

meet your neighbors:
the **rankins**
FAMILY

Written by Resident Suzie Rankins

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If you have any ideas for future features, please email us at bedfordlivingnh@gmail.com.



Have you ever had something weigh on your heart, and you knew you wanted to take action but didn't know when or how? That was me 20 years ago when a small seed of compassion for struggling women was planted deep in my being.

It all began after graduate school, when I was working as Dean of Students at Newton Country Day School of the Sacred Heart. Many of the students volunteered at Rosie's Place, a women's shelter in Boston. This establishment offered job training and housing placement for homeless women and did an excellent job preparing women for life beyond the shelter and finding them that new apartment, but then what? Once they moved, they had nothing ... no bed, no table, no chair to sit on or dishes to eat with. How could they feel settled or even feel like they could possibly get ahead? They were literally in an empty apartment! I knew someday I wanted to help fix this problem, and God kept it on my heart to do so.

Hi! I am Suzie Rankins, and I have lived in Bedford, NH, for 11 years. My husband, Kevin, is an emergency-room physician at Elliot Hospital. In my early career, I was a math professor and tutor. I have spent the last 17 years focused on raising our three children: Caroline, Ryan, and Lily. Caroline is heading to college next year to study animal science with hopes of becoming a veterinarian. Ryan, a high-school freshman, is enjoying sports and doing well in his academic studies. Lily is a joyful fifth-grader, dancing her way through life. We also care for my 84-year-old mother with dementia, who is lovingly known as "Nonny." She became a local celebrity last winter when her love for Ryan's basketball team and their love for her was featured on WMUR. She lived with us for three years and is now at Arbors of Bedford. Our family has been blessed in so many ways - a strong marriage, three busy children, good friends, and a community full of opportunity for fun and service to others. We attend Bethany Covenant Church, and our Christian faith is important in our everyday lives. We raise our children with the foundation of loving, caring and having compassion for both neighbor and stranger, always emphasizing that great privilege brings great responsibility. Community service has always been important to us, and we feel strongly about treating others with dignity, no matter their situation.

Now, back to the seed... Eight years ago, a social worker at Elliot Hospital asked if we could help obtain beds and a few essentials for a homeless family. It was a young mother with four children. Within two weeks, by reaching out to friends in the Bedford area, we were able to fully furnish the three-bedroom apartment with beds, couches, tables, chairs, television, kitchenware, curtains and even art. We transformed an apartment in Manchester into a home for this family that previously had nothing. At this point, I began to realize the idea planted so long ago in my heart could become a reality within this community.

Since that initial family, we helped two to three women each year. I have brought my love of interior design, combined with the generosity of friends and neighbors, and together we have helped establish these women in new "homes." Initially, we stored most of the donated furniture in our own home. Over time, the amount of goods exceeded our space, and a storage area was donated by Kyle Wal-

lace, a friend and fellow Bedford resident. In the past year, with God's initial seed and the help of my fellow board members, we formalized this endeavor and founded the nonprofit organization called Bless This Home. Our ministry currently serves graduates from local rehab programs like New Life Home for Women and Children and Real Life Giving. With continued support, we hope to increase the number of women we serve and eventually expand outside the Manchester area. We are always accepting donations (household items and/or money), and we welcome anyone interested in the hands-on work of setting up a household. To get involved or follow the journey, you can find us on Facebook at Bless This Home.



Suzie and Kevin would like to thank the countless individuals in this community who have reached out to one or both of them about the current pandemic. The outpouring of well wishes and gratitude for Kevin being on the frontline of this crisis, and prayers of protection over him and the whole family during this time, has truly touched their hearts. Thank you, Bedford! Stay safe.

THANK YOU

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Hospital Staff
Scientists
EMTs

From all of us here at



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