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## **Our Community Is At Its Best When We Lift One Another Up**

Anjella Warnshuis

*University of Central Florida, Anjella.Warnshuis@ucf.edu*

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## Our Community Is At Its Best When We Lift One Another Up

**By Anjella Warnshuis**  
UCF Forum columnist  
Wednesday, May 1, 2019



Columnist Anjella Warnshuis with her father, Clyde Parish, in 1982. (Photo by Joyce Parish)

A few weeks ago I was watching TV when I received one of those calls that you hope never to get. You know, the kind where it feels like the earth has skidded to a stop and your mind goes numb.

My daughter answered the call from my mother, who gave instructions to put the phone on speaker.

My 62-year-old father had a heart attack. My father, who in my mind, is still the giant who would pick me up and put me in trees. My father, whose strong but weathered hands were once featured on the Humans of New York blog of street interviews. My father, who walks so fast that I have to practically jog to keep up with him, had a heart attack.

Things looked pretty dire in the beginning but he's a fighter, and despite the ups and downs is recovering better and much faster than expected.

Life is full of highs and lows. Sometimes they even come together. My resulting unplanned trip to New York meant that I got to play dominos with my uncle in medical rehab, share cannoli with my aunt, and go to My Mother's Place for the best Italian ice I've ever had.

The thing that I have found most interesting during this journey is the realization of how our interactions change during and following a crisis or tragedy.

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I live within a few hour's drive of Pulse night club in Orlando and Parkland High School near Fort Lauderdale. The days and weeks following those incidents walking down the sidewalk was a very different experience. People acknowledged one another. The communities came together. We checked in on people that we may not have talked to in a long while.

As the news spread of my father's health issues, I received a similar outpouring of compassion. People I never met before shared their own journeys with their loved ones. Casual acquaintances became close friends by altering their plans to provide support and comfort. Someone I'm pretty sure doesn't even like me put me and my family on a prayer list.

I appreciate the sympathies but wonder how long before we unfortunately all go back to our emotional silos? Why can't we always show this level of concern and consideration for one another? Why is it that it takes difficult times to bring out the best in humanity? Why can't we always be our best selves?

In UCF's Seeking Educational Equity and Diversity professional-development program, participants learn about the principles for how we treat each other that were prepared by the Peace and Justice Institute at Valencia College. We start each monthly meeting with reading them aloud.

These principles remind us that when things get difficult, we should turn to wonder, such as "I wonder what that person is feeling now?" That we should practice slowing down because the speed of modern life can cause violent damage to the soul. That we have to be intentional about creating a hospitable and accountable community.

I would love to say that I am always able to remember and live out these principles in all areas of my life, but to err is human. I do, however, often share these principles with friends and coworkers. I have a copy of them posted on my office door.

I keep them close by so that I am reminded of the community I want to live in and my role in creating that space.

Our community is at its best when we lift one another up.

*Anjella Warnshuis is the coordinator of administrative services for the University of Central Florida's Department of Political Science. She can be reached at [Anjella.Warnshuis@ucf.edu](mailto:Anjella.Warnshuis@ucf.edu).*