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Author: Kitchen, Patricia

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Document Text

DO YOU HAVE a really good friend at work? Then give thanks - and

read on.

Some mornings, I take an early train west to Farmingdale. And often I'm cheered by a group of women who get on my car in Queens on their way to Hicksville. They quickly launch into high-spirited workplace chat: One day, one of them told how she managed an irate customer on the phone. And another, they all hooted over the likeliest reasons one of their co-workers came to work wearing red Spandex.

Within a couple of minutes, the group chat dies down and the women pair up to discuss personal issues in more intimate tones. They remind me how nice it is to have a good friend at work. Someone special to give you help and encouragement. Someone special to tell dreams to. Someone special to share a good laugh with. No doubt about it: A good office friend is one more thing to give thanks for this weekend.

With all the time pressures we face, "workstations have become back fences where we make friends," says Dianne Blomberg, a communications professor at Metropolitan State College of Denver who has studied 71 office friendships.

She found in her group that, contrary to what some bosses may

think, office friendships can help - not hinder - the work effort. Though not all her subjects were happy campers - some even hated their work - all did say they were effective workers

who met the criteria of their job descriptions. All said their friends helped provide stress-relief, ideas for doing the job better and emotional support.

When asked if friends covered for each other, the answer was "yes" but not by doing things the boss would object to, such as punching in for one another or promoting a friend who is not qualified. (We can only guess what the results would have been if a bunch of real deadbeats had taken part in the survey.)

She also found that office friendships usually sputter and peter out within two years if one friend leaves to take another job. I didn't want to believe that at first, but after reflecting on my own work friendships, I have to agree. Not that you care less about each other. "The elements are there but the glue {the workplace} just isn't there any more," Blomberg says.

Such a parting of the ways is unlikely, though, for Fran

D'Arcangelis and GERALYN DICEY - even if one of them were to move on from her job at Design for Vision, a surgical eyeglass manufacturer in Ronkonkoma. Their connection transcends work - in

fact, they have a pact not to discuss work outside the office. A good part of that has to do with the fact that D'Arcangelis does human resources work, so she has to maintain confidentiality. But no matter, even without work chat they - and their husbands - have plenty in common. They even take vacations together, most recently visiting Las Vegas and taking along D'Arcangelis' baby daughter, Marissa.

Perhaps you are lucky enough to have a best friend at work - or have had one in the past. Someone who helped you find a little humor on a tough day. Or someone who took friendship to new heights by doing something extraordinary for you or your loved ones. Wouldn't you like to tell us why you give thanks for having such a wonderful workplace friend? Please write, fax or e-mail me the story of your friendship. Please include your names (which won't be used without your permission), the kind of work you do and day and evening phone numbers.

Why stop with me? Wouldn't you like to tell your friend how fortunate you feel? Now's the perfect time.

READERS' COMMENTS: Write to me at Newsday, 235 Pinelawn Rd., Melville, NY 11747-4250; or send email to kitchen@newsday.com. * * *

You can learn more about the complexities and delights of friendships at a discussion by Jan Yager, author of "Friendshifts - The Power of Friendship and How It Shapes Our Lives" (Hannacroix Creek Books, \$22.95). Yager, who grew up in Bayside, will be speaking Dec. 12 from 6-7:30 p.m. at Borders Book Shop in Levittown.

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Abstract (Document Summary)

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