

# Our Trip Takes Us

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By Becky Hirn

Several years ago, Dan and I were living in Columbus, Ohio and trying to decide where to really start our life together. We both recently graduated college. We really liked the city. We had some friends there but no family. We were new parents trying to make the best decisions we could for a family. After much research and discussion, our decision brought us back to our hometown. Most importantly it brought our daughter home to more than 15 extended family members. Grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, all there in the same town for birthday parties and barbeques. The possibility for her to build lifelong connections with her family was great. That's just what happened too. Our daughter has a cousin who's like a sister. She has great relationships with uncles and aunts on both sides of our family. Her grandparents are a huge part of her life. Our son is making the same connections as he grows up too. Dan and I connected with family members on a new level too. In addition, old friendships were rekindled and new ones have blossomed. And there's always a friendly face next door, down the block, or across the counter.

Now that we've essentially moved away from Delphos for a year, there are some unexpected changes. I didn't know that I'd miss it but I used to run into people, acquaintances at the park or the grocery store. We'd have one of those "How's it going?" conversations. This usually happened on a day I neglected to do my hair or I was just running in for milk or bread. I often couldn't think of much to say and felt distracted and then guilty. Now that I'm not running into anyone I know, I'm realizing that those interactions are pretty important. It may not be much, but it says to the other person "Hey, I recognize you and I want to take the time to say something."

Since I don't have these interactions on the road, I find myself creating opportunities to talk to people. Surprisingly, most people like it.

One of the best was in a campground office in New York State. Another camper came in to register. I overheard her tell the clerk she had been on the road for 41 days. She also asked if she could camp next to some other children because her granddaughter was with her and loved to find kids to play with everywhere they stopped. At that point, I had to speak up. "We're in site D4!" I announced. "I have two kids and we've been on the road for 35 days!" Over the next couple days, we shared meals with our new friends. The kids played in the water, while we sat on the beach and talked. Our families took evening walks together. We tried to roast marshmallows over wet wood. We even had an impromptu birthday party for the little girl.

Opportunities for connecting with others come up every day. In Washington, DC, I talked to a woman on the subway about how to purchase an RV. At a seafood festival in Havre de Grace, Maryland, we sat with a town councilman and discussed the history of the area and travelling around the country. He's

been to all but two states, Hawaii and Oregon. We continue to bond with a Connecticut family we met while camping in New Hampshire. We've shared tourist maps with others, and talked to fishermen on the Atlantic coast just to see what they're catching.

Maybe other people learn the value of connecting with others through work or illness, or other life experiences. Maybe it just happens over time. Maybe it doesn't happen for some people. Travelling outside the safety zone of all the people I know is how I learned to really connect with other people.

Moving to Delphos was a great decision for my family nine years ago. The branches of our family tree are stronger because of it. But traveling around and branching out is an important move too.

Becky Hirn is a Delphos resident traveling America with her family for a year. She documents the journey at [www.ourtriptakesus.com](http://www.ourtriptakesus.com). Follow the Hirn family in photos, blogs, on Facebook and Twitter. Or learn how to partner with the trip as an advertiser. You may e-mail Becky at [beckyhirn@ourtriptakesus.com](mailto:beckyhirn@ourtriptakesus.com)