

Activities for Community Building In Your Neighborhood

We all want to know our neighbors. But it can be hard to introduce ourselves or learn more than their names. The following activities are designed to help “break the ice” between neighbors so that they can begin building relationships. They are particularly focused on helping children and youth connect with adults so that St. Louis Park becomes an even better community for kids.

These activities can be used at neighborhood gatherings such as block parties on National Night Out, apartment building events, as well as other neighborhood activities. All are easy to lead, and many do not require supplies.

ACTIVITIES FOR ALL NEIGHBORHOODS

The “-est” Game

n Supplies: None

- n Instructions:** Have everyone sit together and say that you’re going to play the “-est” game to find out who’s the “somethingest” person on the block. Then ask questions such as:
- Who’s the oldest person in the neighborhood?
 - Who’s the youngest person in the neighborhood?
 - Who’s lived in the neighborhood the longest?
 - Who most recently moved to the neighborhood?
 - Who has been married the longest in this neighborhood?
 - Who can tell the funniest joke . . . and prove it?
 - Who drives the longest distance to work or school each day?
 - Who’s pet is the biggest?
 - Who’s pet is the smallest?
 - Who’s last name is the longest?
 - Who’s last name is the shortest?

When you’re done asking your questions, see if others have “-est” questions to add. (If you’re having food afterward, end by asking, “Who’s the hungriest person on the block.” Let that person be first in line!)

People Bingo

n Supplies: Copies of the People Bingo card for everyone. (The Bingo card is located at the end of this packet.) Pens or pencils for everyone.

- n Instructions:** Give each person a writing tool and a copy of the People Bingo card. Explain that—just like regular Bingo—the object is to fill in five squares in a row. To do it, they must find someone who fits the description for that square. Then they need to write in that person’s name in that square. If there is a question on the square, they need to get the answer. (The square won’t count if they don’t remember the answer!)

Name Wave

n Supplies: none

n Instructions: Have everyone form a big circle. Then explain that you're going to do a "wave" like you do at sports games. Here's how it works: The first person says her or his name while throwing her or his hands in the air. Then the next person (going clockwise) does the same thing, and on around the circle.

Once you've done this several times, have people now say the name of the person on their left as they throw their hands in the air.

Neighborhood "People Map"

n Supplies: Sheets of paper for each household
Pens or pencils for everyone

n Instructions: Have each household draw on its sheet squares representing all the apartments in the building (or floor) or the houses on the block. Then have them fill in their page with the following information from each household:

- The names of people who live in the house (adults and children)
- Telephone number/email (if people are comfortable with sharing them)
- Names of pets in the house
- Any other information people want their neighbors to know about them

Encourage households to keep the page on their refrigerator or a bulletin board and use it to check in with each other.

Variation: You could have people write all the information on a master sheet, then copy and distribute it to everyone. Keep in mind, however, that this approach does not promote as much interaction.

Kids' Poster Party

n Supplies: Poster board for each child and teenager
Markers and/or paint

n Instructions: Have each young person on the block create a poster about what he or she likes about the neighborhood or about living in St. Louis Park. Set up the completed works in a temporary "art gallery," and have the adults tour the art with the kids as their guides.

Block Mural

- n Supplies:** A large appliance box
Markers or paint
- n Instructions:** Cut open a large appliance box so it lies flat. Mark off space for each lot on the block. Gather paint supplies (or markers). Lie the cardboard on the street (assuming it is blocked off!), a park, or another open space. Then have each household paint its own house and yard.

Pizza-Building Party

- n Supplies:** Unbaked pizza crusts and pizza sauce
- n Instructions:** Arrange to have pizza crusts and sauce ready to prepare at your party. (People in the neighborhood could bring it, or you might be able to arrange with a local pizzeria to provide it.) Have each household bring their favorite topping for pizzas. When everyone has arrived, create the pizzas together. Then bake them in people's ovens. Enjoy the feast!

Variations: Try the same idea with tacos (each person brings a different ingredient), submarine sandwiches, soup, and other “assembled” foods. It's also great for a sundae or banana split dessert party!

Move-In Memories

- n Supplies:** None
- n Instructions:** Find out the order that people moved into the neighborhood. When you've identified the person who has been there the longest, go to that person's house or apartment, and have a family member say why they moved in there and what it was like at that time (who was here, what the yards were like, what special things they did). If people are interested, encourage them to invite everyone into the living room. Then continue through all the households until the most recent resident shares her or his story.

Neighborhood Parade

- n Supplies:** Whatever people want for their “float”
- n Instructions:** Arrange to have a neighborhood or block parade. Have kids decorate their bikes, get people to show their talents, and have a great time parading around the neighborhood, block, or apartment complex.

Canned Food Collection

- n Supplies:** Instruction sheets to send to people in advance
A children's wagon (optional)
- n Instructions:** Ask everyone on the block to bring a canned good to the neighborhood party. Load it into a children's wagon. Then have someone on the block help the children deliver it to the local food shelf.

Name that Tune

- n Supplies:** none
- n Instructions:** Form teams of no more than six people each. Try to include all generations in each team. Have each team think of a song, then hum or whistle that song for the whole group. The first other team that guesses the song correctly goes next. Do as many songs as you like. If you like, then let people who know the song sing it—and tell about it—for those who don't. (Be sure that some of the songs are ones that young children will recognize.)

Sidewalk Art Gallery

- n Supplies:** Sidewalk chalk
- n Instructions:** Have each household draw a picture of their favorite place to visit or go on vacations. When the artists are finished, have everyone take a tour of the sidewalk gallery, giving time for the artists to tell about their creation.

FOR NEIGHBORHOODS WITH APARTMENTS

Hallway Hide 'n' Seek

- n Supplies:** None
- n Instructions:** Have children and adults play Hide 'n' Seek in the halls, nooks, and crannies of the apartment complex. Have one adult and one child be "it" each time. The adult has to find the children, and the children have to find the adults.

Life in St. Louis Park Mural

- n Supplies:** Paint and other mural supplies
- n Instructions:** (This activity needs prior approval by the building manager.) During a neighborhood get-together, have everyone brainstorm characteristics of the neighborhood that people believe are important things to celebrate. Then work with an artist to create a mural in a common space (lobby, recreation area, parking lot, etc.) that reflects the community qualities that people value.

FOR NEIGHBORHOODS WITH HOUSES

Yard Tour

- n **Supplies:** none
- n **Instructions:** If you have several gardening buffs on the block, invite them to give their neighbors a tour of their yard. Have them tell about the plants they selected and why. Also have them share any particular tips they have about growing flowers or vegetables in this climate.

Lawnmower Walk

- n **Supplies:** None, except people have to bring their own lawnmowers
- n **Instructions:** Get lots of attention and start conversations on the block by getting everyone with a gas-powered lawnmower to bring it to a designated spot. Then have everyone line up, crank their engines, and start down the block mowing all the front lawns at once.

Prepared by the marketing committee of Children First, a St. Louis Park initiative working to create a better community for children, youth, and families. For information, call 928-6075. Or visit our web page at www.children-first.org

If your neighborhood uses creative ways to build relationships between young people and adults, tell us what you're doing. We'll tell others about it.

PEOPLE BINGO

Try to fill up five squares in a row (horizontally, vertically, or diagonally) by finding someone who fits the description in the box. Write their name in the box. If there are instructions in parentheses, find out the information. *NOTE: You can't ask the same person to fill out two squares in a row.*

<p>Knows the names of at least half the families in the neighborhood</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>Likes to fly kites</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>Plays an instrument in a band or orchestra</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>Rides a bus to school or work</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>Checked out a library book in the past month (which one?)</p> <p>_____</p>
<p>Is a grandparent (how many grandchildren?)</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>Works in St. Louis Park</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>Is involved in the neighborhood association</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>Has had an unusual nickname (what is it?)</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>Has lived in the neighborhood less than a year (how long?)</p> <p>_____</p>
<p>Owens a dog (what's its name)</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>Has ever held an elected office (what office?)</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>Has lived in St. Louis Park all of her/his life</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>Goes to St. Louis Park High School (what grade?)</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>Usually stays up until midnight or later (how late?)</p> <p>_____</p>
<p>Likes to play table games, ie. cards, Sorry. (what games?)</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>Usually gets up before 6 a.m.</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>Knows the names of 5 neighborhood kids.</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>Has lived in the neighborhood more than 10 years (how long?)</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>Was born in another country. (where?)</p> <p>_____</p>
<p>Has extended family in St. Louis Park (who?)</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>Volunteers in a program for children or youth (where?)</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>Likes to babysit or do projects for neighbors</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>Is home during the day most of the time</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>Likes to play at the park.</p> <p>_____</p>