



# **NEIGHBORHOOD BLOCK PARTY KIT**

**AND EASY HOW-TO GUIDE  
TO ORGANIZE A NEIGHBORHOOD BLOCK PARTY**

*“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” (John 13:34-35)*

## **INTRODUCTION**

A neighborhood block party is an opportunity for neighbors to get together, meet each other, have fun, and maybe work together on a common activity. Many people live isolated lives these days. One of the roles of a follower of Jesus or a missional community is to display the Good News of Jesus by showing our Love for one another by building community.

## **9 REASONS TO HAVE A BLOCK PARTY**

- It creates community by providing an opportunity for you and your neighbors to get to know each other.
- It increases a sense of belonging within your community.
- It provides space to learn a little about each other and know who might need a little extra help from time-to-time through your service.
- It is a way to discover skills you and your neighbors have. You might be able to help with a gardening problem. They might be able to lend you that ingredient you need.
- It includes the whole family – allowing them to experience community and engage in mission together.
- It helps with safety/crime prevention by knowing who lives around you.
- It develops an opportunity to meet some of the older neighbors and learn about your community’s history.
- It is taking “the church”, God’s people, out in mission, following relational pathways to see where Jesus is at work.
- It’s just plain fun—no excuses or reasons are needed to celebrate

## **PLANNING YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD BLOCK PARTY.**

Things to consider when organizing your event.

### **1. GETTING STARTED**

- The idea of a neighborhood block party is to bring neighbors together. It’s a good idea to find 1 or 2 neighbors to help you with the event.
- You might also want to ask someone from your Missional Community or The Exchange to help serve your neighbors by helping you put on the event.
- One can take the “Lone Ranger” approach, and it can be a great event. However, it will be hard to greet and meet your neighbors if you’re the only one responsible for the event.
- If this is the first time, you may want to send out a flyer to explain what a Block Party is, encourage attendance, perhaps share some the benefits, get opinions on how to handle food, and possible dates and times to have the event.
- Enlist as many neighbors as you can to help out. Someone can type the flyer; someone else can collect them. You may want to ask some kids to drop the flyers in the mailboxes.

## **2. TYPES OF BLOCK PARTIES**

Which type of block party will work best in your neighborhood? Try not to go overboard; it can make people feel the event is too much work. Keep it Simple!

- **Barbecues** – Either provide the sides and ask for everyone to bring their own meat or provide the meat and ask everyone to bring a side or dessert.
- **Picnics** – Everyone brings their own food
- **Pot luck** – everyone brings a dish
- **Catered** – everyone pitches in for the cost.

## **3. HOW BIG TO MAKE IT**

- Start off with a smaller event rather than a large one. It can always grow, but it is harder to shrink if things get too big to control.
- In selecting who to invite, use natural neighborhood boundaries where possible (i.e. end of the block). If you are planning a street or cul-de-sac party, you *need* to invite everyone from that area.
- Decide early and make it clear in your flyer if this will be a block party restricted to those on the street/block or whether people can invite friends/relatives (if yes how many).

## **4. LOCATION**

- Back yard or front yard for more visibility
- House
- Garage (Rainout)
- Alley\*\*
- Street\*\*
- Park\*\*

\*\* Because these locations are on public lands, an application or permit may be required. Safety needs to be an important factor in planning.

## **5. CITY APPLICATION AND PERMITS**

- If you want to close down a street or re-direct traffic, your city may have application requirements
- Permits may also be required if the event involves a public park, alcohol consumption, and sound-amplifying equipment.
- Remember that at the end of the function, Public sights need to be cleaned and left in good condition.
- Look online at your city's website and call city hall to obtain more information about the requirements where you live. Often if you search "block party" on the website, you will find policies and additional resources.

\*\*\*Don't let obstacles stand in your way...It is worth it!\*\*\*

## **6. THE TIMING TO GET THE EVENT PLANNED**

- Start talking to immediate neighbors 4-5 weeks out and get input on when to hold the party.
- Adjustments may need to be made if a neighbor already has an event of their own planned.

- Once you have the specifics nailed down hand deliver a flyer, 2 weeks before the event, to each neighbor with date time and what to bring.
- Spring and Fall are ideal times temperature-wise in South East Missouri. However, most people have more time to party during the summer.
- A weekend date or holiday are often the best times for events,
- Have an alternate rainout location or day planned, just in case.
- Keep in mind who lives in the neighborhood when setting the hours for the party.
- If young children or seniors are living next door to the party area plan to finish by 9:00pm.

## **7. GETTING THE WORD OUT**

It's important to keep neighbors informed. Here are some ideas.

- Flyers can be used with a request to put their suggestions for the event in your mailbox.
- Information can be gathered from your neighbors by going door-to-door. This adds a personal touch and people often offer to help.
- A casual approach can be used to inform neighbors as you see them working in their yards.
- Neighbors can be called on the phone. (If you don't know your neighbors, a revers directory telephone book can be used. They are available at libraries.)
- Make an extra effort to get your new neighbors out to the event.
- To reach neighbors in townhouses, apartments and condos, it is best to approach the manager. They will let you know how to get in touch with the residents.
- Take every opportunity to talk up the party in the neighborhood as often as possible prior to the event.
- Hold a planning mini-party with those neighbors and MC members who have interest in helping.

## **8. ROLE OF ORGANIZERS**

- Make a decision about the set up.
- Act as a greeter at the event.
- Introduce new neighbors and help them make connections.
- Make sure the clean-up is done. (You may wish to inspire clean up by rewarding the children with a prize.)

## **9. SET UP**

- Set up a sign-in book for records for the next party. It can help develop a contact list for the neighborhood.
- Nametags can be a great help.
- Decide what you want neighbors to write on their name tags (i.e. first and last names, house numbers)
- Line up tables for the food and have a few garbage cans available for trash and recycle.
- Decide whether you will coordinate or everyone will bring their own Tables and chairs, plates, cutlery and cups, beverages, etc. If using grills, who will bring them?

- Institute a bathroom policy. Will everyone use his or her own or will the host location open up their bathroom for the party?
- Decide if pets are allowed.
- Be ready to oversee the clean up after the event.

## **10. ACTIVITIES DURING THE EVENT**

- What should we do during the event?
- Visit and eat. Nothing builds relationships and community like sharing a meal.
- Games for kids (Some organized, some they can plan themselves).
- Take time to introduce one another and point to one's house. This can be done in a game format.
- Encourage the talent in your neighborhood to come forward such a musician, magicians, etc.
- Consider pooling some cash and renting a bouncy house. It's a great draw for families and occupies children so adults can get to know each other.
- Ask people to bring their favorite lawn games.

## **OTHER WAYS TO GET TO KNOW YOUR NEIGHBORS**

- Christmas/holiday parties
- Garden tour party
- Sports parties
- Neighborhood garage sale
- Bonfires
- When in doubt, ask your neighbors for ideas.

## **FINAL REMINDERS**

- Though The Exchange Community encourages and sometimes sponsors block parties, this is not a church event!
- The **MAIN** reason for throwing the block party is to build community, **NOT** evangelism. Don't bombard people with invitations to church. You'll turn people away from the church and alienate your neighbors. Focus on building relationships. Seek other opportunities to have Gospel conversations.
- Neighbors should observe security precautions by keeping back doors locked and equipment in sight.
- Remember when setting up tables and chairs that emergency vehicles may need access.
- You may wish to post signs the day before the event to remind everyone to remove cars from events involving street closure.

For more information go to [www.TheExchangeCommunity.org](http://www.TheExchangeCommunity.org) or email [TheExchangeSemo@gmail.com](mailto:TheExchangeSemo@gmail.com).