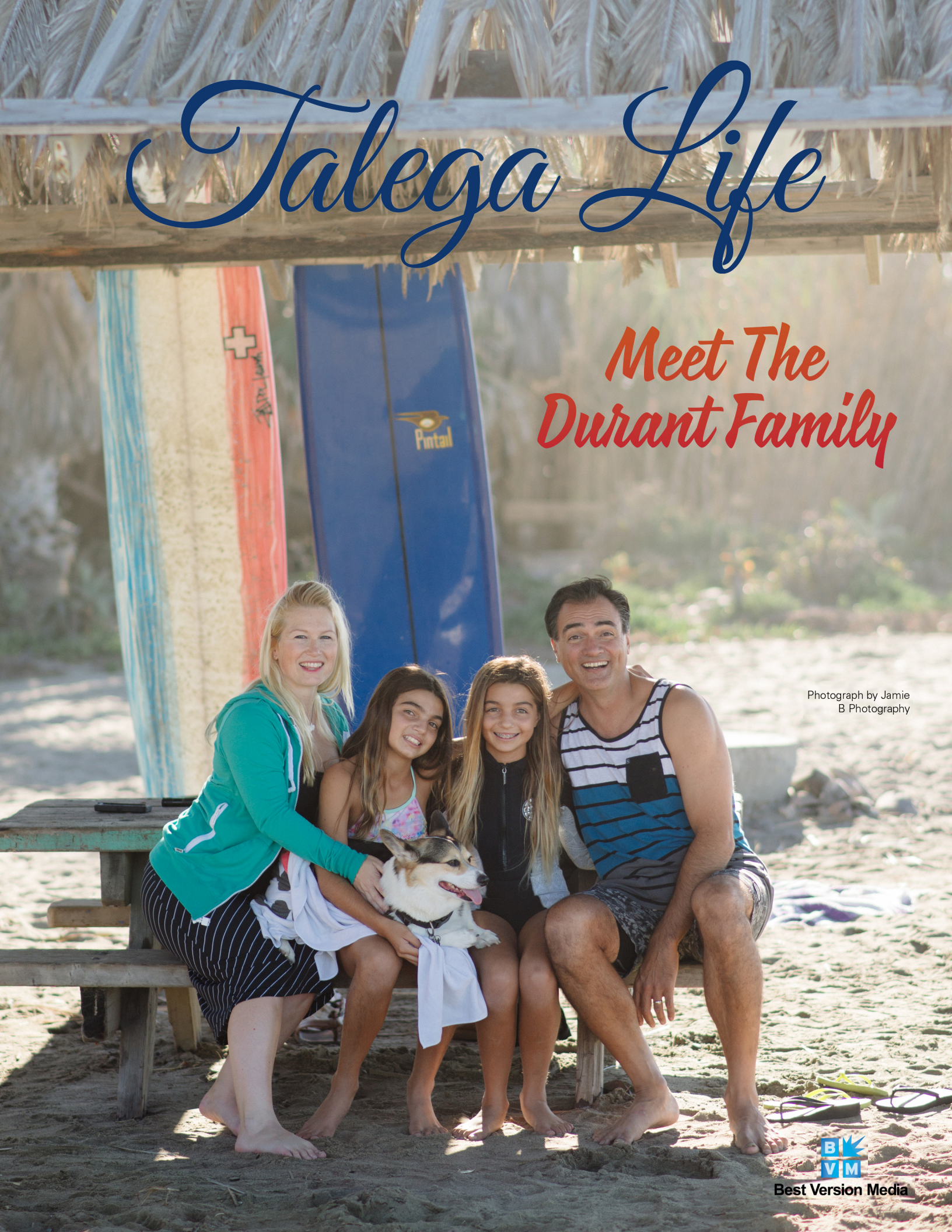


# Talega Life

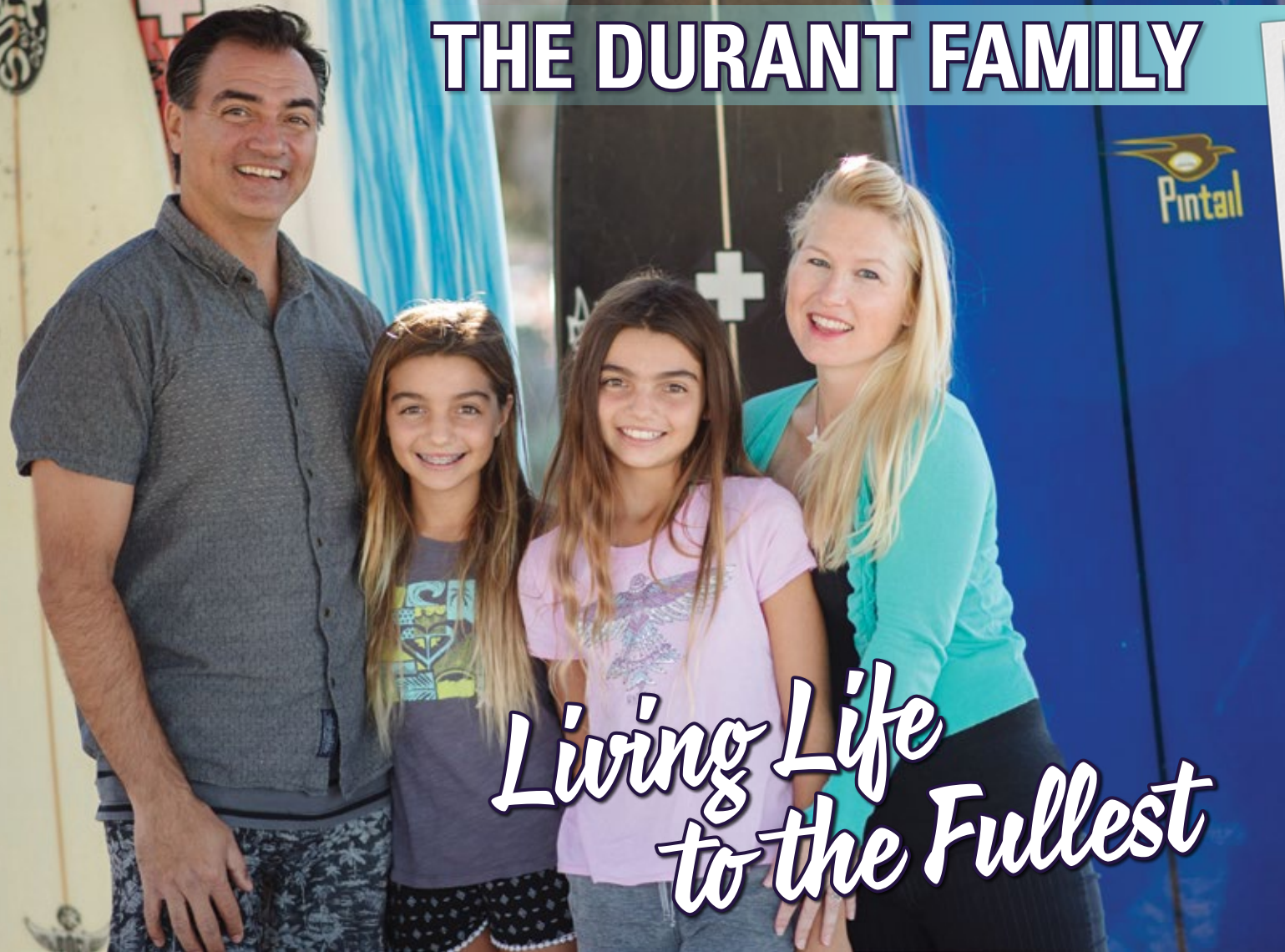
## Meet The Durant Family

Photograph by Jamie B Photography



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# THE DURANT FAMILY



*Living Life to the Fullest*

Since his late teenage years, Paul has turned his passions into a lifestyle. Born into a surfing family and already an experienced skater and mountain biker, in 1983 he tried snowboarding for the first time. His first introduction to the sport was while flipping through a surf magazine and coming upon an ad with the tagline “Surf the Snow.” Paul mentioned to his girlfriend at the time that he’d be interested in trying it out and that

Christmas she gifted him with his first snowboard. In the early 1980’s, snowboarding was still considered to be a somewhat non-conventional sport and thus there was considerable resistance on the part of ski areas to allow riders onto their slopes. Snowboard fashion was of little importance and essentially nonexistent and Paul recalls, “I had no idea what to wear so I got some jeans and I Scotchgarded them, then threw on

**W**alking in to Paul and Elizabeth (Itsy) Durant’s surf shop— under construction in Talega Village Center— feels unexpectedly fresh and original. Despite the papered up windows and boxes strewn about, you immediately feel a sense of welcome and encouragement from them to sit down and “talk story.” The term is Hawaiian, meaning to talk with friends; passing the time by rekindling old stories or by just chatting. It’s this kind of welcoming attitude that the Durants hope to bring to their surf/skate/snowboard/SUP store, which just opened in November. And you’ll soon see that Paul, with professional experience in snowboarding, surfing, skateboarding and mountain bike riding, has a lot of stories to tell...

Itsy, the second youngest in a family of four children, was born in Dana Point. She grew up boogie boarding at Monarch Bay Beach, playing soccer for AYSO and skiing with her family every winter. Her family attended South Shores Church and she went to school at Capistrano Valley Christian School. Continuing on to the University of San Diego, Itsy majored

in Communications with a minor in English. In 2005 she moved to Talega.

Paul, raised in Santa Monica in a surfing family, was introduced to the sport at age three. His parents would compete in tandem surfing contests up and down the coast. Paul’s parents met in Santa Monica in the early 1960s. His father owned SoCal Surf Club, at the time selling wooden surfboards and custom made sandals in a 600 sq. foot storefront on the Santa Monica boardwalk. Next door, his mother ran a “beer and sandwich” shop with her sister. The two met and eventually married. Before the oversaturation of surf companies that today sell everything from wetsuits to board shorts, the surf essentials back then were basic. Paul says “(My) Dad would make surfboards, sandals, wax candles and wax bars from paraffin right in his shop.” When customers would come into his store, Paul says, “He would put down a piece of leather and trace around their foot. Then he’d tell them, ‘Why don’t you go next door and grab a sandwich and a beer and I’ll stitch up your sandals. By the time you’re done I’ll have these glued and stitched up for you.’”

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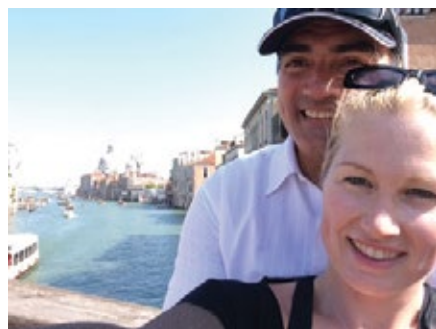
Family snowboarding at June Mountain



a flannel shirt because it was cold.” In his 1975 Volkswagen Bug he drove up to Mammoth with his friend, only to be told by a parking lot attendant when they arrived that they didn’t allow snowboards on the mountain. He told them about a smaller mountain 20 miles north of Mammoth that allowed snowboarders. By the time Paul reached June Mountain, he was eager to start but realized frustration the first day and the next. Because the sport was in its infancy, there were no instructors or other boarders on the mountain to emulate. Paul was determined to figure it out and by the third day he recalls, “I could hardly move I was so sore, but I came down this one hill behind our hotel and I started linking turns. I’m like ‘I’m getting it!’” He soon became consumed with mastering the sport and spent many days at June Mountain.

It was also common for Paul to head up to Snow Summit with friends to dig their own halfpipes to snowboard on and one day in 1986/87, as he stood in the singles line at the chairlift an older man joined him to ride the chair. He complimented Paul on his riding and inquired as to whether he rode for anybody. Paul laughed and replied that he didn’t so the man asked if he was interested in riding for his team. When Paul asked the man what exactly he did he recalls, “he said, ‘Well I’m Tom Sims. You’re riding my board.’”

Tom Sims was a pioneer of the sport, having hammered out one of the world’s first snowboards in his 7th grade woodshop class in the early 1960s. By the 1980s he was a world champion snowboarder and had already founded Sims Skateboards in Santa Barbara. Soon the company was sponsoring skateboarding luminaries and expanding to manufacture snowboards. The sport was growing and riders had started organizing competitions. Paul found himself at the right place at the right time. That day he and Tom went up to the halfpipe together and took some runs. Paul recalls, “I had the ‘Kodak Courage’ we used to call it.” The extra dose of courage to go “bigger, stronger and harder” when someone was watching or there was a camera around



filming. Shortly after Paul started riding for Team Sims.

On Thanksgiving Day in 1991 while Paul was up in Big Bear on vacation from San Diego State University, he was in a head-on car accident and shattered his shoulder. He quickly found himself out for the season and without a job. Luckily, some changes were occurring at Sims headquarters and he was offered a job in product development.

For a few years Paul bounced around in the snowboard/surf/skate world, holding jobs as an executive for Surfside Sports out of Newport Beach as well as head of Product Development for Vans. In addition, he served as head judge for the United States Amateur Snowboarding Association (USASA) and was promoted to Technical Supervisor for all USASA contests in Southern California. Paul also coached the USASA Junior National snowboard team that went on to the 1998 Olympics. Finally, in 1999, he opened his own surf/skate/snow shop in Dana Point called SoCal Surf & Sport. Unbeknownst to him, and just like his father, Paul would meet his future wife in that surf shop.

As a father of two young girls, he would typically bring Taylor and Elizabeth (Eli,) then ages four and three, to the Montessori School nearby before opening up the shop for the day. He had a crew of kids that would take over after school and then close the store so Paul could pick up his daughters and take them home in the afternoon. Paul laughs about the times he’d ask the girls what they wanted to do after school and they’d reply in chorus, “Go to Disneyland!” So he would drive them to the park to go on a few rides and have dinner before heading home at night for bed.

One day Itsy, taking a break from school at USD, walked into the store looking for a job. Paul was hoping to hire someone more responsible to offset the part time high schoolers, but had a rule that employees had to have experience in at least two of the sports the store represented (surfing, skateboarding or snowboarding.) Itsy snowboarded, but despite her lack of exposure to either of

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**“We’re not interested in making a million dollars, but a million smiles.”**

the other sports Paul hired her, agreeing to teach her to surf, a lifelong goal of hers.

Paul’s laid-back, open minded approach to life not only made him well suited to a life chasing adventure in sports, but also to running a successful surf shop. The employees were like family and would often surf together or head up to the mountains, with Paul usually leading the charge. Itsy says, “He’d get to the top of the mountain though and he’d be gone. And I wouldn’t see him all day!”

She joined Paul one year on an annual trade fair trip to Mammoth to test out snowboard equipment for the upcoming year. Despite it feeling like an inopportune time for both of them, they had grown much closer over the years and realized that their relationship was blossoming further. Eventually they moved in together in Talega and together they ran SoCal Surf Shop.

The two recently married in January of this year, with Taylor and Eli serving as flower girls for the ceremony. Itsy says, “We had our own planting ceremony at the reception, signifying

how we are growing new roots in our blended family.” Taylor, a 7th grader at Thurston Middle School in Laguna Beach, is the school’s ASB treasurer and just recently made the surf team. Eli, a GATE student, is the 6th grade representative, acting as a positive role model for the school and giving guided tours to new students. They treasure their time together as a foursome, often indulging Itsy’s love of theater by attending shows at the Orange County Performing Arts Center. They also love to surf, skate and snowboard as a family and every year, on Father’s Day it’s “mandatory family surf day,” says Itsy.

Due to the recession, in 2007 the two decided to close down the store and sell exclusively online, with a warehouse in Huntington Beach. Paul says, “Every Mom and Pop shop that was out there (in South Orange County) is now gone. They’re all owned by corporations, buyers’ groups or a group of realtors.”

Though they maintained a successful online business for eight years, Paul missed interacting with the community. Feeling that they were essentially filling orders for faceless customers, Itsy convinced him to open up the store again. Paul credits Itsy with encouraging him to do it. “She said, ‘You were the happiest when I saw you in the store; when you were able to help people.’” Itsy adds that the store was “part of them.” It’s “where we met and what we do best together so we decided to bring it back.”

The new shop carries clothing, eyewear, footwear and accessories for surf, skate, snowboarding and stand up paddle



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boarding. Itsy says, “Kids can come in, hang out and watch snowboarding, skateboarding and surf videos” just like they used to do in the old store. Paul plans to have his workbench at the back of the store, doing board repair and snowboard tuning. “I’ve been riding and tuning boards for 32 years,” having hand tuned the snowboards for the Olympic, junior national and USASA teams.

In 2012, Tom Sims passed away unexpectedly. After the company fell off in the 1990’s, today they’re making a comeback and honoring Tom’s legacy by re-launching the brand, building boards handcrafted in the U.S.A. Paul feels a loyalty to Sims and is excited to be carrying their new line, “We have the exclusive in Southern California for these Sims boards,” says Paul.

Passion and purpose are at the foundation of Paul and Itsy’s lives. With years of experience, and a desire to live authentically, they’ve come full circle. Excited to reopen SoCal Surf Shop to share their love and knowledge with others in San Clemente, Paul says, “It’s about much more than selling product and making dollars. It’s about bringing the community together.” “His passion just sort of seeps out of him, and it’s catching,” says Itsy. “We’re not interested in making a million dollars, but a million smiles.”

**SUSAN DALLAS HATTAN, ESQ.**  
ESTATE PLANNING

*“While you are proclaiming peace with your lips, be careful to have it even more fully in your heart.” – Francis of Assisi*

As 2015 comes to a close, take a few moments out of the hustle and bustle of the holidays to look around you to find Peace and count the blessings we enjoy here in the picturesque community of Talega. The beauty of our bedecked homes and natural surroundings, celebrations, festive food, and gift-giving abound. But for many of us, our family is our most priceless asset. Have you protected yours?

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Wishing you a very Merry Christmas filled with Peace, joy, and good cheer!

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