



“Immediately she felt like my child,” says Thomas Rhett (in Uganda in October 2016).

THOMAS RHETT

# Counting Their Blessings

THE COUNTRY STAR AND HIS WIFE ARE THE PROUD PARENTS OF A DAUGHTER FROM UGANDA—AND EXPECTING ANOTHER CHILD THIS SUMMER

By EILEEN FINAN

It's his first full day as a dad, and Thomas Rhett is already coping with parental guilt. “I’m nervous to leave her,” he says of new daughter Willa Gray, who spent her first night at her new home in Nashville on May 11. Earlier the singer, 27, went to exercise while his wife, Lauren, looked after the napping 18-month-old, who was born in Uganda, “but she woke up 10 minutes after I left. That made my heart sink!” he says. “I don’t want to be away when she’s doing stuff.”

Both Thomas Rhett and Lauren, 27, are determined to make every moment with Willa count.



**A New World**  
“She’s our little survivor,” says Lauren of Willa, who was orphaned as a newborn and nicknamed Blessing at the children’s home where she lived.

Lauren, who has a nursing degree, first met her while doing aid work in Africa with the Christian group 147 Million Orphans, and the singer and his wife have traveled back and forth to Uganda nearly a dozen times since, working their way through the East African country’s complex adoption process. In the meantime, they learned Lauren was pregnant with another girl, who is due in August.

For now, Willa is enjoying exploring her new home: discovering music by Bruno Mars, watching *Finding Nemo* and tiring out her parents. “She never stops!” says the singer. And though their world will soon get even busier, the couple say it all feels perfectly right. “Finally everyone is where they’re supposed to be,” Lauren says. “We are just so thankful she gets to be ours and we get to be hers.” ●

**‘She’s just so fun to watch. All you want to do is love on her’**

—THOMAS RHETT

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: COURTESY AKINS FAMILY; KALLEY DICKERSON(2)