

She's cut from a slightly different cloth

New Junior League president Jeannie Deakyne is an Army veteran, beauty queen, marathon runner, mother of three – and a whole lot more

• By Sue Stevens Durbec



The Deakynes: Will, Emma Kate, Evie, Libby (bottom center) and Jeannie. (Photo: Paul Knudsen)

Arlington Today would like to introduce you to an Army veteran with two tours of duty in Iraq, a beauty queen, a marathon runner, a former ROTC instructor, the mother of three daughters under the age of six, a manager in human resources at the University of Texas Arlington and the president of Junior League of Arlington which, under her leadership, recently won an international award for an innovative membership development program.

Her name is Jeannie Deakyne.

Crowned Mrs. Texas International 2005 shortly after returning from Iraq, she brought the Mrs. U.S. Beauties crown to Texas in 2008, while still an Army officer. She is active in the Daughters of the American Revolution, a legacy from her great-grandmother and in Gamma Phi Beta, a legacy from her grandmother.

The University of Texas Arlington is also a legacy. Her father, Don Panton, chaired the finance and real estate department there. Jeannie served as student body president before she graduated as a Distinguished Military Graduate with a B.A. in political science in 1998 and joined the Army.

She was engaged to Will Deakyne, a West Point graduate and fellow Army officer, whom she met in June 2000, when they were both stationed at Fort Polk, La. They were married at First United Methodist Church in Arlington the evening of July 4, 2001.

"It was a federal holiday, so I knew we would both have the day off," Jeannie said. She also thought it would be fun to have fireworks

on their anniversaries. And, since Arlington's annual Fourth of July parade had always been a highlight of the Pantons' summer, on the morning of the wedding the bride, groom, their wedding party and family rode on a wedding float in the parade.

Will left the Army in 2008 and is an engineer at a Dallas firm. Jeannie, then still in the Army, took a three-year assignment as an assistant professor in UT Arlington's Department of Military Science.

In 2011, when that assignment ended, she decided to leave the Army. "It was either take another assignment in the active Army or leave," she said.

Knowing that the assignment would most likely be in Afghanistan, and since she now had a baby daughter, Libby, Deakyne made the decision to depart from the military and applied for a job in human resources at the university.

"It was a seamless transition," she said. "One day I went to work in my uniform, and the next day I was in civilian clothes."

She received her master's degree in political science at UTA that same year and in February 2013, twins Emma Kate and Evie were born. That's also the year she developed the international, award-winning membership program for Junior League of Arlington, which addresses the reality of women's lives today.

"The League was working with an archaic model," she said. "Seventy-five percent of our members work outside of their homes. We needed to adapt to those changes." **A**