

## GOOD CITIZENSHIP STARTS AT HOME

Once again, spring is upon us and as the Oklahoma foliage comes out of hibernation and as we see the signs of rebirth and renewal all about, I cannot help but reflect on what it is that sets one community apart from another. A community is only as good as the people that make it up, and when it comes to people, The Village is tops in my mind.

As a citizen of any community, there comes the responsibility of doing whatever is reasonably within our means to foster the right environment for our families and neighbors. Good citizenship starts at home and includes, among other things, mowing yards, maintaining flower beds, painting, and the like. Yard and home improvements can be contagious and what we do to improve the looks of our homes may inspire others to do the same. In the end, we all benefit from increased property values and a more pleasing environment in which to live and raise a family.

Yes, it is true that not all citizens share the same community-minded values. You know who they are. Therefore, it is incumbent upon each one of us as responsible members of the community to be proactive and to work together through our neighborhood associations to educate these citizens and to encourage them to be better members of the community. To be sure, there will always be people who do not respond to positive input and will require a visit from the Code Enforcement Officer. And yes, some properties will ultimately require the extreme measure of legal abatement by the City.

The City of The Village takes a proactive approach to code enforcement. In fact, the Insurance Services Office (ISO) recently rated The Village as the most effective code enforcement department in the entire state! The City currently employs two fulltime enforcement officers to patrol the neighborhoods. It is their job to spot and correct problems *before* they become citizen complaints. Officers, however, occasionally miss violations, especially if they are in an enclosed backyard, and we do need your eyes to be more effective. Please report any violations that you see to the Code Enforcement Department by calling 751-0493. Don't worry; we will keep your call confidential. Please keep in mind, however, that all citizens are entitled to "due process" and enforcement actions oftentimes take quite a bit of time due to paperwork and other legal requirements.

Strict ordinances and enforcement are only part of the answer. For one, the City cannot legislate pride. I oftentimes find people surprised and dismayed to learn that local governments lack the statutory authority to effectively deal with many situations that relate to aesthetics and quality of life. This is where you come in. Citizen involvement can and does make a difference. Together we can make The Village a safer and more attractive place in which to live. – *Bruce K. Stone*