

## Wren Creek Resident Exemplifies What It Means to Be a Good Neighbor

Resident Marie Shook has lived in Stonebridge Ranch for 11 years. Her daughters were 4 ½ and 1 ½ when she and her husband moved in to their Wren Creek home. As a young mother new to Texas, “I just needed another mom to talk to, another adult,” she says. “So I started doing play groups, and I realized I like entertaining other people. That’s when I started having people over to my house every week.”

Her friend Dianna Alvidres (also a Wren Creek resident, who met Marie through a playgroup when their daughters were young), laughs and turns to Marie: “I was at home as a young mom for a long time, too,” she says, “but I was never like that. I was in survival mode!”

Dianna and three more of Marie’s Wren Creek neighbors, Cara McLain, Deb Johnson and Lisa Lalani, all agree that Marie is a great neighbor to have. They sat down with Marie and *Stonebridge Ranch News* at the Association office (6201 Virginia Parkway) to share what makes Marie so special. For each of them, Marie’s presence in the neighborhood cannot be separated from that of her dog, Dooley, a Labrador Retriever mix whom Marie often walks multiple times a day. This gives her an opportunity to interact with residents throughout Wren Creek, as well as anyone who visits (including the postman, whom she knows by name). Here, in their own words, the women describe Marie (and Dooley’s) influence in their lives.

### Cara

“Marie definitely cares. A lot. Most people don’t care. But Wren Creek is better for Marie. I remember when I was out of town, I knew that Marie was keeping an eye on everything at home for me. And when I got back, my pantry had been reorganized! She’d cleaned it for me. [“I like to organize!” Marie interjects, laughing.] One time, she even washed another neighbor’s laundry—multiple loads—for her while she was dog sitting. And she *folded* it!

“If I forget and leave my garage door open or the lights on, she’ll call and remind me to close it. Or if a package is left on my doorstep, she’ll text me to go outside and get it. She’ll help you fix anything. She saw me outside repainting my patio furniture and stopped to help.

“When I got my dog, Chubbs, Marie offered to walk him. All of the neighborhood dogs have their own personal love affair with her. Whenever we get close to her street, Chubbs speeds up.” [Grins Marie: “I always have a bag of treats with me.”]

### Deb

“Marie cares. And she’s not expecting anything in return. Marie never gossips about anyone. She searches for positive things to say. Several times, she’s straightened me out. If I complain about how a neighbor’s lawn looks, she might say, ‘Remember, he just had surgery. That might be why his lawn doesn’t look so great. She’s a wealth of info.

“One day I was walking my dog, Bella. Bella saw Marie and took off running, and I fell and tore my rotator cuff and had to have surgery. Marie organized people to help walk Bella for me when I couldn’t. She still walks Bella two or three days a week. When Bella sees Marie, she’ll lean against her like she’s

trying to get in her lap. And because Marie started walking Bella with Dooley, Bella has started to calm down. Marie even trained my dog to walk on my right. That's because I had my surgery on my left side and I couldn't hold the leash.

"When I was able to get up after my surgery, I walked into my garage and said 'Wow! Why is my mess organized?' It was because Marie had organized my garage for me. ["I was afraid she might fall over the boxes," says Marie.]

### **Lisa**

"I live directly across the street. When I moved in, Marie was the most amazing welcome wagon. Some people may not realize the need for that kind of thing. We all get involved in our own little lives. We stay in our houses and only come and go in our own driveways and garages. My husband, Nawaz, and I have taken on the role of aunt and uncle to both her girls. It's been wonderful to be part of their lives and watch them grow.

"Marie is the glue, the connector. When I had surgery, my husband was traveling. She came over three times a day and filled up my ice for me. We all call Marie first when we see a dog out, loose. She'll know exactly which house it belongs to."

### **Dianna**

We only know each other because of Marie. She knows everyone's names. She knows the names of everyone's dogs and cats. We call her Mrs. Kravitz, like the character from that old TV show *Bewitched*. The one who was always watching and knew everyone's business. ["I'm not that nosy!" laughs Marie. "Just informed."]

"Our oldest daughters, Amy and Grace, are best friends. She's like my kids' second mom. If I'm working late, they know to call her and say, 'Mom's not here, can you come pick me up?' And Marie never asks for anything back. [The women laugh when Marie interjects and says, "I *will* accept Starbucks and food."] I'm forever indebted to her. When she sees me, she'll tell me, 'Dianna, these are the names of your new neighbors, or, have you met so-and-so? You need to go over and meet them!' [Says Marie: "Dianna is kinda introverted. We used to walk together every day after taking our kids to school. I made her get out of the house more."]

### **In Marie's Own Words**

"All the neighborhood kids know Dooley because I've walked him with my girls to school at Wilmeth Elementary, and now, to the bus stop. And we wait together for the girls after school. Whenever I'm walking him and we see a neighbor coming toward us, he'll stop and lay down. Dooley knows it's gonna be awhile because I'm going to stop and talk.

"I can do all these things because I'm a stay-at-home mom. I used to be very involved at my daughters' elementary school. I was on the Board that planned their carnival for four years in a row. I volunteered for everything and was very organized. Now that they are in middle school and high school, I have more time. I volunteer at the Collin County Animal Shelter 10 to 15 hours a week. I guess I just have a passion

for animals and people. I like to learn what we have in common. You never know who knows who, or what connects you, until you talk to someone.”