

From Africa to the Tetons SNAKE RIVER K9 FAMILY

Makes Jackson Their Home

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Now swirled around the plane and ice crystals glistened as the Greene family arrived at the Jackson Hole Airport in December of 2012. Jeff and Kim Greene and their six-year-old twins, Rhys and Tor, had lived in Kenya since before the boys were born—the twins had never seen snow before. “The kids had read books about snow, but there was never any context,” Kim explained. Facing temperatures of 28 degrees below zero their first week in town, it was a startling 120 degrees colder than the summertime African weather they had left. But the family adapted well and they now have a thriving business, Snake River K9, just south of town, where they breed, raise and train personal and family protection dogs.

Both Jeff and Kim come from a diplomatic and security background, having met in Afghanistan in 2003, where Kim served as a policy adviser to Afghanistan’s President Hamid Karzai and Jeff worked in diplomatic security, running President Karzai’s counter sniper team. They forged their relationship in Jeff’s crew chow hall, which was stocked with food from the U.S. “I wooed her through her stomach,” he laughed. Before working on the diplomatic detail, Jeff served 11 years in the military, in the Marines and the Army Special Forces. Between his military assignments, he was very involved with counterpoaching work in Africa as well as helping the Ugandan government with their search and rescue teams. “I have a deep love of wildlife and wildlife protection,” he explained. “I wanted to take my skill set and stave off the decimation of rhinos, elephants and other animals. Bushmeat and poaching are rampant across Africa.”

In 2005, the Greens moved to Nairobi, Kenya to start Ridgeback, a canine facility located on a 75,000 acre game reserve. The same year, they decided to get married and became pregnant with twins. Only intending to stay in Kenya for two years, they ended up living there for eight, enchanted by the wildlife and finding a market for protection dogs, including Dutch and German Shepherds and Belgian Malinois. “The threat level in Kenya is very real,” Kim explained. “In a lot of instances, people are reactive in Kenya. People consider it to be a lot of money and they think they don’t really need a dog and then they have a scare or an incident. There are many victims of sexual assault, people who want them for protection but also as a post-traumatic stress disorder therapy dog, a companion dog. We’ve dealt with people overseas who are at the far end of an event or incident and it’s unfortunate.”



They sell dogs throughout the U.S. out of their Jackson facility, with many clients being families and single mothers. “For augmenting security, it’s a quiet thing,” Jeff explained. “This is a dog culture and it’s not a leap of faith to have a dog in your home. It’s a family pet, a part of the family that goes and rides in the car on family outings. The majority of clients are looking for peace of mind. It’s a deterrent, it makes you feel more secure.”

Snake River K9 offers group and individual classes in obedience, stability, socialization and agility, serving all kinds of dogs from the tiniest miniature pin-

cher to massive Newfoundlands. They also offer a residential “doggie boot camp” for animals that need more intensive training as well as seminars on tracking and obedience. Offering educational and outreach services to the community is important to the Greens. They work with the animal shelter, River Rock Assisted Living, PAWS, the K9 Carnival and several children with autism who visit weekly. Before their move to Jackson, the Greens compiled a spreadsheet comparing a number of different U.S. towns they were considering but settled on Jackson. “An active community was something we were searching for,” Jeff said. “Here people really help and support one another. It’s a great place.”

The move from Africa to Jackson was a big one but the Greene twins adapted quickly. “The boys act like they’ve been here for years,” Jeff said. “They have their cowboy boots and jeans. They’re very Wyoming children.” Children who grew up with Swahili as their first language and Maasai as their second, they settled in quickly and enjoy a wide range of winter activities, including sledding, ice skating, snowshoeing, snowball fights and downhill skiing.

The family’s life in Jackson is a stark contrast to the one they lived in Kenya. “In Kenya, we lived in a gated community with an electric fence, roaming guards and grates on the windows,” Kim explained. “The kids would think it was normal when the phone rang at 2 a.m. and dad headed out to track people who had murdered or gang raped. We wanted to get away from that daily part of existence. The kids ask why there are no bad guys in Wyoming.” Jeff noted that many things have changed, living in a western mountain town, “When we arrived in Jackson, we found that no one even knows where their house key is. Here my biggest concern is winterizing my truck.” ■

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