

Building Connection With Acts of Neighboring

It only takes a small act of neighborliness to make a big difference in the life of a neighbor. Acts of kindness among neighbors have become rare enough these days that being neighborly stands out as a special event for most people. It can also open the door to further connections and neighborhood involvement. But where should you start?

Reaching your neighbors does not mean you host a block party with inflatables. It is better to start small by reaching out to your eight closest neighbors with an act of kindness. As you get to know your neighbors and they get to know you, the next step could be a food event. Just make sure your focus is always on building connections, not just entertaining.

One Missourian recently shared how he shoveled snow from the sidewalk of an elderly neighbor who then gave him hot chocolate as a thank you and said he was the "best neighbor she had ever had." The irony is that this was only the second time he had ever spoken to her and the first time he had done an act of kindness for the elderly lady. That demonstrates the power of an act of neighboring to build connection.

There is something you can do every day that will improve the community where you live: be neighborly. Here are over 100 unique acts of neighboring that have been tried successfully by others in Missouri and are now organized into 12 categories.

1. Social Gatherings & Events

- Host a soup potluck for neighbors in your driveway.
- Plan a neighborhood scavenger hunt.
- Organize a neighborhood ping pong or croquet tournament.
- Plan a fish fry, BBQ smoke-off, or hot wings cooking contest.
- Host a "Pancakes on the Porch" breakfast for neighbors.
- Host a neighborhood book club.
- 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.
- Plan an activity for Missouri Good Neighbor Week.
- Host a cornhole tournament in your driveway for neighbors.
- Plan a neighborhood art project for Show-Me Art in Neighborhoods Week.

2. 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.
- Create a front yard water park for the neighbors.
- Organize a simple game of catch with a different neighbor each week.
- Host a neighborhood egg hunt.
- Plan an outdoor movie night. Show the movie on a garage door. Or try silent movies!
- Invite a neighbor to walk or bike in the neighborhood or on a trail.
- Organize a neighborhood progressive dinner with a different course at each house.

3. Acts of Service & Helping Others

- Offer to rake a neighbor's lawn or clean rain/street gutters.
- Help with unkept lawns for a neighbor that could use an extra hand.
- Offer to bring in the mail or newspaper when a neighbor is on vacation.
- Offer to 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 for free.
- Make dinner for a neighbor who has just had a baby or surgery.
- Help a neighbor with items while at the store.
- Offer a helping hand to a neighbor in need (moving, repairs, etc.).
- Organize a neighborhood cleanup blitz.
- Organize a free car wash for neighbors.
- Organize a neighborhood watch program.

4. Celebrating Holidays & Special Occasions

- Plan a "Sunday Sundae" event for neighbors.
- Host a neighborhood party for new neighbors.
- Organize a toy drive for those children facing challenges.

- 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 Mister Rogers' birthday on March 20 with an Act of Kindness for a neighbor.
- Plan a “May Day” flower basket drop-off for neighbors.
- Offer a bottle of bubbles, flowers, or a coloring book as a surprise.
- Put together a “holiday caroling” event visit for neighbors.

5. Community Involvement

- Start a neighborhood garden and share produce with neighbors.
- Create and distribute neighborhood newsletter on a regular schedule.
- Invite neighbors to help stock a local food pantry.
- Organize a neighborhood fundraiser or charity event.
- Start a toy drive in the neighborhood.
- Join or support a local homeowners' association or neighborhood group.
- Help organize a neighborhood basketball or wiffle ball game.
- Organize a neighborhood cleanup day.
- Read a good book about neighboring or neighborhoods.

6. Small Gestures of Kindness

- Send a text, an email, or a card to thank your neighbors.
- Leave a surprise affirmation note on your neighbor’s door.
- Compliment a neighbor on their home or garden.
- Move a fire pit to roast marshmallows or make s’mores in your front yard.
- Bring cut flowers to a neighbor.
- Give thank-you cards to those who contribute to the neighborhood.
- Say hello or wave each time you see your neighbors.
- Create sidewalk chalk messages with inspiring or fun notes.

7. Supporting Local Events & Activities

- Invite a neighbor to attend a local event with you, such as a craft fair or concert.
- Go to a library event featuring a local author or speaker and invite a neighbor to join.
- Support your neighbors by attending their children's sports games.
- Volunteer at a local charity or community event and invite neighbors to join.
- Plan a neighborhood outing or group attendance at a local event or performance.
- Commit to inviting a neighbor to tag along before attending a movie or other event.

8. Sharing & Lending

- Create or host a neighborhood tool library in your garage or another location.
- Foster a lending culture by offering items to your neighbors instead of buying new.
- Start a neighborhood directory with contact information.
- Offer to share your expertise (e.g., teach a skill like sewing, baking, or budgeting).
- Organize a seed or plant swap among neighbors.

9. Connecting with Neighbors

- Introduce yourself to a neighbor and write down their name to help you remember it.
- Try to meet a new neighbor each month.
- 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.
- Use sidewalk chalk to create challenges or games on the sidewalk.
- Write a welcome note for new neighbors with tips and local recommendations.
- Designate a specific day of the week or month for “driveway chats” and encourage neighbors to gather with lawn chairs.

10. Neighborhood Spaces & Enhancements

- Build and stock an official Little Free Library or Free Blockbuster Box.
- Create a public art display in your neighborhood.
- Organize a neighborhood improvement project (e.g., beautification).
- Create games or activities on your neighborhood sidewalks with chalk.

- Set up a reverse lemonade stand with complimentary drinks for neighbors.
- Organize a monthly walking club that also picks up trash in the neighborhood.

11. Supporting First Responders & 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 neighborhood initiatives, like neighborhood watch programs or safety patrols.
- Host a driveway or garage party and invite the police officer who patrols your neighborhood.
- Organize an annual neighborhood watch event where a first responder is the guest speaker.

12. Seasonal & Themed Activities

- Organize a Halloween costume parade and contest.
- Host an Easter sunrise service on your driveway.
- 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 holiday dinner with neighbors. Each neighbor hosts a different part of the meal.
- Organize a simple parade in your neighborhood with a fun or silly theme.
- Kick off summer with a lemonade crawl. Children set up lemonade stands on their driveways, and adults sample the options.

These categories organize the acts into logical groups, making finding and planning neighborly activities easier!

Background: This list of neighboring ideas was first developed in the spring of 2021 for a project between University of Missouri Extension and the Springfield-Greene County Library District in Springfield, Missouri. It was further refined in the fall of 2021 with Springfield television station KY3 to celebrate National Good Neighbor Day. This list was further expanded in 2022 as part of a partnership between MU Extension and The Hopeful Neighborhood Project. This final version was refined for public use in 2025.

** Individual counties, municipalities, Homeowners Associations, etc. may have their own community rules and regulations prohibiting some of these activities. Please check your local rules before planning an event or planting/placing anything permanent.*