



THE ROAD TO HEALTH: MEET KAREN AND STEVE LILL

BY KELLY GILBERT, PHOTOS BY KERRY CHESHIRE

The wonderful thing about life is that it is always changing. We all go through many stages and transitions in our lives which help to keep things exciting and new. Karen and Steve Lill have travelled together through lots of twists and turns with many changes along the way. All roads lead back to their beloved community of Westmount.

"I was the first to come to Waterloo from the West end of Toronto. I came to attend the University of Waterloo in 1993 where I later graduated with a degree in Electrical Engineering," explains Steve. "Karen arrived in the area from the East end of Toronto with her three children in 1996."

The pair eventually connected through a mutual friend in 1999. Steve and Karen went on to be married in 2006.

Steve originally resided in the Seagram Lofts, not wanting to leave the area after graduating from his degree program. "I loved living within walking distance to RIM where I worked as a Hardware Designer and Manager for 16 years," recalls Steve. "We were close to all of the exciting events that were happening in the UpTown area of Waterloo."

Deciding that they loved the city and wanted to stay in the area for good, Karen and Steve have transitioned through several different properties during their time together. They first settled together as a family on Dunbar Road, then Avondale Avenue and now at Luther Village on the Park. Westmount is where the couple have always called home.

"We added a large addition to the back of the Dunbar house to provide ample room for the whole family," notes Steve. Karen also operated her daycare business from that home, which she had previously operated in Toronto and continued once arriving in Waterloo.

"The Dunbar home was special to us. I loved how close we were to Waterloo Park. I was able to take my daycare kids on many adventures to Lion's Lagoon, the zoo, and Laurel Creek," recalls Karen fondly. "We actually were married in that backyard."

"Once our kids had grown up and moved off to college, I decided to close down my daycare business, but I also wanted to help out my parents," continues Karen. "At that time, we moved to a nearby tri-plex on Avondale Avenue, with my parents as our first tenants so they could be close by and yet have their own space."

Ultimately, Karen's father went into long-term care and the couple grew tired of yard work and snow shovelling. With a desire to simplify life, the couple sold the tri-plex and bought into Luther Village on the Park in 2018.

"We can now support Mom in an easy to care for condo where we all have access to a fantastic community of 55+ along with social and exercise programs to keep all of us active and engaged," says Karen.



The smaller space fits perfectly with the current stage of life for Karen and Steve. “Our three children are grown and have spread out. Sarah lives in Calgary with her husband and four children, Tamara and her partner live in Kingston and our son Michael lives in Kitchener,” explains Karen.

“The other benefit is that we can plan our travels knowing Mom is active and engaged with lots of options to keep her busy,” adds Karen. “We love to travel in our 1974 GMC motorhome and have attended many rallies in Ontario and the U.S.”

Like any faithful companion, the motorhome has earned a nickname. “We have named her Delilah, which means temptress. She tempts us to run away,” Karen says with a smile.

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“We have also travelled with WE Charities to the Masa Mara in Kenya, where we helped in building a school,” shares Karen. The opportunity to experience a different culture and improve the quality of life was truly rewarding.

Closer to home, the couple enjoys volunteering and supporting their local community. “I have been on several Boards, including Grand River Unitarian and Tri-Pride Community Association, and I am a member of Interfaith Grand River,” explains Steve.

Karen adds, “I have been on the Board of East York Family Resources. As a member of the Infant Mental Health Promotion Project at Sick Children’s Hospital

Toronto, I was honoured with the Confederation of Canada medal in 1992 for my contributions to the community. I have also enjoyed working with many school councils over the years.”

Both Steve and Karen have volunteered for various other groups, including Habitat for Humanity, Waterloo Region Foodbank, WE Day, and WE Charities, among other fundraising activities.

Working life has also been a journey for Karen. Karen has combined her passion for helping others with her healthy lifestyle. “After working to improve my own health, I started LillyPad Health in 2011, with a goal of helping others do the same. We focus on improving health through personalized weight loss coaching, education, and workshops,” shares Karen.

“It was my own success story with the Ideal Protein protocol that inspired me to open LillyPad Health at 22 King Street South in UpTown Waterloo. After learning about insulin resistance and how the body stores fat, I finally understood why I had struggled for so long,” explains Karen.

RESIDENT FEATURE

A unique feature of LillyPad Health is the in-store kitchen. "I wanted to provide an inclusive, supportive weight-loss experience and I knew I had to help people change their way of eating. Our kitchen is a source of delicious samples that change weekly. Our clients can try our low carb, keto recipes and learn how to prepare them at home," states Karen.

"Lillypad Health is the realization of my dream to provide the opportunity for change and improvement to others. I am so proud of what we have accomplished and to have been recognized by Three Best and the Record and Waterloo Chronicle Readers Awards in 2016, 2017 and 2018," says Karen.

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Living healthy, giving back, and helping others along their self-improvement journey are the key ingredients to happiness for Karen and Steve. With an eye on the road and roots firmly planted in the community, the pair looks forward to many years together enjoying all that Westmount and Uptown Waterloo has to offer.

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