

Shelley Schaaf

An Artisan in the Foothills of the Adirondacks Stays Connected

Life has taken Shelley Schaaf from the Nebraska plains to Fort Knox, Kentucky, Belgium, Germany, France, and New York City; through careers in the Army and as a tax accountant; and now to the life of a high-end woodworker living in the foothills of New York's Adirondack Mountains.

Schaaf lives in the upstate New York town of Herkimer, near the small city of Utica. Herkimer is the seat of Herkimer County, an historic area with agricultural and industrial legacies such as cheese making, firearms and furniture manufacturing. The area is known for "Herkimer Diamonds," which are actually finely formed, naturally faceted quartz stones nearly as hard as true diamonds. The Adirondack range and the Mohawk River dominate the county's geography.

Since moving to Herkimer in 2001, Schaaf has established a reputation as a highly skilled woodworker specializing in jobs that require elaborate techniques such as fret work, scrollwork, and complex Victorian reproductions. She works with fine woods such as cherry and butternut. Inlaid napkin holders, hand-carved walking sticks, specialized furniture, clocks, and elegant signs for homes and businesses are among her creations.

"I do a lot of special orders, like a woman who brought in a beautiful piece of cherry wood and wanted a sign made for her friends, and a musician who is kind of a Waylon Jennings type," she said.

The 2013 Herkimer Fair commissioned Schaaf to create a herd of carved and painted animals to adorn the fairgrounds. Each one was composed of many parts that she cut and carved individually then assembled into foals, cows, calves and ponies. In addition to her own work, Schaaf also does fine detail work for a nearby furniture maker, as well as keeping a hand in her former profession with some tax accounting work.



The carved wooden carousel horses she collects adorn the front of her house near the base of a small mountain, displaying Schaaf's interest in fine woodworking. The Hughes satellite dish mounted on her house displays her interest in staying connected to the world.

"I use my HughesNet service for business and personal work," Schaaf said. "I made do with dial-up for a long time, but the download speeds and allowances were very low and it didn't work well for me."

Schaaf's home is in a dead zone for broadcast TV reception and has no high-speed terrestrial Internet. Schaaf endured slow dial-up access for years until she heard about HughesNet satellite Internet while exploring options for television service.

"The local cable service stops about four miles from my house. There is a fiber optic network available right across the road but I can't connect to it. I looked into satellite TV and eventually had someone come in to tell me if I could get it here," Schaaf said. "The Internet service they were providing was actually HughesNet Gen4. As soon as they sent me information on HughesNet, I told them to hook me up as soon as it was available."

Schaaf uses HughesNet Gen4 to do research, source materials for her woodworking business, and file tax returns electronically. HughesNet Gen4 provides reliable service and high download speeds that weren't possible with dial-up.

Even though she lives in a tricky spot for satellite reception, with the mountain across the street blocking much of the horizon,

"As soon as they sent me information on HughesNet, I told them to hook me up as soon as it was available."

HughesNet 
Gen4 

Schaaf said her Hughes installers had to cut only one tree branch out of the way to mount the dish on her house and position it correctly.

"I love Gen4 and it has been just about trouble free," she said. "Once I had to reboot, but that was because we had some strange weather with electric pulses, things like that."

The study and practice of spirituality are among Schaaf's many interests. They are the chief reasons she ended up in the shadow of the Adirondacks after spending much of her life in Nebraska and Kentucky.

"I let myself be guided here—I'm not quite sure why. I wanted peace and solitude, and in general this is a quiet place. I've been in my house for 12 years and I've grown very attached to it," she said.



"I love the HughesNet Gen4 service. It's made a huge difference for me. When I heard what it could do, I couldn't wait to get it."

With HughesNet Gen4, she did not have to choose between living where she wants and staying connected to the outside world.

"I love the HughesNet Gen4 service. It's made a huge difference for me. When I heard what it could do, I couldn't wait to get it," she said. "I've had no problems since I was hooked up in 2012. Basically, if the power is on, then I'm connected. The download speeds and everything else is so much better than what I had before."

About Hughes

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