

KEVIN BURKE

■ **Occupation:** Owner of Varsity Team Sports & Apparel on East Brainerd Road. Self-described "conservative blogger."

■ **His blog site:** <http://kbb2.com>.

■ **Memorable quote:** "There is no denying that humans take a dangerous toll on the Earth and its natural resources. I don't think anyone of sane mind has ever denied those allegations. The problem is when power-hungry has-been politicians who lost their own state during a presidential election attempt to brainwash the entire world." — From undated entry

HIS FAVORITE BLOGS

■ <http://jgmason75.blogspot.com> — Personal friend's blog, also a conservative blogger.

■ <http://www.legitsports.blogspot.com> — Sports blog.

Making a statement

Area bloggers create loyal online followings



Online: Hear advice for new bloggers from Kevin Burke.

Read blogs by Times Free Press staffers and other contributors. Comment.

BY LAURA GALBRAITH

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Blogging provides ordinary people with an online outlet for their writing. Some even develop a fan base.

Chattanooga Alli Crumley, a stay-at-home-mom with two small children, manages two blogs. She began a family blog in 2004. It's full of bright pictures of her kids and the excursions they go on.

"None of our family lives around here, so the grandparents were going to be missing out on things," she said. "That's why we started Crumley Blog, mainly to document our experiences as

first-time parents."

She said she can express herself and her feelings better through written words.

"I do a lot better when I'm writing, I guess because I can see the words or something," Mrs. Crumley said. "So I'll be with friends or family, and I don't even talk about half the things that I write about on the blog."

Kevin Burke, 24, owner of Varsity Team Sports & Apparel, is a self-described "tech geek" and "conservative blogger."

"I like talking about sports, politics, business, technology (and) basically just anything in life," he said. "I might just drive down the road and see something that sparks a thought in my head, and it's just a way for me to either vent or get my thought on paper and publish it."

WHY BLOG?

■ **To keep in touch with family and friends.**

Alli Crumley and her husband have their hands full with two young sons, so keeping in touch with their extended family in different cities is difficult. The Crumley Blog keeps the grandparents from missing out on things, she said.

■ **To start a dialogue.**

With the help of social networking sites, bloggers can share entries with family, friends and co-workers.

"I would say that I have a handful of

loyal readers, but the majority of them are directed to my blog through either Facebook, Twitter or my e-mails," Kevin Burke said. "And then that's where we kind of get the dialogue going."

■ **To get ideas, advice.**

"One of my new favorite blogs ... is Soule Mama (www.soulemama.com)," Mrs. Crumley said. "She's really into crafting and homemaking and that sort of thing, and it's just a really refreshing way to get good ideas on things I can do with my son."

BLOGGERS BEWARE

■ **Be careful what you say.**

Blogs are meant to be about anything and everything, but people should use discretion when it comes to airing personal dirty laundry, gossip and hearsay.

"Once you blog, that's on there," said Mr. Burke. "Even if you go back on there and delete that post, some computer somewhere has kept a screenshot or whatever, so that's something you've got to keep in mind."

■ **Beware of "trolls."**

Anyone who's going to write about something controversial most likely will be attacked verbally by someone who doesn't share the same opinions. Usually that person moves on but in some cases may make it a mission to bring you down. Although it is annoying to deal with, bloggers have the upper hand.

"If you have a blog, you can pretty much control it however you want," Mr. Burke said. "If you go to my blog today and you comment on a piece, I have to approve it before it shows up on the blog."

CHATTANOOGA CHATTER

Launched in July 2008, Chattarati is a Chattanooga news and opinion blog.

"Basically the idea was we wanted to create the blog that we wanted to read," said John Hawbaker, an editor and one of the founders behind the community blog.

"There's a lot going on in Chattanooga, a lot going on even with local news and events, arts and culture type things, all of which we wanted to read more about, learn more about and

create discussions around," he said.

Mr. Hawbaker said Chattarati.com has a unique personality.

"We can talk about something as serious as the low turnout in the local elections or something as fun as a whole summer series devoted to finding the best taco in Chattanooga," he said. "I love that contrast, that we can have these ridiculous satire articles right next to a very serious editorial."



STAFF PHOTO BY D. PATRICK HARDING

Alli Crumley and her children, Fuller, 4, and Tebow, 2 months, spend an afternoon at a park in St. Elmo. Mrs. Crumley writes a blog about her family and life as a mother.

ALLI CRUMLEY

■ **Occupation:** Self-described "mommy blogger."

■ **Her blog sites:** <http://crumleyblog.com> and <http://alwaysalli.com>.

■ **Memorable quote:** "I've always heard the transition from one kid to two kids is hard. I've also heard the transition from two kids to three kids is easy. I would like to go ahead and request we have our third child so I can get to the easy." — From a March 25, 2009, entry

HER FAVORITE BLOGS

■ www.bonspark.com — Digital photography blog.

■ <http://shuttersisters.com> — Community blog on digital photographers.

■ <http://motherhooduncensored.typepad.com> — Blog on motherhood.