

How Mimi Met Her Neighbours

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Inspired by the memory of her mother who worked with children, Mimi decided to get more involved in her community and start a children's class. When a nearby co-op housing board was slow to respond to her offer, she had to turn to her immediate neighbours. See what she learned.

Hi my name is Mimi welcome to my neighborhood. Do you want to come in with me?

My mom of course just passed away and I came back from Africa a couple of weeks prior to this planning and she kind of nudged me like "you know Mimi, you need to do something, you need to get more involved with your community, you need to..." not that she said that to me to or anything but I felt she would be happier because she owns a school and she has always been involved with kids.

Oh yeah, my moms name is Aufyoung, coincidentally, well it's not coincidentally actually I named my daughter Aufyoung after my mom. So we decided to name it the "Aufyoung Epe teaching project." She gave me a lot of strength because practically I would never.. I would think "O my God, I am not knocking on anyone's door, I am so not knocking on anyone's door", they're going to think that you are one of those religious groups knocking on someone's door trying to get... but it was fine, it was perfect, it was perfect. I felt that my mom was nudging me to like Mimi get up and do something, it's ok go do it, I mean, who doesn't want the world to be a better place.

So we sat down on Friday night we started coming up with plans, we are going to make flyers tell them that every Sunday we're going to host children's classes in my home and on Fridays on Saturdays we are going to host a devotional meeting in my friends home and then we see what happens, see who'd show up.

So we all went out to go give out flyers and talk to parents and it was eye opener, like sometimes... don't ever assume things because I had like worst assumption of my neighborhoods ever. I went out there and they were like the sweetest people ever, they were receptive, they opened their... those who couldn't come 'oh sorry we can't come' those that could come says "oh sure we send the kids over, what are you trying to do?" And briefly we explained to them we are trying to start a children's class in my home, we want to teach that we are in a community where we are from different races, different religious backgrounds, and different cultural upbringing but yet we have to deal with living in Canada together.

We had like ten kids the first weekend we tried it, they came over ten kids and about four parents in the process made a couple of friends that now agreed to join us to set up a study circle and then a couple of other friends that agreed to come for a devotional.

We have a little girl, she is just 14, we always say she is 14, her name is Georgia, she is 14 going on to 17. so she actually runs the children's classes while we just stay at the background to make sure we kind of keep some... you know, that the place is not rowdy and all that.

We felt that because she was their age group, a bit older, she can relate to them more and if she can do it, the other kids probably... and yes I had this little girl Timmy, a friend's daughter, she said "why can't I teach too. I am almost her age" and that's what we wanted, you know? She wouldn't say that if we were the one who is doing the teaching but because somebody her age was telling her "it's ok to love one another, it's ok to go out there and do community service, it's ok, I do it, why can't you?" So I think that they relate more to that. So that's why we felt it will be better for a kid their age group to run the children's classes for us.

Now I walk around the kids actually and parents "Hi, Hi!" and it kind of makes me feel warmer, it kind of makes me feel that I belong in a community now. Before then is I drive into my driveway, park my car in my garage, come into my house, stay in my lonely self here and behold I had neighbours that are actually very, very nice.

We knocked on a neighbour's three doors down, we knocked on his door, he has never seen us there before and he comes out with his son, he has a six year old. He comes out and goes "Hi" and he had this smile on his face, I am thinking first they're going to probably throw hot water or something on you. Why you bother, it's Saturday, we need to rest, we have been working all week. And then the neighbor goes, "Hi" so I am like "Hi" ok that helped, cause he was all nice, you know? And he says... and we say "oh hi, we are trying to start a children's class just a couple of houses down you hosted by the Baha'i community and..."

So he was so sweet. Wow, we were, I was so... that kind of lifted my spirits, "ok fine, I don't care who's door I am knocking on, like that was my first knock and the person came out with this smile and invited me in for coffee on a Sunday morning, that has to be good, so that helped, and you know we got lots of responses like that.

I had a kid stop me by and like "oh we heard that you have this party in your house every Sunday" I'm like "yeah, it's a great party, you should attend" "oh ok I am going to come next Sunday, I'll come. Can I come with my friend?" I am like "sure as many as you can, as many as you can, just show up, it's good for you."