

The Rhythm of Kindness

By Mary Jane McCormick

I began my reflections on altruism by consulting Google for its definitions, derivatives, synonyms and antonyms. Next thing I knew, I was sucked into a myriad of articles questioning whether true altruism even exists. Several evolutionary theories propose that human beings never intentionally act to benefit others except to obtain some good for themselves. In other words, altruism is no more than selfishness in disguise. Come on, do we really need lab experiments to demonstrate the existence of human altruism?

So I retreated to my lanai and waited for my 'too much information headache' to subside and wrote my own definition based on experience: *Altruism is the expression of great and small acts of kindness rooted in one's concern for the welfare of others.*

When I am asked, "Where do you live?" I not only say, "Windsor Gardens," I usually add the word "Community." This is because my days begin with more "Good morning(s)" and "How are you(s)" then I know what to do with. If I am carrying a heavy load from my garage, inevitably I get a polite, "Can I help you with that?" or "Let me get the door for you." Neighbors check in on me if I have been 'missing in action.' The laundry room is often a place to get caught up on who is ill or in the hospital or to sign the posted birthday cards for building mates. The seemingly small courtesies shown when crossing the street, using the fitness center or rushing for the elevator all add up to a feeling that I am not alone.

The many groups, clubs, classes, lectures and trips allow for numerous acquaintances which marinate into deep friendships. Each reading of the *Windsor Gardens Life* publication is testimony to those who volunteer to sit on boards and committees dedicated to maintaining and improving all aspects of our communal living. Altruism is rooted in the Windsor Gardens Community. There is a palpable sense that we are meant to look out for each other.

So, I say let the scientist argue all they want as to the existence of pure altruism. Let them debate whether or not human nature is fundamentally selfish or altruistic. What I know is that there is a rhythm of kindness that beats on our community streets.