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community and opportunities at USD.

“This community of Vermillion has really embraced us – our family as a whole,” she said. “We’re both getting to do what we love to do so we’re both really happy.”

However, because of mirror scheduling in the Summit League, Williams and her husband knew their hectic schedules would conflict with one another. So when the Williams came to USD with their two daughters, seven-year-old Kennadi and two-year-old Bentli, they made a commitment to their family.

“It is a challenge, but one thing when I took this job, my husband and I made a commitment that no matter where we are, our family is always going to come first,” she said. “And that’s a commitment that we stand by.”

Although she keeps her family-first mentality, Williams does not attempt to keep her family and work separate. As a role model for her student athletes, she believes it is important for her players to see her as both a successful coach and a great mom.

“I think that it’s good for our players – young women – to see that family model and atmosphere,” she said. “I also think it’s good for my children to be around these amazing young women who are driven and motivated. I couldn’t pick better role models for my two little girls. So it’s a good fit for both sides.”

Raising a family while balancing a career is not the only struggle Williams faces in her new position at USD. Leading a Division I women’s basketball team involves much more than choosing the right in-bounds play or defensive strategy. She believes it is much more about motivating players, finding the best chemistry, and just facing the daily battles of a team of young women.

“Those daily battles of life are one of the things I love about the job and it’s also one of the things that is a challenge about it – being able to handle those things that come up without it distracting from what you’re trying to accomplish as a team.”

As the season goes on, Williams will have many chances to address these on- and off-court challenges, but her love of the job and her experiences as both a coach and a mom will help her overcome them.

■ *by Jilanne Doom*



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