

In the course of its work, the Dummerston Housing Commission has heard some stories we'd like to share. In the last Views, you read about John and Cindy Wilcox, who give a great deal to Dummerston and would like to continue to call it home as they enter the next stage of their lives. Some day their home and gardens will be too much to manage. They hope to find a new home in Dummerston that offers community as well as the amenities they'll need as they age.

At the other end of the spectrum are younger families. Here's another story about housing needs in Dummerston.

Andrea Jaquith Carrasquillo is the middle of three daughters, born and raised in Dummerston. Her Dad, Francis "Punky" Jaquith, is a math teacher at BUHS and his wife, Pat, is co-chair of the math department at Landmark College.

After high school, Andrea moved to Providence, RI for college but never really felt the city was for her. "I love this community, and my family is very important to me," she explains. Andrea met her husband, Seth Carrasquillo, at BUHS. The son of a local doctor, Seth had deep hometown roots, too. He and Andrea managed to buy a three-apartment fixer-upper in Brattleboro. They moved between the apartments, renovating each while living in it and renting out the others to cover the mortgage. "But it was just an investment," says Seth. "A stepping stone to where we wanted to be," adds Andrea.

They always imagined moving back to Dummerston and being in the country, "a place that's calm and quiet." When their son Dylan was born, that wish became more urgent. Being near Grandma and Grandpa Jaquith and going to the Dummerston School were definitely what they wanted for Dylan.

They hoped to find a peaceful spot, in the woods, with privacy and at least three bedrooms, and, adds Seth, a place that didn't need fixing up. "We were worried about finding a place in our price range in Dummerston," says Andrea. "We knew we could move to Vernon or Guilford or Hinsdale but that's not what we wanted."

As a teenager, Andrea used to baby-sit for a neighbor boy, only about two miles from home. That boy's family was moving to a new house, still in Dummerston but with a little more room and a few more acres. Pat Jaquith saw the family at the Market one day, and mentioned that Seth and Andrea were looking for a place. Everybody got excited and when the house went on the market, Seth and Andrea were one of two parties to make an immediate offer. It was below the asking price but at the limit of their budget. "We crossed our fingers and held our breath," they recall. The other offer, at the asking price, was from a couple looking for a weekend getaway from the city. You can guess the end of this story. The seller made the decision to help Seth and Andrea get to Dummerston.

It was a good move for all concerned. Andrea tells a funny story about the sellers waiting too long to pack everything up. They were late to the closing and still had another few carloads at the house. The Carrasquillos were much more forgiving than a stranger might have been.

I caught up with Seth and Andrea for this interview at the end of sugaring season. Andrea's dad, Punky, has tapped trees along Green Mountain Camp and Hague Roads for years, producing about 30 - 35 gallons of fine syrup annually. Seth and Andrea's new home was just past the far end of Punky's run of trees. Seth has gone from helping out his father-in-law to doing the bulk of the work. It's a family endeavor with Andrea and kindergartener Dylan helping, too.

Seth is the Audio-Visual Director at Mount Snow's Conference Center. He's looking forward to helping coach Dylan's baseball teams. Andrea works as an Account Manager at Sajen Jewelry, parent company of Offerings, in Putney. She's interested in finding ways to use her skills in the community as well. "This is such a great place to live. Knowing your neighbors are all looking out for each other, and aren't too busy to stop and wave as we drive by is great," she says. "Knowing that we can spread our roots and that this is home is such a comforting feeling. It's nice to know that Dylan's grandparents are right up the road and they can really be involved in his life. It'll be nice to know that they can rely on us being close by, too."

The Dummerston Housing Commission is looking at ways to help people like Andrea come back to Dummerston. Good people who want their kids to go to our school and who care about traditions like sugaring and Strawberry Suppers ought to be able to come home. Sometimes it's a matter of what could be called "socially responsible selling," looking at a dual bottom line when choosing your buyer – who they are as well as how much money they've offered. Another win-win scenario can be an accessory apartment – an older person creates an apartment in part of their house they no longer need and rents it out. They help a young person who isn't ready to buy their own place or a divorced parent who wants to stay close to their kids. At the same time they feel better knowing someone's right nearby in case they need help.

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