

My husband and I opened our home for Air BnB guests in August of 2013. We rent out a room in our home to couples and also rent out our Yurt to guests. I am 69 and my husband is 60, so we are “half” retired”.

The Air Bnb business is my addition to the family income which has been getting tighter and more challenging for us over the last 15 years as pay rates have not risen to the level of the tax rates and cost of living. The income from Air BnB, which has been about \$8000. a year for 2 years, has been a significant help to us. It is allowing us to make necessary repairs to our home and also allows my husband to play enough golf to keep him happy! In retirement, it may be a mainstay to keeping our home in Woodstock.

Air BnB is unique in the vacation rental business in that it is a community of travelers and hosts. This is essential to the success of the organization and crucial to me. I am often home alone with ‘strangers’ in my home---right across the hall from my bedroom. We do not have locks on our bedroom doors or any kind of protection except the reviews of our guests and any correspondence I have with them before they book my space. In the almost 2 years since I started I haven’t had a single problem with guests other than messiness on one occasion. Wow. For these safety reasons, I only rent through Air BnB

Additionally, my husband and I have had enormous pleasure and fun with our guests who have been from all over the world, though mostly from New York City, since our town of Woodstock is only 100 miles North of there. It is truly heartening to meet the young people in their 30’s who are doing so many wonderful things for this world. Among our guests we have had parents taking kids to college, people attending workshops and classes here, an FBI agent, a NYC Fire Dept member, Director of condom education in NYC, teachers from several alternative schools, pizza blogger, tugboat captain, environmental engineer, and many diverse kinds of people just wanting a peaceful time in the country. And, we get to sit down to breakfast with them. We learn about all sorts of new things, and I know that our guests also learn from us, and our organic gardens, the forest behind the house, and the incredible town of Woodstock, NY.

This last weekend was Memorial Day and this was a true illustration of what Air BnB in particular has done for our community, as a whole. When I started 2 years ago I think there were about 25-30 offerings in our area on Air BnB. There are now well over 300! This Spring, and especially, this last weekend we had quite a spectacular demo of what Air BnB has done for our community. Woodstock was PACKED! It has been more than 20 years since we’ve seen this kind of traffic and business in town. I am sure that the stores, restaurants and services were all feeling the lift of the business, particularly after our intensely cold winter.

The last item I’d like to mention is that this influx of young 20-40 something people visiting us seems to be part of a renewal in our town, and also through other mid-Hudson Valley towns. Before, we were becoming practically a retirement community, with all of the young people leaving to find work and inspiration elsewhere. Over the last three years we are seeing people of this age moving INTO our community and starting up new businesses. What we are seeing is the beginning of a true revitalization of our community. While this cannot be Air BnB alone, there is no doubt that the changes happening here have been significantly generated by that organization and by the quality of the sharing community.

I would be happy to speak for this sharing economy and the difference it has made to our lives and for our community at any time.

Sincerely,  
Kristine Flones  
Bearsville, NY  
May 26, 2015