

Your Personal Coach

By

Kathleen Brehony, Ph.D.

Four and a half years ago, after deep contemplation, I moved to the Outer Banks. Like most transplants, I had vacationed on our beautiful barrier islands for most of my adult life. Still, I wondered if this would be a good fit for me as a permanent resident. After all, I'm a city girl. I grew up in New Jersey in the shadow of the Big Apple where my parents would take my brother and me to see the Rockettes every Christmas and where Jimmy and I were hoisted on my dad's shoulders to get the best view of every Macy's Thanksgiving Day parade in this vibrant city. We ate at ethnic restaurants of every flavor, though my brother and I repeatedly chose the Automat which, for those of you too young to remember, was the precursor to modern day vending machines with the same stale sandwiches and wax-like lemon meringue pie. New York: where the world's most diverse people, museums, concerts, and theatre were just a short train ride into Penn Station. As a teenager and college student, I lived in the Washington, D.C. suburbs. Here I was immersed in history, world class music, museums, and the throbbing pulse of political decisions that change the world. Well, I never actually made any of those political decisions – so don't blame me – but my hobby was attending open congressional hearings. Go figure. I was still too young to seriously take up golf.

So you can see my dilemma about my decision to move to Dare County. After New York, Washington, and then the Tidewater area, I was the city mouse becoming a mouse in a very small country. Still, I already had close friends here and an opportunity appeared for a great house in a terrific neighborhood, and for an unbelievable price. (I slipped in under the wire on that one).

I am happy to report that my decision to become a citizen of Dare County has exceeded my expectations. I've found that our community can stand up to big cities in every way. The North Carolina Symphony under the stars at Roanoke Island Festival Park was as good as anything I've heard at Wolf Trap or Carnegie Hall. The Forum and other events encourage our intellectual and creative curiosity. The Lost Colony assembles actors, choreographers, and other creative people as they make their homes in our community – some for a season, some for a lifetime. Artists, healers, and innovative thinkers have moved here and discovered that Dare County is more than just the stereotype of Aunt Bea and Floyd the Barber. We are becoming an increasingly multicultural community with new neighbors from all over the world. I like that. Diversity keeps us alive and changing as we learn new things from one another.

Washington D.C. may have its museums, but the Smithsonian, for all its brilliance, doesn't hold a candle to the feeling of walking on the same ground as the Freedman's Colony – where during and after the Civil War, slaves became free human beings. It is awe-inspiring to contemplate the fate of the first English colonists as you traverse the same ground, walking under the very trees that sheltered them. There is a pulsating feeling of history standing on the exact beach where brave men from the Pea Island Life-Saving Station outwitted an almost certain death as they rowed through hurricane-ravaged waters to save the lives of sailors and passengers on sinking ships. We may not have the same brick and mortar museums as do big cities, but our history is right outside our back door.

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My schedule in the past few weeks has taken me to the places where I grew up. First I took a trip to New York City to tape a television show and then it was on to Washington D.C. for a psychotherapy conference. You might be interested in my journal and a report on some comparisons:

1. Traffic: I have complained about summer traffic on the Outer Banks. But I won't do that ever again. I left my stepmother's house in Occoquan, Virginia at 7:15 AM to travel the twenty-five miles to the conference in D.C. It took me two and one-half hours! I checked the distance on Mapquest and I was nearly correct in my estimation of the mileage: 26.38 miles. Note to self: Never again whine about summer traffic in Dare County.
2. Affordable Housing: We have many important problems to solve with regard to affordable housing. It is imperative that people of all economic circumstances have decent places to live in our community. But consider my nephew Matt's affordable housing problem in Brooklyn. He and his girlfriend, Nicole, pay almost as much in rent as I do for my mortgage. Their place is cute and well-tended. And I'm not saying it's small, but you do have to go outside to eat a large pizza. Note to Self: Don't ever move to Brooklyn but, if you must and you still want pets, exchange your Golden Retriever for an ant farm.
3. Restaurants: We ate at some swell and expensive places and they were fabulous. But I'll wager any of my big city friends, that we have equally excellent places to eat, drink, and be merry. Note to self: Celebrate that you can dine out in Dare County without taking out a second mortgage.
4. Natural Beauty and Birds: We win.
5. People: It is my experience that there are warm and friendly people everywhere. Although New Yorkers are often burdened with the stereotype of being brusque and inhospitable, I have never found this to be true. Still, I have been warmly welcomed into my new community. Note to Self: Be sure to thank the people in Dare County for welcoming me.

Thank you.

Send your personal coaching questions to kathleen@fullpotentialliving.com or call 473-4004. Kathleen is a personal and executive coach, clinical psychologist, and writer. (©2006 Kathleen Brehony. All Rights Reserved.) www.fullpotentialliving.com.

