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# The Ties That Bind

Dorothy Woods

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# The Ties That Bind

STORYTELLER: Dorothy Woods

I don't know why they took away the Priority Boards. They were such a good medium to talk about and try to resolve issues in our neighborhoods. They're still downtown, of course, but the neighborhoods don't have them anymore. We don't have them anymore. It's a shame, really, because the Priority Boards gave the average person a chance to speak up in their own communities. I was secretary on our neighborhood board for twenty-seven years or so. The board was the core of the community, real intimate leadership. They made people care, because they knew their needs mattered. I really wish we could bring them back.

Every neighborhood in Dayton had a place they'd meet-no one was left out-and the city

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would send representatives to hear our problems. If there was an alley that needed cleaning, it was done within a month of your request. Those boards were our voice. It let outsiders know we cared about where we lived, and it discouraged crime and other unwanted behavior. **THOSE MEETINGS ENCOURAGED PEOPLE TO CARE ABOUT THE PLACE THEY LIVED. WE KNEW WE COULD MAKE A DIFFERENCE. DAYTON HAS HAD A HUGE IMPACT ON ME AND MY CHILDREN. IN MY OPINION, IT REALLY IS A WELCOMING PLACE WHERE ANYONE CAN BE COMFORTABLE.**

Family is the most important thing in the world, of course, and I've loved living with my kids in a place where they know all their neighbors and aren't afraid to walk outside. Naturally, we've had our issues like any other neighborhood, but I see real love and kindness in the people around me. To love someone is to share what you have with others. When you love something, you got to do something about it. You can't just sit there and hold your hands. Instead, you can be active and bring about that love.

Say you like flowers. Maybe you go and plant some seeds, grow those flowers, and eventually give them to your neighbors. **WHEN MY DAUGHTER DIED LAST DECEMBER, SO MANY OF MY NEIGHBORS BROUGHT FOOD OVER IN COMFORT.**

They had known our family for years and wanted to lighten our burden. Love isn't something you can define in words, but it's something I see around me every day.

I've never felt any hatred here. I've always been comfortable. I've been here all my life. Dayton is all know. What I see in this community is a real sense of respect towards each other, even if we don't all get out and see as much of each other as we once did. Reba lives next door. I see her car leave her driveway every morning, and if I don't see it one day, I want to know everything's alright. Likewise, if she hadn't seen me for a while, you know, she'd ask my daughter Linda if I was doing alright.

We moved here because the highway was built in the seventies, and many people were displaced from their homes. It was hard at first, and we deal with difficulties now too, like food accessibility. We moved to this part of town because this is where our family was. The segregation happened naturally. People moved where their families were. If you wanted, you could live anywhere in Dayton so long as you could pay the rent.

**FOOD ACCESSIBILITY IS AN ISSUE-THERE AREN'T ANY GROCERY STORES NEARBY-AND WE NEED A FULL-TIME MARKET WHERE YOU CAN GET FRUITS**

**AND VEGETABLES, ONE WHERE YOU CAN FEEL SAFE.** We don't have many programs that invite community participation the way we used to—think it's important to get both young kids and us older people involved. I don't know why people think that we senior citizens only want to play Bingo; I want to do something that matters in my community. I want to get other people involved and make a difference.

The youth need the most attention because they are the future. When my daughters were growing up, there were training programs available to students who had just graduated high school. These programs trained anyone in a particular field so they could have the right qualifications to work in that field. One of my daughters, Elaine, went through and became a pharmacy technician. She's been in that field for about thirty years or so. Not everyone is smart enough to go to College. These programs gave people purpose. Jobs give people purpose, and make people care about the Community. That's what think this city needs again. Train people to do something so they can feel like they matter. Give them a purpose.

I think we need to get away from this technology and all in school. We need to take the time to teach our children how to take care of

themselves: how to make a meal, mop the floor once a week, and iron their clothes. Teach them to care about themselves, and then they will care about the community more. We have to train our young people, to do a job that makes them feel good about themselves. Dayton is really a wonderful place—quite honestly, you'd think it was a made-up place you'd read about in books—and we can teach our children how to help keep it that way.