

OPINION: New Bedford's missing ingredients to being a better community

In response to our 'Apathy is the main problem with New Bedford, not crime' article posted to our Facebook page, Lois Wiseman posted her thoughts on how New Bedford is different than her new hometown in Canada.

I no longer live in New Bedford. I married and moved to Canada. Over the past few years, I've tried to figure out how life, and people are different here. I think you hit the nail on the head.

Here are a few things that work here to make a vibrant, safe life and a community of involved citizens. You may not agree, and I'm not picking on you, just telling what life is like here.

First: When parents take their children out to a restaurant, you hardly ever see video games or tablets.

Next: Every town or community has a community center. Most have an ice arena, meeting rooms, a theater and town offices are located there. This week there is a Shop Local Fair, with vendors, and a Sustainability Fair, with a variety of green businesses. We have a dog park for people to meet with their dogs. We have hiking trails. People volunteer here. The hospital auxiliary, just this week, donated \$77,000 to the local hospital. We have a yearly indoor yard sale which covers an ice rink, called Hey Day. About 60 volunteers run it and make \$36,000 for the hospital. We have an active youth center. We have a group for youth, called Sea Cadets, which gives them a look at what a military career would involve. Every town has a weekend farmers' market, well-attended by the town people.

We don't have handguns. Canadians are reputed to be polite, and they are. People hold doors for each other. Family values are strong here. Kids play outside in the cold, because every child has a snowsuit. There are volunteer drives to be sure of that. We still have ham and bean suppers, pig roasts and old fashioned barbecues. That all being said, my town is about the size of Acushnet, smaller than New Bedford. I'm still working out the differences.

I visit the New Bedford area quite often. I have a different set of social skills for New Bedford, quite often driven by not feeling safe in public. I drive differently. I am afraid to drive in New Bedford and on Rt. 195. There are no cell phones in the car, or even eating, in Ontario. The fines are stiff. Speeding and reckless driving fines are stiff, and you lose your license. There are no gangs in my area, and there is little vandalism and no graffiti. I don't have an answer for New Bedford. I'm just telling what I see here that works.

Hope you read this without judging me. I miss my hometown, but life is good here, too.

– Lois Wiseman