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Why live here? Because County feels like home

Three winters ago I fell on some ice in a parking lot across the street from my house and broke my leg in three places.

In my own defense, the ice was smooth and covered by a thin layer of fine powdery snow that camouflaged how treacherous it really was. I wasn't running. I wasn't

pretending to be Peggy Fleming like I did when I was seven years old. I was carrying too much and as I rounded my car, the platter I was carrying went flying. So did I.

Word travels fast and every night for almost eight weeks someone in town brought us supper. Going from being responsible for everything to being responsible for just opening the mail was frustrating and hard. A lady who knew me only through someone else stopped in and scrubbed my kitchen floor on her hands and knees.



**LOCAL
COLOR**

by Melissa Finnemore

I don't even do it that way.

People really cared about my family. I wondered many times if that would have happened in Monroe, N.Y. The two sisters who I left there have a hard time understanding why I would want to live in Aroostook County. They only see what they know. They only know what they see.

Sometimes seeing is done not only through eyes, but through the heart.

I can understand why my sisters feel the way they do. Siblings are extensions of ourselves. They think because we were born and raised in the same household we should all love being stuck in traffic, shopping in malls that resemble small cities, and being lost in a crowd of 450 other parents whose child is graduating from kindergarten.

It was hard to verbalize the answer to their questions. But I'll try.

We hadn't been living in our house very long. One Saturday I was awakened very early by the sound of earth-moving equipment and men's voices. More than a dozen men were standing, pointing and getting ready to do what looked like an all-day project.

It was.

For the entire day men came and went, digging, dumping dirt and raking. Men who gave up their

other jobs to come and make a parking lot around a church where there was none. Men who had other jobs and other things they could be doing. No one got paid. No one complained. They stopped only for lunch and continued working until supertime. I watched them laugh and sweat and make something that would benefit more than just themselves and their own families.

That day I witnessed amazing acts of unselfishness that went beyond any others I had ever seen before. I was in awe of it. The best part is that since then, I've seen many more.

People who are not born in Aroostook County are considered "from away," even though many of us "outsiders" have lived here a long time. Those of us who were not born here are here primarily because of choice. We choose to shovel snow from November to April. We choose to drive 30 minutes to the nearest shopping mall and pretend that basketball is our favorite sport. We choose to grow vegetables, attend town meetings and strawberry festivals, and wave at everyone.

Before I lived in the County I never picked wildflowers or drove on a field road to a lake hidden deep in the woods. I never watched a moose stroll awkwardly through a muddy potato field or pushed a car out of a snow bank taller than I was. I never saw so much sky before.

We live here because people care about who and how we are. People are willing to share all they have with each other so no one goes without. Work is not a four-letter word and kids can play outside and be safe.

I tell my sisters living in Aroostook County is wanting to let everyone know how good life can be and yet not wanting to leak one of the country's best-kept secrets.

Snowstorms and cold weather are weighted by the appreciation we feel about long warm days and matched by the warmth of the people we share them with.

Sure, I miss public libraries you could get lost in and being able to ride into New York City for coffee at Zabar's with my sisters. But I could never go back there for two reasons.

My life is better here.
My life is better here.

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