

FOCUS ON OUTREACH

Neighborhood Outreach Activities By Twila Petrie

As Christians, we are to be initiators in reaching out. Building relationships allows us to share what Christ means to us. Here are some ideas:

Get-to-Know-Everyone Barbeque

Soon after you move into your house, invite the neighbors all along the streets near your house for a neighborhood barbeque. Think large; don't limit it to just a few houses. Supply the meat and drinks and ask others to bring side dishes. Hosting this event early on allows you to meet your neighbors and break the ice. The longer you wait, the harder it is to pull this together.

Game Nights

Invite a group of neighbors over for a Game Night. These can really break the ice and through laughter build bridges with your neighbors. Prepare all the snacks yourself for the first gathering and then invite your neighbors to contribute for future game nights. Change the invitees each time or invite some of the same and add new ones the next time allowing for more neighbors to build relationships.

Neighborhood Tea

Teas are special events and people feel honored to be invited. Sending or handing out official invitations creates an atmosphere where others will make the effort to come. It can be a structured event with everyone sitting down together or a more casual event where people mingle around. There are books that suggest different types of teas that one can host. You could choose a theme to dictate your decorations and type of food provided or keep it simple and just offer tea and scones.

Bunco Club

Another version of hosting your own game night is to form a Bunco club where ladies meet once a month in different homes to play a light-hearted game together. It allows for friendships to grow and gives a night of fun together once a month. If you are unfamiliar with Bunco, choose another type of game. Rotating game nights give women a chance to be updated with school events, learn about each unique personality through how they decorate their homes, get questions answered by those more involved in the community, and many other interesting things.

Neighborhood Phone Directory

An excellent way to get to know everyone is to offer to produce a neighborhood phone directory. This can be anything from a list on an 8 1/2 x 11 paper to a small booklet, copied and stapled together. To gain the trust and confidence of neighbors, it is best to personally go to each house to distribute the contact information forms inviting them to participate but leaving it as a choice. Give them a week or so to return the forms. To make the directory more useful, include such categories as baby-sitters, dog-sitters, plant-sitters, birthdays, hobbies, etc. Directories help neighborhoods bond together. When a new family moves in, welcome them with cookies and a phone directory. It will truly make them feel welcome and encourage neighborliness.

4th of July Parade and Barbeque

Instigate a neighborhood 4th of July gathering. Pass out flyers a week or so ahead of time. This event is especially enjoyable when there are younger kids in the neighborhood. Before the barbeque begins, have a parade route lined up and encourage the kids and families to dress patriotically both by wearing the colors of the flag, as well as by decorating their bikes, wagons, and strollers. Form a group at the beginning of the parade route and consider having a decorated car or truck lead the parade with patriotic music playing for all to hear. This not only alerts everyone to the approaching parade but it also gets everyone into the patriotic mood. Have the parade end at the cul-de-sac or sectioned off part of the neighborhood to share a barbeque together. You could have everyone cook their own meat or assign one person to cook up the meat brought by all the families. Provide a community table where side dishes are made available for sharing.

“What Christmas is Really About”

Birthday Party

Host a neighborhood celebration of Christ's birth for the children of the neighborhood. This is a good way of introducing the true meaning of Christmas to those of other religions. Plan games and crafts for the children. Have a Christian clown or mime creatively present the story of Christmas. End with cake and ice cream and sing Happy Birthday to Jesus.