

NEIGHBORS

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The Gordons

THE ART OF LIFE

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Cover photo by Shetal Patel

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The Gordons

THE ART OF LIFE

By April Garner



Photo by Shetal Patel

It's serene. Driving up the path to Jeremie and Amber Gordon's property in Cypress Acres, you begin to feel what this part of Austin was like decades ago. And you can tell an art teacher lives here; colorful sculptures peek out from the bushes here and there as you approach the house...or should I say "houses."

Amber and Jeremie were high school sweethearts growing up in Fort Worth. After they were married they began flipping houses together in their spare time, but once twins Julien and Adrien came along, they decided their flipping days were over. After years of searching, they found the perfect forever home for their family in Cypress Acres, a neighborhood born around 1942 when Lake Travis was created.

The property and buildings, old as the neighborhood itself, had been used as rental units and needed a good deal of work to make it livable. Amber says there were mountains of stuff everywhere — hoarding levels. The Gordons sorted through everything from old furniture to photographs from the '80's. The place originally belonged to "Old Man

Crady," who, operated Cypress Creek Millworks out of the warehouse and had a unique affection for cannons. He also did a fair amount of custom wood working inside the house and around the property.

Jeremie has a master's degree in electrical engineering and grew up repairing and renovating houses and cars with his father, so he took on the challenge of refurbishing the main house without hesitation. Once it was livable, the Gordons moved in and renovation on the studio space began — a space that now houses Amber's Art Barn ATX. Jeremie says he tinkers around in the workshop below, he can hear the pitter patter of little art feet above as Amber conducts classes and camps for children and adults. When I asked what he does in the garage, he answered, "Whatever I need to do to keep Amber happy."

Amber says, "Without his knowledge, my dream never would've happened." Amber is one of those rare people who truly loves her profession, and Art Barn ATX is a natural extension of what she does as an art teacher at Laura Bush Elementary School. Her studio is dotted with her custom-painted stools and refinished chairs. Her vibrantly-styled furnishings are set off beautifully by the natural wood-plank floors underneath them. During the remodeling, the Gordons wanted to extend the original flooring into a second room. Jeremie found the perfect match in some vintage, reclaimed maple flooring from the 1950's. Indeed Jeremie has a wealth and variety of knowledge. At 16 years old, he reassembled a basket-case classic Corvette that came in pieces in boxes. He says his dad was a Jack of all trades, and he seems to be as well.

When Amber and Jeremie found out they were having twins, their reaction depends on whom you ask. Amber says, "shocked." Jeremie



says, "blessed." In truth, twins run in Amber's family, so she was half expecting more than one baby. During an ultrasound, her doctor insisted there was only one, but it was Amber who pointed out the second heartbeat on the screen. Julien and Adrien were born at 31 weeks, the day before Valentine's Day on Friday the 13th.

The two boys love to build things and tinker. One of the attractions of the Cypress Acres property for the Gordons was being able to offer their children the space to explore and build - to run wild and be creative. Both Julien and Adrien love to work with clay in their mom's studio and mud when they're outside. Amber says she can barely get the recyclables out of the house before the boys are reclaiming them for projects.

Julien likes the guitar like his dad. Jeremy played in a band at one time. Adrien likes the drums, and both kids attend Austin School of Music. Overall, Amber says Julien is more like Jeremie and Adrien is more like her. But both of them enjoy boy scouts and camping and are very kind towards others.

Before Jeremie and Amber had children, they spent free time exploring the various local music venues and attending festivals like South by Southwest. Now, they enjoy working on their property and the art studio. They talk of buying a boat in the future and teaching the boys to water ski. They also like to vacation on the Texas coast in Galveston. Amber has been going with Jeremie's family there since the two were in high school, and now they've made it their own family



Photo by Shetal Patel

tradition. (Their families always expected they'd marry.) The Gordons have a long list of favorite restaurants in the area, and Julien and Adrien sometimes attend "Sea Camp" while on vacation.

You might understand, though, if the Gordons didn't travel away from their house and property very often. It feels like an oasis in the trees, and with the addition of colorful artistry all around, it's just a fun place to be.

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