

## MANSION

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# Staying Apart Together

Some families are using vacation homes to quarantine individual members of the family

By NANCY KEATES

**OWNING A VACATION HOME** has long been a way to bring families together. Now, in this unprecedented global crisis, it offers an unexpected benefit: keeping family members separated.

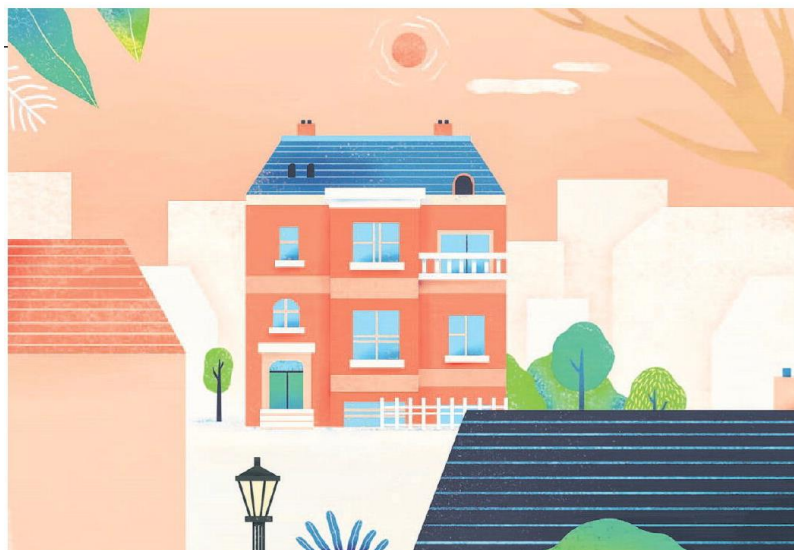
The spread of the new coronavirus across the U.S. has forced many people to self-quarantine. Sometimes it is to protect vulnerable parents from children back from college or an overseas trip. A family member who is already sick might need a separate room, while partners in front-line jobs like health care stay on opposite ends of the house to avoid infecting each other.

"I would love to be home, but I am not comfortable going home," says Zoe Beutel, 22, who lives in New York City and works in investment banking at Lazard. Ms. Beutel's parents live in Newton,

Mass., where their house only has 1½ bathrooms. Her mother, Robin Kaplan, is a 58-year-old clinical social worker who has asthma and just got over an upper-respiratory infection in February. Up until March 16, Ms. Beutel was working at 30 Rockefeller Plaza, a business and tourism hub, eating takeout at work and exposed to too many variables to risk going to Newton, where she would be afraid of touching the refrigerator.

Instead, Ms. Beutel is living for now with her boyfriend in his family's vacation house in Westhampton, N.Y. His parents, who are in their 50s, go back and forth between their house in Great Neck, N.Y., and Westhampton. Even though she has been dating her boyfriend for two years, they weren't living together. Ms. Beutel had been away with his family before a couple of times, and they get along well, but living in someone else's space has its

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# Apart

Continued from page M1 challenges. Still, she feels fortunate to have such a good option.

Ms. Kaplan's son, Eli Beutel, 20, is also living apart from the family for now. A sophomore at Tufts University, where a student tested positive a few days before the deadline to move off campus, he is in the Kaplan-Beutel family vacation house in the Berkshires, along with two other college students. They are learning how to cook, hiking and doing online classes as well as they can, given that there is no cell service and spotty internet. "It's fun—probably more fun here than back at home," he says. Ms. Kaplan agrees. "I know he is safe. I know I am safe. And we are helping to flatten the curve," she says. Still, separation is hard for her and her husband. "I don't know when we will see them."

In times of crisis, decisions can result in longer separations than anticipated. Douglas Johnson and his wife Sandy Johnson were planning to travel from their home in Hawaii to their apartment in downtown Houston in mid-March, where Ms. Johnson owns a technology company. At the last minute, Mr. Johnson, a 79-year-old retired aerospace engineer, decided to stay in Kauai because he was uncomfortable flying during the pandemic due to his age. Now, Hawaii has mandated a 14-day quarantine for all visitors and returning residents, and his wife needs to stay in Houston for family and business reasons. Mr. Johnson says that even though he feels isolated ("It's getting to be like a ghost town," he says), and he misses his wife, being stuck in Hawaii isn't so bad. Their three-bedroom townhouse is on the coast in a resort called Timbers Kauai, which has a restaurant and staff to provide food, supplies and fresh produce from the garden whenever he needs it. There are miles of walking trails and he has been working on a digital model for a train project. "I feel a lot more comfortable not being around family right now, for their safety and mine," he says.

Worries about being too close to the 21 young adults they have unofficially adopted over the years is what drove Los Angeles-based interior designer Thomas Ryan and his husband Matthew Ryan to their country house in Solvang, Calif., 34 miles north of Santa Barbara. Since many of the couple's "adoptees" live in the couple's houses in Seattle and Los Angeles while they attend college or work, Thomas Ryan, whose doc-

tor advised him to stay away from young people right now, thought it would be safer to just stay away. "It was always my refuge from the kids anyway," he says.

The couple are self-quarantining, having stocked up on food and gardening materials, leaving only for walks and drives. "It's not horrible," Mr. Ryan says, using humor to acknowledge their fortune in owning a place to go in such a beautiful setting. He is expecting they will be there at least three months, until there is more widespread testing for the virus, before he will feel safe venturing out. The situation reminds him of when he lived in New York City in the 1980s, during the AIDS epidemic. "It scares me the

same way," he says. For Jay Mason, a 44-year-old company founder, the possibility of exposing his parents to the virus is one reason he decided to decamp from his home in West Linn, Ore., where his parents live nearby, to his house in the 1,500-acre resort of Punta Mita, Mexico, about 15 miles north of Puerto Vallarta, with his wife Tonia Mason, their two daughters and some family friends. His mother has diabetes and his father had to self-quarantine after a trip to Europe. "I couldn't even hug them goodbye," says

Mr. Mason. Life at their resort house, which is about 20,000 square feet, is a little surreal, with almost no one around and the golf courses, hotel swimming pools and beaches practically empty. Mr. Mason says the family had planned to be there for spring break and could now end up staying all summer. The nearby hospital is state of the art and he is thinking of hiring a tutor for his daughters, who are 13 and 15. As someone who travels every week for work normally, he says he knows he is fortunate. "We aren't sure when we will be back," he says. Families that don't have the luxury of owning a vacation house are doing what they can to separate at home. When it became necessary to bring her daughter Nasra home from college in Switzerland in March, Brooke Condit, a nurse in Portland, Ore., encouraged her parents, who are in their late 60s, to rent a beach house in the city of Manzanita on the Oregon coast for two weeks. Ms. Condit lives with her parents in a three-bedroom, two-bathroom house and she thought that the arrangement would give her

had to return to their homes, and their reservation was canceled. Ms. Condit put her daughter in quarantine instead in the work studio attached to the house. Nasra isn't allowed in the living room and kitchen and eats her meals in the studio, but she has access directly to the backyard outside. As a nurse, she says what she sees at the hospital is terrifying enough to make the necessity of quarantining clear. "It's stressful," says Ms. Condit. "She was tearful when she came home and saw what we are asking of her." But after news came that a classmate's grandfather had died from Covid-19, she has taken it more seriously, says Ms. Condit. Michael Kerin has three plans in case his family members get sick. Plan 1: Mr. Kerin, 56, figures he and his wife, Lisa Kerin, who works from their Montvale, N.J., house, could stay home and send their children back to their apartments near their colleges. Plan 2: His wife could stay home and he and the children could go to the three vacation rentals he owns in Morris, Conn., with one person in each house. Plan 3: They all stay home and everyone retreats to their own room. "Whenever the four of us are home we all watch our own TVs anyway," he says.



MARK CONLARK (ILLUSTRATIONS)