

## Being Neighborly Without Leaving the House

If you live near me, you already know you have a lousy neighbor. I rarely interact with residents on our street and couldn't tell you the names of people who have lived four doors away for decades. I'm probably known locally as the clueless, grumpy old guy who lives on the corner.

LuAnn on the other hand actively engages with the other locals. She notes when the joggers and dog-walkers deviate from their usual patterns and makes deductions about neighbors' personal lives based on their behaviors. Some might characterize this as "nosy," but she has been good about limiting her inquisitiveness to looking out our windows and chatting on the street. So far.

We have lived in our current house since the early eighties, and were the young kids on the block at the time. Now that we're probably the oldest, I feel some pressure to become even more erratic and curmudgeonly. As if that wasn't highly likely to occur in any case.

In an effort to improve my perceived standing in our neighborhood, I recently signed up for something called [nextdoor.com](#). As if I wasn't receiving enough email already. It's a free site that connects me with others in my neighborhood, most of whom I haven't met yet and probably never will.

Nevertheless, we have a lot of common concerns that can be addressed communally. The neighborhood LuAnn and I live in is Wilson/Morningside, encompassing 694 households of which 28% are currently registered on the site. I've also chosen to participate in adjoining neighborhoods, which adds another potential 1,684 households.

Despite some negative reviews about cyber-bullying and racial profiling, [nextdoor.com](#) claims to have grown to encompass over 70% of all U.S. neighborhoods. The site has a cool interactive map showing individual residences and limited information about the inhabitants, if they chose to make that public. Postings are all over the board (so to speak) about lost ferrets, found keys and cell phones, suspicious people/vehicles/activities, elections, road closures, events, recommendations, free stuff, you name it.

Recently I was involved in a series of posts debating the desirability/necessity of putting a roundabout at the ACT intersection of Scott Boulevard and North First Avenue with dunderheads who just don't like roundabouts. Yes, "rotaries" can be confusing at first but once you get used to them most people prefer them. Especially if they have the right attitude.

It's like driving in Chicago. You gird your loins and dive in – the meek and indecisive are penalized while the assertive and confident are rewarded. If you'd like to practice, a great example is north of here in Mount Vernon at the intersection of Highways 1 and 30. Pack a lunch and make a day of it.

Anyway, with nextdoor.com it's easy for me to seem neighborly – except with the dunderheads, of course - without leaving the house. No awkward conversations that have no graceful exit, no uninvited contact with slobbering dogs and damp babies, no dirt, germs, or fresh air. An outgoing shut-in's paradise.

After using the site for a few months, I've decided I may be a better neighbor than I thought. In today's world of diminishing standards, I probably shouldn't be too quick to label anyone - including myself - as a good or bad neighbor. I suppose LuAnn and I could be considered excellent neighbors in the sense that our front lawn doesn't feature a rusted-out Chevy propped up on cinderblocks.

Not to mention the meth lab in our basement which hasn't exploded yet. In some neighborhoods, that would put us in the running for Neighbors Of The Year.

*Writers Group member Dave Parsons is preparing a spot on his mantle for the surely forthcoming NOTY award.*