



MOUNTAIN GROWN: (L to R) Marty and Katie sit on their front porch; Angie, Oliver and Katie enjoy their backyard at the base of Mount Fernie; Surveyors Lake is a nearby play spot.

Forging their dreams: forever in Fernie

Twelve years after their ski trip started, this couple are still loving their time in Fernie

by JONI KRATS | Marty Hafke just came out for a post-university ski vacation in Fernie with his friends. Angie Abdou dropped in the next spring to ski and visit Hafke. Add the transformative powers of the mountain lifestyle and true love, and voila—they are now married with two children, and living in Fernie.

Finding a local niche for their professional careers took patience and persistence, but the active, outdoorsy couple found their way and are now grateful to have the best of all worlds in their beautiful mountain home.

Lifestyle perks versus career cons

When they first committed to Fernie and a lifestyle that included downhill skiing, mountain biking and hiking, Abdou left behind a PhD program and her hopes of an academic career and became a library storytime lady.

"I never expected that I could live here and teach university-level English courses," said Abdou. Now she does just that—at the College of the Rockies in Fernie and Cranbrook. She has also published two books.

Hafke joined the leagues of bartenders and tree planters with university degrees. Now he is an environmental officer at Teck Coal.

"Marty and I both found that we had to commit to Fernie first and be flexible about finding work, and then opportunities presented themselves," said Abdou.

For the past two years, Hafke has competed

solo in the 24 Hours of Adrenaline mountain bike race in Canmore, Alberta. Because he lives close to mountain bike trails, he was able to keep to a rigorous training schedule while continuing to work full time and be a hands-on dad.

"That would have been nearly impossible if we didn't have such great access to mountain trails," said Abdou.

Promoting her books might have been easier if she lived in a big metropolis, but Abdou managed to do it—even as a new mother to her eldest child, Oliver, who is now two.

"I'm a big fan of air miles and make good use of the Cranbrook airport," said Abdou. "(As a baby) Ollie came with me on one book tour, and by the time he turned one he'd been on over 30 flights."

Inspired by the view

In her home office located in their dream home in Parkland Terrace, Abdou finds perspective and inspiration in the view.

"I have an office with a clear view of Castle Mountain," said Abdou. "That's particularly inspiring since Marty proposed to me there. Looking at that while I'm writing reminds me that my real world is more important than my fictional worlds. It also reminds me that no matter what I write, I'll always have at least one fan."

Abdou and Hafke enjoy raising their kids in Fernie. Oliver skis the Mighty Moose and swims, and Katie goes in the stroller with her mom on runs.