



community development partnership

Creating opportunities for people to live, work, and thrive on the Lower Cape

An Affordable Home is First Step to Feeling Hopeful

“The Cape is big, but the community is small...It feels so much more hopeful here. Things are finally going right. I’ve never felt I would be successful before.”

**Autumn Edwards
Resident, Wellfleet**



Growing up in South Dakota, Autumn Edwards never saw an ocean until she arrived in Provincetown in 2013. She landed a position as an intern at an art gallery during her junior year at Black Hills State University. Ultimately, the internship didn’t work out, but as a photography student, Edwards attracted the attention of Amy Arbus, and won a scholarship at the Provincetown Art Association & Museum (PAAM) to study with her.

While working at a local gas station, Edwards met CDP supporter Judith Stiles, owner of the Newcomb Hollow Gallery in Wellfleet, who befriended her and took on her work. Stiles also became a mentor as Edwards struggled to make a living as a photographer.

As it has been for so many others, the expense of living and working on Cape Cod was out of reach for the nascent photographer. Edwards had fallen in love with the sand and sea, however, and vowed she would somehow return someday, with her two daughters, then 9 and 15. The following year Edwards and her daughters arrived in Fall River. It wasn’t her first choice of places to live but it was the only place she could afford.

“I wanted to come down here and grow my business. I love photographing the Cape, the places, the people here. But there was no chance,” Edwards said. “Then I went to the CDP like Judith advised and was put on a waiting list there for the Fred Bell Way apartments in Wellfleet. It took two years but here I am. I wouldn’t be here without their help.”

The Fred Bell Way apartments in Wellfleet provide affordable housing for about 20 people in 12 units. There are currently 105 people on the waitlist, an indication of how serious the housing situation is on the Lower Cape. The CDP is committed to helping people like Edwards survive and thrive in the

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community by giving them the opportunity to live in safe, affordable and year-round housing. While all CDP subsidized rental properties have a wait list, qualified people are encouraged to add their names and speaking with CDP staff can help them figure out arrangements that are workable and livable as well.

Not only have we helped Edwards with an affordable rental, she is looking into working with our business and credit programs to help her with marketing and other business activities. The CDP also hired Edwards to photograph several of our events recently, and will be using some of her images on our seasonal holiday card this year.

Edwards plans to expand her photography business to include more events. She loves photographing parties, celebrations and fundraisers. She would also like to sell more prints in galleries and exhibit more widely. In the meantime, Edwards works from home booking reservations for a large hospitality firm.

The opportunity to live and work on Cape Cod, a place with an active and supportive arts community has been life changing. Edwards lights up when talking about how happy she is to have the chance to live here. “In other places, lots of times your business is just your business. And yes, the photography is my business, but it is also my community. The Cape is big, but the community is small. I meet lots of people. They remember me, and I remember them. I love that. It feels so much more hopeful here. Things are finally going right. I’ve never felt I would be successful before.”

“Where I live is a community. We visit each other but we all have our own personal space. We live off in the woods, but we are close to a gas stations and a marketplace.” Edwards also made a point of how much she loves the schools here, calling them some of the best anywhere. Having been helped along her way, Edwards said, “I really want to become an active volunteer in the community, be an active community member.”

Edwards would love to own her own home someday, but the cost of housing here is a major challenge. “I may never be able to give my kids a permanent home here, but I’m glad to be here now.”