

Purpose: This publication provides practical, easy-to-use ideas that help individuals strengthen relationships with the people who live around them. The 101 Acts of Neighboring encourage people to start with simple gestures of kindness, build meaningful connections over time, and ultimately create stronger, more caring and connected neighborhoods and communities.

101 Acts of Neighboring to Build Connection

Introduction: In a time when simple acts of kindness between neighbors can feel unusual, even a small gesture can stand out and open the door to stronger connections.

One Missourian shared how he shoveled snow from an elderly neighbor's sidewalk. She thanked him with hot chocolate and told him he was the "best neighbor she had ever had." Remarkably, it was only the second time they had spoken and the first time he had done something for her. One simple act changed their relationship.

Start small. Reach out to your eight closest neighbors with a simple act of kindness. As relationships grow, you might eventually gather over food or another activity. Whatever you do, keep the focus on building connections, not simply entertaining.

There is something you can do every day to strengthen the place where you live: be neighborly. Here are 101 acts of neighboring, organized into 12 categories, that have been successfully used by people across Missouri. Pick one and get started.

Three Categories of Acts:

Start Small includes easy, personal actions (learning names, offering kindness, helping, sharing and simply having conversations) that anyone can do with the people living nearby.

Build Connection moves from individual acts to shared experiences, gatherings and activities that give neighbors opportunities to spend time together and develop relationships.

Building Community takes the next step by encouraging neighbors to work together, support local activities, improve shared spaces and contribute to the well-being of the larger neighborhood or community.

Learn More: Begun in 2019, University of Missouri Extension's Engaged Neighbor program provides practical education, resources, classes and activities that encourage people to know, connect, include their neighbors. The program includes Neighboring 101, Show-Me Neighborhood Art Month and Missouri Good Neighbor Week - MissouriGoodNeighborWeek.com.

START SMALL

Connecting with Neighbors

- Introduce yourself to a neighbor monthly and write down their name.
- Make a phone call to a neighbor to chat and offer help.
- Start a “secret club” to perform acts of kindness or help a neighbor in need.
- Write a note for new neighbors with tips and local recommendations.
- Ask a longtime neighbor to tell you about the history of your neighborhood.
- Learn the names of the people living in the eight households closest to you.
- Introduce two neighbors who have something in common but do not yet know one another.
- Create a contact list for emergencies, with each neighbor’s permission.
- Designate a day for “driveway chats” and ask neighbors to bring a lawn chair.

Small Gestures of Kindness

- Leave a surprise affirmation note on your neighbor’s door.
- Compliment a neighbor on their home or garden.
- Bring cut flowers to a neighbor.
- Give thank-you cards to those who contribute to the neighborhood.
- Nominate a neighbor for a local award or recognize something they have done.
- Send a handwritten note sharing what you appreciate about a neighbor.
- Say hello or wave each time you see your neighbors.
- Ask a neighbor about themselves and take time to listen to the answer.
- Ask a neighbor if they need anything from the grocery store.
- Spend 10 minutes outside talking with a neighbor you usually only wave to.
- Create chalk messages with inspiring or fun notes on sidewalks or driveways.

Acts of Service & Helping Others

- Help with unkept lawns for a neighbor that could use an extra hand.
- Plan a volunteer activity for Missouri Good Neighbor Week (Sept. 28-Oct. 4).
- Offer to bring in the mail or newspaper when a neighbor is on vacation.
- Change batteries in smoke detectors for senior neighbors and widows.
- Offer to walk your neighbor’s dog(s).
- Offer to babysit a neighbor’s child.
- Make dinner for a neighbor who has just had a baby or surgery.
- Offer a helping hand to a neighbor with moving, repairs, etc.
- Shovel snow from a neighbor’s sidewalk or driveway before they ask.
- Roll a neighbor’s trash or recycling cart to or from the curb.
- Help an older neighbor with a technology problem.
- Offer to water plants or a garden while a neighbor is away.
- Organize a free car wash for neighbors.
- Start a neighborhood watch program.

Sharing & Lending

- Create or host a tool library in your garage or a neighborhood location.
- Start a neighborhood directory with contact information.
- Offer to share your expertise (e.g., teach sewing, baking, or budgeting).
- Share garden produce, baked goods, or a homemade dish with a neighbor.
- Organize a seed or plant swap.

BUILD CONNECTION

Outdoor Activities & Sports

- Invite neighbors to watch a football or soccer game outdoors or in your garage.
- Organize a neighborhood basketball or wiffle ball game.
- Organize a neighborhood kickball game.
- Create a front yard water park with sprinklers, hoses, and water balloons for children.
- Organize a simple game of catch with a different neighbor each week.
- Host a neighborhood egg hunt.
- Organize a neighborhood nature walk and identify birds, trees, or flowers.
- Invite neighbors to join you for an evening walk to watch the sunset.
- Plan an outdoor movie night and show it on a garage door. Or try silent movies!
- Invite a neighbor to bike in the neighborhood or on a trail.

Social Gatherings & Events

- Host a soup potluck for neighbors in your driveway.
- Plan a neighborhood scavenger hunt.
- Organize a neighborhood table tennis, corn hole or croquet tournament.
- Plan a fish fry, BBQ smoke-off, or hot wings cooking contest.
- Host a “Pancakes on the Porch” breakfast for neighbors.
- Organize a neighborhood trivia night in a driveway, garage, or common space.
- Host a neighborhood book club.
- Host a front-yard coffee hour on a Saturday morning.
- Host a neighborhood story time in your front yard for neighborhood kids.
- Organize a night out for neighbors at a bowling alley or a golf driving range.
- Hold a neighborhood “bring your own chair” gathering with no agenda.
- Move a fire pit to roast marshmallows or make s’mores in your front yard.
- Plan a “Sunday Sundae” event.
- Work with a neighbor or two to organize a block party with games.

Celebrating Holidays & Special Occasions

- Organize a welcome party for new residents of the neighborhood.
- Host a holiday-themed gift-wrapping station with coffee and cookies.
- Put together a goodie bag for neighbors and deliver it door-to-door.
- Celebrate a neighbor’s birthday by leaving a card or homemade treat at their door.
- Invite a neighbor who might otherwise be alone to join your family for a meal.
- Celebrate Mister Rogers’ birthday on March 20 with an Act of Kindness.
- Plan a “May Day” flower basket drop-off for neighbors.
- Offer a bottle of bubbles, flowers, or a coloring book as a surprise.
- Host a seasonal dance party for neighbors.

Seasonal & Themed Activities

- Organize a Halloween costume parade and contest.
- Organize a summer-time neighborhood walk.
- Plan a “Donuts on the Driveway” event with coffee or cider.
- Organize a neighborhood Christmas caroling event or holiday gift exchange.
- Host a progressive dinner, with neighbors taking turns serving each course.
- Kick off summer with a lemonade crawl featuring driveway stands for neighbors to sample.

BUILDING COMMUNITY

Supporting Local Events & Activities

- Invite a neighbor to attend a local craft fair or farmer's market with you.
- Go to a library event featuring a local author or speaker and invite a neighbor.
- Support your neighbors by attending their children's sports games.
- Volunteer at a charity or community event and invite neighbors to join.

Community Involvement

- Start a neighborhood garden and share produce with neighbors.
- Create and distribute neighborhood newsletter on a regular schedule.
- Invite neighbors to stock a food pantry.
- Organize a neighborhood fundraiser or charity event.
- Join or support a local homeowners' association or neighborhood group.
- Organize a neighborhood cleanup day.
- Organize a simple parade in your neighborhood with a fun or silly theme.

Neighborhood Spaces & Enhancements

- Build, stock and register an official Little Free Library or Free Blockbuster Box.
- Build and stock a "blessing box" with food and/or hygiene supplies available to anyone.
- Create a public art display in your neighborhood.
- Organize a neighborhood improvement project (e.g., beautification).
- Set up a reverse lemonade stand with free drinks for neighbors.
- Place a bench or chairs in your front yard and intentionally spend time there where neighbors can stop and talk.
- Adopt a storm drain, shared green space, or other neighborhood area and keep it clean.
- Organize a monthly walking club that also picks up trash in the neighborhood.
- Plan a neighborhood art project for Show-Me Neighborhood Art Month.

Supporting Community Helpers

- Write a note of thanks to the first responders in your neighborhood.
- Offer small tokens of appreciation to local workers or volunteers.
- Support or participate in a neighborhood safety patrol.
- Host a party and invite the police officer who patrols your neighborhood.

Background: This list was first developed (Spring of 2021) for a joint project of University of Missouri Extension and Greene County Library District in Springfield, Missouri. The list was further refined (fall of 2021) with Springfield television station KY3 to celebrate National Good Neighbor Day. This list was expanded in 2022 by MU Extension and The Hopeful Neighborhood Project. This final version was refined for public use in 2026 by MU Extension. If you want to provide feedback please email the author at burtond@missouri.edu.