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Gather 'round the Hearthfire

Fort Collins neighborhood assembles arts, crafts showcase

By SARA REED
SaraReed@coloradoan.com

Parades, picnics, neighborhood cleanup and landscaping, flower-bulb exchanges and clubs for knitters, readers and more are just some of the ways residents in the Hearthfire at Richard's Lake neighborhood build a sense of community.

"It's nice to have a community," said Celia Walker, a Hearthfire resident since 2003. "It's nice to know your neighbors."

Now, just in time for the holidays, the neighborhood off Douglas Road in north Fort Collins is putting on an arts and crafts show Saturday featuring nine artisans from the neighborhood to help strengthen the sense of community.

Walker and neighbor Marcella Wells worked on the idea after seeing a neighborhood boy selling deer he'd carved from wood. Walker, a potter, and Wells, who does beadwork, knew there were more people in the neighborhood involved with arts and crafts and decided to put a show together in November.

The women hope the show, which will offer pottery, beadwork, knitted and sewn items, hand-painted signs, woodwork, handmade teddy bears and more, will draw a bigger crowd than the last one.

Walker and Wells, who moved into the neighborhood in 1999 as the first residents, said the growth in the neighborhood has exploded during the past few years and the neighborhood isn't quite as tightly knit as they would like but they are working on it.

Building a strong sense of community within a neighborhood

⊕ Zoom Photo



Michael Seamans/The Coloradoan

Celia Walker sits at her potter's wheel in her home studio holding a mug she made that she will have up for sale at the Hearthfire crafts fair, which is just one of many ways neighborhood residents get to know each other.

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is beneficial on several levels, the women said.

Knowing your neighbors is a security issue, Walker said, because you know who is supposed to be there and who isn't.

"When my neighbors are gone, I keep an eye on the house," she said.

It also makes it easier to solve disputes or problems, Wells said, because you can work together and not against each other.

Strong neighborhood ties are very beneficial to families, especially those with small children, Walker said. Neighbors look out for each other's kids and help out when needed, she said.

"It takes a village," she said.

A majority of the neighborhood events and clubs have been initiated by residents and not the homeowners' association, Wells said.

And new ideas to strengthen neighborhood ties are always coming.

In just an hour Sunday, Wells and Walker discussed holding a flea market and forming a welcoming committee.

"We don't really have a lot of committees," she said. "These things just get a life of their own and they either live or die."

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