



## Nadine and Zach

### A Home for Kids and Business to Grow In: Music, Peanut Butter, and Safety in Barnard



*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.*

#### **Keeping Creative Families Local**

Nadine and Zach represent the kind of family *Local Deeds* was built for: artists, entrepreneurs, and parents deeply rooted in the community, yet nearly priced out of the possibility of making a permanent home in it. Our mission is to keep local workers like Nadine and Zach able to afford the area they live in.

#### **A New Country, Same Band**

It wasn't until Nadine and Zach moved into their own home that they truly understood the profound impact homeownership could have on their family. Zach, a Woodstock native, met Nadine in her home country of Haiti while he was living there and working with local musicians. Their band, Lakou Mizik, began touring the US and Canada in 2016 and currently performs locally at town halls, community events, and festivals. In 2018, the couple married and moved to Barnard, Vermont, renting the apartment above the Barnard General Store.

Since meeting in 2011, their journey has included a blend of artistic passion and entrepreneurial spirit. In 2024, they launched Panou—"ours" in Haitian Creole—a spicy peanut butter business. To understand the importance of this Haitian staple, Zach calls it, "the maple syrup of Haiti". Panou ships around the Northeast to Haitian communities, and now, with the security of owning a house, they hope to scale production up to a commercial kitchen and sell in local stores as well.

#### **Pandemic Prices Hit Hard**

They began their search for a home shortly after moving to Vermont, and the couple knew they'd quickly outgrow their apartment after they welcomed their first son, Ezekiel, to the family (and later Ishmael). Finding a home was taking "forever" for them, and the pandemic housing market made things more

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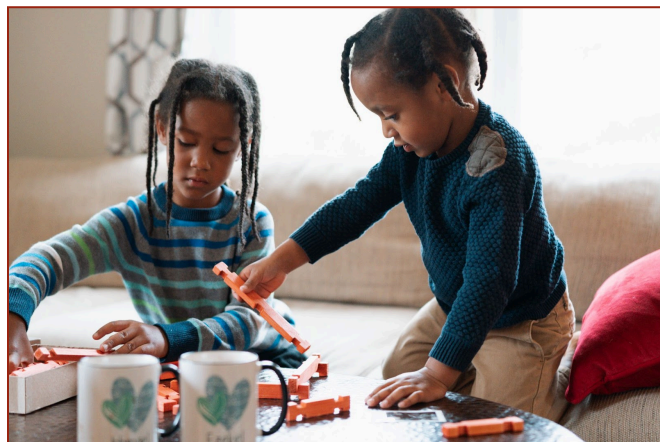
difficult; as Zach put it: "It got crazy, and we just felt totally priced out of everything." While the hope was always to stay rooted in the Woodstock area, where Zach's family and Nadine's bandmates live, the couple began to consider other possibilities—as far as Illinois—hoping to find a place that felt both affordable and right for raising their young family.

Zach talked to just about everyone he knew about the dream of finding a local home. It was through one of those conversations that a friend mentioned *Local Deeds*, and suddenly, staying in their community felt like a real possibility. But even then, doubt lingered. With both Zach and Nadine self-employed, they worried they would not qualify. Working with *Local Deeds*, they were re-assured that Nadine qualified as a housekeeper and singer, and so the search for a home continued with a bit more hope.

Then, a bit of local luck came their way. In August 2024, a friend casually mentioned he was thinking about selling his house just across from the Barnard General Store. As soon as Zach returned home, he followed up to see if it was more than just an offhand comment—and it was. Nadine and Zach contacted *Local Deeds* and, with the program's help, bought the home. By December, they had closed on the house and moved in. The owner, familiar with the family and their story, was more than happy that a local family would be moving into the home his own kids grew up in.

### **The Power of Safety**

Now, just a stone's throw away from their old apartment, Nadine, Zach, and the kids finally have the room to turn up the volume. As Ezekiel drums with surprising skill for his age, the kitchen table becomes a peanut butter production zone, and Nadine creates social media content for Panou and practices her vocals. The family dreams of adding a dual-use garage for drumming and peanut butter.



"This house definitely would have been out of our reach without *Local Deeds*." Zach, who liked the charm of their apartment, underestimated how good it would feel to have their own place that can grow with the family. He explains it feels like the kind of house that can continue in the family for a while.

For Nadine, even as a naturalized U.S. citizen, safety has always felt fragile, both in Haiti and in the States. Here, safety means the freedom to create at full volume, to build a business at the kitchen table, and to let two young boys grow up in a house that feels permanent.

"It's important to have this space for us," she says as Zach chokes up. "Life is safe."

### **Help More Families Find Their Home**

*Nadine and Zach'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.

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