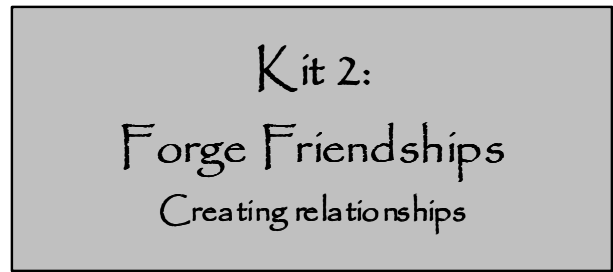


Creating Connections for Caring Communities



Motivation for coming: Promoting stronger neighborhood relationships and a safer environment for everyone in the neighborhood.

Project Idea: Block Party

Summary: Block parties vary from a simple gathering of a few people in a front yard, to a highly organized event involving multiple streets in a neighborhood. Block parties provide opportunities to renew neighborhood awareness, socialize, and celebrate neighborhood relationships.

What you need:

- A central location for the party
- A few neighbors that will work together in planning committees
- Invitations and/or signs (create your own or use invitation in this kit)
- Permit to block off your street (if you decide to do this, see sample letter in kit)

Optional Extras:

- Create or update your Neighborhood Directory with contact information
- Family fun games and activities
- Identify special talents in the neighborhood – you may live next door to a magician, singer, dancer or artist.

Checklist for Hosting a Block Party

Step 1: Things to consider before you plan your party

- Check with your neighbors: See what interest there is in an event like this and choose a time and date which is convenient for most of your neighbors. Find out which neighbors can help.
- Select a central location for the party: It should be a place where people can walk or ride their bikes. Find out if neighbors will host the party in their front yard.
- Be safe: Consider blocking off your street or use several neighbors' front or back yards. In either case, consider ways to protect children from traffic.
- Be considerate: Think about the privacy and property of those who don't want to participate.
- Be prepared for bad weather: Find an alternative indoor site – a garage works great.

Checklist for Hosting a Block Party

Step 2: Organize and begin planning

- Begin early: Begin planning at least six weeks in advance. If you decide to block off your street for the party you will need approval from the city. Submit a letter to Jim Hawks at City Hall for approval at least 3 weeks in advance of your party. Include date, time and location of the party along with a contact name and phone number. (See sample letter in this kit). The city is responsible for setting up and taking down the barricades.
- Form committees to help with planning and implementation: Suggested committees/duties:
 - Invitations and Publicity: Create an invitation and distribute around the neighborhood. (Sample invitation in this kit can be filled in and photocopied). If you decide to create your own, make sure to include: date, time, location, what to bring, rain date, who to call for more information. Find people to help distribute the invitations, door to door delivery is suggested or ask one person from each block to pass out the flyers on their block. You may also want to post signs in the neighborhood.
 - Set-up: Things to figure out and line up in advance: 1) Chairs and tables. Neighbors can bring their own lawn chairs but you may need some extras for people who forget. Line up tables for food and beverages. 2) If you will be having a cookout, locate enough grills to cook the food. 3) Make a plan for restroom facilities. You can ask a few families to open up their homes for use of the facilities. 4) Trash cans: Be sure you have adequate trash cans available with extra plastic liners. You may want to put out recycling bins for aluminum cans. 5) Name tags and markers: It is always helpful to have name tags for newcomers to the neighborhood.
 - Food and Beverages: Questions this committee should consider: How many people do you expect? How much food will you provide? What food or supplies will you ask neighbors to bring? How will you pay for the party? Should we have an RSVP date or call neighbors to see if they plan to attend? What about plates, napkins, cups and plastic ware? Ideas that you might consider:
 - Potlucks are a relatively inexpensive way to defray party costs. Have each family bring a covered dish. You may want to split up food tasks by last name. For example, if your name starts with A through L: bring a salad, if M through Z: bring a dessert.
 - If you are planning a cookout and will provide the main dish (hamburgers, hot dogs, buns, etc.) either ask neighbors to help fund the cost or seek donations from area businesses or local grocery stores. Determine exactly what you need and include in a letter to the sponsor: a) who you are and why you are planning the event, b) how much money or product you are seeking, c) how the money or donations will be utilized, d) how many people will be attending, e) whether there will be any publicity for the sponsor. You will also need to line up people to do the grilling at the event.
 - Have the food catered or have a neighborhood committee prepare the food and charge a fee for the meal.
 - Consider different tastes (caffeine, no caffeine, dairy products, vegetarian, kosher, etc.) Alcohol is strongly discouraged! This is a family and neighborhood event. If you do serve alcoholic beverages be mindful of laws and ordinances as well as courtesy for other neighbors. You can serve alcohol as long as it remains a private function. The function cannot be open to the general public and you cannot serve alcohol if you charge a fee. It is a crime to serve alcohol to any person under the age of 21.

Checklist for Hosting a Block Party

Step 2: Organize and begin planning (continued)

- Form committees to help with planning and implementation: (continued)
 - Entertainment: Try to develop activities for all ages. Set up family games or tournaments. Set up a dance zone with a boombox and portable speakers, a card-playing or board game zone, an active zone for softball/volleyball/street hockey, a casual seating zone for visiting. You may want to ask the local police officer to stop by your event to get to know people in the neighborhood. Just call the North Platte Police Department at 535-6789 and they can make arrangements for you. Please try to provide as much advance notice as possible.
 - Clean-up: Be sure you have people in place to oversee cleanup. Locate bins to put trash into or arrange to take it to the dump. Be sure the clean up crew knows where to return borrowed tables, chairs, grills, etc.

Step 3: Enjoy the Party

- Forge stronger relationships: Use this time to get to know your neighbors better. Strike up conversations with those you don't know well. Be sure to include new comers in all activities to make them feel welcome. Wear name tags to help those that don't know each other well.
- Watch the weather: Have a back-up plan for bad weather – perhaps someone's garage can be used.

Step 4: After the Party

- Clean up the block party site: Be sure you leave the site better than you found it to maintain good relations with your neighbors and the city.
- Thank you notes: Send thank you notes to any sponsors and to all those who planned or helped out on the day of the event.
- Begin planning for next year: Make notes of things that worked well and ideas for an even better party next year. Some neighborhoods start a tradition and have a party the same weekend every year. It's a great way to build neighborhood unity.