

Parenting in Focus: Know Your Neighbors

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I recently moved to a different neighborhood. It really is different. Before I lived on a large piece of property and couldn't see my neighbors from my house. But that certainly isn't the only difference.

After I moved, people began to come to see me. They were people who lived nearby. Some brought flowers. Others brought invitations or information about things going on in the neighborhood.

Then within the week, the COVID-19 quarantine began. The visits stopped but the phone rang. People were still interested in my moving to "their" neighborhood.

I began to look forward to the calls or the visits or just meeting them in the street as I went to pick up my mail. I found myself very interested in learning the names of their partners or the names of their dogs that were walking with different people in the neighborhood.

As the restriction eased a bit, I was invited to a meeting to talk about "Neighborhood Disaster Readiness" that was going to happen in a few days. I wasn't really into disaster readiness but I did want to meet more of the neighbors. I agreed to come; actually, I didn't want to miss it.

We met outside while bringing our own food, drinks and chairs. After the "meeting" began and introductions were made, there was a brief moment when someone handed me a brochure on disaster readiness but that was the last that disasters came up. It was mostly just a friendly get together with about 15 people in the area.

We all learned about each other — where we came from, how long we have been in Sequim, who else lived close by and which houses belonged to which people.

I learned a lot. I learned that I was the one who had lived in Sequim the longest. I learned that my dog barked at everyone who went by my yard. I learned this was a neighborhood filled with very nice people.

We all lasted for a couple of hours and were then going to head home. Everyone seemed to be walking since it was their neighborhood.

The very special and eye-opening thing happened as I was leaving the yard. I fell. I fell and hit my face on the asphalt. The special part was not the fall but the response from my neighbors who came to my aid and who helped me home. It was really impressive.

This was the first night for me to visit my neighbors. Their responses were so positive. They helped me find an ice pack in my still only partially unpacked new home. They stayed awhile to make sure I was okay. They gave me phone numbers to call if I needed help during the night. Then the next day, one of them came back to make sure I was okay.

All of this help and friendliness convinced me that neighbors are really important. It made me feel that it was beneficial to anyone to get to know their neighbors.

Neighbors used to be important to us. I remember neighbors from my childhood, but now I will remember neighbors from my later part of life.

I will be a friend in a special way to those around me. I will learn who my neighbors are, their dog's name, their cat's name, and the kind of car they drive. I will make a point to welcome new people to "our" neighborhood because I see how important it is.

I would encourage you to reach out to your neighbors. You never know the good it brings or what disaster awaits you.

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