



JPA

Juvenile Protective Association



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Office kitchens are great places to catch up with co-workers about this and that. Earlier this week I was talking with a colleague and we found ourselves comparing notes about our commutes, our neighborhoods and how we spend our free time at home. Francesca, a mother of four including two children under five, described how she loves to run with other early morning risers at a nearby park. Her runs often take place before the sun is fully up. It's quiet and the only sounds are muffled traffic and the smack of sneakers on the track. As the day wears on, she said, it's mainly kids running around and it's definitely not quiet!

Francesca loves how easy it is to catch the bus or train from her front door. I drive into work from the western suburbs. Either way, we both admire the architecture in our communities, especially the religious buildings that call on us to love our neighbors and serve one another. We laughed that in both our communities, visiting the local park and the local café were at the top of the list. I live in one of the safest communities in Chicagoland. Francesca lives in one of the top five most dangerous neighborhoods in the city.

Over the last several months, my opening remarks in this newsletter have been filled with outrage over what is happening on the West Side of Chicago. It's right to be outraged by the shootings and the violence. But my conversation with Francesca reminds me how important it is not to succumb to generalities and stereotypes. We need to remember that neighborhoods on the West Side look and sound a lot like those in the suburbs. That's because real people live in both places — people who work and who love their kids. People who enjoy parks and cherish family time. So, this month let's celebrate the good people and good things taking place on the West Side and remind ourselves that headlines don't define us — our actions do.


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