



Dechen

Starting Anew in the Upper Valley



In and around Woodstock, Vermont, affordable housing isn't just hard to find—it's slipping further out of reach for the very people who keep this place running. Carpenters, teachers, servers, and care workers are too often priced out of the communities they serve. Local Deeds was created to change that, offering down payment support and housing stability for local workers in a market increasingly dominated by out-of-state buyers.

Community Roots and Shared Values

Dechen came to the Woodstock area seeking a fresh start—bringing with him a creative spirit, a commitment to community, and a deep belief in the value of hard work. His story is one of resilience, reinvention, and now, finding home in the very place that once brought him joy as a visitor. *Local Deeds* helps people like Dechen—those who keep our communities strong in quiet, essential ways—put down roots where they truly belong.

Rebuilding in a Familiar Place

Dechen moved to the Woodstock region during the pandemic looking to rebuild his life. The musician and painter had just been through a divorce, and needed a change of pace from Pittsburgh. In discussing where to start over, one family member said to him, “Why don’t you go where you’re happiest?” That meant Woodstock, Vermont.

Dechen (pronounced DAY-shun) had visited the area on vacation, and soon found work that he loved, managing human resources at *Woodstock Farmers’ Market*.

A Rocky Start in Vermont

Upon moving up to Vermont, he initially stayed in a hostel. Then a rental in Quechee. Still, he longed for the security he’d known as a homeowner.

He was in high spirits when he found a home in Mendon, but after negotiations fell through—he got discouraged again.

"I knew that property here was gonna be pretty impossible for me to get," he says, "based on my salary and some of the debt that I walked away with from my divorce." But knowing something to be true and living it out are two different things.

When the 2023 summer floods hit, Dechen saw *The HUB*, a program of *Woodstock Community Trust*, help many of his workers. He also made a connection to the *Trust's* new program, *Local Deeds*. At an information session about the initiative, it dawned on him that he'd be a perfect candidate.

Finding Home through *Local Deeds*

For Dechen, working with *Local Deeds* was seamless. "It was so smooth and user friendly," Dechen says. "You really felt like there was a group of people who wanted folks like me here."

Now, it has not only helped him buy a home of his own, it has given him a renewed appreciation for the community.

Ask him about his home, a 1700-square-foot top-floor condo that he shares with his cat in Bridgewater Corners, and Dechen launches into how it is at once a sanctuary from the stresses of his job, a reflection of his quirky, offbeat taste as an artist—and nothing more than he needs. "It's just the right amount of space for me." He says of his place overlooking the forest not far from Calvin Coolidge State Park, "what's not to love?"

From Recipient to Hopeful Contributor

Dechen says that from his position at *Woodstock Farmers Market*, which he calls "a gathering place" for the community, he has a front-row seat on how much work it takes to maintain our quality of life.

"Our quality of life is dependent on a strong working class, and a strong working class needs to have fair wages and needs to have homes," he says. "Preservation of the working class in the area is something I feel really strongly about, and I think that the folks who are donors to this program really also understand that."

Dechen says that as he and others in Generation X near 50 years old, their minds are turning to what they can leave behind. He says that one of the reasons he wanted to move to this area is "this idea of living somewhere with legacy." And because of *Local Deeds*, "I'm now able to make a plan where five years from now, I can contribute to this program," he says. "I don't make a lot of money, but I've received, and I want to give back. It's just the beginning of the snowball rolling."



Help More Families Find Their Home

Dechen's story is one of many housing success stories made possible in 2024 by Local Deeds supporting local workers and their children through this housing assistance initiative.

When you support Local Deeds, you make more stories like theirs possible.

- [**Donate Here**](#) to support nonprofit housing programs in the Woodstock area, VT
- **Volunteer** to expand local housing options for families
- **Share** to spread the word about the urgent need for affordable housing in the Woodstock area.

Together, we're not just building homes—we're building a stronger, more inclusive Vermont where families can stay, work, and thrive.

Local Deeds is an innovative program to protect housing for families and individuals who live and work, or will work, here year-round serving the local community.