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LEWES NEIGHBORS


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Cover Photo by Justin Nixon

THE WILLIAMS FAMILY:
Kindness. Connection. & Wellbeing

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Kindness, Connection, & Wellbeing

By Rachel Swick Mavity

Coming home just felt right for these two Cape Henlopen graduates who moved back to Lewes in 2014.

"We were living in the New York metro area, the boys were young and we would discuss what we envisioned for the future, so when the opportunity presented to move back, it just felt natural. Our families were here and it was a better fit for the overall lifestyle we were seeking," Andrew said.

"Andrew had already started working remotely a few days a week, so that transition to telecommute from Delaware was smooth," Rita said.

Rita, Andrew, and their two boys, Keenan and Bodhi, moved into a rental for a year before purchasing their home in May of 2015.

"It was clear to us, we wanted to be in the downtown area where we are able to walk, bike, or drive easily to all the things we need and want to do. Lewes has been a special place for us and a great community to raise our kids in," Rita said.

Reconnecting & Building a Life together

Rita Karapurkar moved to Lewes with her parents when she was 13. She and Andrew Williams met in ninth grade at the Lewes School Annex. The Cape Henlopen School District experimented with having the ninth graders in their own school, and during this time they became good friends.

Andrew was born and raised in Lewes. His great-grandfather was Dr. James Beebe, who co-founded Beebe Hospital – now Beebe Healthcare – with his brother Dr. Richard Beebe in 1916.

Both Rita's parents and Andrew's parents worked at Beebe during different periods of time, so the families also knew each other.

Rita and Andrew remained good friends throughout high school and upon graduation, went their separate ways – Rita to University of Richmond in Virginia and Andrew to Dickinson College in Pennsylvania.

After college, Rita moved to New York City where she worked in health education and

communications. Andrew was living on the opposite coast in California while at the Stanford Graduate School of Business.

They describe their reconnection as something wonderful that came out of something really bad -- it was September 11th, 2001. Rita, being in New York City, living in the East Village, was right in the middle of it. Andrew knew she was living there and had reached out to her via email to see how she was doing.

"We started keeping touch by emailing and then soon were calling each other regularly," Rita recalls. "It was an intense time, in some ways, much like this year has been. We found ourselves reflecting on many deep life topics and having many meaningful conversations with friends."

The two started "dating" cross-country, and were fortunate to be able to travel to see each other pretty regularly. About a year after they started dating, Andrew decided to make the move back east, and returned to Lewes which allowed them to continue to explore their relationship and their future together.

In 2005, the couple were married locally and then started their life together in New York City.

Andrew began working for a global data analytics company and has remained with the same company leadership, at GlobalData Inc., working in their healthcare sector. Living on the East Coast, they could easily travel to Delaware to see their parents who still live in the Lewes and Rehoboth Beach area as well as friends who lived in cities all along the coast.

Rita was in graduate school at Columbia University, getting her Master's degree in Health Education and Behavior Change, when the couple had their first son, Keenan, who is now 13.

"I had taken the year off from work to push through and finish grad school during the time I was pregnant. I was able to stay home with Keenan during his first year while I finished my masters thesis," Rita recalls. "That time was full of strolls in our local parks, play dates with new mom friends and just taking in the time together as a family. Of course, during naps and late nights, I was finishing school."

Their second son, Bodhi, was born in 2010. Bodhi completed this fantastic four-some. It also gave Rita and Andrew a moment to consider where and how they wanted to raise their family.

Returning to Lewes

"Growing up in Lewes was certainly a special experience for both of us, with many fond memories and connections to home," she said. "We also wanted to be close to our parents, there for more everyday moments, and took into consideration the lifestyle we wanted for our children and our family as a whole."

The family made the move in May/June 2014, Rita and Bodhi arriving first for her to start her new job with Beebe Healthcare. That next school year, Bodhi attended pre-school at Kid's Cottage while Keenan started 2nd grade at Shields.

Bodhi has just finished fourth grade at Shields and will transition to 5th grade at Sussex Academy Elementary School in the fall. Keenan just completed seventh grade at Sussex Academy and will continue on at the school for eighth grade.

Among his many hobbies, Keenan is an avid writer. He writes journals, songs and has considered writing a book. Even from a young age, he had a passion for writing and it has continued to evolve into a creative outlet for him to write songs that he brings to life as a musician.

Keenan is a talented guitarist and has been taking lessons for about six years with Mike Curry. He and Bodhi, who takes drum lessons with Carmine Strollo, formed their own band, The Sticky Notes. They enjoy sharing their music with others whether they are playing around a bonfire for friends, at local restaurants like Striper Bites or for as they call it, "music with a mission," to benefit local organizations or people in need, including one virtual music concert recently which raised money for a local musician living with cancer.

"We like to play all types of music. For our originals, I'll weave a message into the song in various ways and people can interpret what it means to them," Keenan said. "It's music with a message. We enjoy sharing our music with others and making people smile."

They have played at Striper Bites, JD Shuckers "Kids Got Talent," and open mics hosted by Frantic Frets. They are just getting started and hope to continue to share their music with others.

Keenan recently was accepted into the National Junior Honor Society. He enjoys school particularly writing, math and science. Outside of school, you can also find him

Photos submitted by the family



playing travel soccer with Henlopen Soccer Club or for his Middle School team (which went undefeated last season!) or running and biking around town exercising and enjoying the sights with his brother.

Bodhi admits he will miss Shields, which has been a special place for him. He has loved his teachers and being able to walk to school during his time there. He is excited for the next step and to go to the same school as his brother. He too plays travel soccer with Henlopen Soccer Club as well as Factory Basketball and Atlantic Lacrosse.

He is passionate about all of his subjects in school. His favorites include creative writing and social studies. He's a history and sports buff and is often reading multiple books at a time.

At home during the COVID-19 pandemic, the two became even tighter than they already were. While they have their moments like all siblings, they are grateful for each other. All four in the family are foodies and while they have missed eating out at our local restaurants, they have really enjoyed cooking together and family meals at home filled with lots of meaningful conversations.

In quarantine, the boys have been able to continue their love of cooking. They recently harvested cherries from the tree in their yard and turned it into jam.

This year, because they have more time, they are in charge of the family vegetable garden. They are growing hot peppers, squash, eggplant, herbs and more.

They both admit that while they love traveling and visiting cities, Lewes is a special place.

"It's peaceful here. You can walk down the street and wave and talk to your neighbors," Keenan said.



"I like it because even though we go running around here all the time, I see something new each time," Bodhi said.

"It feels like everyone here is one big family," Keenan said.

Rita and Andrew agree.

"When we moved back here, we wanted to be involved in the community," Rita said. "In my role at Beebe, I partner with people on their lifestyle and health - mind, body and spirit - focusing on the whole person and the power of connection and purpose. It is all intertwined. It's front and center in our conversations at home and the way we live our lives."



Andrew is very involved with the boys and often talks to the boys about balancing life, working hard and being of service to others.

When Andrew isn't working, he enjoys playing golf and playing ping pong with several local friends. You also may find him playing soccer or basketball with the boys.

When Bodhi and Keenan aren't jamming together, you may find them surfing and hanging out at local beaches, playing soccer or running around town. When they're doing their own thing, you may find Bodhi curled up with a good book or drawing and writing or Keenan may be quietly sitting with his journal and guitar coming up with new song lyrics.

"Family time together is a priority but it's also nice that we all have our own interests. It's important to nurture that and give each other space to grow as individuals," Rita said. "Then when we come together we can really be present and our best selves."

If you see this lovely family walking, biking, or jogging around town, be sure to wave and find out when the next Sticky Notes concert might be!

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LeeAnnGroup.com

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