

It's a Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood!

*By Mary Jane McCormick*

I am sitting here on my lanai smelling the fresh cut grass, adoring the beautiful flowerbeds, noticing the shapes of clouds against the azure morning sky. It's no wonder why Mr. Roger's theme song is rattling in my head.

This unique place I now call home gives me the best of both worlds. I have my own space, my dwelling, my sanctuary; but when I open my door and walk a few steps, I also have neighbors.

I am reminded of the African proverb, "*It takes a village to raise a child.*" The twist I would like to put on this quote is, "*It takes a community to age gracefully.*"

I recently read an article that identified eight lifestyle factors that contribute to healthy aging: exercise, diet, time in nature, relationships, recreation, stress management and service to others. This universe we call Windsor Gardens provides tons of opportunities to address these factors.

You may want to interject and say, "*Yeah, especially opportunities for stress management.*" Of course this close living causes disputes over laundry times, noise from our TV or visiting grandchildren, pet cleanup and an array of other issues.

Forest Gump weighed in on this reality and said, "*Life is like a box of chocolates. You never know what's inside.*" It's true; some of our neighbors may have a smooth creamy filling while others have a hard nut. And we come in all shapes and sizes; some of our neighbors are well rounded, while others are square. While I am on this 'metaphor roll,' how about spices? Some neighbors are sweet and savory, while others are pungent and hot.

We live in a place that, by design, gives us access to a rich diversity difficult to find elsewhere. We live in a 'melting pot' of difference. Our neighbors represent a vast array of beliefs, personalities and life experience. There are few living spaces that allow us to walk a few steps when in need of a favor, advice, information or a smile.

Let's admit it. We live in a mecca for visible and invisible acts of kindness. We witness and receive these from others on a daily basis. These may be hard to notice, such as someone holding the door open, helping us with our groceries, or walking our dog on days we are ill. These acts may seem like small gestures but they can change a bad day into a great one.

Well, there goes that song in my head again. It really is "... a Beautiful *Day* in the Neighborhood!"