

February 2022 Reefnotes

By Janet Newman



The composition of The Reef community has been changing – nearly 25% of current owners consider themselves full-time residents. Jeff and Adrienne Hughes are a variation on that trend. Jeff remains on island full-time while Adrienne, who is a medical aesthetician, continues to travel back to Pennsylvania each month, at least for now, to see patients. As Jeff explains it, after his 32-year career in the restaurant and bar industry, which required sacrifices on Adrienne’s part, now is the time for her “career to shine.” Semi-retired, Jeff puts in a few hours as an employee at The Reef golf shop and two or three days a week at Shupes, where, he says, “the view from my office (the harbor) is not bad.”

When the Hugheses came to St. Croix to look at property, they had specific requirements: his was a gated community on a golf course and hers was a view of water. As he puts it, he “frustrates or humbles” himself a couple times a week on the golf course.

Adrienne has wanted to live on an island since she was a little girl – to which, she says, a friend from kindergarten will attest.

At the time that the Hugheses purchased at The Reef, they intended to only vacation here. But then Covid hit, and the industries in which they both worked were shut down.

Adrienne learned there was a market for medical aesthetics on St. Croix, so she took a leap of faith, resigned from her position in Pennsylvania, and moved here for six months, without Jeff, to see if she could establish a practice. She has actually resigned three times from her job in Pennsylvania but continues to find it hard to leave behind patients who have been with her as long as 30 years. Adrienne was one of the first seven people in the United States to be licensed as a medical aesthetician.

Adrienne got into the profession as a result of her first ambition, which was to be a television news anchor. She was interning as a broadcast journalism student when she learned about the emerging field of medical aesthetics. Along the way, she competed in the Miss USA pageant as Miss Pennsylvania in 1991. Her memories of that experience include dancing with Jimmy Stewart.

Adrienne and Jeff, having both grown up in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, say they felt an instant connection when they met. They “get” one another’s references and both appreciate small, tight-knit communities. They have two adult sons, both of whom still live in Pennsylvania. The Hugheses say it takes a special person to leave the mainland life behind to relocate on St. Croix, where, as Adrienne says, “you learn to bend or this place will break you.” The Hughes’ perspective is that you’re held accountable in a small community, where you rely on the kindness of others. They have found kindness in abundance, both at The Reef and across the entire island.

Having lost friends to cancer, Jeff and Adrienne didn’t want to wait too long to live their dream. They both have portable careers which made this move possible. Jeff says working at Shupe’s takes him back to his twenties, before he came a restaurant operator and then consultant. Saying they have “zero regrets,” Jeff cites his respect for the beauty, the health benefits, and the spiritual benefits of living here, all of which, he says, “bring me peace.” He says when he was back in Pennsylvania for Thanksgiving, he felt like he was in a black and white movie, in contrast with the colorful surroundings of St. Croix, including what Jeff claims are “seven different colors of blue.” I think those variations of blue are mesmerizing for us all, whether we spend a few weeks, a few months, or full-time at The Reef.