THE CIVILITY CORNER

 DON’T GOSSIP

The fourth civility tool is the only one that asks us not to do something which is to Not Gossip. Clearly civility and gossip do not have the same intent. Civility is seeking a positive communication with another person even when you disagree. With gossip one wants to tell another person some negative, uncomplimentary, unreliable information about someone you both know that is hurtful.

Primarily gossip has been seen in the context of small communities that we live in: a small town, a neighborhood in a larger community, a school, a church, a business. Most of us know someone whom we would call a gossip. Almost all of us listen to gossip, and unintentionally tell someone else what we heard. Sadly that gets passed on the same way to another. We must ask the gossiper to stop talking and say that we do not listen to any of this type of talk and that we will not tell anyone what we did hear.

 A second type of gossip has been in written form. With the invention of the printing press, we were able to get news from anywhere. One interest of the general populace was the rich and famous. Some tabloids were started to give that information. Hence began the gossip column where the focus was to find and report negative and unsubstantiated information. From those who read these publications others are told this information.

Now we have an even wider way that we can get information or give it, social media. Anyone can say what they believe and feel without proof. Our young face bullying. In the adult world, we do a lot of blaming, name calling, put downs, threats, and outrageous claims. Simply this is another form of gossip, it’s intent is to hurt someone else and have others believe their statements.

Not Gossip asks us not to participate in this. Each of us can not give any of these messages. Yet that is hardly enough. We need to filter out those messages someone gives to us. A key to helping us to do that is to check each message we receive with considering if kindness is their intent. If so be inclusive to the statement. If the words are hurtful, it as gossip. Delete and do not share.

Orlaine I. Gabert, Door County Civility Project