

## Meet Your Neighbors – Try a Block Party or Progressive Event

One evening while walking in my neighborhood with my youngest daughter, I met one of my neighbors, Janice Guthrie, for the first time—and I've lived here for almost a year. After speaking with her, she mentioned she was planning on putting together a block party. What a great idea! And now, after attending my first-ever block party, I've come to realize that getting to know one's neighbors should be near the top of our list of things to do, whether you are new to a neighborhood or introducing yourself to someone that has just moved in.

REALTORS® are great partners for those buying and selling property; however, I think many of us forget the importance of one's neighbors. The home I purchased last year was listed by an agent in my office. After we closed escrow, she asked me if she could introduce my family to the neighbors. I said that was okay, and she took the time to visit all my neighbors. She presented a flyer to all of them with information about my family. She understood the importance of neighbors; yet, it took me a year before I actually met my closest neighbors.

I remember the first neighbor to introduce himself when I first moved here. Although I've been a mountain-area resident for a long-time, this was a new neighborhood for me, and I knew no one who lived within a few blocks—or its mountain equivalent—to me. Ted was someone who made us feel welcome; this was appreciated by someone dealing with the stresses of a move and reassuring to know that I had a neighbor I could call if needed.

It was almost a year after I moved here though that I met Janice; a year that I should have taken the initiative to get to know my neighbors. Thus, when she mentioned the block party, I was thrilled. Months later when she dropped off the block party invitation, I knew I was going to make sure my girls and I would attend. We met some wonderful people at the neighborhood gathering, and we quickly realized that we are privileged to have the neighbors we do.

It was once quite common in year's past to know one's neighbors. However, with changing times and lifestyles and, for many, our ever-increasing busy schedules, we've become accustomed to our privacy and getting to know our neighbors has fallen in our list of priorities. However, there are many reasons to invest your time in getting to know your neighbors and putting together a block party.

Here are some reasons why you may want to consider having a block party:

- To have fun!
- To meet your neighbors.

- To address neighborhood issues.
- To exchange skills or resources and for networking.
- To start a new tradition or to continue an on-going one.
- To create a neighborhood email or phone list for communication.
- To get to know who lives in your neighborhood to better identify strangers or suspicious people.
- To meet some of the old-time residents in the neighborhood and learn the neighborhood's history.

If you are considering a block party but are concerned about the work it might entail, seek help from other neighbors. You may also want to consider a progressive dinner approach. I participated in a progressive dinner years ago as part of a local service club event. We had three homes participate as host homes: one for appetizers, one for dinner, and my home for dessert. A block party/progressive home approach could make for a great mountain alternative.

I'd like to thank Janice and John Guthrie for hosting our block party and a special thanks to those that helped her put the event together. We had some neighbors who were unable to attend this gathering; perhaps, we'll have the opportunity to meet them at our next block party, which I hope will become a neighborhood tradition.

If you don't know your neighbors, don't hesitate! Gather a couple of neighbors, pick a date, and invite everyone to join in! An easy way to start is to have a neighborhood block party on National Night Out, which is held annually on the first Tuesday in August. (Though, you'll need to determine whether a week night or weekend event is best for your neighborhood.) This is designed as more of a crime and drug prevention event, but still worth considering for your neighborhood. To find more information about this program, visit <http://www.nationaltownwatch.org/nno/>.

There are a multitude of online block party guides. If you like the idea, do a search and you'll probably find many helpful suggestions. Consider finding something that works for your neighborhood this summer—and get out and meet your neighbors!

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