

ALONG THE WELCOME TRAIL

OUR NEIGHBORS

Once upon a time, we kept our porch lights on. We opened the door even if we didn't know who rang the bell. And we could always leave the back door unlocked during the day. People stopped by without an "appointment." We had lemonade or hot coffee ready when they did! Many things have changed in our digital, mobile, double-income world. We're way busier. And central air, garage-door openers, and 24-7 cable news have also affected our culture. It's why we Welcome Neighbor greeters continue to do a personal welcome visit, human to human. Time spent WITH someone is a different experience from a text, an email, a "Like," or a "Great pic" comment.

Part of our mission is to help neighbors meet neighbors--new OR old. As an experiment, last year I set up a Nextdoor.com neighborhood, starting by outlining our small development of 23 homes. Next, I asked the website to send postcards to all the homes outlined in the map (many of whom I didn't know and who didn't know us). Next I downloaded a flyer after customizing the message, and Bob and I delivered them personally, talking to as many one-on-one as we could. Not everyone joined; some expressed fears of privacy invasion, security issues, and lack of computer skills. But we got 13. We celebrated Halloween together, have had a neighborhood garage sale, kept each other informed of community issues, crime activity, items for sale, even help wanted or services needed and offered, including babysitters! Following the "babysitter request" instructions, you can post something like this:

"I have 3 children between the ages of 3 and 10 and I need someone who can drive them to a birthday party this Saturday. My 3-year old son is dairy-free. Otherwise, all three are pretty easy and happy to eat anything."

We are actually getting to know each other! If I wanted to do a pop-up barbeque this Friday night, all I have to do is send a post to my own neighborhood. Or invite neighbors over for iced tea and discussion on a development proposal, it's a simple one-and-done! We can also discuss township-wide issues with other Nextdoor neighborhoods, such as Save Beaver Valley emergency meetings, or any crime issues.

So I share this idea with you as one small way to keep the civility in our civil society. A good start is to find easier ways to be more friendly to our neighbors. I encourage you to join or set up a neighborhood at NextDoor.com and try it out.

"We're all about online chats that lead to more clothesline chats." Nextdoor.com Manifesto excerpt.

By Anne Pounds, Proprietor, Welcome Neighbor