

SMELLS LIKE HAPPINESS

BY ALYA SHERMAN

As diehard city dwellers, we had zero intention to migrate to the burbs. However, wanting an escape for our then one-plus-year-old son, Jacob, we looked to the one place we knew everyone could enjoy as a family, the beach!

Since we live in Philly, this logically led us to the Jersey Shore. I grew up in Baltimore and spent summers in Ocean City, Maryland, so I knew very little about "The Shore." I was, however, open-minded, excited, and ready to have my husband Phil, a shore expert who spent his summers in Brigantine, take me on a tour. Much like everything else that we undertake, we jumped right in. After very extensive research, we came upon Margate City. As we drove around this sleepy little town where people surf, ride bikes, and spend evenings BBQing and eating ice cream, we fell in love. We could easily picture ourselves enjoying many happy years as a family right here at the Jersey Shore. I wish I could say that the rest is history, but from the time we found our house to when we finally closed took longer than the renovations that proceeded.

THE FUN AND THE WORK BEGINS

At last, the 1910 two-story bungalow was ours. It became a labor of love and we have since transformed it into our beach haven. When we bought the house, we agreed that since it will only be used in the summers, we would furnish it with existing furniture and do the minimum to fix it up, but...who were we kidding? Immediately, the kitchen, the heart of any home, had to be addressed. In less than a month, we designed, ordered, and installed it. Then, came the closet under the stairs that, over the course of the first summer, reemerged as a second full bathroom and the crown jewel of the house. By now, I guess you could say we caught the bug and proceeded to refinish everything from the floors to the walls and ceilings. We even replaced the old claw-foot tub with a new one. Every detail was attended to and every project, with the exception of the floors, was done by us. We later found out that our house was one of the first built on our street. Although many think it's new, the details inside prove otherwise. From the wide, intricate moldings to the cherry inlay hardwood floors, it has all the character of a historic home and, now, all the comforts of a new one.

MARGATE'S MADE FOR MEMORIES

As we wrap up our fifth summer in Margate, the house remains a work in progress, but the memories that we

have made as a family along with friends, who visit regularly, are timeless. We have also fallen into a routine. By Friday, we are all eager to migrate from big city to beach for some quality family time. Whether it's just the three of us or a house full of guests, we can always count on a fun-filled weekend.

The summer kickoff officially begins July 4th Weekend. All the kids, after a winter spent apart, are reunited for a day of swimming, sun, and s'mores, capped off by a spectacular fireworks display that lights up our beach and our sun-splashed faces with delight. A favorite summer highlight is our very talented friend's incredible

sand castles, which make him our beach's most coveted guest. Sprinkled throughout the summer of sun and sand are oodles of ice cream and insanely fun water gun fights. The season draws to a close with a Labor Day beach barbecue that everyone looks forward to and dreads all at the same time...no one wants the season to end. It all adds up to an amazing summer.

AN IDYLIC FAMILY RETREAT

When we first walk into our home, I often think back to the winter of 2006 when we introduced Jacob to our new shore

house. At a little over one year old, he was already walking, but not proficient in stair climbing. I helped him up the steps into his new bedroom. He wobbled in, looked around, and walked out, making a beeline straight for our bedroom. Let's just say, some things never change. I wouldn't have it any other way! Our official first night at the house was New Year's Eve 2006. Although it was the most low-key celebration we ever had (sleeping on a blow-up mattress in the dining room because it was the only room warm enough), it's a memory I will never forget.

Driving over the Migrate Bridge one Friday evening recently, I was convinced that our shore town, much like our mood when we're there, has a weather pattern all its own--always sunny (happy) with an occasional downpour (exhaustion). Just as I rolled down the windows to take in the salt air and sounds of the bay, Jacob leaned back in his booster, placed his hands behind his head and said, "Smells like Happiness!" Right there and then, Phil and I looked at each other and knew, we did good.

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"It's a Shore Thing!"