Why organize a block party?

A block party is a great way for neighbors to get acquainted, and it creates a good neighborhood feeling. A block could be a floor of your apartment building, a city block, a square mile, or any area that seems like your neighborhood. Organize a simple get-together on your own to get started. After the ice is broken, the group may want to make the block party an annual event. Form a committee to choose a place, date, and time for the block party and get others involved to plan the menu and handle other responsibilities.

What do we need?

name tags; "icebreaker" charts and scavenger hunt lists; plates, glasses, and flatware

How long will it take?

2 to 3 hours for the party, plus preparation time

What do we do?

• Invite each family on the block to bring their favorite dessert to your house for a party. Other ideas for meeting places are your community center, a park, or someone's backyard.
• Provide name tags (unless your neighborhood has been so stable that everyone knows each other).
• Plan a get-acquainted mixer like the "What's My Name?" icebreaker on page 128. If neighbors already know each other, a scavenger hunt can be a lot of fun.
• You may also want to have a game of charades or a fast game of volleyball.
“What’s My Name?” Icebreaker

| | Draw a chart of 1- to 2-inch squares on a sheet of paper. Make at least one square per guest. |
| | At the top of each square, list a characteristic that could fit one of your guests. Examples: talks back to TV commercials, can wiggle ears, can touch palms to the floor, has a hole in the bottom of his shoe now, hates hamburgers, or runs 5 miles or more a day. |
| | Characteristics can be humorous or practical, but the chart should provide an interesting fact about each guest. Don’t leave anyone out! The object is for all the guests to introduce themselves to each other and to learn a bit about each person. |

Option. Scavenger Hunt for Kids Aged 6-96

| | Divide the group into teams of four to six persons, making sure each team has a similar distribution of ages. You could have people line up by age or by length of time in the community and then number off 1 to 4 (or whatever number of teams you plan to have). All people with the same number would then be on the same team. |
| | Distribute copies of the scavenger-hunt list to each team. |
| | Tell the teams to try to collect as many of the items as they can in the next 20 minutes. If most members of the community are attending your party, you may have to go to your own homes for most of the items. |
| | The team that collects the most items on the list gets to go through the dessert line first. |

Possible Scavenger-Hunt Items

- A coin with the same date as the birth year as one member of the team
- A sock with a hole in it
- A rock smaller than 1 inch in diameter
- Five marshmallows
- Three chocolate chips
- Four raisins
- A twig longer than 2 inches
- A class ring
- A shoestring that is longer than 18 inches
- A child’s toy that has the shape of a triangle on it somewhere
- A pencil that still has an eraser left
- An item that has been recycled
- A stuffed animal
- A children’s book
- A nail file
- A band-aid
- An earring for pierced ears
- A stick of sugarless gum
- A photo with more than three people in it
- A magazine turned to page 37
Other options.

- Have a progressive dinner. In a progressive dinner, people move from home to home, eating a different part of a meal at each one. For example, you could have soup at one home, salad at the next home, the main course at the next home, and dessert at the last home. You can add as many courses as the number of families participating.

- Have a mystery dinner. Write the menu in code or in a foreign language that the group doesn’t understand. As guests order each course of the meal, they often get unusual combinations, such as dessert first or butter without bread.


- Play relay races; make up community versions of Pictionary or Trivial Pursuit; or try some of the games listed in the reference section of this manual.

Part of this activity was taken from Let's Make a Memory by Gloria Gaither and Shirley Dobson. 1983. Dallas: Word, Inc. Used by permission.

What happened?

- Have each family member tell what they did to prepare for this event and how they felt as they did it.
- How successful was the event?
- How did family members feel during and after the event?
- Did neighbors seem to enjoy participating in the group?

What did you learn?

- What things did you consider when you decided what kind of group event to hold?
- Why were these important considerations?
- How did you divide jobs and organize the party?
- What did you learn about your neighbors?

Why was this activity important?

- What did you learn about planning and organizing?
- What did you observe or learn about getting along with your neighbors?
- Why is it important to know your neighbors?

What's next?

- What are some other ways you could use the organizational skills you learned in this activity?
- What other things could you do to make friends with the people living in your neighborhood?