

The Demiryols: CONNECTING WITH THEIR COMMUNITY



By Krista Cowan

Photos by Chris Cabral, Studio Cabral

The Demiryols are an active family who love spending quality time together and going for walks in their Lorne Park neighbourhood.

Hikmet and Berna met while they were both studying engineering at a university in Turkey. During their first summer of studies, the students were divided into various groups to attend a co-op-like program. Hikmet later revealed to Berna that he had scanned the group lists for her name and then changed his grouping so they could be in the same session. It was from those summer days spent together that a friendship and then love blossomed. The couple were married in a traditional ceremony in 1996.

Berna graduated with an Industrial Engineering degree as well as an Executive MBA. She excelled in the corporate world, working for several large banking institutions before starting her own business. Her last corporate job was as a Senior Director at Scotiabank Technology, where she oversaw the migration of bank technology to cloud-based infrastructure.

The couple now has two children, Demir and Daphne. Demir graduated from Lorne Park Secondary School last year and was accepted into the University of British Columbia's Bachelor of Management program. He is currently taking a gap year to play basketball at a prep school in Dallas. Daphne attends Toronto French School and plays volleyball. She and her team, the Titans, became the U16 National Champion last year. "She keeps us

extremely busy," states Berna, "with her practice and tournament schedule in and out of Canada."

A cuddly 7-year-old cat named Benny is like the youngest child in the family. "He is a Siberian - Scotch mix, as far as we are told," states Berna. "He is very social and follows us wherever we go." The family adopted Benny after many years of dreaming of getting a dog. However, they could not take the plunge to own a dog due to their busy schedule and adopted a cat instead. This easier-to-take-care-of option was a settlement they all agreed on. They have had a true love affair with him since then. Their lovely neighbours come to feed and play with Benny when the Demiryols need to take a couple of days away for the tournaments which they appreciate.

This close-knit family enjoys playing board games together, having movie nights, and travelling. Both children play basketball and volleyball, so there's no shortage of time spent watching live sports, whether on the court or the television. They are huge Raptors fans.

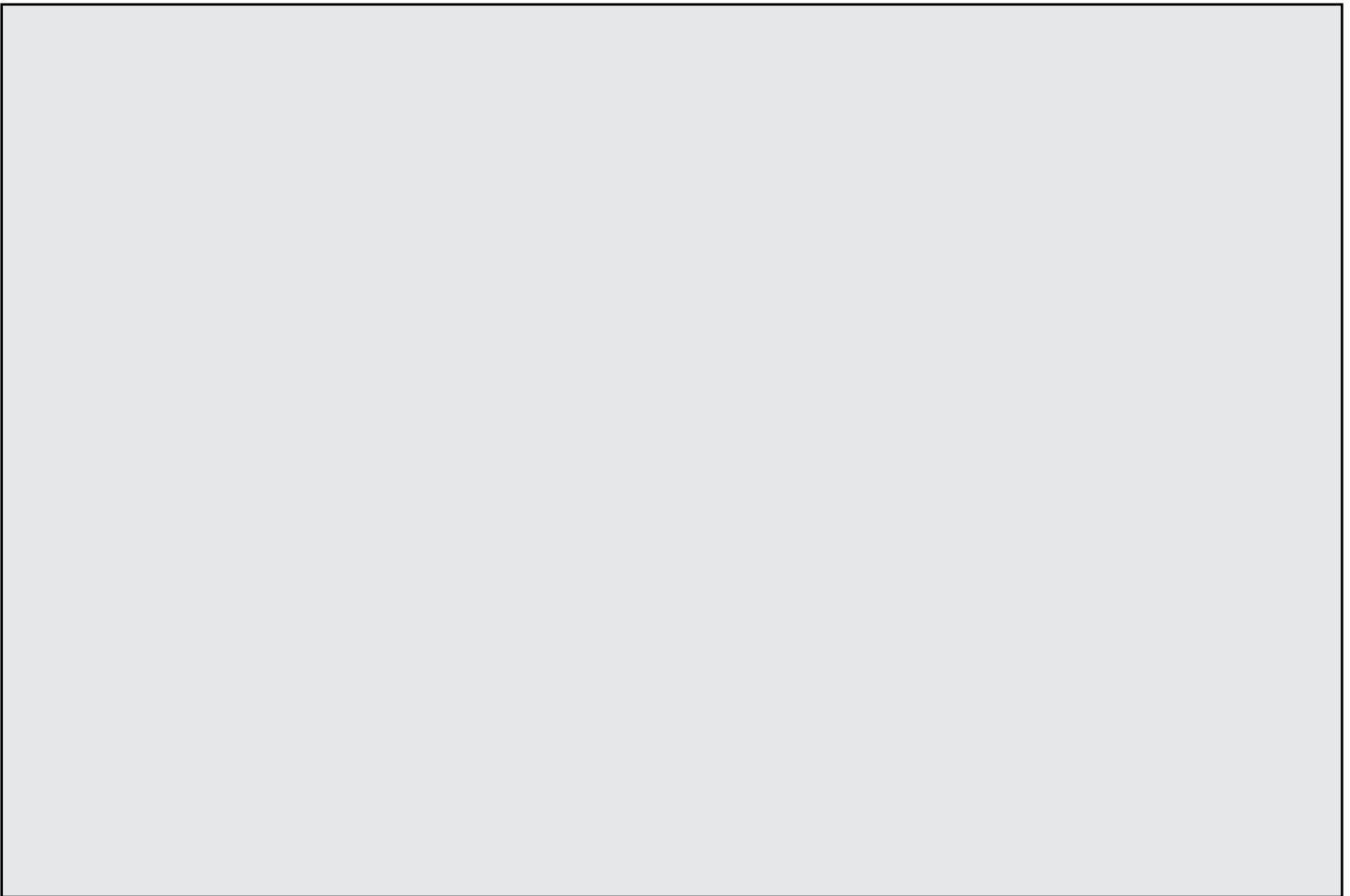
The Demiryol children both excel at competitive sports. They feel extremely grateful for not getting severely sick during the Covid-19 global pandemic. However, as teenagers, it was difficult not being able to continue sports and recreational activities with all the restrictions in place. Playing sports with masks that restricted their breathing brought an additional set of challenges.



Berna's children's experiences became the inspiration for her to start her business, Proteq Medical. At the beginning of the pandemic, she was searching for a brand that offered masks for kids with sensitivities. "When I could not find anything that I was comfortable having my kids wear it for hours at a time," states Berna. "I ended up looking for solutions myself and founded my business." One of the first things she did was to work with the Titans Volleyball Club to provide the players and coaches with Proteq's antimicrobial breathable masks. Through Proteq Medical (proteq.ca) Berna now proudly provides hospitals, universities' medical departments and veterinary hospitals with infection control and PPE products. Her mission is to ensure continuity and uninterrupted medical care by providing high-quality infection control supplies. Berna also launched Maple Apparel Design to provide uniforms for healthcare providers and other industry professionals. Encouraged by the positive feedback received for the scrubs collections under Proteq Medical,

she recently launched Atelier Scrubletic, a marketplace where healthcare professionals can find a wide range of scrubs and accessories.

Giving back to their community is important to the Demiryols. When Daphne and Demir were younger, they would volunteer at the neighbourhood senior's centre playing piano. Last winter, Berna's father was diagnosed with stage 2 cancer. Even though Covid delayed the diagnosis, the family was still fortunate to catch it on time and be able to start an early treatment plan. Having a cancer patient in the family impressed upon Berna how critical it is to support cancer treatment in any way possible. Through Proteq Medical, she has run an annual Power of Pink campaign supporting the Princess Margaret Cancer Foundation during Breast Cancer awareness month. Proteq Medical also donated some PPE to Dorothy Ley Hospice. "This hospice was where my friend's mom was looked after so well in her last few months," states Berna. "We choose organizations that are dear to our heart when it comes to giving back."



Resident Feature

The usual circumstances surrounding the birth of Berna and Hikmet's second child gave the family a deep appreciation for Canada's healthcare system. When Berna's contractions were 30 minutes apart the couple left Oakville as planned on route downtown to Women's College Hospital to give birth. However, on the highway, the contractions became only minutes apart. Due to a festival and road closures, the couple found themselves trapped in downtown traffic. Desperate, Hikmet begged a police officer for help. Within a few minutes, Berna was whisked away in an ambulance to the hospital, where she delivered Daphne minutes later. "This experience," explains Berna, "made me so grateful to our healthcare system, our nurses, and all the front-line staff who are taking care of us on a daily basis, whether we are rich, poor, important or random people."

The family has been living close to Rattray Marsh for the past 13 years. "We love our neighbourhood and neighbours," states Berna. "The proximity to the lake makes us feel like we are living a cottage life right in the city." Ironically the global pandemic facilitated the family getting to know their neighbours and neighbourhood more closely. They spent time walking and meeting their neighbours outdoors. A group of neighbours even set up outdoor tables by the lake for early breakfasts, where they served up homemade coffee, scones and even pancakes. The couple state that the time spent in their community makes them feel like they have a larger family around them. "It is the pandemic that pulled our community tighter," reflects Berna.



"My hope is that we continue to find more time for each other as life gets busy again post-pandemic. After all, it is the human connections and friendships that make us stronger as individuals and as a society."

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