

America needs to be like Jonesborough...

far more than Jonesborough needs to be like America

You probably have noticed us, the out-of-State license plates driving behind the moving vans...the ones who talk just a bit differently and seem just happy to be here. Yep, that's us. New to Town, and happy for it.

Maybe you're curious as to why we are here, and maybe you're a bit concerned if the Town will change because of us. Or perhaps, you are just wanting to know more about us. If so, read on. We come from many different viewpoints and backgrounds...but if you listen carefully enough the similarities might amaze you.

First of all, THANK YOU Jonesborough for welcoming us and our spouses to your Town! Your hospitality and openness have made it so much easier to call this place "home". Maybe you can imagine the difficulty in moving up to 2000 miles to be here, or the emotional fabric that was torn in separating from local friendships garnered over a previous lifetime? Let's just say that arriving in your town was not by accident, nor without careful and deliberate calculation. You see...

You have something special here.

The wonderful thing is that most of you already know how unique your community is. It truly is! If you arrive from another area, the sight of a motorist in the opposing lane motioning you to turn in front of them is a bit startling (at first), just as the random "honks", and waves as you drive by catch us off guard occasionally. We've waved more, said "Hey There" more often, and have been to more "socials" in the last 11 months than we've experienced in years! YOU have made us feel so much at home, and we are so grateful. Like many, we purchased an older home in town, and we (and quite a few more newcomers) have been getting settled in. That's our only commonality with other "newcomers" ...on the surface. Geographically and politically, the new folks to your town come from many different backgrounds.

One family voted for Trump (twice). Another family voted for Biden and are great fans of Kamala Harris. Is that all we need to know about each other? It takes time, and effort to get to know who we all are. Too often, modern "fast-facts" America rushes to place each of us in a "box", and then judges our perceived character as a collective. That might be faster to do in our era, but in doing so we sure miss out on discovering the individual good inherent in almost everyone. Every good story I've ever heard is longer than 280 characters! Maybe that is the point to the journey, and the message. Our family is here to rediscover the good, and willing to work hard, slow down... and listen to more "stories" to do so.

So, I am writing this to thank Jonesborough for bringing many decent people together! You see, the love of community is the best part of Your America. Your America loves a good debate, because we can always learn from each other. Your America respects history, because

some parts of it aren't best for repeating. Your America plays well together. Your America assumes it's best to be polite, until proven otherwise. In other words, we believe...

Jonesborough is what America longs to be. America needs this place.

Jonesborough is the Norman Rockwell image of the lone dissenting citizen standing up in the middle of a town meeting, or the knowledge that your neighbor has your back (as you have theirs). More than anything else...Jonesborough is a lot of good, hardworking people...quick to say, "Welcome to Tennessee".

Personally, our family came here to blend in, to add...and to appreciate and enjoy the table all of you have set before us. We may come from different political viewpoints than others. Frankly, that matters little to me.

What concerns me more is the protection of this special place. We have seen firsthand what happens when communities lose their uniqueness, historical preservation, and vision all in the name of being like someplace else. Jonesborough is our home now, and we sure as heck didn't pull up deep roots elsewhere just to see Jonesborough be other than what it is destined to be. Which is, exactly what it is already.

Jonesborough needs only to be like itself.

Sometimes it's good to see your hometown as new, and special all over again. We hope this message has left that impression. You all have done such a great job in creating a unique palette for America to relax, breathe...and see hope in. Not perfect, but just trying to smile.

On behalf of every new face, our family says "Thanks" for making these past few months such a welcoming time for our diverse families! We'll do our best not to mess it up.

Dana Helvey

Jonesborough, TN