

# Welcome to the Neighbourhood

"Who's my neighbour?" That's the question being asked here. And to be honest, it is a question that I don't know the answer to. In my neighbourhood, no one seems to interact outside of their families; most people in my neighbourhood don't even know each other. In my opinion, neighbourly values have been lacking severely in our generation. From what I have observed in my neighbourhood, people no longer seem to want to do anything just for the sake of being nice. However, I do have one exception to this.

Last year when I went to China to visit my grandparents I was told an interesting story. The local barber shop was giving free haircuts to the senior citizens in the area once a month. They would just go out onto the middle of the street with a chair, pair of scissors and a mirror and give the elderly a haircut. They would never charge the clients for the haircuts and there were no strings attached. They just did it because they wanted to do something helpful for the neighbourhood since most of the people who lived in the apartments were over the age of 70. They have been doing this every month for the past year and a half and my grandparents go every time and are never charged a cent.

The reason I told you this story is because it isn't something you see happening over here, in Canada, no one just goes and does things for free, everyone always expects a payment in return for doing something. That mentality has even spread to people's homes. Most kids nowadays expect some sort of reward for doing something as small as chores. We live in a generation where people no longer do things out of the kindness of their hearts but rather for their personal gain. The most neighbourly thing I've ever seen in a person in my neighbourhood is wave and say, "Hi!" But that's it, there's nothing more than just that simple greeting. People need to understand that if we keep doing things only for personal gain, nothing good will come out of it.

I have lived in the same neighbourhood for the last 12 years. I have seen many winters, heavy with snow, and elderly people shoveling that snow. So one year I decided that I would help every elderly person in my neighbourhood by shoveling their driveway. However as I found out in my first year, these elderly people were reluctant to allow me to shovel their driveways for them. Even though I would tell them that I wasn't doing it for money they would always give me a look if they didn't believe me. When they finally did let me shovel it for them, there was no gratitude. They would just go back into their homes and never come out again. After 3 years of doing this, I have received thanks from one person and nothing else. People in my neighbourhood seemingly don't appreciate people helping them out. Even so I continue to do it in hopes of maybe one day there will be a change maybe the people in my neighbourhood will finally decide to actually rest each other like neighbours rather than complete strangers.

If there were more people like the barbers my grandparents told me about in China, it would be easy to speak of neighbourly values. But because they aren't, neighbourly values are hard to come by. I wish I could write about the numerous neighborly things my neighbours have done but I cannot due to the fact that no one leaves their homes unless they absolutely have to. No matter how many times I shovel other people's driveways, they still won't acknowledge it as anything more than work they don't have to do. Even during Halloween, the kids and their parents just leave after they receive candy without even a thank you. In my experience people need to learn how to help each other out without asking for something in return. Humans are social creatures we must acknowledge that and socialize within our communities. Only then will we be able to truly understand who our neighbour is.