Version:1.0 StartHTML:0000000193 EndHTML:0000002692 StartFragment:0000002374 EndFragment:0000002656 SourceURL:file://localhost/Volumes/SERVER/EDITORIAL/3-29-11/COLUMNS/barefootfarmer.doc @font-face { font-family: "Times New Roman"; }p.MsoNormal, li.MsoNormal, div.MsoNormal { margin: 0in 0in 0.0001pt; font-size: 12pt; font-family: "Times New Roman"; }table.MsoNormalTable { font-size: 10pt; font-family: "Times New Roman"; }div.Section1 { page: Section1; }

My neighbors are the greatest. I've been going through some hard times during the last few months and they have really helped. We've been getting together and laughing a few times each week. I didn't realize how great they were until I was in need.

Version:1.0 StartHTML:0000000193 EndHTML:0000005205 StartFragment:0000002378 EndFragment:0000005169 SourceURL:file://localhost/Volumes/SERVER/EDITORIAL/3-29-11/COLUMNS/barefootfarmer.doc @font-face { font-family: "Times New Roman"; }p.MsoNormal, li.MsoNormal, div.MsoNormal { margin: 0in 0in 0.0001pt; font-size: 12pt; font-family: "Times New Roman"; }table.MsoNormalTable { font-size: 10pt; font-family: "Times New Roman"; }div.Section1 { page: Section1; }

About 10 years ago I had a neighbor who wanted to put in a body shop. He fixed up a room in his barn and painted a car for someone. When I expressed my concerns about spray drifting down on my farm, he said it had never occurred to him. He quit his work there and rented a garage in town to paint cars in.

One of my neighbors bought a big tractor for me. Well, not really, but I put many hours on it. I finally bought my own even bigger tractor, and I wish he would borrow it. Instead, another neighbor uses it to feed out hay.

My neighbor across the street got mad at me once. We had a band on the porch, playing loud rock and roll. At 11 p.m. I pulled the plugs and said we need to play acoustic guitars now, because I didn't want to disturb the neighbors. Then here he comes driving up the driveway. "Why did you shut the music off?" We were outside and really enjoying it."

Neighbor Tom plays bass with me. Sometimes I call him up, but I don't use the telephone. I just get on the porch and play slide guitar. Next thing you know, he's driving up with his bass, "My wife came inside and said, 'Tom, Jeff is calling you'."

We tray to have music in the log cabin every Friday, a tradition that's been on for over 10 years of Friday's. Not all rooms sound good, but the acoustics in the cabin are great. Tom finds the right spot for his upright bass, which his father bought in 1940 and was 100 years old then. The whole room rings, and we gather 'round the guitars, dobros, banjos, mandalims, fiddler and anything else we can pick on. Our first local show is April 8th at the Armour Hotel.

Some of my neighbors let me collect manure and make compost at their farms, which we've been doing this week. It's been hard for me to get excited about gardening this year. I've had the wind taken out of my sails. With hundreds of people visiting the gardens every year, and hundreds of thousands enjoying them on the Television show, it's hard to believe I have to move. The msd from construction is already in my garden, giving me a taste of what's to come.

Through all of this, getting to know my neighbors better has been a god send. If we met at a political rally, we'd be on opposite sides of the fence. My lifestyle is different, too, but none of that seems to matter. People are a lot more alike than they are different, and we are blessed with the opportunity to love our neighbors and to do unto others as we'd have them do unto us. Besides, after seeing a picture in the paper of one of my neighbor letting his hair down, maybe we aren't so different after all.