

GATHERING NEIGHBORS' CONTACT INFORMATION

A 2023 Pew Research Center survey found that only 26% of Americans say they know most of their neighbors, while 57% say they know only some of them. Maybe you can relate.

It's nearly impossible to love someone if you don't even know their name, so if we want to take Jesus' call for us to love our neighbor seriously, it starts with being intentional about meeting them.

As you plan for your neighborhood block party, your neighbors are much more likely to accept an invite to a gathering if they have had a positive connection with you already. So how do we do that?

One strategy you can try out is a neighborhood food drive. This is a great way to do two things at the same time: feed the hungry and get to know your neighbors.

COMMUNITY FOOD DRIVE

Here's how it works:

1. Grab a stack of large brown paper bags to fit grocery items—enough for at least one per home in your neighborhood you plan to visit.
2. Write/print off notes to attach to each bag introducing yourself and letting your neighbors know that you are working with others from your church (name drop The Bridge!) to collect non-perishable food to donate to a local food pantry (i.e. The Well). Indicate in the note that you will be doing a trip around the neighborhood on a particular day and time window to collect food, and that you'd love to say hello if they are home. If they would like to contribute food but can't be home during that window, tell them they can just leave their brown bag outside their front door and you'll pick it up. You can also leave a spot on your note for them to write down their name and contact info. Tell them that you'd love to grab their info to let them know how much your neighborhood collected.

3. When the day arrives for food collection, carve out enough time to allow for conversations at neighbor's houses to not be rushed. As you leave each house, jot down any notes from your conversation that stood out to you so you don't forget (address, names of adults/kids, how long they have lived there, any life events they brought up, etc). That will help you be intentional with any future followup conversations.
4. Once all the food is collected, do a count of how much your neighborhood was able to donate, and send out an email/text to each person who contributed, thanking them for joining in, and letting them know the total amount. You can then use this connection point as an opportunity to invite them to the block party you are planning for your neighborhood.

It's that easy! With just a few hours invested, you'll have made a direct connection with neighbors you might have never met, and gotten a list of names along with contact information to organize neighborhood events like a block party.

BONUS TIP

Throwing a block party in your neighborhood is easier and much more fun when you enlist the help of neighbors who love this kind of thing. If you know neighbors who would be good partners, team up with them from the start. If you don't know of such a person in your neighborhood, use your food collection outings to keep an eye out for those who are clearly extroverted, are gifted in hospitality and event planning, or just show excitement at the idea of getting to know more neighbors, and reach out to them to see if they are willing to team up!