



NEW IN TOWN

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Recently named as Forbes' most livable U.S. City, one of Money Magazine's 10 Best Places to Retire, and number one in U-Haul's 2012 relocation survey, with a nine percent hike in transplants, there is no doubt that Pittsburgh has its fair share of new residents. And with nearly 100 city neighborhoods and suburbs in the region, Pittsburgh newcomers have a lot of choices when it comes to finding a community to call home. Still, many of them have chosen Mt. Lebanon. We talked to several new-to-Lebo families, and asked them, "Why Mt. Lebanon?" Here are their stories.

RYAN & BETSY MILLER

When Ryan and Betsy Miller moved to Pittsburgh from Northern Virginia in 2009, the pair knew exactly where they wanted to settle down.

"Mt. Lebanon was the only place we even considered," Ryan, 33, originally from Charleroi in Washington County, says. "I was always taken back by the charm of it, the feel of it."



Betsy, 32, a WVU grad raised in suburban Detroit, agreed, recalling one of her first visits to Mt. Lebanon, "I just remember thinking, 'I really like it here.'"

What the couple didn't know when they bought their home on Sleepy Hollow Road in Sunset Hills, was that they would become not just new residents, but also small business owners here.

As new residents and newlyweds, Betsy, a kindergarten teacher, and Ryan, then a marketing manager, spent much of their free time exploring their new neighborhood, especially Uptown—the part of Mt. Lebanon that Betsy said reminded her most of Birmingham, Michigan, where she grew up.

"Birmingham had an area just like Uptown, and that's what I loved most," she pointed out. "It had that same feel, where you would just go up and hang out. There were a lot of small businesses and it was, you know, the place to go."

Still they felt that something was missing in Mt. Lebanon's Uptown.

"We would go for walks up there, and it always surprised me that no one in Uptown did homemade ice cream," Ryan said, recounting when the idea for Betsy's Ice Cream popped into his head. "I felt that this was something the community could use."

"We were absolutely blown away by the reaction," Ryan said. "I had no idea how much people would embrace this and thank us for being there. We got such a warm response and business is going far better than I ever expected in the first couple of years."

"We're thrilled!" Betsy adds. "Business is steady and busy."

So steady and busy, that Ryan left his job to run Betsy's Ice Cream full-time. But he insisted that it's not just the city's attractive demographics that have made the business a hit.

"The community is exceptionally welcoming and appreciative of small businesses, as long as the business reciprocates that openness and helps foster a sense of community," he says.

The shop has become an after-school gathering place for Mellon students. Also, the Millers often take their ice cream into the community for school fundraisers and civic events.

According to Betsy, working in the community seven days a week has had its perks.

"Ryan gets recognized all the time—the kids recognize him when we're out and about!" she jokes. "We really love living where we do," Betsy says.

Ryan added: "Honestly, we have no intentions, really, of going anywhere—ever."

PAUL & ANNA SIEFKEN

Last year, when Paul Siefken was offered his "dream job" at The Fred Rogers Company, he and his wife, Anna, knew immediately that their family was Pittsburgh-bound. The couple's only worry was uprooting their two children, who were happy and thriving in a close-knit community just outside Washington, D.C., where they had lived for nine years.

Paul, 43, and Anna, 44, decided to tackle their moving-induced anxiety the way they knew best—with research.



"He told me [about the job opportunity] on a Friday and by Saturday I had bought a book about Pittsburgh [and] I reached out to people on Facebook," Anna says.

Over the next few months, Paul and Anna made a few trips to the area to scope out the city. On her very first trip, Anna says, she "narrowed specifically on Mt. Lebanon."

"When I drove into Mt. Lebanon, I thought, 'WOW!' We loved the downtown area; we loved the community feel, the beautiful historic architecture," she remembers.

The excellent reputation of the Mt. Lebanon schools solidified their decision to put roots down here.

"We were looking for strong schools," Anna says. Both she and Paul had previously worked as educators. "It's hard to deny that the schools here are really great, that something is working really well here and we wanted to be a part of that."

So the couple wasted no time. They bought a house on Woodland Drive and packed the family (including their beagle, Sadie) into the car for a weekend visit to their new neighborhood, which included a cookout at the Mt. Lebanon home of a family a Facebook friend recommended.

Anna says the cookout was so much fun, that "they had us over two days in a row!"

Once the family had officially moved to Mt. Lebanon, the Siefken kids, 11-year-old Ella and 9-year-old Ruby, started swimming with the Bower Hill Swim Club team and enrolled in school.

The Siefkens loved their welcome to town. Only weeks after moving in, Ruby was invited to a play date by a neighbor who would be a classmate at Foster when school resumed in the fall. When she arrived, however, the play date turned out to be no play date at all.

"It was a party!" Ruby says. "All the fourth-grade girls in the class, almost, were there. And there were cookies and a cake that said 'Welcome Ruby' on it."

"It was pretty terrific. It was something you don't see, something you don't get in other places," Paul adds.

"The community is just so kind; the girls have made the transition beautifully," says Anna, who was appointed to the historic preservation board in March. "By the time school started, both had met a number of different friends."

Today, less than one year after their decision to settle in Mt. Lebanon, Anna said the whole family is very content.

"We'll be here for a long time!"

VINNIE SALVATORE & AMY COOPER

Vinnie Salvatore and his wife, Amy Cooper, love neighborhood block parties, quiet nights at home and walks through Mt. Lebanon. But they aren't exactly your average empty nesters.

He is a rock n' roll guitarist who's traveled the world with a handful of successful bands including The Dogs and his current band, American Dog. She is the marketing director for Stage AE and spends her time hobnobbing with some of music's top acts while promoting and running concerts.



The pair has had some big changes in their lives over the last few years. Their youngest child left the nest, Amy started a new job, and in 2012, they moved to Pittsburgh from Columbus.

"This is such an exciting time, oh yeah!" Vinnie says.

"Every single day it feels like it's brand new, that we're in a brand new place," Amy adds.

Living in Mt. Lebanon has a lot to do with why they are so happy.

"I like being able to walk to good restaurants and going somewhere to get a craft beer," Vinnie said. "And the neighbors are so great."

The couple said they have always felt a connection to the town, but it wasn't until recently that they knew why.

"Divine intervention," Vinnie explains.

Vinnie's sister, researching their family on a genealogy website, discovered that in 1926, when their grandparents were forced to evacuate their West Virginia town during a smallpox outbreak, their daughter—his mother—had been born in Mt. Lebanon.

"I kind of think she led us here," Amy says.

Now here, the couple said it's unlikely they will ever leave.

"I love Mt. Lebanon so much, I could be mayor!" Amy jokes. "Everyone has lived here for 25 years or more—except for us. But we hope to be here for 30 years—if not longer."

CARL & MEREDITH BROUSSARD

At a time in their lives when a lot of people are ditching the cold weather locales and moving south, Carl and Meredith Broussard did just the opposite—they moved here from Orlando.

For the couple, packing up and relocating north was an easy—albeit a somewhat unexpected—decision.

“We never thought we were going to live in Pittsburgh, I will tell you that!” Meredith, 54, says, laughing. “Then the grandbaby came and all bets were off.”

It all started in August 2012, when the Broussards came for one of their frequent visits to Pittsburgh to see their daughter, Jennifer Schurman, and her husband, Chris, both 33, who had lived in Pittsburgh for eight years and who were expecting their first child.



But what was supposed to be a four-day visit, with Jennifer’s baby shower as its main event, turned into an all-out house hunt. Within the month, the Broussards had bought a home on Roycroft Avenue, sold their home in Orlando and begun the process of expanding their successful real estate business into a new office in Pittsburgh’s Shadyside neighborhood.

“Our grandson was 90 percent of our motivation [to move],” Carl, 55, says. “And I’m loving my time with my grandson, but I’m also loving my time with my teenager.”

The Broussards are not just involved grandparents; they also have one of their three children still in the nest, a 14-year-old son, Charles, now a freshman at Mt. Lebanon High School.

“When we thought about moving, we gave him a choice,” Meredith remembers. “He said, ‘Let’s go, I want to be an uncle!’ So we all looked at each other and said, ‘Let’s do it.’ So we did it.”

A year and a half later, the family has no regrets about downsizing and moving north.

“Charles tells me at least two times a week, out of the blue, ‘Mom, I love Mt. Lebanon.’ He’s just flourishing,” Meredith says. “I can’t imagine being in Florida now. To give up sunshine and warm weather, it doesn’t compare to watching your grandson grow...I love it! It’s been fabulous!”

“We don’t regret it one bit,” Carl adds. “We’ve lived in Florida for all of our married life, and now that we’re here, this really feels like home.”

The Broussards spend at least three days a week with their 16-month-old grandson Andrew, who lives with his parents in Shadyside.

“They are seven miles away, that’s nothing!” Meredith says.

“I am so grateful that my family is now only a 20-minute drive away,” says daughter Jennifer. “It’s wonderful that they were here to share all of our son’s firsts this past year. And of course they have been a tremendous help to us as we became new parents.”

In addition to doting on their grandson and working to grow their real estate practice, the couple also spends time as parent volunteers with the Mt. Lebanon High School Band, where Charles plays the alto saxophone. It was as volunteers, they said, that the Broussards saw firsthand just how involved some members of the Mt. Lebanon community are.

“There are parents who volunteer who don’t even have kids in the band—at the school—anymore. It’s just something you don’t find elsewhere,” Meredith says. “Now I can’t go anywhere without seeing someone I know and we’ve only been here a year!”

Long-time realtor Carl said it’s no surprise to him that people, who live in Mt. Lebanon, love Mt. Lebanon.

"The proximity to downtown and the urban feel it has and the school district, are the biggest attractions," he says, outlining why not only his family, but also his clients often choose to live here. "It's that quality of life, those values and priorities that draw people here [and] you end up with a lot of people who have a lot in common, especially with their core values. That's why when you live in Mt. Lebanon, you feel like you belong."

And these newcomers do feel like they belong.

"We came here for something else," Meredith says, but "the community itself turned out to be a bonus." According to Betsy, working in the community seven days a week has had its perks.

"Ryan gets recognized all the time—the kids recognize him when we're out and about!" she jokes.

"We really love living where we do," Betsy says.

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Melanie Aloï & Josh Lee

S. MEADOWCROFT AVENUE

Moved to Mt. Lebanon: Fall of 2013

Moved to Mt. Lebanon From: Chicago, IL

Why Mt. Lebanon: "We are not people who live in the suburbs, we're in our twenties. We're newlyweds [but] we loved the feel of the area, and our neighborhood. You can tell people care, and take care of it. We love the T running through and we can make it downtown in 20 minutes. Eventually, we wanted a great school system for when we have kids in a few years... It's the sweet spot at the intersection of everything."

Missy & Jeremy Timko (two children, ages 1 & 3)

LAKEMONT DRIVE

Moved to Mt. Lebanon: Summer of 2012

Moved to Mt. Lebanon From: Portland, OR

Why Mt. Lebanon: "We absolutely love it here and feel it is the best place on earth for us to raise our kids! We have two young kids and we wanted to live in a community that supports family and has great schools. And it was affordable compared to where we were coming from and that's liberating! People seem really invested in what's going on in the neighborhood too. We like the library, Uptown Coffee, Washington Road shops, and we go to Main Park a lot. And we're getting a pool pass this summer so we can swim a lot!"

Mara & Scott Robbins (two children, ages 4 & 2)

POPLAR DRIVE

Moved to Mt. Lebanon: 2012

Moved to Mt. Lebanon From: Hawaii (lived in Dormont first)

Why Mt. Lebanon: "The first time I brought my wife through Mt. Lebanon 13 years ago she said that it was where she wanted to live and never wavered for a moment. Living here, it's more about what Mt. Lebanon has more than what other neighborhoods don't have...Knowing all the neighbors and seeing all the same people all the time, it feels like a real community. It checks all the boxes of all the things you would want about a community and everyone chips in to make it nice."

Meredith & Seth Shafer (two children, ages 4 & 7)

PUEBLO DRIVE

Moved to Mt. Lebanon: Spring of 2012

Moved to Mt. Lebanon From: Camp Hill, PA (Harrisburg suburb)

Why Mt. Lebanon: "With two young boys we wanted an excellent school district and we both enjoy older neighborhoods with homes with a lot of character and lots of older growth trees versus new construction and sprawling subdivisions. I've lived in neighborhoods where you really don't become part of that neighborhood. Here you meet natives but you also meet people who are in the same situation and have migrated to this area. There is definitely a great community feel and you feel welcomed here."