

Recently, the San Diego Union Tribune reported that a man was found dead in a La Mesa condominium, and was probably killed. While his identity was not known, he was apparently dead for several weeks before neighbors noticed. While this is a grim subject, I believe it holds a lesson for living in any community neighborhood, especially when the homes are attached. The important question is “do you know your neighbors?”

Sociologists have speculated that American society has become more fractured and secluded over the years. Gone are the times when whole towns knew each other. Now, people don’t even know who lives next door to them, much less who lives “across town.”

This lack of knowledge has very important consequences. Who lives next door to you? Do you see them on a daily basis? Would you miss them if they disappeared, and how long would that take? Would you get involved at all?

Do any of your immediate neighbors have any special concerns or needs? In the event of an emergency, like a fire or earthquake, familiarity with your neighbor could mean the difference between life and death.

For example, many elderly residents may need assistance with walking or other daily chores. This type of assistance,

Do You Have a “Stiff” Community?

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when properly appreciated, fosters friendship and a better sense of community. It could even mean having an available “babysitter” for those families with children.

In the case of the La Mesa man, the neighbor he had entrusted with a key to his home when he traveled was concerned because his mail had not been picked up for many days. The neighbor eventually opened the front door to check and presumably found him badly decomposed.

His vehicle was found in downtown San Diego, had been impounded for parking more than three days with his tires marked from parking enforcement. A police officer actually went to the man’s home on Dec. 30, knocked several times and left a note, which remained on the door on Jan. 13 at 7:30 p.m. when police arrived.

Living in a high density community can be a positive, life-affirming choice, if you make it one. This is the basis for most neighborhood watch programs. It builds stronger communities and better living conditions for everybody.

Make a resolution today to say hello to your neighbor. Watch out for one another. You never know where it will lead!