



The Janzes: A Dream Come True

BY MICHELLE LONGO

PHOTOS BY BROOKE LOHMAN-JANZ AND JOHN KANDALRAFT

It's about eighty miles between Riverside and Northridge, and no one knows that better than Brooke Lohman-Janzen and Michael Janzen. For all of Brooke's masters degree program and half of Michael's, they made that trip quite often. While many feel that LA traffic can be a headache, one good thing came out of the journey: the found Altadena.



Brooke, 37, is a marketer for a software company and a professional singer. Michael, 39, is the Director of Philanthropy at a non-profit that provides supportive housing and mental health services. He has also worked as a musician, plays multiple instruments, and composes music. They live together with their three cats, Freddie, Felix, and Lili.

"They are our pride and joy!" Brooke said.

Brooke and Michael met in 2006 as undergrad music students. Brooke was pursuing a voice performance degree, while Michael studied composition. At first, they just hung out as friends, and they've been hanging out ever since!

Over the years, they've shared many fun and meaningful experiences. Two of the most significant were moving to Altadena in 2018 and purchasing their lot earlier this year.



When they first moved to Altadena, Brooke and Michael lived in the Lake/Mariposa area. After outgrowing their first space, they found the perfect unit on El Molino. They loved their new complex and felt more at home in Altadena than anywhere else.

Brooke said, "We would walk around the neighborhood and admire all of the darling homes, dreaming of one day owning one and permanently staying."

"Altadena truly is a very special place," Michael added. "It's an incredibly warm, welcoming, diverse, and loving community. Between all the different artists, people who work in the industry, all the scientists and engineers that are here, and all the families that have been here for generations, it really is the kind of community everybody dreams about living in. I can't imagine living anywhere else."

The Janzes lost their home and belongings in the Eaton Fire, and the thought of losing their community forever as well was terrifying. Brooke calls what happened next divine intervention. In April, they decided to find a land loan to purchase a lot. Although the process was stressful, it was also surprisingly smooth. The day after their pre-approval came through, they found a lot they fell in love with. They inquired about it and learned they were just in time. The owner was hours away from accepting a cash offer. Because Brooke and Michael were already from Altadena and looking to get back, their offer was accepted.



“Owning a tiny piece of our beloved Altadena is our dream come true,” Brooke said.

After the fire, Michael and Brooke turned toward activism. They started a petition to unite Altadenans on points they felt were vital, including the right of return for all residents, keeping developers from snatching up lots, and safeguarding the future through infrastructure enhancements.

Another project that Brooke is passionate about is the Historic Home Relocation Project (<https://omgiving.com/>). This organization sought to locate historic homes that were in danger of being torn down and relocate them to Altadena as an alternative to building new construction. Brooke has been working with the house-moving guru Brad Chambers since January, and they’ve been collaborating since then about the idea of moving homes to Altadena. The initiative is greener, less expensive, preserves history, and brings authentic character to Altadena in a way that simply rebuilding does not. Brooke and Michael are also working with the architect who is heading the project to find the perfect home for their lot.

At present, Brooke and Michael have a trailer on their lot, and they are living there a few days a week. Finding a historic home to relocate is challenging, but they’ve got their eyes on a few potential homes. While it’s interesting and stressful, they are very hopeful! Michael has been

very focused on the house move and getting the lot in order so when the right building is discovered, they’re ready for it.

In June, Brooke started the Altadena Dining Club to help bring Altadenans together and support the community’s remaining businesses. The group now has over a thousand members on its Facebook page (facebook.com/groups/1500128948060835) and close to nine hundred on Instagram (@thealtadenadiningclub). There are regular outings to local venues, and interested parties can visit the social media pages and sign up for the newsletter at <https://forms.gle/irMtx711gt5ms8hn7>. In addition, there is a monthly raffle, and Brooke is always seeking donations for that.

Besides singing and her community interests, Brooke also loves to paint and sew. She loves collecting antique chairs and interesting art, though the pieces she had were lost in the fire. In addition to his music, Michael practices yoga daily and spends a lot of time reading about current issues, philosophy, and activism.

When asked what message or greeting she’d like to share with her neighbors, Brooke said, “It has become crystal clear to me that relationships and community are the most important thing in life. Altadena has been through an unimaginable tragedy, but the beauty that has bloomed since then has been awe-inspiring, and it’s all from meeting and being with our neighbors.”

Asked the same question, Michael said, “The world is really chaotic right now, both in the state of the nation and the aftermath that ravaged our community. We gotta stay focused on what we can help; we gotta stay focused on our community. It’s too easy to give up and say that our community is gonna change forever and there’s nothing we can do about it. It is going to change, but you can be part of that change. I don’t know how and I don’t know when, but there are definitely more options out there than people want you to believe. We’re all here for you if you need to reach out; everyone is just looking to help. I hope to see you around the neighborhood soon!”

Would you like to be featured on our cover or do you have a neighbor you think has a great story to share? Send nominations to Michelle Longo at mlongo@bestversionmedia.com for consideration. Be sure to mention Altadena Neighbors in your email.

