

Dear Friends:

This is the first sneaky thing I've ever done behind Suzanne's back, but she's a proud, gutsy lady who won't impose on others, so sometimes a friend needs to voluntarily step in to give support, whether asked or not.

I met Suzanne several years ago as my neighbor here in Chapel Hill. She'd just had some serious surgery, after having fallen off a ladder and badly messed up both knees while trying to cushion the fall and land upright. Ouch. I was called in to care for her kitty while she was in rehab. When she got home, I saw for myself how bad the damage was, not to mention the pain she was in. Her legs were swollen and full of fluid, and getting around was a nightmare. I don't know how she stood it.

While still cat sitting, I'd meanwhile heard from neighbors about her history of commitment to the Chapel Hill community - astonishing dedication and compassion. But now in front of me, I saw only how much an accident had debilitated her. She wasn't moaning about it - but I certainly was. I was appalled for her. That it should happen to her at all seemed so unfair. Talk about bad things happening to good people.

To be as brief as possible, she eventually moved back to Mt. Airy, with the express idea of doing something for her hometown, wanting to give back to the place that had given her such a happy childhood. Her beloved Mayberry. The accident, as a matter of fact, happened while rehabbing the dilapidated house she'd bought, gutted, and completely redone, to turn it into a Bed & Breakfast showplace, full of beauty, history, and Mt. Airy pride. She'd wanted to help her town, but now she needs her town to help her.

Suzanne's pain and limited mobility are still the reality. The existing driveway setup has made a tough situation tougher, the technical and medical details of which have already been touched on. I've seen the new driveway design, and it's quietly attractive, draws no obtrusive, negative attention to itself, and would go a long way in facilitating the higher level of comfort and mobility she so much needs. It would be done at her own expense and with her usual utmost care for the aesthetics and history of Mt. Airy. Suzanne loves her town way too much to ever hurt it in any way.

I learned about the Board's resistance to making any adjustments, or helping her out, which seems so out of keeping with what I've always heard about the town. Observing the letter of the law is of course always important, to avoid chaos, but Mt. Airy, by reputation, is about something more than that. If Andy Griffith - and Suzanne - are right, it's more about people, compassion, and the flexibility needed to look clearly at rigid rules that hurt rather than help its own folks. The true greatness of a place is measured by its ability to embrace that kind of spirit. To paraphrase Christ, laws are made for the people, not people for the laws.

I'm asking you to help my friend. Suzanne needs her life back, to become the active, participating citizen she once was. And the town needs her as much as she needs the town. Please help her.

Thanks for reading this. I'm praying you'll come to a happy solution that satisfies everyone.

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