

My husband, Kevin and I operate an Airbnb in our home. We began 2 years ago when friends told us about their experience of sharing an extra room with guests traveling in their area of western North Carolina. They described the benefits of getting to know total strangers and learning about their lives and their journeys in a way that made them feel connected to a larger whole of humanity. They spoke of the economic benefit as one of them had only part-time employment.

We were intrigued so we looked up Airbnb and learned about its mission, philosophy, and desire to bring the concept of hostel to everyday folks. My husband being a part-time carpenter was looking for a way to make extra income that was also easier on his aging joints. I was interested in paying off medical bills for both of us. What we didn't count on was not only the economic benefit but the incredibly friendly and wonderful people that would flow through our home, bringing their stories of struggle and success. Like our friends, we awoke to a connection with humanity and ourselves that we did not expect.

Our home is on a farm in the mountains of western North Carolina. We homestead with dairy goats, chickens, bees, an organic orchard and garden. We value a life connected with nature, our food, animals, our neighbors, and the Earth. We have shared this with our guests, from children gathering eggs, rolling down our sledding hill, or brushing our dairy goats to guests who sit on our front porch to watch the hummingbirds feed or late at night to see the moon rise and the fireflies blinking on and off by the hundreds. We watched people arrive stressed and leave completely relaxed. We realized the quiet farm life that we often take for granted, brought solace, peace, and a connection with nature and themselves. We felt a connection, too. As people came and appreciated what we had, we began to appreciate our own labors and way of life more.

Sharing the economy through Airbnb has made our lives more rich in meaning and has allowed us to pay bills that normally would have taken a lot longer to pay or been delayed as we put two sons through college, paid unexpected medical bills, and kept up the infrastructure of our home and farm. With Airbnb, we more deeply live our values about what it means to be human, share our bounty from nature, and support those folks with busy lives to remember the peace of being at home with their own quiet nature and the quiet of farm living. We are so grateful to be a part of a sharing economy that has brought many benefits but most importantly, shared values of what it means to be fully alive with others.