Inside: Meet Drs. John & Helen Kiss

YOUR STORIES. YOUR PHOTOS. YOUR COMMUNITY.
Helen and John Kiss joined our community in June of this year. They came to us from Mississippi where John was Dean of the University of Mississippi Graduate School for four years. Having been recently appointed Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at UNCG is what precipitated their move. Before that, John was a University Distinguished Professor and Chair of the Botany Department at Miami University of Ohio. His wife, Helen, is also employed by UNCG in the Office of Sponsored Programs, where she aids the faculty in finding funding and in writing and submitting grants for their research.

Helen and John met while in graduate school at Rutgers University in New Jersey. They were soon married and began their respective academic careers. They went to Ohio State University to pursue post-doctoral education, and then to the University of Colorado at Boulder for additional post-doctoral work. Then their son, Stephen, was born while they were in Colorado.

Soon, John was awarded a tenure-track at Hofstra University on Long Island, New York, where he began his professional academic career. While there, Helen also worked part time at Hofstra. Following this, the couple moved to Ohio and Helen began doing grant work. John was promoted from assistant professor to full professor, and son Stephen grew up there.

Among his many honors and awards, John has earned NASA's highest civilian honor, the Outstanding Public Leadership Medal. This honor recognizes non-government employees for notable leadership accomplishments that have significantly influenced the NASA mission. Specifically, John received the medal "for exceptional contributions in spaceflight research in the fundamental biology of plants in support of NASA's exploration mission." Most recently, John has served as President of the Conference of Southern Graduate Schools from 2015-2016.

Both Helen and John have traveled extensively due, in part, to John's work but also because they enjoy traveling and taking "side trips." They have, so far, been to Norway, Sweden, Japan, Russia, Australia, England, Spain and France. Helen says the only continents they have not visited are South America, Antarctica and Africa. One of the trips they have enjoyed was to Australia for the International Botanical Congress, which was followed by a five-day side trip to the province of Victoria.

In their spare time, both Helen and John love to read and to attend musical theatre. Helen finds doing needlepoint "very relaxing." They also love to walk and go hiking and are looking forward to visiting our North Carolina mountains. So far, favorite restaurants here are Green Valley Grille and Fishbones.
Although both of his parents are scientists, Stephen decided to go another direction. He is a graduate of Miami University with a bachelor's degree in English education. He has taught both tenth and twelfth grade English and decided he wanted to work with underprivileged children, so he accepted a teaching position in Greenville, Mississippi, where he will soon complete his second year of teaching. He is contemplating moving to North Carolina to be closer to his parents.

When asked what brought the Drs. Kiss to Lake Jeanette, they said that they looked everywhere but “kept coming back to Lake Jeanette.” Having lived on a lake in Mississippi, Lake Jeanette itself was an attraction. They have two kayaks which they love to “drag down to the Lake,” and they have rented a pontoon boat twice. The nature trails are another attraction and they have enjoyed walking around the neighborhood enjoying the foliage and meeting residents. They say it doesn’t feel like they are in a city because it is so quiet and peaceful and has so many trees.

We sincerely hope that our new neighbors feel welcome and have the opportunity to fully enjoy the wonderful amenities of our community.

If you would like to share your family story with us or know a neighbor that you would like to nominate to be featured, we'd love to include the article in an upcoming issue. Contact us at brian.shabosky@2pub.com.