

Colleen's Contemplations for July 2009

Summer

Do you remember when you were a kid and summer meant relaxing and vacationing and reading under a tree all day if you wanted to? It's so not that way now. In the last 3 weeks, we've vacationed in Orlando FL, vacationed in northern MN, refinanced the house, begun violin lessons, did a chuck e cheese afternoon while my car was being prepped for the various trips, readied the house for new windows, and currently there is a team of people replacing every window in my house. Busy doesn't begin to describe it. Usually I try to contemplate in either silence or a bit of music. Today its power saws and hammers.

When I was a kid I don't even remember if it was hot. Who cared? Now... however... when my air conditioning was out for 3 days; I got quite growly with my family. I notice every change in the weather now. I think about things like will I get the mowing done before it rains. Will it rain enough to green up the grass, or will I have to water. Why does the grass grow so well in the cracks in the sidewalk, but struggle in the middle of the yard? Waunafest is coming up in 3 weeks. I live right beside Centennial Park, so it's not a single day experience for my family, it's a weeklong event. We can watch the Ferris wheel get put together from my kids' windows, and smell the food cooking in the park. We generally have a house full of people come stay, since it's not nearly busy enough with the WNC food stand and the parade on Sunday. Since I live right beside the park, I'm on call for the food stand all weekend; I do openings and closings, and any running that may need doing. If I time it right I can get to Target when it opens and get back before the food stand needs to be open. It's a busy time, during a busy season.

But I'm not really complaining. I have air conditioning, my car is reliable, my family is healthy, my husband has a good job, and despite the running during Waunafest, we have a very good time. I could have it a lot worse. I know a lot of people who do. I'm really quite spoiled. Even in service, I'm spoiled. I mean really, I have a great job. Sometimes when I'm really busy at the store and I've got 20 people standing in front of my desk waiting to talk to me, I might feel a bit tired. But generally I've got at least one baby either sitting on my lap or sitting in a car seat on top of all my paperwork kicking irresistible little naked feet at me. Or I've got a 5 or 6 yr old with big eyes saying 'can I really take this?' I get to hear the excited cries of a young man say 'hey these basketball shoes fit me!' I get to say yes, it's all for free because your neighbors care enough to give it to you. The hard things are telling people that I have at least 3 people waiting for non-existent air conditioners; or hearing that someone who has been working their butt off and keeping a positive attitude through it all just keeps getting more bad news. Sick people get sicker. Jobs disappear. Cars break down. Fires, floods, and theft keep happening. It can be discouraging. I've shed more than a few tears for all these people we help, people I consider my family and friends.

I often criticize myself for letting life get to me when in all honesty I've got it pretty good. I have concerns, like lawn and windows and getting my laundry done; but all things considered, my life is a good kind of busy. When I'm working at the food stand during Waunafest, I get to tell people about all the good works this community allows me to do. I get to say Waunakee takes care of its own, and is a

welcoming community to all who could use a home and a friend. During the parade I feel pride in my little organization and all we do for this community, but I never forget that it's the community that makes it possible. I feel like during the parade we get to say thank you to all of you. You give us the materials to give to your neighbors. You give us the money to rent space to store all your precious gifts. You allow me the opportunity to sit and pray with people. You make it possible for me to give your love directly to your neighbors. I have a great job, thank you.

So now, since this is going directly to the website and I'm not limited in space, here's the portion of the letter in which I ask you for even more. Air conditioners and fans would go a long ways toward helping your neighbors. In my case it helped domestic tranquility; I can't be the only one who gets mean and depressed when I'm uncomfortable. Would you believe I have about a dozen requests for dvd players? What's in your basement? Do you have swim suits that no longer fit, but still have some swim left in them? Do you have any life vests in the garage that no longer fit your kids? I know I've been eyeing a lot of those things lately and wondering what I'm holding onto it for.

What about your time? Working an hour at Waunafest selling pickles on a stick can be one of the more amusing things you do all summer. We have a lot of fun, and we have the best seats in the house for softball. Unfortunately, being right there between the ball diamonds means your kids will always find you when they need money and drinks and snacks and Band-Aids and nose wiping and handholding and more money. But that's pretty much the worst of it. We get a pleasant breeze, and we get to stand and talk to all the neighbors we haven't seen since garage sale days. But, life gets busy in the summer, I know it. So if you only have a moment during Waunafest, consider buying a drink or a Milios sub, or the ever popular pickle on a stick, and say hello, so I can personally thank every one of you for everything you do.