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## Home Buyers' Journal

by Kay Steele Faulk

Recent Richmond newcomers agree—buying a home in Richmond is quick, affordable and problem free. And this, despite the fact that it's one of the fastest growing areas in the state. Both Richmond and Madison County offer residential sections with landscapes, architecture and floor plans to please the tastes of the most discerning homebuyers, newlyweds just starting out and everyone in between. Price ranges, too, vary from the fixer-upper to the palatial.

With so much to offer, it's no wonder that long time residents are not surprised when they hear of newcomers Raymond and Eunice Lee who pulled up stakes and moved to Richmond after a visit there. Successful business owners for twenty years in New Port Beach, California, the Lees hail originally from Columbus, Ohio, where they had planned to return for retirement. But after their Richmond visit, nothing could quash the couple's desire to make this Kentucky town their home. "It was a case of love at first sight," Raymond said. "Richmond people are incredibly friendly and helpful, and the four-season climate can't be beat."

Although the Lees' four children are grown, they wanted a house with plenty of space for summer-vacation and holiday visits. Raymond had high praise for their real estate broker. "She was interested in *us* and *our* needs and in helping *us*." So much so that the couple bought the second house they were shown—a 4,000-square-foot colonial with ample room for their nine grandchildren on Thanksgiving Day.

Today, Raymond is the owner of ECU football season tickets and an active Rotarian. He and Eunice enjoy The Arlington Association and the Madison Country Club's Friday evening buffet. An unexpected pleasure came for Raymond when ECU invited him to teach in the School of Business & Technology, which he left retirement to do. "Eunice and I knew right away we loved Richmond, but we never dreamed the community would reach out to us in the ways that it has. We've sunk in a tap root and intend to stay."

Reporting on the Richmond housing market, one Madison County realtor quoted the average home price at about \$115,000. And although the pace for building new homes has slowed a bit from the boom years of 1992 to 2000, he reported that existing-home sales remain brisk. "In fact," he said, "it's not unusual for buyers to find their perfect house in a day."

This was nearly the case for California natives Janice Arntz and her husband Mark, a technology consultant who accepted a position with a local company. The Arntzs had only a week to find a home within their budget, which they had no trouble doing despite their need for a house that was readily marketable. Janice explained, "Although Mark's position is permanent, the technology field changes so rapidly we can never be certain of staying put."

With four children ages 7 to 17 to consider, Janice and Mark found the perfect 4-bedroom, 2½-bath home in Highland Park close to the Lake Reba Recreational Complex and Camp Catalpa Park. As a Cub Scout den leader, Janice expressed her delight at having these outdoor areas so near her home. "They're ideal for preparing my Scouts for the Arrow of Light Award," she said. "I walk our dog at both parks, and when my two youngest are there riding bikes, I feel confident knowing that park security is always available." Janice also expressed her fondness for Richmond's slower pace. "When the

outer world is not moving so fast, it calms you down—and this is good for someone with four children!"

For Paul and Rhonda Miles, the Kentucky small town pace was nothing new. With their daughters Grace (12) and Rose (8), they relocated from Middlesboro, Kentucky, for Paul's new position as CEO of the Pattie A. Clay Regional Medical Center. A former public school board member, Paul emphasized the importance of a good school system to his family's relocation decision. "Rhonda and I did our research and found in Richmond and Madison County many good options for schools. The public schools here rank in the state's top one-third and some private schools even higher."

When shopping for a home, Rhonda did the first and second screens before involving Paul. Then, together, they culled her favorites down to three. Always partial to houses with character, the couple chose a Lancaster Avenue home listed on the National Historical Register. Paul recounted the ease of the event, "We drove up one Saturday morning, made the offer and boom! it was accepted. We took care of it all in one day." The new medical center CEO expressed his family's love of being right in the heart of Richmond. "It's close to my work, ECU, the school system, and we can walk to church whenever we want. It doesn't get better than that!"