

# Friendship comes full circle with family through open house

I was not expecting the bear hug I received as we walked into the church for our previous next door neighbor's graduation open house.

It was a welcome surprise. And then another hug from his grandmother and grandfather and a hug from his dad and a warm smiling welcome from his mom and brother and sister. All the memories of the family expanding next

door to us began to flood back. As we looked at the photos displayed on a tri-fold board and in a photo album, the realization of just how much the Marion High School senior had spent at our house his formative years were revisited.

Initially it was just his parents who lived next door to us in a smaller two-bedroom home. Plenty big for a young couple just starting out in life and would continue to be big enough as they started their family.

While we had all three of our daughters by the time, they had their first child, we seemed to mesh pretty well as new parents. Our twins were just two years older than their oldest.



A SLICE OF LIFE

Linda Wilk



Their son became like the brother they never had, as was evidenced in photos.

There was the photo of Andrea, Marissa and Laura practically smothering Alex as they all sat in the back yard. Or the photo where only two were visible, with a third child covered in leaves except for their feet. That would have been when the city still vacuumed up leaves. Each fall the children enjoyed jumping into the leaf piles and many times Larry would be the leaf monster.

Since our yard was larger than our neighbors and had a club house, swing set and slide, it was not uncommon for our

next-door neighbor and other neighborhood children to hang out at our house. Our only rule was that before a new child could play at our house, we had to meet their parents. We always wanted the parents to know we were a safe place to have their child at, and we wanted to make sure we knew at least the names of the parents.

Since we have no immediate family in Indiana and our next-door neighbor's family all lived in Michigan, there were times we spent Easter and Thanksgiving with each other. At first our homes were large

enough to host the dinner and all of us. Then as their family grew or when one or both of their or my parents came to visit, we started going to their church for the meal.

There were lots of memories made between the fence over the years. While Larry can fix pretty much anything, our neighbor is much more proficient in computers and technology. So, Larry became known as MacGyver and would frequently be called over to assist with this or that household repair need. On the other hand, when we had a computer problem,

our neighbor was quick to diagnosis and fix the problem.

Eventually the next-door neighbors outgrew the house next door and moved just one street over and two blocks down. While it was not that far, as happens, their lives went in a different direction than ours did.

It became less and less frequent that we would see one another, occasionally one of the children would stop by for a fundraiser, selling cookies or popcorn or one year even trash bags.

So, when the invitation came in the mail for Alex's

open house, it was an opportunity we intended not to miss. Marissa who is home for the summer since she opted not to try and find an apartment her sophomore year of college at Purdue went along with us to the open house.

It was fitting Marissa was the daughter who went to the open house, given that Alex will be going to Purdue next year where he will study animal science and pre-vet. Marissa made sure to let Alex know that anything he might need once he is on campus, she would be happy to assist with, to which Alex asked Marissa to give him a tour of campus.

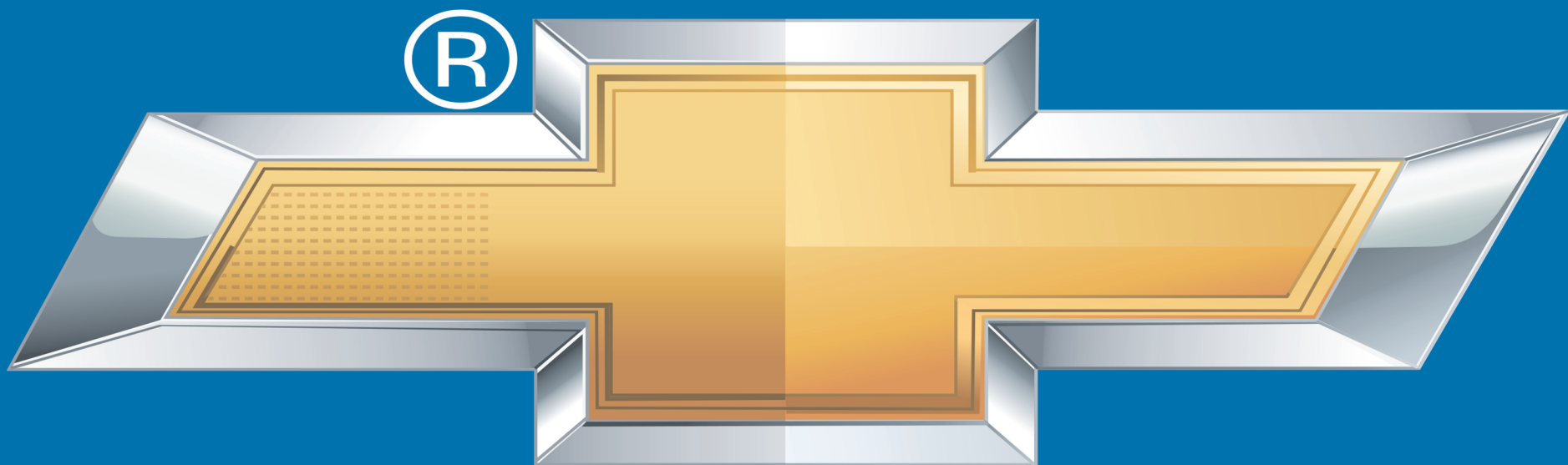
It seemed as if things had come full circle. The friendship was rekindled and the big sister looking out for the younger brother was evident again as Marissa wrote a note in Alex's graduation giving him her phone number, in case he needed anything. She also offered to bring him home for holidays and other times she was also be coming home.

It reminded me that while lives change and neighbors move, the bonds of friendship remain.



Photo from graduation open house.

# BARRY BUNKER CHEVROLET



State Road 15 North 1307 Wabash Ave.

Marion, Indiana

765. 664. 1275 • [www.barrybunker.com](http://www.barrybunker.com)