize in—working with kids—which makes sessions fast and easy, plus we guarantee all of our sessions. We work quickly because we know that the longer we take, the more the kids devolve. Some kids come in ready to go and fade really quickly.”

Ivory Tree works with kids of all ages, from newborns through seniors in high school. In fact, there are some kids who have practically grown up at the studio, as the Wayne location is now 14 years old. Mattey attributes this client loyalty to a number of factors, including Ivory Tree’s signature style.

“People can recognize an Ivory Tree image,” she adds. “We hear all the time,

An example of Ivory Tree’s work



‘My neighbor comes to you, we got their holiday card,’ or, ‘We saw your images on Facebook or Instagram.’”

This is no accident, as all Ivory Tree’s photographers go through an intensive training that is studio specific. The goal: to ensure that each staff member adheres to the kid-first philosophy and knows how to capture Ivory Tree’s signature look.

“An Ivory Tree image could be three years old or 10 years old and it still looks good in a home,” she says. “Being timeless is a very intentional decision. This is a core component of our look and brand.”

More than a Pretty Picture

Beyond just creating art to make families smile for years to come, Mattey says Ivory Tree is committed to enhancing children’s self-esteem by ensuring a natural photography style.

“In a world full of filters and AI, our philosophy comes back to a natural approach,” she says. “It’s really important for kids to see who they are—not some glossy version of themselves. All editing that we do is very natural; we would never remove something that makes a kid who they are, like a scar or birthmark. It’s our way of telling kids they are perfect as they are, and we have found that really resonates deeply.

“We do a lot of training with our team about how to do that,” Mattey continues. “My girls, for example, are 12 and 13, and they’re always giggling. When they were little, they would whisper and giggle, and we have all different images throughout the years that capture that connection. It’s not a picture—it’s a memory.”

The primary goal, Mattey says, is not just to take beautiful images, but to capture the true essence of each child’s personality,

their heart and soul. As one might imagine, Mattey finds great happiness in her line of work.

“To me, and to everyone on my team, there is just a certain joy you get from working with kids,” she says. “I think a little bit of it is just who we are. For me, getting to meet families is really important, and getting to watch kids grow is really fun.”

For the years ahead, Mattey looks to make the Newtown studio just as popular as their original location.

“On the Main Line, we’re a household name, and that’s our goal for the Newtown studio for sure,” she says. “We just want to make it easy for families throughout the area to enjoy timeless images and help kids build self-confidence.” ■

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—LARA AMAN MATTEY,
IVORY TREE PORTRAITS



Ivory Tree Portraits

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Wayne, PA 19087

Bucks County

35 S. State Street
Newtown, PA 18940