

Finding Just What *We're Looking For*

Jeanine and her husband, Larry, were high school sweethearts. They did almost everything together. After marrying, they even lived on a boat for the better part of a decade, while they built their idyllic North Hero home together. So, when her husband passed away seven years ago, Jeanine knew she couldn't leave their home.

The challenge was Jeanine needs to be around people. She has friends and neighbors who stop by regularly, but only two of her six children live in Vermont and not a short drive away. Isolation is especially challenging in the winter when it's more difficult for people to travel to visit her. Jeanine, 88, admits it was initially difficult to ask for help when she started feeling lonesome. Part of that help was turning to HomeShare Vermont to find a compatible housemate who could assist with cooking and be an added presence in her home.

Jeanine's most important criteria was finding a housemate who laughed. She certainly got what she was looking for in Gretchen, a bubbly and engaging 63-year-old from California. Gretchen had hoped her family would eventually move back to California where she raised her son. But after 10 winters, they're Vermonters now, so Gretchen decided she'd move here to be closer to them and her 4-year-old granddaughter. It was important for Gretchen to find an affordable place to live where financially she'd have the freedom

to focus on building her consulting business. Luckily, she found HomeShare Vermont. "I came to it by complete accident, and it's truly been a gift," Gretchen said.

Before Gretchen moved in officially, she met Jeanine's family and friends. The experience created a sense of safety for everyone involved as they all know each other now and truly have Jeanine's best interests in heart. Getting to know Jeanine has been Gretchen's favorite part of the homeshare match. The two bonded over their shared sense of adventure, discussing Jeanine's living in Kuwait and Gretchen's five years in Tanzania, along with their other travel experiences. As part of the homeshare arrangement, Gretchen cooks dinner at least four nights a week, which is usually closer to every night. Jeanine loves her steak, and any meal that ends with chocolate ice cream is a good one.

Because Jeanine is established in the North Hero community, Gretchen sought guidance from Jeanine's friends, easing her transition into the community. Gretchen loves hiking in North Hero State Park, while Jeanine sits by the water. The two like to work on art projects together, and many of Jeanine's paintings can be seen throughout her home. "It was so much easier than I thought it could be. The reason why I can stay here is because she's here. For me it's been wonderful. We have managed to make it work for both of us," Jeanine said.



Gretchen and Jeanine

Photo by Karen Pike



HomeShare Happenings
June 2022

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Homeshares Available

Below are just a few of the homes we currently have available to share. If you know someone looking for a place to live and able to help someone else, please send them our way. Our application is on our website, and it is free to apply. Background checks, references and in-depth interview required. Most homes are no new pets, no smoking, with no security deposits.

Addison: Peaceful location tucked in the woods, 30 minutes to Middlebury. Seeking housemate to lend a hand with mowing/yardwork, stacking wood, and pet-care for 2 friendly dogs and a cat. \$550/mo. Furnished space w/ private BA & kitchen.

Barre: Share a downtown apartment w/ professional woman and her dog, looking for companionship, help w/ cooking & light housekeeping. No rent, \$150 utility share. Shared BA.



Charlotte: Senior couple who enjoy plants & gardening, seeking a peaceful housemate to lend a hand with snow removal, weeding gardens, cook 2x/week, and provide light help around the house. \$200/mo. Shared BA.

Cabot: Quaint home to share w/ senior woman seeking an overnight "just in case" presence & help w/ cooking. No rent, \$100 utility share. Shared BA.



Middlebury: Rural home to share w/ professional in her 60s who enjoys horses & gardening. Seeking female housemate to lend a hand w/ yardwork. \$350/month. Must be cat- and dog-friendly! Private BA; shared kitchen.

Milton: Share a rustic, rural home w/ woman in her 70s who enjoys nature, photography & Mah Jongh. \$500/mo. Seeking eco-friendly housemate to share lawn mowing & snow removal. Shared BA.

Montpelier: Share a cozy family home w/ active senior woman looking for a housemate to share a few meals, and help w/ light housekeeping, lifting & occas. transportation. \$500/mo. Shared BA.

N. Ferrisburgh: Share a farmhouse with artist in her 70s. Provide weekly organization help in exchange for reduced rent of \$400/mo. Must be pet-friendly! Shared BA.

Home & Away Raffle Winners

Thanks to generous donations from Gardener's Supply Company and Leisa Pollander and Ed Conrad, we raised over \$5,000 from our Home and Away Raffle. The winning tickets were drawn on April 12th, just before our 40th Anniversary Storytelling event.



Photo by Karen Pike

Peter Cameron won the "away" part of the raffle, a 3-day/ 2-night stay at a lovely cottage on Lake Champlain located immediately adjacent to great hiking in the Missisquoi Wildlife

Refuge. Peter reported he booked his trip within days of being notified of the drawing!

Becky and Stewart Arnold won the "home" portion of the raffle, a \$500 gift certificate to Gardener's Supply Company. They report a major gardening project set

for this summer, so that was great timing!
Thank you to everyone who donated and purchased a raffle ticket to support our home-sharing program.

An Interview *with Professor Danigelis*

As part of our 40th Anniversary celebrations, we are interviewing key individuals who were involved with us in the early years. Now retired, UVM Sociology Professor Nick Danigelis talked with us in April about the start-up of what was then called Project HOME.



Fred and Nick in 2012

Photo by Karen Pike

Q. How did you get involved with HomeShare?

A. In 1981, my colleague Fred Fengler had been approached by the then Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) Director, Sally Conrad, who was looking to create challenging volunteer experiences by starting a program to match older people to share housing. Our role was to develop a questionnaire for the application process. After many drafts, the program launched in 1982 with RSVP volunteers staffing it.

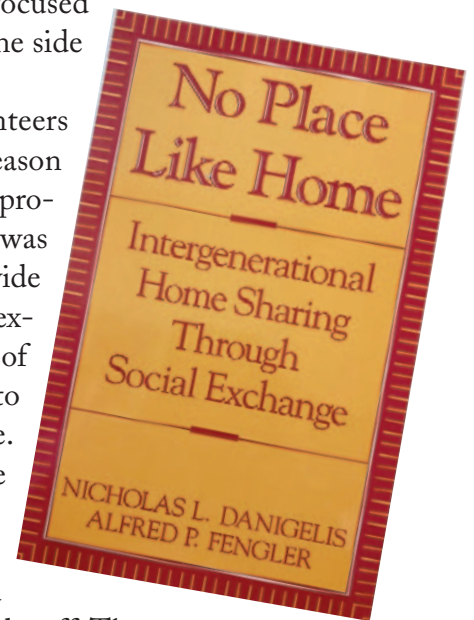
Q. How did it go?

A. We found out rather quickly that most of the older people didn't want to leave their homes to live with another older person, so by the second year it was opened to intergenerational homesharing with younger people moving in with older people; and all of a sudden, the application pool swelled, matches increased and it took off. Fred and I continued to be involved as professional evaluators, and the program and process was revised as we went along.

Q. Why do you think HomeShare has continued to thrive over the last 40 years?

A. That's an excellent question. And it forms the basis of the book that Fred and I eventually wrote called *No Place Like Home, Intergenerational Homesharing Through Social Exchange*. The key phrase here is social exchange. I think that the reason the program was able to survive its early difficulties and why it continues to grow today is its adherence to social exchange, which basically means I do something for you, you do something for me, and we both benefit by sharing housing. The whole premise of the program has been based on bartering, on people giving and taking in equal measure. Some programs failed over the years because they focused their efforts on only one side of the match.

The staff volunteers were another major reason for the success of the program. The program was created in part to provide meaningful volunteer experiences, and the role of volunteers is central to HomeShare's purpose. They worked with the program participants doing the interviews and matching and were in essence, unpaid staff. They were instrumental in the early days, Polly Rowe, Dot Black and all the others. Volunteers continue to play an important role in the organization, bringing a lifetime of professional and personal experiences to HomeShare Vermont.



Q. Any final thoughts?

A. When I agreed in 1981 with Fred to get involved in the program, I didn't realize it would take up almost 10 years of my life. It was such a feeling of accomplishment. Every time we went to meet with the director or talk with the volunteers, it was a real lift. Those years with Project HOME were a very important part of my life. I'm so happy to see that the program is now enjoying its 40th anniversary. I wish you all the best for many years to come!

HomeShare Vermont: Improving lives and communities by bringing Vermonters together to share homes.



Serving Vermont for
40 years

Celebrating Homesharing in Vermont

In honor of our 40th Anniversary, Governor Phil Scott signed a proclamation making the week of June 6th Homesharing Week in Vermont. We used this opportunity to host open houses at our South Burlington and Montpelier offices. We met some new and old friends and look forward to another 40 years of homesharing!

