IMMIGRANT WELCOME & RESOURCE CENTER

Neighbor Stories: Kate Sedlakczek, ARNP-C



When you meet Kate Sedlakczek at Forefront Dermatology in Evansville, Indiana, you are greeted with a big smile, a hardy handshake, an intense gaze, and a soft Polish accent.

Kate grew up in Poland on the German border. After high school, she moved to Germany to attend university and earned a B.S. in Nursing in 2000. She also met and married Steffen whose sales company transferred them to the U.S. twenty-six years ago, shortly after Kate's graduation. Six years ago, Kate's job brought them to their present destination – Evansville, Indiana.

Upon arriving in the US, Kate's biggest hurdle was learning the English language. She was fluent in Polish and German and knew a lot of Russian. But, she said, "The only English I knew was, 'I love you, shake your booty, yes, and no.'" She spent her first five months learning basic English by watching American TV, getting to know her neighbors, and spending lots of time with her landlady drinking coffee, shopping, and talking. Kate said, "We met the best people here in the USA. Our neighbors embraced us and helped us adjust to this new culture."

Kate's second hurdle was obtaining a driver's license. With her very limited English, she memorized the entire driver's booklet. She laughed, "On the day I took the driving test, I did not realize that I would have to use my personal car. I had my dog in the back seat. He is a very big Rottweiler. There was nowhere to put him during the test, so he came with us. During the test, my dog kept trying to crawl over my seat to get into my lap. It made the Tester very, very nervous. Finally, he threw up his hands and shouted, 'Okay, we are finished. You passed. You passed!' We pulled up to curb and he jumped out!"

Other struggles included trying to buy their first house and obtaining a credit card and debit card. Kate said, "It was a challenge to obtain these things, but it was still easier than what we had to go through in other countries."

She also decided that she wanted to get a degree as a nurse practitioner. So, she studied her English textbooks to memorize all the medical terminology. She also took on-line practice tests and talked to other students and instructors to learn more English. Kate finally obtained her Nurse Practitioner Degree in 2009.

Today, Kate and Steffen have a full life which includes two children. Daughter Angelina was born in 2001 and son Sebastian was born in 2003.

Kate says that she likes living in the U.S. “It really is a Land of Opportunity. If you work at it, you can make something of yourself. Also, there is freedom of speech, travel, and economic opportunity. The healthcare is also much better here. And most important, the friends that we made are so welcoming and open – especially in Evansville.”

Kate’s advice to other people immigrating here is to meet and befriend people from the U.S. to learn English. “Don’t cocoon into your culture.” Also, she encourages others to look for ways to benefit their community. For example, in her work, Kate looks for ways to develop good relational skills especially with her patients. She is open to whomever comes through the door, no matter who they are. Also, she treats her patients like she would want to be treated, with respect and dignity. Kate reaches out with much more than just a smile and a handshake. She extends the hand of friendship.

Note: Forefront Dermatology is located at 7516 Eagle Crest Blvd, Suite D, Evansville, IN 47715