


A man with short, light-colored hair, wearing a blue and white striped button-down shirt, is sitting in a wooden chair on a porch. He is smiling and waving his right hand. The porch has a white lattice railing. In the background, there is a dark door and a light-colored wall. In the foreground, there is a table with a glass of red wine and some greenery with pink flowers.

# Neighbors

Tom and Sally Golden relocated to Ballantyne from Pittsburgh in 2009.



By Mary S. Gilbert  
Photos by Shane Baskin, Blackbox Studios

**BALLANTYNE EMBRACES**  
newcomers long before they arrive.

The proof towers some 30 feet high at the intersection of Ballantyne Commons Parkway and Johnston Road. Four imposing Stonehenge-like arches represent the themes of transportation, textiles, commerce and the human spirit. The monument straddling the expanse of land near The Ballantyne Hotel & Lodge is dedicated to the human spirit, and attests to the area's welcoming mindset. At ground level lies a plaque with this inscription:

*"Charlotte had only modest natural advantages. Much of Charlotte's current prosperity reflects the ambition and talent of its diverse citizenry, many of whom have come from outside the area. The spirit of Charlotte is renewed daily with the arrival of new citizens."*

Now that's a heady dose of Southern hospitality.

And it applies particularly to Ballantyne, says Jeff Adams, president of Helen Adams Realty. "Ballantyne barely existed 20 years ago," he says. "Today it is

# IN Newcomers to DOORS

**BALLANTYNE  
THROWS  
OUT THE  
WELCOME MAT**



Raising their children in Ballantyne appealed to Greg and Vanessa Hunt, who moved from New York City. Their sons are Nicholas (left) and Gregory.

the holiday decorations, and it seemed peaceful."

Back in New York, their lives became more complicated with long hours devoted to their professions. With one child and another on the way, they decided to make their lives easier and raise their children elsewhere.

They remembered Ballantyne.

Their Realtor® gave them materials about the area and they researched it online. A house caught their eye, and they went to the airport to catch a flight south "just to kick its tires," Greg says, only to find the airport closed because of snow. Undaunted, they returned home, grabbed their toothbrushes and drove to the Queen City.

Again, they liked what they saw. "Ballantyne Village was lit up and the grocery stores looked great," Vanessa recalls. "I said I want that house, the stars aligned, we got it and it's met our dreams."

As residents, the Hunts appreciate the ability to live and play in the same area. Self-described foodies, they frequent the many local restaurants. They live an active lifestyle, with walks on the greenway and their children playing sports at the Morrison Y.

They describe their neighbors as diverse, warm and receptive. Many are new to the South, as they are, and many also are young families planting roots outside of where they've grown up.

### Moving from Pittsburgh

Tom Golden's job required that he and his wife, Sally, move from her native Pittsburgh to the greater Charlotte area in 2009. Tom is a customer business

"I said I want that house, the stars aligned, we got it and it's met our dreams."

— Vanessa Hunt

one of the most sought after places to live and work in North and South Carolina. From zero population to 80,000 in 20 years is pretty impressive."

The rise of Ballantyne has paralleled Charlotte's growth over the last two decades, and the south Charlotte community has attracted many of the newcomers relocating to the Queen City.

"When people think of coming to Charlotte, one of the things they hear about is Ballantyne," says real estate broker Linda Ritchie.

She and her husband, Stokes, work as a team at Cottingham Chalk Hayes and live in Ballantyne. He calls it "a nexus for newcomers."

### Love At First Sight

Consider Vanessa and Greg Hunt. Greg is a lawyer in private practice, and Vanessa is the office's general manager. Transplanted from New York City's Harlem in 2007, the couple actually fell in love with Ballantyne some 10 years prior when they were visiting family in Charlotte.

"We were driving around, made a left turn from Lancaster Highway onto Ballantyne Commons Parkway, and that was it," Vanessa recalls. "We saw ourselves living here. There was a lot of construction going on. We appreciated the landscape, the functional layout and all



Another facet of Ballantyne the Golden's admire is its appearance. "It's well maintained, clean and flowery."

— Sally Golden

manager servicing the Food Lion account in Salisbury for the Campbell's Sales Company.

Knowing that Tom would work from a home office, they entered their search for a house with an open mind and looked at a variety of properties, including ones at Lake Norman, SouthPark, Dilworth and Myers Park. They chose Ballantyne.

"We were impressed with the neighborhoods," Tom says. "The value of the homes seemed reasonable for what we wanted. We like all the amenities, like shopping and restaurants, and the easy access to downtown, the mountain region and beaches. The people are friendly, outgoing and interesting professionals. A lot of transfers like us, so that makes them welcoming to newcomers."

Sally adds, "We were in the process of downsizing. The size of our home, its location, its well-built construction and its move-in condition were perfect for us."

Another facet of Ballantyne the

**Above:** The Golden's came to Charlotte because of Tom's job servicing Food Lion.

**Right:** St. Matthew Catholic Church sponsors a newcomers' group for women.

Golden's admire is its appearance. "It's well maintained, clean and flowery," Sally says, "and just going out the front door to take a walk is uplifting."

Members of Ballantyne Country Club, the Golden's attend St. Matthew Catholic Church and participate in its outreach programs. Sally volunteers with the BCC Rally for the Cure, which raises awareness and funds to fight breast cancer.

### Lending a Hand

Aware of how disorienting and overwhelming a move to a new home can be — even to a place as welcoming as Ballantyne — St. Matthew Catholic Church runs a newcomers group for women. Participants need not be church



members.

The Moving On After Moving In program, according to Maureen Regele, broker-in-charge at Bon Maison Properties and the group's instructor, is adopted from a book called "After the Boxes are

Unpacked," by Susan Miller. The fee is \$20 for materials.

Classes for each nine-week session are held mornings and evenings. Activities include book clubs, Bunco games, lunches, evenings out, knitting and

"We start with acknowledging that moving is a struggle, but that it's not all bad and there are things you can do to work into friendships. — Maureen Regele



"You don't feel like you're in a middle of a city, but everything is convenient and geared for families."

— Richard Lawson



an annual tailgate party. "We start with acknowledging that moving is a struggle, but that it's not all bad and there are things you can do to work into friendships," Regele says.

Lidia Annunziata, who moved four years ago from Rochester, N.Y., recently took the class as background to become a program facilitator.

"When you move there's always anxiety, even if the move is a positive thing," Annunziata says. Having moved six times herself, she wants to be able to share her experiences with other newcomers. "The program gives so much support, and you feel that there's a home for you in Ballantyne."

Another way newcomers assimilate quickly is through

**Above:** Maureen Regele runs the "Moving On After Moving In" program.

**Above Right:** Emi, Richard and Alexandra Lawson spend some "sweet" family time.

**Right, Bottom Right:** The Lawsons relocated from Philadelphia to Ballantyne with Richard's job at Premier.

their employers. Richard Lawson is a good example.

When Premier decided to move its headquarters to Ballantyne in early 2011, it set up an interactive online portal to provide regular updates on the move. Lawson relocated to Ballantyne last fall with his wife, Emi, and daughter, Alexandra, from the now-closed Philadelphia office.

He and other employees from outside the area also received support through an organized

tour of Charlotte and the office building, a stay at The Ballantyne Hotel & Lodge and spousal relocation services.

"We love it here," says Lawson, whose title is "director-Internal Product Owner." "You don't feel like you're in a middle of a city, but everything is

convenient and geared for families. Those of us from the Philadelphia office have a lot to say about the newness and cleanliness. It doesn't feel like I'm living in the South, other than some of the food, because it's eclectic. It's very social, open and outgoing, and we feel welcome." ☑

## Home Stats

March 1, 2009 –  
March 31, 2011

Months Supply of  
Homes on Market  
28277

-13.8%

MLS overall

4.37%

Average Months  
Supply of Inventory  
28277

10.9

MLS overall

13

Average Median  
Home Price  
28277

\$296,000

MLS overall

\$157,000

Median Home Price  
28277

-1.6%

MLS overall

-2.3%

## GREATER BALLANTYNE HOME MARKET

### Outperforms MLS Overall

Newcomers choose to live in Ballantyne for many reasons, and the health of the home market is no exception.

The 28277 ZIP code\*, which includes the greater Ballantyne area, outperformed the overall Charlotte regional Multiple Listing Service in terms of reducing the supply of inventory over the last two years for the period March 1, 2009, through March 31, 2011, according to Jeff Adams, president of Helen Adams Realty.

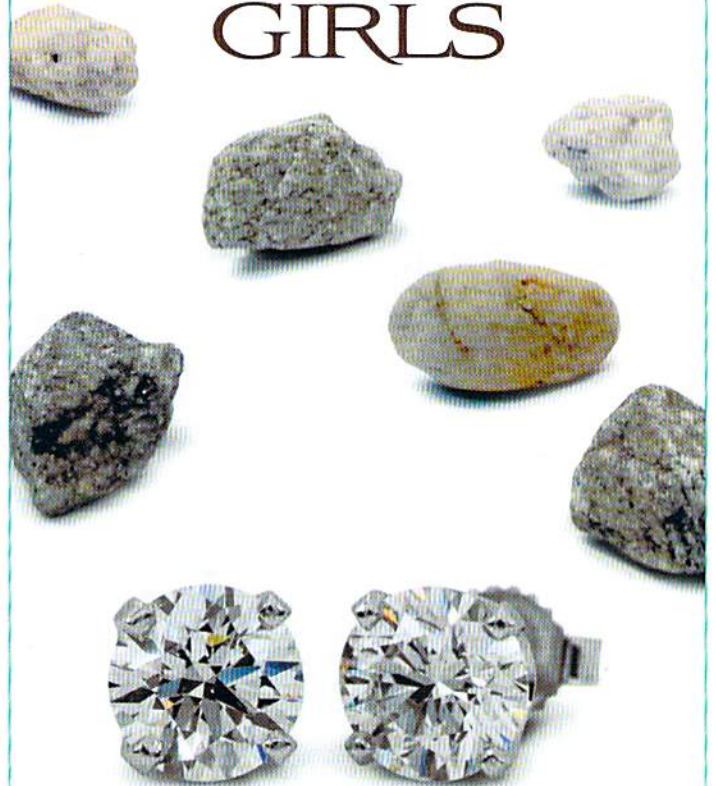
Furthermore, homes in 28277 have held their value better than the Charlotte market average.

Adams notes that the months of supply of homes on the market for the ZIP code has decreased 13.8 percent and averaged 10.9 months supply of inventory since March 2009. The median price in 28277 has fallen 1.6 percent and averaged \$296,000 during this period.

For the MLS overall, supply has increased 4.37 percent and averaged 13 months supply of inventory for the same period. The median price in the entire MLS has fallen 2.3 percent and averaged \$157,000 during the same time frame.

\* Roughly, the boundaries for the 28277 ZIP code are: N.C. 51 to the north, Providence Road to the east and U.S. 521 and the state line to the west. The county line makes up most of the southern boundary.

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