

In the neighborhood - January

January, it's a month I like. Named for the god Janus, pictured as a two-faced man, looking forward and backward, a fitting symbol for the time of year when we do just that. January gives us a much needed respite after the frenzy of the holidays and allows us time to consider new possibilities as well as ponder past poor choices, looking forward to a fresh, new improved year with hope and back at the oh-so-last-year past.

January brings new enthusiasm to succeed in whatever you have resolved to do. I generally make New Year's resolutions, they last about two weeks, and they are nearly always the same for every year. I get sucked into all of the encouragement from T.V. ads and magazines to get healthy, lose weight, exercise more, be kinder to yourself, get happy, save more, spend less; a slew of self-improvement platitudes that I buy into every year that feeds some part of me that constantly whispers, "you could be better than you are."

You have to love January, the season of self-improvement. Everywhere you look, somebody is telling you it is time for a change. Weight loss companies and organizations, fitness centers and exercise equipment manufacturers all spend millions on ads in January because they know we are all thinking the same thing. It's January, time to atone for our year-end sins, our shortcomings, thigh expansions and lack of waist management. Apparently it works. More gym memberships and diets are started in January than at any other time. Magazines are full of self-help and improvement articles, and self-improvement books fly off of shelves.

So, with every January hope springs eternal. This is the year I am going to do it! This is the year I will make a difference in my life; I think to myself as I ponder the luscious layer-cake recipes on the cover of the popular women's magazine, alongside the article on "Lose ten pounds by Valentine's Day." Yes, January is the season of hope, even more than Christmas. I hope I can still fit into my clothes after all the holiday indulgence. I hope that all of the Christmas bills don't come in the next statement. I really hope that this new wrinkle cream and this new diet work. I hope that my new spandex undergarments are as slimming and supportive as they claim to be. I hope that my new exercise video will inspire me to actually move.

With each passing January, my hope grows bigger, and my resolve smaller. You would think that by now at my age I would know better. January goes by quickly, and with it my enthusiasm for all things "resolved." By the time February comes around, I am contentedly settled back into old routines and comfortable with the knowledge that the more things change, the more they stay the same, and that even though that voice still whispers, "you could be better," by February I am content to be who and what I am. January is like taking a trip to Oz. In a whirlwind of excitement, you are swept up and encounter bold new ideas, people and events, but in the end, you discover that if you go searching for your heart's desire it's best not to go beyond your own back yard. That is what I like about January. It takes you out of your comfort zone for a while, lets you see possibilities, then in 30 days it lets you return to your comfortable reality, a little wiser, a little happier and maybe with some luck, a little improved.

Beverly Wallace is a Greeley native. She has one more big reason to like January, especially the 12th; it is the birthday of her youngest daughter, 21 this year. Happy Birthday, Tara!

