

I have been renting a room in my home through Airbnb for almost 2 years. This opportunity, made so convenient, friendly and safe by Airbnb, has been a real financial benefit to me.

I am a 66-year-old woman artist living in a nice community in northwestern Massachusetts. I have owned my own home for over 20 years, and have been working primarily as a graphic designer, but also owned a small, mostly-used bookstore for about 8 years. I currently work at the local food coop, 4 days a week, doing design as well as helping the finance manager with bills and payroll. The store does its best to pay a “living” wage, but it is not really a living wage. I have been, in the last 10 years, in serious danger of losing my home, especially during the “great recession” years. I tried making more money by taking various “side” jobs for extra income, along with, now and then, selling one of my paintings. When a friend told me about Airbnb, I was at first skeptical about sharing my home with an assortment of strangers. But I decided to try it, as I really needed the extra income. I was getting desperate, really. Airbnb has been a godsend for me.

Because of the extra income I earn through renting my “sitting room / spare bedroom” through Airbnb, I am finally able to relax a little bit about my financial situation. I can now actually purchase some food instead of relying primarily on the “leftovers” from the food store where I work (which I had to do for quite a few years). I can pay for the vitamins and calcium that the doctors have been recommending for me. I have now been able to hire a plumber to fix the leaky faucet in my kitchen (leaking for more years than I care to remember!); I can now go to the various local shops and purchase items here and there for myself or for my home. And, recently I was able to re-finance my house at a low interest rate so that I can afford to live here without fear that my interest rate would rise, which would have made it impossible for me to stay in my home. The bank would not have considered me a good risk if I did not have regular income other than my workplace salary.

In other words . . . I can actually live now, without the continuous pressure of “how can I possibly make more money without working more than I am physically and emotionally capable of working;” “how can I possibly get through the coming months, as my bank account is so low and I am not making enough to pay the basic bills.” I still need to be

careful, as the income through Airbnb is not a huge amount; I keep my rate low to be competitive with the area's other accommodations. But, it finally makes life possible for me.

And, I can do this without too much stress or over-work. I only need to do a bit of extra laundry and cleaning and changing sheets and such. Airbnb makes it very convenient – I am able to put photos of the room on the site, complete descriptions, pricing. Airbnb “screens” folks a bit, so that I can feel confident that the people I am renting to are decent people. I can communicate with the potential guests on the site, get a feel for them and decide if I feel comfortable about renting. We get to see each other's photos, and comments and recommendations from other hosts on the site. And, none of our personal information (phone, email) is communicated to the other party until we agree to the rental. I feel safe renting through Airbnb. And, the money they are paying for the rental is deposited directly into my bank account, with just a small fee taken by Airbnb. It's a very good business!

My guests – sometimes from my own state, but sometimes from as far away as California, The Netherlands, France, England, China -- visit the local restaurants while they are here, go to the coffee shops, museums, food markets, drugstores, etc. They are eager to explore and spend their “vacation” money in the local establishments. They help support the local economy, and make life better for all of us.

I want to make sure that you understand how important this is to me. Airbnb has saved me. There are many of us in this country who live on the edge of our income, “hand-to-mouth” my father used to call it. It's a fearful way to live. This “sharing economy” business, Airbnb, helps to open up the economic field for more of us to share in. It just makes good economic sense.