

□ *Editor's note: This is the one in a series of feature stories about people who have returned with their families to their hometown of Imperial, after working in other communities.*

By Carolyn Lee

The Imperial Republican

We didn't sit down and count the number of relatives Stephanie Terryberry Rau has in Imperial, but it's a lot. That's the reason the Imperial native and her family moved back to Imperial in September, 2004.

Stephanie graduated from Chase County High School in 1995. While attending Fort Hayes State University in Kansas, she met Tom, who grew up on a farm near the small town of Caldwell, Kan.

Tom graduated in 1997 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Marketing. Stephanie graduated in December, 1999 with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Interior Design. They married the next day.

The couple started out in Wichita, Kan., where Tom was in the insurance business, while Stephanie designed interiors of private airplanes for Cessna.

"It was one of those jobs that when you're in college it never crosses your mind that you'll do," she stated. She loved it.

However, Nathanael, now seven, was born, and she wanted to stay home with him. Then the airline industry took a nose dive after 9/11.

The Raus moved to Guthrie, Okla., in September, 2002 when Tom opened a branch office of his insurance company, serving all of Oklahoma.

Nickolas, now five, was born, and the couple decided to move back to Imperial to be closer to family.

"I wanted the kids to know their family, and grow up with their cousins," Stephanie said.



Tom said he could sell insurance anywhere, and that Stephanie had been away from her family for five years.

Stephanie added, "In a small town you know the teachers and don't worry about them. You know the day care people and are comfortable with them. When I worked at Cessna it took a long time to find day care for Nathanael and feel comfortable about it."

Imperial is special, Tom said, in that "for the size of Imperial it's a very thriving community. The town I came from had a John Deere dealership and a Chevy dealership and that was it."

Stephanie added that Imperial makes them feel comfortable. "People know you. If Nathanael ran down the street someone would bring him back, and that doesn't happen everywhere," she said.

Tom is the service manager at 21st Century Equipment, having also worked as a service clerk there, and as a marketing agent at AK Acres.

Stephanie has an interior design business Simply Home, a consultation business.

After picking Noah, age 15 months, out of his crib after a nap recently, Tom said he thinks the biggest selling point about Imperial is that “small town atmosphere. You don’t have to lock your car, and you can give a phone number for groceries and pay at the end of the month.”

Stephanie said there are so many opportunities and support for children. “You can find almost anything that fits them and the community’s supportive of whatever your child is, be it sports abilities, age, disabilities, etc.”

That support extends beyond high school, she pointed out.

“When I was in college people wanted to know what was going on in my life. I didn’t disappear when I went to college,” she said.

Both Raus are very active in the Imperial United Methodist Church. Tom is the Youth Director, as is Stephanie, and she teaches Vacation Bible School and Sunday School. She also started the Little Readers Program at the Lied Imperial Public Library.

By the way, Stephanie’s parents, two grandmothers, two brothers and their families, and many aunts, uncles and cousins live in Imperial. We never did add them up.