

<https://gradschool.duke.edu/about/news/life-durham-families-live-chat-2015>

ALEX: (intro is cut off) Alex Bey. I'm a fifth year graduate student in the neuro depart, neurobiology department. I'm originally from Winston-Salem, North Carolina and I'm the mother of twins, Roy and Etta, who are going to be three in June.

CARLOS: And I'm Carlos Tavares. I'm a third year student in the PhD Sociology program. I'm originally from the Cape Verde Islands off the west coast of Africa and I have two children, Makenna who is seven and Micah who is two. Um, before we get started we wanted to let you know that this session will be recorded and a link will be emailed to all admitted students. So, let's go ahead and get started.

ALEX: Okay. Our first question: **what are some fun and inexpensive family activities close to campus?** Um, that's a great thing to think about right now, now that the weather is getting a lot warmer in North Carolina. We are lucky that Durham has a lot of great parks. Both, um, on campus, you can go to Duke Gardens which is a beautiful arboretum and they have ducks and animals to look at as well as lots of cool plants, and it is free for students to bring their families. Um, also, there are just lots of parks in the Durham Parks System that are great to go to and also free. Um, we like to go to the Farmer's Market a lot, just to look at all the people and try some new fruits and vegetables and there are lots of vendors there and food trucks, which is a lot of fun.

CARLOS: (nodding) Yeah, so, yeah, my family as well, we like to, to go to parks. Um, we've come to the Gardens a lot like Alex mentioned. Um, and so yeah, well really, really close to campus and there are lots of good parks that have different types of activities for different ages. Um, so there's a park that's near, which is close to campus, a few miles but it's near the Jordan High School, and that has like tire swings and uh, like a little trail and other things that you can enjoy with your kids there. So there, those are things that are free, um, and that we've had fun doing.

ALEX: There are a lot of really good museums in the area too if you, if you're, that are not exactly free but are pretty inexpensive, especially if you get a family membership and you can go as many times as you want all year long. And we go the Museum of Life and Science in Durham a lot.

CARLOS: Yeah, we've gone to the Museum of Life and Science. And then not, not exactly close to campus, but you know, about 20 minutes away in Raleigh, are a couple of, you know, cool, not so expensive things to do. So there's Pullen Park, which is in Raleigh, that has, you know, it has like a train that goes around the park, they have like, um, paddle boats and other types of things which are all only like a dollar for each ticket, so we've taken our family there a lot. Um,

there's also a Marbles Museum, and, which is only five dollars per kid, and then the Museum of Natural History, which is right next door, which is um, free to the public. So within, you know, 20 minutes or so, there are lots of things to do, uh, for families that are not that expensive.

ALEX: (nodding)

CARLOS: The next question is, it says, **can you provide advice of financial stability or how to maintain a family in Durham on a PhD stipend?** That's a good question (laughing), um, um so, okay, I'll just start with, um, us and how we've done that. So um, my wife and I moved here and we had, uh, just Makenna, and then Micah was born after that. So um, my wife currently works full-time and our kids, and this is something that may come up later, but our kids are on the Duke Health Insurance Plan. Um, so that has helped, um, in terms of, you know, being financially stable for us. So I can't necessarily speak to how it would be to just maintain yourself on one particular income, just on the Duke stipend.

ALEX: Yeah, so, I also have the, the Duke stipend, which um, and my husband was a graduate student during most of, um, our time in Durham and he recently got his PhD, so we had two student stipends. We found that, like, more than enough because the cost of living in Durham is really low compared to a lot of other cities, um, or areas where you might find similar universities. So we found that was great. We were able to buy a house during grad school, which we didn't really expect in a lot of other places we looked at, um, and since we're going to be here for a while, that was a good investment for us and it's nice to have our own space. Um, and then, you know, our kids are in daycare since we are both working and we've been fortunate to take advantage of, Duke has a childcare stipend for graduate students, um, and so that puts some money every month towards their daycare bill, which we've found really helpful.

** 4:37**

CARLOS: Yeah, we also took advantage of that and that has been very helpful in terms of being able to focus on, um, the program, um, and not necessarily having to worry about, um, footing the whole cost, as most of you know, daycare is, is expensive. But The Graduate School subsidy really helps, um, towards that cause.

ALEX: Yeah, and since we're already speaking about it, I saw one of the questions coming up is about the childcare subsidy, so maybe we'll just talk about that for a minute. Um, it says, **how much approximately are childcare subsidies towards childcare, (5:12) are students eligible?** So, I think to be eligible, first of all you have to be a graduate student in good standing at Duke and your partner, um, has to also, be either working full-time or going to school full-time or otherwise unable to care for your children full-time. Um, and so if that's true, I think it's sort of

rated by the number of children you have, and I want to say it \$5,000 per year for one and maybe \$8,000 for two. So that, you know, makes a big difference for a lot of people.

CARLOS: Yeah, and they have some requirements on, like, what types of facilities. So I think, um, it has to be at least, um...

ALEX: I think it's four or five star.

CARLOS: (nodding) Four- or five-star rated facility. But um, yeah, so yeah, it's, it's pretty generous of a subsidy and definitely helps with the, the cost of, um, the childcare. And I think you can get it for, up to three years, is that?

ALEX: I'm not sure of the cap.

CARLOS: No, No.

ALEX: They haven't capped me off yet (laughing).

CARLOS: (laughing) No, I just talked to the person in charge recently and I think they said, uh, general, like a three-year cap per child.

ALEX: I also like the flexibility of it where it's not like you have to use it at one childcare facility on campus or something. So since my husband doesn't work on campus, it's more convenient for us to send our kids to a daycare close to where we live. And the stipend is eligible, as you said, for any four or five-star rated daycare, so you don't have to use just one. Um, so one other question is, **what are medical facilities like for expecting mothers?** Um, that's actually a really great thing about coming to Durham, the Duke healthcare system is top-notch. I did my prenatal care there and my kids were delivered at Duke, but there is also a variety of OBGYN's in the area affiliated with Duke or its partner hospital, um, Duke Regional Hospital. As well as some people who want to go to a birth center, they go to Chapel Hill, there is like a midwife practice in Chapel Hill that is pretty big. Um, and so, I found like the, the care to be, the care here to be great. Um, and it was pretty affordable considering I was on student health insurance and I didn't know what the maternity benefits would be like until we decided to have children. And it's really pretty good, everything, um, was very well covered and there's a cap on how much you pay out-of-pocket per year per family and so that was really helpful for us for planning because you knew how much money it was going to cost for the whole thing together, rather than waiting until you got the bills and then figuring out how much you have to pay.

** 7:37 **

CARLOS: Right, yeah, so my, my son was born here, he was born at UNC Hospital and we had a really great experience as well. Like Alex mentioned, um, you know, most of the hospitals here have top-notch quality, they have um, neonatal centers and, you know, children's hospitals, and you know, very adequate resources to deal with any types of problems that, you know, might come up. Um, and yeah, like you mentioned, the, the aspect of knowing what you are gonna owe and the student health insurance being actually pretty good for maternity was really helpful. Alright, um, the next question says, um, this person says, **I want my wife to have a similar insurance as I will or something that can cover her expenses in case of accidents or illnesses. How can I do that?** Well, um, the, you, you can add a spouse and your children to the Duke, um, insurance, which right now is through Blue Cross Blue, I'm sorry, Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Carolina. Um, your, your part of the health insurance, um, if you get a, you know, if your department offers an assistantship or a fellowship, is usually covered by The Graduate School. Um, and then to add, I'm trying to remember what it was this year, I want to say it was around \$2700, I don't remember correctly, but my wife is on our insurance. It's somewhere in, in that range and then it's a little bit less expensive then to add children, so we found the health insurance through Duke to be, you know, very adequate. The network is large, um, and the, the out-of-pocket money, in terms of copays and other types of expenses, are low. Um, I haven't really explored other options just because my wife has been on the Duke, um, plan, um, but, yeah.

ALEX: One of the things that we didn't realize initially about the health insurance premium for children is it's, the rate, it think it's about \$2000 per children, and that's not per child, which we didn't read carefully at first so that was kind of a nice surprise to us that the \$2000 covers both of our kids rather than \$2000 per child. So, keep that in mind if you have more than one child, that it's rated like that. One of the questions coming up also on health insurance is, **if I don't get health insurance now, will I have the opportunity to opt in at a later date?** Um, it would be best to check with the student health website, they have a really extensive information section about the student health plans, but my understanding is that there are different enrollment periods throughout the year. So if you don't come to graduate school and opt in right away, there are other chances to enroll, but it's usually done on the academic calendar from what I understand.

CARLOS: (nodding) Yeah, I think that's right. Um, and I think there are certain conditions for which you can opt in. So they have open enrollment periods where you can then opt in, um, and join the student health insurance, but those are more limited in what those can be. I don't know all the specifics of that. But um, oh, and the other thing I wanted to say is, um, uh I lost my train of thought (laughing). I was going to say something else, if I remember I'll jump in and say something. Um, the next question, it says, **are there activities for families sponsored by Duke that help connect to other students with families?** This is a great question and the answer to it is yes! Um, so the, The Grad School has, uh, a listserv, and a small organization, it's called Grad

Parents, and they host events. So this year, they had something at the Museum of Life and Science, last year they something, or it might have been in the fall, they had something, uh, the circus, before they had Disney on Ice, where they usually sponsor tickets for families, and there you are able to meet people and connect with other, um, students who have families. But then they, so besides the big events, they also have usually a lunch, um, periodically, uh, and events that they will sponsor here on campus as well.

11:47

ALEX: Yeah, we've gone to a few of these Grad Parent-sponsored events and they're really fun. It's cool to see your friends that you know have kids, but then to meet a bunch of other graduate students that you would have never known or also have families and hear about sort of how they're balancing doing their research and their classes with talking care of their family. So, I found it really neat to meet the other people as well as to like do the fun activities that they are providing for us. Um, the other great thing about that Grad Parents group is that it's just a good resource. There is a Listserv that they run as well as there is a student president and then a staff member who is the program coordinator, who's really great, and so if you ever have questions about what daycares are great or what public schools people are interested in sending their children to or just, you know, if you have some, you want to buy or sell baby gear, it's a great way to like meet other people on campus with kids, just send emails through the listserv. Um, the next question is, are, **is it safe for everyone to ride a bike or walk around Duke and its surroundings during the evenings?** Um, I'm not a big bike rider so I can't speak to that. I know that there are some routes around campus that have bike lanes and other that don't, so I imagine, you know, practice good cycling safety and pick bike routes if you can because then the, the cars will be more aware of you and you'll have the space to cycle safely. Um, but in terms of, I do come to the lab and work at night and I feel safe on campus. There's um, a Safe Rides program if you have to park far away from your building that you can call in the evenings and get like a van ride to your car or wherever you need to go, um, around campus. Um, and there are some parking facilities close, so my, I happen to be lucky and park near where I work, so I just park my car and walk and it's very well-lit and there are, you know, emergency call boxes along the way in case I ever needed to get help. So, I feel safe doing that, but you know, exercise caution.

CARLOS: Yeah, I would generally say that, you know, I've not had, um, I don't, I'm not a bike rider either, but um, I do walk on campus late at night when I'm generally working in the office. Another thing I'll say is that, um, at least near my building, the parking lots after 5 pm, so generally the lots that are close to some of the buildings, are um, reserved for faculty and staff and others who use those lots, but then after 5 pm, students, graduate students can swipe their cards and have access, uh, to some of those lots. So generally if people are working late in the office, many of them will move their cars closer to, um, to our building. But, but, I walk through

the, you know, through the Gardens late at night and um, I've never had any problems or anything like that, so yeah. Um, the next question is, **what are the best neighborhoods that are close to Durham for families other than suburbs?** Um, I don't, I don't live in Durham, but I have a few friends who live in Durham. They live near the, um, the Watts Elementary School, which is near East Campus, um, and that's uh, that's uh, sort of, uh, favorite neighborhood. A lot of faculty members live in that neighborhood, uh, and I've, from the conversations that I've had with the friends in that department, in my department, uh, they've found that to be, um, a good neighborhood. But, but Alex lives in Durham so I'll let her speak more to that.

** 14:58 **

ALEX: Yeah, so I live in Northern Durham, um, near Duke Regional Hospital and I really like it up there because it's really quiet and we have a big yard, and like a fenced yard for our kids and the dogs and a garden, so it feels like, not very urban or very suburban, it's almost like pretty rural which I really like. Whereas I have friends that live much closer to campus in apartments and it's, you know, they can walk to lots of restaurants and stores and that's a much more urban feel and then I know people that sort of live in between, where they live in neighborhoods that have a good community of people with children and a lot of, um, similar-aged families living close together. As you said, Watts Hillandale is a popular neighborhood. We go to the park there a lot. It's a lot of kids and a lot of nice playground equipment. And then there's also a pretty good community of people living in Southern Durham, kind of near Southpoint Mall.

CARLOS: (nodding) That's right, yeah.

ALEX: I know a lot of people with kids that live in that area because there are a lot of townhomes as well as single-family houses that are affordable. Um, our next question is, **do students typically get their insurance through Duke or do they use Obamacare?** Um, most of my classmates that are, um, students here are on the student health plan just because it's usually covered through your program or it's just really affordable if not, so a lot of people do that. Um, but I have friends whose spouses are on, um, plans through the ACA network, so my next door neighbor for example, he's a graduate student and his wife, um, stays at home with their son and she got a pretty affordable plan through the Exchange that they are really happy about.

CARLOS: Yeah, most of the students in my program that, that I know of, um, are on the, the Duke Student Health Insurance. Um, like Alex said, it's pretty affordable. I don't have much experience with, um, Obamacare and um, so I'm not really sure, you know, if, if students are using that, I'm not aware of it, um, as much. The next question says, **I'm planning on moving to a neighboring town, how can I find out if there are people who would like to carpool with me?** Um, and this is one respect in which Duke is, is uh, really good and um, Duke actually

helps you coordinate these particular efforts because they have a web, website that, that is dedicated to helping people who are trying to carpool or connect with each other. Um, I don't remember what the site is called. I think if you Google it, uh, Duke carpool or something like that, you'll be able to, uh, find it. But there, you can put in your address, um, and you can see others who are, you know, in your area. Um, and I think you might, you might even be able to send, uh, like a message or like a request and then that person can, um, either respond, you know, you guys can talk about schedules and stuff like that. I, I think you, you may even have to put in what your schedule is on the website so that other people can see like what times you're coming to Duke and what times you're leaving. Um, uh, so yeah.

ALEX: I know there's also some parking permits specifically for people carpooling.

CARLOS: Right, right. (nodding)

ALEX: So I know people who weren't necessarily, they didn't, hadn't thought about carpooling until they realized like, that they would get a really great parking permit (laughing). So they and like their friends coordinated efforts and now they share a carpool permit and they drive to work together because they can park really close to where they work now and it's like a special parking situation. Um, and then, also, there are, um, public transport options between Durham and the surrounding areas. Like I know there's buses that run between Durham and Chapel Hill or Durham and Raleigh so people, um, who can't find carpoolers in their area may be able to take advantage of public transit options. Um, let's see. This says, under our Duke medical plan, if the Student Health Center is, um, **is the Student Health Center the required first place to turn for basic health care?** I don't think it's required, but it is free. So, when you pay your student health insurance plan and your student fees, there's a health fee included which is used to, I think, subsidize the Student Health Center, so whenever I have like a problem and I just want to see a general practitioner, I often will go to Student Health because then I don't have to pay anything and it's really, you know, it's on campus, it's easy to walk in and get an appointment most times. You can schedule an appointment online if you have a really tight schedule. So I often will use that, but I have gone to specialists directly and paid a copay to see like my OBGYN or to go to like an allergist. I don't think I had to go to Duke, no, I'm sure I did not have to Duke Student Health to get their permission or something to do that. If you have a specific type of doctor you want to see or you would like to find a family care doctor or someone outside of the student health system, that's an option.

19:18

CARLOS: Yeah so, yeah so, uh, I think like Alex said, I don't think it's required, but it is pretty convenient, especially um, you know, being on campus and the Duke MyChart, which you were talking about, scheduling stuff online, being able to communicate with your doctor, um, for

refills or, um, you know, just, just general questions, it's pretty convenient. I mean, the doctors are pretty responsive in terms of getting back to you quickly. Um, so I, I found it, even though it's not required, I found it to be a useful place to, to go for some of your general, yeah um, general concerns. The next question says, **what are some quality public, elementary schools in Durham?** Um, well I, I'll preface this by saying that, you know, sort of evaluating the quality of, uh, public schools, you know, there are different ways to go, right? So, you know, one way is just to ask people and, you know, get their sort of opinion on which schools are good and bad. Another way is to sort of look at, I guess more of, technically objective measures of school quality, which generally can be obtained through, um, the, the North Carolina State of Education, which gives a sort of report card for each, um, for each school, for each public school in every district, including charter schools and magnet schools. Um, so you know, according to the latest ratings I saw, because the, the North Carolina Department of Education just put these out recently and it was in the, it was in the newspaper, but I think I saw some of the good schools here. Um, I think I saw Cedar Creek, um, did pretty well, um, I think also Watts did pretty well, um, but beyond that I'm not really sure. Um, but yeah.

ALEX: Yes, there was a list, like he was saying, with the report cards publically available and that's one way of doing it. Um, I think there's other like "rate my school" type websites where you can hear feedback from specific parents. Um, but I think one nice thing about the public school system here is that there is an extensive range of magnet schools that are focused on specific topics or, like there is, um, a performing arts or more like science and math. OR, for example, the public school that our house is zoned for was recently added a magnet language immersion program that we are really excited about taking advantage of in a few years for our kids, where they can either learn, um, Spanish or Chinese full-time, so that's pretty cool. Um, **Are there any good kids museums or cultural centers in the area?** I think we've touched a little on some of our favorite museums, but we can focus on those. Um, I like the Museum of Life and Science. It's in Durham. It's like half way between campus and where I live, so it's really convenient. Um and, they, um, offer really affordable family packages where you can pay one fee and then come to the museum as much as you'd like all year long and you don't have to be the same, um, it's just like, there's a cap on the number of people but not the specific people. So for example, if the, my in-laws or my parents come in to town they can take my kids to the museum with our membership, so that's great. Um, that has like a pretty extensive outdoor section with lots of different animals, both native and um, sort of imported animals, like lemurs. There's the Lemur Center itself, a lot of people go on tours there. You can see all sorts of primates, um, and learn more about them there and that's through the Duke University Lemur Center. Um, other museums, there's, I guess you talked about the Natural, The Life and Science, or what is it, the Natural History Museum?

CARLOS: Yeah, the Natural History Museum.

ALEX: Yeah, and there's a good art museum actually on campus. Duke has the Nasher Museum, which as a student, I think you can get in for free and my children, last time we went they were young enough so they were also free. I was a bit nervous about taking little kids to an art museum, but we went to the Miró Exhibit and it's like really beautiful and abstract and a lot of colorful paints as well as sculptures and they really enjoyed it, I think.

23:14

CARLOS: Yeah, um. So, one museum that we really like, we live a little closer to Raleigh, um, one museum that we really like is the Marbles Museum. They have really, um, really hands-on stuff, um so, similar to the Life and Science Museum as well where they have really hands-on stuff, they have really, um, cool exhibits for like sports-related things or they have a really cool water exhibit. Um, there's a little money center where it's supposed to help the kids like get acquainted with money and get your banks and, you know, saving and that kind of thing. So we really like going there as well and, and when we're usually there, we usually go to the Museum of Natural History, which is next door and it's free. Um the, the Marbles Museum is, is \$5 for kids and for adults. So, yeah so.

ALEX: I also forgot. There's a really great art museum in Raleigh, for like North Carolina's, I think it's like the State Art Museum, and it's free as well. They have sometimes specific exhibits that you pay for, but the general museum and its whole outdoor campus is free. And, they have like a really extensive walking trail with outdoor sculptures, which is a lot of fun to take little kids to if you otherwise would feel like uncomfortable taking them to like a really quiet and formal art museum environment, to like let them get outside and go right up to a big sculpture. It's a lot of fun.

24:30

CARLOS: Um, the next question says, **can you speak on what it's like being the spouse of a PhD student?** Um, well uh, I guess I'll try to, I'm gonna try to, um just, from my wife's experience, what it's like to be married for, to a PhD student. So um, for some of you guys coming to the PhD program here, um, your schedule isn't as, um how do I say it, your schedule isn't as like firm. Like, you'll have classes and you'll have other things, but then you'll have, you know, talks and other things that will pop up, so sometimes I have stuff that's at night and so, and sometimes my wife is generally, you know, putting the kids to bed by herself or, um, other things like that but I would say there are lots of perks too, you know. Um she, um she has, because we're married, she has access to the Duke recreational facilities, um, and when they have events for families, uh, for football or basketball or other things, generally we all get to come. Um so yeah, I would say there are, you know, there are some things that are, you know,

put some pressures on the spouse of a PhD student but there are other things that are also, you know, really nice and benefits as sort of being a part of the Duke community as well.

25:50

ALEX: Yeah, so my husband just defended his PhD, um, less than a year ago, so I can speak as being his spouse too, and from my own schedule what that must do to him. I think we've been really beneficial that we both have a lot of flexibility, like you were saying, in our time. After your core classes are done, if you do research during your PhD, a lot times that's up to you to determine when you do it and how, how you do it, where on campus, if you can do it from home or if you have to be in a lab. But, that's been really great for having kids because we're able to have a very balanced and flexible schedule where, if one person needs to go to a conference or a meeting at a strange time, the other person can almost always cover for them and it's not a big deal. Um, and we try to be pretty balanced about, you know, if one person goes to a conference, the other one will go to a conference later in the year. Um and, we like that too because we're able to send our kids to childcare less times that we would've otherwise, if we both had really strict, you know, nine-to-fives and we had to clock in or something. It's nice to be able to like bring them late or pick them up early. Um, so then another question is, **does Duke provide any job assistance for the spouses of students?** Um, I can't speak to this directly because we've not used any of these services. It's possible, uh but, I'm sure that like people have thought about this question a lot since Duke is one of the biggest employers in this area, so there's a lot of people coming here to go to school here or to work in the hospital system or to work otherwise on the campus, so I'm sure there's a lot of different sort of job opportunities.

CARLOS: Yeah, I don't know specifically if, if Duke was involved in the process, but three other people who are in my cohort, their spouses work, um, at Duke. And like I said, I don't really know if Duke aided in that um, you know, sort of job search or not. Um but like Alex says, Duke is, you know, a pretty large employer so there are, you know, lots of different, and Duke, you know, having a medical center, there are those opportunities and then there are, you know, obviously opportunities on the campus working in various departments. So um, at least in my department there are a lot of spouses that also work, um, on campus. Um, the next, uh, question is, **what is the job market like in Durham and the surrounding areas?** Um, so I think one of the things that the Triangle is, is really well-known for is, is for sort of being sort of a tech hub. There are lots of different, so in terms of the technology aspect, there are lots of different companies like Nvidia, Cisco and IBM and other companies that have very large, um, centers here. They have very large offices here and they employ a lot of people. Um, like Alex said, Duke is also a very large employer and then the hospitals, Duke, UNC, WakeMed, um, the Regional Hospital which is affiliated with our. Um, so I would say that the job market, I think, is, comparatively to other areas of the country, is pretty good, but maybe you can add something to that.

****28:50****

ALEX: Yeah, so in addition to the tech companies, we have a lot of pharmaceutical and, like, biotech companies too.

CARLOS: That's true, yeah.

ALEX: So I know, I know a lot of people that wanted to work in industry that are graduate students here even found jobs through these sort of companies after school. So clearly, there's a lot of jobs in those sectors. Um, the next question is, **can you recommend some resources for finding good childcare providers and what are some quality preschools in the area?** Yeah, so when I originally was applying for the childcare subsidy at Duke, they have this requirement that you find a four- or five-star center and to educate myself about what that was, I went, there's like there's a state-sponsored website that lists the ratings for different daycares and I was shocked at how many different daycare providers there are in the area. So, you can take time to look through there and see the ratings that the schools have gotten and that's sort of based on like the teacher-to-student ratio as well as what facilities they have and sort of their track record for their turnover of staff and stuff like that. So you can sort of look at those more objective numbers as one way and then other, um, option is just talking to people who have kids on campus or like going to the Grad Parents listserv and asking, um, what people have done. A lot of people take advantage of the childcare services close to campus. There are two daycares that are affiliated at Duke's campus, um there's The Little School and then I think there's a Bright Horizons at Duke's campus, and those are both I think five-star centers and are very highly rated and, um, people like them a lot. So, if it's convenient for you to take your children with you to Duke's campus to these centers, that's an option.

****30:17****

CARLOS: Yeah, yeah so I would just emphasize what Alex said, that really one way that people try to get information on this is to connect with the Grad Parents, um, listserv and there is a staff member, Sondra Ponzi, at The Graduate School, that's sort of in charge of this and, if you're interested, can connect you with, with this listserv and with other people who are in similar situations, have kids and are looking for a childcare facility. So, I would take advantage of that.

ALEX: Oh, and related to this, before our kids went to daycare, we actually kept them at home for the first year and so thanks to my husband's flexibility and my flexibility as well as hiring, um, a part-time nanny, we were able to do that. So, we took advantage of, um, putting an ad in the Duke newspaper, The Chronicle, and looking for, um, someone interested in doing part-time babysitting that way. And I know also, I don't think Duke has this, but UNC has a, um, sort of a

yearly list of people interested in doing babysitting or pet sitting or other sort of services that they put out, so we looked through that list too and contacted people that lived in this area that were interested in like the specific schedule requirements we wanted to have someone come in.

CARLOS: Um, the next question is, **what is the closest place where I can take the kids to just run around and play?** Well, I think the closest place to campus is really Duke Gardens. So, Duke Gardens has some wide-open areas where kids can run around, um, and play so in, when the weather is nice, you'll see people out there throwing balls around and just, kids just running around. They also have a little like uh, little like koi pond, um, where they have fish and there's all kinds of, uh, different plants and stuff that you can see, some unusual ones that you won't find other places. Um, so that's really the closest place. You can ride the bus for free over to East Campus, um, and the, uh, the playground that's near the Watts Elementary School is, is walkable from East Campus. Um so, those are two places that are close.

ALEX: Yeah, as he mentioned, I think Duke Gardens is amazing and I never realized. You know, it sounds like, oh a garden on campus, like my undergrad had flowers too, and this is, it's really this world-class arboretum and it would take you days to look at everything in it walking around. So, it's a really great place to explore and, as you said, they have an open space where there will be other, other kids kicking balls or playing, so you can let your kids run around there. Um so, **what are some nearby family-friendly restaurants?** Oh, one of my favorite topics, eating (laughing). Um so, we're just now getting brave enough to take our kids more regularly out to eat because with twins we were always afraid that the adult-to-kid ratio wasn't great for going out, but we're actually finding it, uh, more manageable. Our first sort of like restaurant we went to with them is Elmo's Diner on Ninth Street because it's super kid friendly. You'll be hard-pressed to find a table that doesn't have small children at it (laughing).

CARLOS: Mhm (nodding)

ALEX: So if you don't want to be surrounded by children, don't go there during like brunch or dinner. Um and that's great because the, the wait staff are super friendly and nobody seems like putout if your kid is like eating with their hands or staring at other children instead of eating or whatever our kids do in public. Um, so we went there first and we've been there numerous times and they have a great diner sort of menu. So, lots of kid-friendly choices. You know, you can get breakfast any time of the day. And then from there, recently we went to **Nanataco**, which is a taco restaurant, um, fairly close to campus. And uh, again we went there because we like Mexican food a lot, but this is a place we've gone before as just the two us and saw that everyone else had kids there, so we were like, oh we can bring our kids and we won't be out of place.

CARLOS: Yeah, so we like Elmo's Diner as well and like Alex said, it's really kid friendly, uh, and even their menu items are, you know, things that kids will eat as well, so we like that. Another place that we've been that didn't initially strike me as a kid-friendly place, but there are always kids there, is a place called Monuts.

ALEX: Oh yeah.

CARLOS: Yeah, so it's, it sounds weird, I mean they always serve like donuts and breakfast sandwiches, breakfast sandwiches and then sandwiches, but it's really good, like really, really good donuts and really, really good sandwiches. Um, so that's another place that we like that's fairly close to campus as well. Um, yeah so.

** 34:34**

ALEX: Yeah, another option too is there's a ton of food trucks in the area and they come to different places. Sometimes some will come to campus, sometimes they'll all sort of converge in one location and they call it a Food Truck Rodeo. And so, sometimes they'll have those during the day, either at the Farmers' Market or other places downtown and that's fun because you can try a lot of different foods, um, while you're sort of in an outdoor environment, so you're not under any pressure to like make your kids sit still and like use their forks or like be real proper. You can tell that I have really been dominated by small twins (laughing). It's chaos.

CARLOS: (laughing) Yeah, but you're right. You know, for family-friendly places, it's hard when you're going somewhere where that's really quiet or, you know, where your kids are sort of expected to sit really still and not get up and so yeah, so, these places I think we've mentioned are all places where the kids are up or, you know, stuff is falling on the floor.

ALEX: (laughing)

CARLOS: Generally, it's loud and you won't hear it or it's not a big deal. Um, so.

ALEX: And if you can get a babysitter, there are so many other like really fantastic restaurants in the area too if you do want a night away from the kids. So, that's something that my husband and I like to do when, um, we are able to get our in-laws or my parents to watch the kids. We'll go out to eat because Durham is really known for its foodie culture and the amount of like really interesting restaurants in the area.

CARLOS: Yeah. Um, the next question is, **does Durham have good parks and hiking spots for families?** Now I don't know specifically about Durham, but in the area there are some really good, um, parks that, that are, for families. Um, one of them is called, um, Crabtree Lake Park,

um, that's, it's in Morrisville, which is kind of in between Durham and Raleigh. Um, there you have huge play structures, I think there are three of them at that park, and then, um, hiking and biking trails there and there's like a lake where in the summer they have boats that you can rent, um, and stuff like that. And there's another one that's a little farther away, um, that's called, um, Jordan Lake, um, and I think there, so besides the other stuff that I mentioned about Crabtree Lake, there they have, um, I think spots that you can rent for tents and they used to have cabins, although I'm not sure if they still have that, but they used to have cabins that you could rent, um, as well.

ALEX: Yeah, a similar camping option that's in Durham is, um, Eno River State Park. They have a lot of great hiking trails and a really pretty river that you could walk on, but if you want to stay overnight, they also have camping and that's within Durham. Um, and then I was just on the Durham Parks website the other day trying to get directions to a new park I'd never been to and I saw that there are 60 or more parks in Durham itself, which I was really surprised by. So, that's my new mission for this summer and the nice weather is to try a different park every week because there really are so many and they all have really different focuses. So, as you said, some will have a lot of different play structures, some will have like water that your kids can play in, some have really good hiking trails, some have a lot of open spaces for running around, so I'm hoping to try a new one each week because there's a lot that I've never heard of on the website. Um, let's see. Okay, the next question is, **can you speak of your experience with on-campus housing?** Um, the short answer is no because I have not lived on campus. Um, I know some people do. It's much more common for the undergraduate population. I think almost all of them live on campus until their senior years of undergrad. There are some, I think, options for graduate students but we have never lived on campus and I don't think I actually know anyone right now that does.

CARLOS: Yeah, same here. I, we've never lived on campus and I don't know, um, of any graduate students in our program that live on campus, so.

ALEX: But there are housing opportunities right around campus. I know plenty of people who live in some of the apartments that are literally right next to the campus, so they do walk to work.

38:26

CARLOS: Right. Um, the next question is, **what are some good places to shop for children's clothing, both for babies and older children?** Um, so I'll just tell you specifically about us. We generally shop at, uh, Goodwill, um, store, so we generally buy second-hand clothing for, for our children and, you know, the grandparents will buy them, like you know, new clothing and stuff like that (laughing).

ALEX: So much stuff (laughing).

CARLOS: But for us, we generally, uh, in our area there's a really good Goodwill store that generally has lots of clothing but also baby items. So, we've found strollers, bikes for kids, um, lots of toys and other types of things. So, very kid friendly in some of these second-hand stores. There's another store that also sells specifically like children's items, but I'm not remembering the name of the store, um, anyways, but it's specifically a kid's store and they, um, sell, um, generally pre-owned, um, items as well.

ALEX: Yeah, so there's, there's a couple like big, you know, box stores for baby stuff in the area like Babies R Us or Buy Buy Baby if you have like a really specific thing you're looking for or you want that kind of store. Um, we also rely a lot on getting second-hand stuff, either hand-me-downs from friends or from these stores, mainly 'cause like kids grow out of clothes so fast that like it's brand new practically even when they are done wearing it. So um, I know people often will, uh, sell or give away stuff on the Grad Parents listserv sometimes, maternity clothes or baby equipment or children's clothing, so that's one option. Um, and there's a lot of consignment stores in the area that focus just on children. And another option for baby equipment is, um, there's a Triangle Mothers of Twins, Triplets, Multiples, I'm not really sure the exact acronym, sale that happens a couple times a year, once in the spring and once in the fall. And so, they, it's not just equipment for twins or triplets, but they offer all sorts of baby stuff for sale, so that's really a good opportunity to see a lot of different choices in one place. Um, let's see. So, **please talk more about your experience with the Grad Parents group.** Um, so I originally came to it through applying for the childcare subsidy and, um, the coordinator was like, Oh let me add you to this listserv, and um, initially I didn't, there was, you know, I would just follow the listserv and see what people were selling or different events before asking, you know, has anyone taken their kid to this park or does anyone know a good babysitter. But recently, over the last couple of years, they've been doing a lot more scheduled events which I really like, like the lunches. There's, several times per year, maybe once a month, um, a lunch on campus that you can bring your partner or your children to and they provide food and one time they had chair massages and it's a nice way to get to know other people and sort of feel celebrated in having a family and a graduate student. Um, and then as you said, they had lots of events to the circus or Disney Frozen on Ice or a museum day which are a lot of fun. And, I think they have like meet-ups sometimes like at a park where you can just, everyone at their leisure can come and play and meet each other.

CARLOS: Yeah, yeah so my experience has been great. Um I, I had a similar experience to Alex, where I came to the Grad Parents through the childcare subsidy. I saw the childcare subsidy, was really excited about it, um, I applied and then the person said, hey let me add you to this, and um, yeah. So, yeah, it's a really supportive environment. You know, sort of you don't

have to be involved in all of these things, but these things are available, play dates, scheduled events, um, and other things that are happening so that if you want to get involved and, you know, meet other people, other graduate students who also have children and get together and that type of thing, that's possible but it's not like, you're not forced to do that obviously. But um, I think that was a benefit for, for us, uh, being here, so.

ALEX: Mhm.

42:22

CARLOS: Oh and I will also say, I have been at some other, uh, universities as a graduate student where, uh, this didn't necessarily exist, you know, the childcare subsidy or this type of group, at least that was coordinated through The Graduate School, didn't necessarily exist. Now, it may have existed informally through people who got together but not on this, not on this scale. So yeah, I would say that Duke is very supportive of, um, families and, and mindful of graduate students who have children, um, as represented in, you know, sort of the resources that they are putting into the subsidy and also sort of organizing this Grad Parents, uh, organization. Um, the next question says, **some cities have movies, cinemas and playhouses that cater to children and families, does Durham have anything like that?** That's a really good question. Um, I don't know, um, I don't know of any movie theaters that have specific like playhouses in them. I mean, some have arcades but I don't think that's necessarily what the question is trying to get at so, I'm not sure.

ALEX: Yeah, I know, uh, some movie theaters will have like specific showings during the day that are like very parent and baby friendly. Um, I have friends that have taken their babies to the movies before and like there are specific times of the day that are known to be like when everyone else might also have a baby there, so it's okay, nobody is going to like look at you for your crying baby. Um, we haven't taken our kids to very many movies yet. Um, but then playhouses I think they're talking about maybe theaters that offer plays that are child friendly. Um, Duke has a lot of performing arts options that are family friendly. They do like a Concerts in the Gardens series that's free, so in Duke Gardens you can bring your family and sort of picnic on the lawn and listen to music. Um, I know they put on a lot of plays on campus. There are probably some that are more family friendly than others. Um, UNC does a, uh, version of The Nutcracker most years that is super child friendly and you can bring your kids to the ballet. Um, let's see. The next question is, **are there any easily accessible vacation spots or road trips that you would recommend?** That's one of the greatest things about Durham for people with and without kids, is it's in between, um, the mountains and the beach of North Carolina, which I happen to think are both really beautiful. So it's, you know, a couple of hours to Wilmington and there's great beaches there, Wrightsville Beach and the North Carolina coast in general is, is, really, um, known for its nice beaches. You can, there's a lot of, um, also cool wildlife and things

to do on the Outer Banks, which is a little further of a drive. Um, and then the mountains are not too far from here. Again, it would take you maybe three or four hours to get to Asheville, which is a really cool town in the mountains that has a lot of good restaurants and art scene and a lot of young people. So, we've gone there before with our kids. Um, and then closer to here, we often go to a lot of, um, smaller towns in North Carolina that are like 20 to 30 minutes away from Durham to do things. Like we went recently to, uh, a goat farm in Pittsboro or Siler City which is maybe 20 to 30 minutes from here and they let you touch all of the baby goats and we got to eat goat cheese and my kids loved it. Um, we sometimes take our kids to Hillsborough, which is like a very small and historic, um, town maybe 20 minutes from here and there is like a nice sort of downtown Main Street you can walk on and like an ice cream parlor and restaurants and things, so we often go there.

45:52

CARLOS: Yeah so, a lot of the things that I enjoy too are what Alex has mentioned. Um, we've gone a lot to Wrightsville Beach, which is about two hours, um, east of here, um, and Kure Beach and in that area there is also an aquarium, so you can go to the beach and then the aquarium is right there. Um, there is also a Civil War, uh, kind of site right there off the beach as well. So there's, there's lots of, lots of really nice things about the Carolina beaches. Myrtle Beach is, um, about four hours away in South Carolina, so not too, not too bad and then the mountains as well, uh, both here in North Carolina and then the Blue Ridge Mountains in Virginia too are accessible, um, about three to three and a half hours from here, so if you enjoy like hiking and camping out and that kind of thing, um, there are lots of sort of options. Yeah. Um, the next question says, **what time management advice would you give an incoming PhD student parent?** Well um, I guess from my perspective, this is how I operate. Um, I try to get most of my work done here, so that when I go home I, at least when my kids are like up and around, I'm not trying to have to juggle like I have work to do but, you know, I also want to give attention to my kids and my family. So, one strategy that I have taken is, is to work here, uh, here on campus, um, get most of my work done here. Um, obviously there have been times where I've had to do stuff at home, but as a general practice I've taken the approach that, um, in terms of trying to manage my time, that most of my activities will be here and then when I go home, you know, I just kind of hang out and play with my kids and spend time with my wife.

ALEX: Yeah, I think this is one of the hardest parts about being a parent and a graduate student for me is time management because really so much of your schedule and your productivity is up to you and deciding how to use your time. Um, but when I've asked my friends who don't have children who are graduate students what the hardest part about grad school is, they also say time management, so I think this is, this is hard no matter what. Just figuring out how to be your own boss somewhat and, you know, to prioritize the many different things you need to work on and figure out how to get them done and in what order and when do you need to seek help or when

do you need to just try harder by yourself on something. Um, so that's, that's really helpful to have a supportive mentor or program, so I feel like my mentor and my graduate program are very supportive of me in that way and I feel like I can therefore take advantage of the flexibility grad school has to offer. And as you said, like when I'm home I don't really try to do a lot of work, but then when my kids are asleep I do sometimes do more work, so it's useful to be able to take that break and just focus on your kids or when you're working, just focus on work and not have to watch your kids at the same time. Um, so the next question is, **do many of the businesses in the area offer Duke or family discounts?** I know a lot of restaurants around campus do. I've seen signs that if you have a Duke ID you can get, you know, 10% off so that's something to think about, that you can eat at a lot of the restaurants around campus or in Durham for cheaper. Um, and then I think there are some other services that do. Like I remember when I first came here, people's cell phone bills, certain like Verizon or I don't remember exactly where, like you could get a discount if you were affiliated with the university, so that was kind of cool.

CARLOS: Yeah, mhm.

ALEX: And then some of the museums, I think, have student discounts, so that's nice.

CARLOS: Yeah, yeah so, definitely on the cell phone you can get discounts, so I, we have Sprint but they also offer discounts to Verizon and AT&T, so that's something you can take advantage of. Um, the museums, some, some places will give you free, um, free admission as a Duke student or other places it is just discounted. I remember when we went to the beach, we went to the Ripley's Aquarium, and there it was free admission for myself and my, uh, two other people.

ALEX: Oh, wow.

CARLOS: So yeah, it's not something that I knew about, but that's um, and then like you said, some restaurants around campus you can get a discount as well. I know there's, there's a sort of wider list of discounts that you can get somewhere, I don't remember if that's on the Human Resources website, uh, but it is located somewhere on the Duke website, so I think if you search for that, you would be able to find a more comprehensive list of the discounts that are offered, but yeah, like Alex said, there are many places that will give a Duke discount.

ALEX: This isn't actually a discount but it's a perk of being a Duke student that I recently, um, found out about, which is that there'd a lot of basketball games throughout the year where they offer family admission. If you have a Duke Student ID, you can, to some of the games you can bring up to four guests. You can bring your kids, your spouse, whoever. Sometimes it's just one or two guests, but there are like a lot of basketball games throughout the year in Cameron, which is a really neat environment to see a college basketball game in. People take it really seriously

here and the fans are like really enthusiastic so it's a lot of fun to go and you can bring your friends on those days.

****50:58****

CARLOS: Yeah, it's really cool. Um, so the best way to get information about that is to follow the Duke **Ushers** on Facebook and they'll, you know, announce, you know, is this going to be, uh, a grad student game or a family game. Um, generally when you have, when you bring kids, you can just sit in a specific section, uh, with kids so there will be other people who have kids there as well. I took my daughter and it was a really cool experience for her. She was doing the cheers and so she had a really great time. But yeah, they are really cool. I have taken family members and friends who, you know, who root for Duke as well, so yeah. Um, it said, the next question says, **you spoke about mentors, what is the mentoring system like at Duke?** Um, I'll speak about what it's like in our department. In our department, in your first year you are assigned, um, it's not technically an advisor, um I'm blanking on what the actual term is, but it's someone who sort of oversees your first year and just checks in on you to see how things are going. Um, in your second year, you will pick an advisor, um, and then generally, you know, obviously mutually agree upon you and the advisor and then the advisor will oversee your second year paper and then your dissertation proposal, um, and stuff like that. I guess the mentor experience really varies, from, from, in our department, right. Some, some mentors are really, um, hands-on and are really supportive, like my advisor has had me over to his house several times, not just me but other students that he advises, um, and we have lunch and things like that, and other advisors have a different strategy where it's a little bit, you know, if you need something you can come to them and it's a little more hands-off and they just sort of let you do your thing. And so, in our department at least, it seems to me, there seems to be some variability in terms of the mentor experience.

ALEX: Yeah, my program is similar in that when you first come to the PhD program in Neurobiology, you haven't picked a lab to work in so there's a Director of Graduate Studies, or what people call the DGS, and that person is a faculty member who sort of runs the graduate training program and you can go to them for advice and I think you meet with them anyway just to talk about what lab rotations you're doing and what classes you're picking and if you're having trouble with classes, so that person helps sort of shepherd you through the first year, sometimes two years. And then you pick a research mentor whose lab you will work in and, um, then you have, you know as you said, you can have very close workings with that person. I see my mentor almost daily and then we have formal meetings with the whole group once a week and he has us to his house for holidays, so we see him a lot and it's good. Other people's mentors are more hands-off or, you know, you operate more independently. And I think it's also important to find mentors outside of that too, not necessarily that are on your research focus, but sort of career and life advice mentors. So, um, in my program and in many programs you have a

committee of faculty members sort of overseeing your dissertation research and your defense of your dissertation and the chair person in my committee also has children and a similar career trajectory to what I hope to have so I get a lot of career and life advice from her. Um, and then there's also just other, um, more proximal mentors you can find, people that are doing post-docs, people that are a few years above you in your program that can give you a lot of really good advice about the stage of your career that you are at now. Um, so I think we've reached the end of our questions and the end of our hour and, um, thank you all of you for joining us. We hope this was helpful. Um, a recording of this chat's gonna be posted on the website and also emailed out to, um, admitted students and there's usually also a lot of great links on the website to many of the resources we've mentioned today.