

Ivonne and Sean

From RV to River Bank: The Journey to Homeownership



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.

The Power of Community Support

Meet Ivonne and Sean—At Worthy Kitchen, Sean was a steady, supportive manager who made work feel grounded. For Ivonne, it was at Santé, the farm-to-table restaurant, where her own talents shone. Even when facing housing uncertainty, she showed up ready to work hard every single day. Local Deeds helps keep valuable community members with high spirits, like Ivonne and Sean, able to live where they work.

Meet the Family Behind the Dream

Sean, a native Vermonter, after years in restaurant management and hospitality, now works as a paraprofessional in special education at the local middle/high school—a role that makes the most of his calm and patient nature. Ivonne, originally from Chile, has over 20 years of experience as a high-end server and bartender, and is an encyclopedia of knowledge about mixology and customer service. At the heart of every decision they made was Emily, their daughter, who is now in middle school in Barnard. When the family moved from Florida to Vermont in 2017, they sacrificed a planned Disney vacation, using those savings instead to give Emily access to better education and a safer, more supportive community environment.

The Housing Crisis Hits Home

Despite full-time jobs and deep ties to the area, finding stable housing proved nearly impossible. They lived with family, rented a home that was reclaimed for renovations, and faced astronomical rental prices. At one point, the only short-term option available was a 2-bedroom that was \$2,700 per month. Out of necessity, they purchased and moved into an RV. With few options left, they started to seriously consider moving back to Florida. But the idea of uprooting Emily from her school and support system

felt like too much. As Ivonne put it, “I would've had to put her in therapy—for taking her away from her school and friends.”

Local Deeds Creates the Solution

Then came a lifeline: Donna, a friend and *Local Deeds* photographer, told Ivonne about *Local Deeds*. Despite concerns about waitlists, Ivonne approached the application with characteristic determination. Her persistence paid off. The bright cottage along Route 106, nestled beside a rushing river, became more than just affordable housing – it became home. Emily immediately claimed the riverbank as her favorite feature, clearing invasive plants and building stone steps to the water as part of a school ecology project. The property even included a mobile home that could be renovated and rented to another local worker under the *Local Deeds* deed restriction, providing both financial stability and an opportunity to pay the support forward.

Community care showed up in small ways too. Sustainable Woodstock planted daffodil bulbs to bloom outside the cheerful yellow front door. “It’s little things like that,” Ivonne says, “that make you feel like people really want you to stay.” Jill and Trena from *Local Deeds* helped every step of the way. “Everything was just done, done, done, done,” Ivonne recalls.

Since settling in, life has opened up again. Emily loves inviting friends over. The family is saving money, cooking at home more, and enjoying a quieter pace. “It’s just so much better,” Ivonne says of living close to work, school, and community. “We’re not constantly worrying about what’s next.”

To mark their new beginning, they adopted Quigley—a cat they’d long promised to welcome “once we have a home.” Quigley now stretches out in sunny spots like he’s always belonged.

For Sean, the transformation is clear: “Home is peace of mind. It’s knowing we work hard, we pay for it, and it’s not going to be taken away.”

Since Moving In: Emily’s Achievements

Staying in Woodstock has given Emily the stability to thrive. Now, finishing sixth grade, she recently excelled on her PSATs, scoring higher than 91% of Vermont grade 6 students in English.

Ivonne gloats: “It’s true, I’m a very proud mama!!! Teachers said that the test was way more complicated than other years.”

Beyond the classroom, Emily has had the opportunity to discover and deepen her musical talents. Her music teacher describes her as “strong, competent, and way ahead of the group”.



Help More Families Find Their Home

Ivonne and Sean’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 creating 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.

Local Deeds is a Project of Woodstock Community Trust