

BLOGGER | DEBRA DARVICK

# Neighbors Without Borders

Sharing more than cups of sugar and street frontage

**When I read the quote** from a woman whose house had been leveled by a tornado last spring—"I lost it," she told the paper; "My neighbor held me while I cried"—I thought instantly of my neighbor who lives two houses down. She's held me while I've cried, and I have held her.

And I realized that good neighbors are first-responder friends: She's the one who bandages your kid's knee when he falls off his bike in front of her yard; you're the one she calls when she's on vacation and needs her black dress to attend an unexpected funeral. She's got your house key and alarm code; you keep extra onions on hand because she usually runs out.

At first glance, you might not peg Shelby and me for close friends. She's central casting WASP; three of my grandparents, though born in the United States, knew Yiddish, too. Our families share a snowplow, which we keep in our garage. Her husband's the one we call when we can't get it to start; in 20 years, it's never taken him more than one try.

In a way, those comedy-skit differences are part of what makes our friendship so solid. She and I have struggled with our

respective faiths, watched the ebb and flow of our own children's engagement with religion. My kids got their Christmas tree fix in the living room of the house up the street. Come fall, our neighbors attend our yearly party during the Jewish harvest holiday of Sukkot, our temporary hut (sukkah) braced against October gusts thanks to her husband's skilled knotting. At such times, I feel that my neighbor and I embody the best America offers—the privilege to follow one's own faith supported by others of a different heritage.

I know the challenges life has thrown into Shelby's path and am in awe of her courage and fortitude. She's seen me through my own share of personal devastations, stepping in to help pick up the pieces while they were still crashing around me.

Perhaps that's what puts a true neighbor/friend in a class by herself. Simply by sharing a street, we've grown to share so much more. As families scatter, it can take half a day or more to reach a loved one in crisis. But Shelby is just 200 feet up the sidewalk, instant as a text-message. Whatever blows our way, we're there for each other. Mister Rogers would approve. ■



Debra Darvick (with longtime neighbor Shelby Hodgkins, top) blogs at [debradarvick.wordpress.com](http://debradarvick.wordpress.com)



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