

# DISTINCTIVELY SOUTHERN

Coweta & Fayette

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today's southern town



***The Good***  
*step out and grab it!* ***Life***

# SOUTHERN LIFE



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***justeen & matt oess***

LIVING LIFE ON THEIR TERMS

PHOTO BY MONICA GADDY

## *justeen & matt oess*

Once engrossed in the hustle and bustle of Buckhead with an enviable, but hectic life, the Oesses decided to make a big change. Today, they live a simpler life on their terms.



story by **SHERRI SMITH BROWN** | photos by **MONICA GADDY**





**T**HANK GOD FOR THE ICE STORM OF 2011," SAYS Justeen Oess. "If that had not happened, who knows where I would be. I'm pretty certain I would not be in this house, on this property."

Justeen and Matt Oesses' white 1890 farmhouse with its sloped roof, double chimneys and wide front porch looks out over 12 acres of property in Coweta County. There is a small pool and two quaint guest houses, one which serves as an office. The Oesses' plant and harvest organic vegetable gardens. They tend fruit trees, a chicken coop with nine chickens, and honey bee hives. They exercise their three dogs on a half-mile hiking trail they created around their land. They entertain and cook in their huge kitchen, which is often filled with friends and laughter. The couple stays busy, working at their respective jobs and caring for their farm. They say they have created a home and a lifestyle that is full of love, peace and harmony.

But life was not always so idyllic for the Oesses. Just a few years ago, they were living in the hustle

and bustle of Buckhead in Atlanta. According to Justeen, they were workaholics. Justeen was running her own multi-six-figure business as an architect, specializing in high-end, custom residential and selected commercial projects. Matt was a sales and marketing consultant and an executive coach.

Their lifestyle was enviable but hectic. They owned a house, a condo, and lots of other material goods. They took great vacations. They dined out a lot. From all vantage points, they had a nice life—but they were living beyond their means. The Oesses were a million dollars in debt. Their constant work was barely paying for their expensive lifestyle. The stress was mounting.

And that is where the Atlanta ice storm enters the story.

Justeen recalls that Matt was in Florida on a business trip when the winter storm hit the South. She was iced in alone for three days. No internet, no computer, no television. No work. She had hours to do nothing, and it gave her the opportunity to do a lot of thinking about where their lives were going—the debt they had accumulated, the overwhelming stress



just to pay bills, the never-ending work that was wrecking her health. Then she says she had “a moment of clarity.”

“I decided I wanted to live life with intention,” says Justeen. “To do that I had to change my mindset about money.”

Justeen spent her remaining ice storm vacation formulating a plan to rid them of debt. Happily, Matt was enthusiastic, and the couple immediately began to implement the changes. They wanted financial freedom, and they planned to accomplish it in one year’s time. They put a freeze on spending. They began selling everything that was not necessary and paying off the rest. It took 15 months, but they paid off their debt of \$988,000. They remodeled and moved to the old farmhouse, planted gardens, and started living a simpler life.

At a slower pace, the Oesses continue their professions, but Justeen now adds Life Coach to her resume. A life coach collaborates with people to help them create a change or reach a new goal—and quicker than they could on their own. Justeen’s focus is to take what she and Matt learned and help others. She particularly wants to empower women with the idea that they can achieve financial freedom on their own. They just need to decide what they want and then make a decision for change.

“I love what I do,” says Justeen. “I’m still a workaholic, but before, I couldn’t stop working because I had so many bills to pay. The fuel behind my work was fear. Now, the fuel behind my work is passion.”

Justeen and Matt Oess are living life on their terms. It is a simple life filled with love, peace and harmony. If they have any message for others, it is that gaining financial freedom is one of the most rewarding changes you can make to your life. But you have to change your ideas about money, set your goals, and then, set your mind to achieve them. It just takes “a moment of clarity.” ◀◀



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