

Melanie Chamberlin grew up in Swanzey, NH. She met Michael playing volleyball in New Hampshire. They became friends, then dated, and now they're married, living in Dummerston and raising their twin 4 ½ years old boys.

Michael is the youngest son of Leon and Carol Chamberlin, names familiar to many of you. Dummerston owes a great deal to the Chamberlins. Leon was the long time Fire Chief and Fire Warden; his other son Lee is our Road Foreman. Leon died tragically of brain cancer a few years ago. Carol built a new home on Lee's land, and offered to sell the family homestead on Dutton Farm Rd., which Leon had built himself, to Michael and Melanie, then expecting the twins.

"We were not financially ready to buy a house," Melanie explains. "We would have paid a lot more money for this house if we had bought it on the open market. We both work full time and we struggle to pay what we pay now."

When asked what she likes about living in Dummerston, Melanie talked at length about the sense of community she feels with her neighbors. "Even though I grew up in a small town, I didn't have this sense there. Family is a big part of it. I like that my neighbors have lived here for a long time. I feel safe and looked after. The Garlands have lived here as long as Leon and Carol. Their families grew up together. Our neighbors have always been very kind to us. It's wonderful to feel that generational support and to know that if I needed something . . . I love my neighbors and I look forward to them relying on me."

Melanie and Michael and their family make good use of the family's land. She mentions how fortunate they feel to have gotten a good many acres with their home. "We use the land to hike and camp. We all do a lot of snowmobiling and back country skiing. The family's made a really great camping spot on the hill that we use a lot. And my brother in law has a great sugaring business, that uses our land, as well as other family property."

As others expressed at the recent Dummerston Housing Commission's Forum, Melanie worries that new affordable housing may compromise the feeling of community she so treasures. "I so value that my neighbors have lived here for so long."

The twins just registered for kindergarten next fall and Melanie reports being really impressed with the school. "They were very welcoming. There's a lot of opportunity for community in this area," she adds. "I'm really looking forward to meeting new families next year."

In addition to caring for her boys and working as a Hospice caregiver, Melanie serves on the Dummerston Recreation Committee. I had never met Melanie before but, after talking with her, was struck by what she brings to our community. I'm grateful she met and married a Dummerston boy and that his parents were able to make it possible for them to live and raise their family in Dummerston.

*Cindy Jerome, for the
Dummerston Housing Commission*