

Kathleen Agnew is a Clearwater resident steeped in civic engagement. The Countryside leader has been involved in Clearwater government and non-profit organizations for decades. She is a local treasure who will be recognized for her contributions when she receives the title of “Mrs. Countryside 2022” at a reception at the Countryside Country Club on Sept. 21 from 5:30-7:00 p.m. I’ve had the pleasure of working with Kathleen at NAACP events, and I’ve seen her in action as she led lively discussions in Charter Review Committee meetings. I’m grateful she participated in my “People You Should Know” interview.

Hi Kathleen – Are you one of the few who can call herself a Clearwater native? I’m not a Clearwater native but I’ve lived here since 1991. I was born in Connecticut and have lived in Massachusetts; New York; Florida; Connecticut; and Ottawa, Ontario.

I know you’re a registered nurse, can you tell me more about the type of nursing you practiced or most enjoyed? I have been an RN since 1970 and have a BSN. Everywhere I moved to I managed to take some additional nursing classes and maintain all my required educational hours. I have worked in Pediatrics as well as adult care. I’ve always worked in critical care or the recovery room. I love the humanity of the job. I am now retired, but you never really retire from nursing. Someone is always asking me to “take a look” or give advice. I’m always happy to help.

(Kathleen was excited to show me the new KardiaMobile device she purchased for mobile EKG readings; happily, my heart rate was in a healthy range)

Tell me about your neighborhood: My neighborhood is called Clubhouse Estates at Countryside and is a combination of single-family homes and condos. We have young families, and I believe our oldest residents - that I am aware of - are both 93. Obviously, there are many in between those two age ranges. Our HOA has 419 homes. It is voluntary to join.

Clearwater is so lucky to have you involved in so many facets of our community. What community organizations are you involved in?

In 2014 our HOA, which had previously not been very active, had an awakening and by the end of the first official meeting somehow, I ended up being the president! We keep track of neighbors coming into the neighborhood and welcome them with a gift bag and a list of telephone numbers of helpful neighbors. Because of this, I have been lucky to get to know many of my neighbors, including those who work for the city.

This was solidified by being fortunate to be chosen to attend the Clearwater Citizens Academy which gives one so much information and insight into the city of Clearwater and how it functions. With all the information you glean about the city, you become interested in knowing more, so the program organizers encourage Academy graduates to volunteer somewhere in the city. Thus, I am in my second term on the Clearwater Housing Authority (CHA), a group that handles housing for voucher clients and

public housing. The CHA is an arm of the federal Housing and Urban Development (HUD), widening horizons and helping people from Clearwater to strive to possibly one day have a home of their own.

Next, I became involved with the Clearwater Neighborhoods Coalition (CNC), which is a group of neighborhood associations and individual members. The CNC is voluntary; it has members from neighborhoods throughout Clearwater and has a relationship with the city. The CNC informs members about city events and programs, they host speakers on a variety of subjects, they participate in some citywide events, and they have a police community officer that attends and gives current information to our members.

One opportunity I took advantage of was participating in the 2020 census. Organizers needed people to help spread the word of what the census is and why it is important. It was so important for me to communicate that participating in the National Census is safe and that neighborhoods and residents actually gain positive things, namely funding, as a result of participation and creating accurate data. There were several geographical areas that indicated poor participation, and I approached people who lived there. I was determined to answer questions, reduce any fear, and provide accurate information. Ultimately, Clearwater reported the most accurate count/data possible. That results will help maximize funding for our community.

I am also a member of the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People). I'm on the Health Committee with this group. It is through this group that I became aware of the BayCare Faith Community Nurses that offer information about health issues. They are talented educators and are ready to help when asked.

Why are you involved in so many organizations?

I enjoy my neighborhood and my community and helping anyone who might need a hand because someday it could be me that needs some help. Why volunteer? It feels good and people appreciate you. There is so much need within the city. If someone wants to get involved, try a few things, see what fits.

What do you think the city can improve on?

I would tell City leadership - Remember you are there for ALL of the community. Don't be afraid to ask the most unlikely person to help out, and they will get involved. They may be more likely to buy into a new idea and more readily support it. It is also so nice to be recognized.

I would urge residents to thank those who work so hard in our city. Recognize them by name and take a moment to say thank you. That's such a powerful gesture in this thing we call life.

Describe your "perfect day." A perfect day: walk my dog; chat with neighbors; eat breakfast on the lanai; feed the bunnies and birds; check out the butterfly fly garden, and repeat.

What do you like to do in your free time?

I like to be outside with my dog. I have always had a dog which gets me out and about in the neighborhood at least four times a day. People get to know you and your dog, oftentimes it is the dog people get to know first! My dog Lucy, actually "Lady Lucy of Ulmerton" is a rescue from the shelter on Ulmerton. She's a Black Mouth Cur (actually a mutt) who is about 9 years old. She is my near constant companion; she's my automatic doorbell and I love her dearly.

Favorite quote or a philosophy you like to live by?

A few sayings come to mind:

The smallest good deed is worth more than the grandest intention.

I also like this MLK quote: Life's most persistent and urgent question is, 'What are you doing for others?' And I like JFK's: Ask not what your country [or city] is doing for you, rather what can you do for them?

Thank you, Kathleen – Always a pleasure to spend time with you.