

Host a Backyard Party

Invite your neighbors over for a small gathering to get to know each other or deepen your connections!

This is the tactic for you if...

- You like to throw a good party
- You care about building relationships and community

Why this tactic matters

Social connections are one of the keys to a functioning democracy. Without these connections, according to political scientist Robert Putnam,¹ our democracy falters. This means that rebuilding our social ties is a critical aspect of preserving our democracy and pushing back against the rising authoritarianism we face. By hosting a backyard party, you can begin building deeper relationships throughout your community and strengthen our democracy.

What to do

1. Pick a type of event.

You could have a backyard fire, a potluck, a barbeque, an ice cream social, or something else! In a world where people are craving connection, the time together is the draw.

2. Choose the date and time for your event.

3. Invite your neighbors.

A simple flyer, a phone call, or a text message should suffice. If you don't know your neighbors, knocking on their door to introduce yourself and extend the invitation in person might be a good way to break the ice.

If you want, invite people to bring something to contribute.

4. [Register your event](#) with NETWORK.

Don't worry, we won't promote the event. This just helps us track our impact.

5. Prepare for your event. Gather some refreshments. If you're hosting a backyard fire, some drinks and desserts are great. If you prefer a full barbeque, go for it. Don't feel like you need to go all out, though. The real draw is the community you create.

¹ Robert Putnam is most known for the book *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. A recent documentary about his lifetime of work, *Join or Die*, looks at how essential community organizations – even those who don't do anything political – are to preserving a democratic system of governance.

6. Host your event.

Pro-tip: If you can, take pictures or ask a guest to take pictures throughout your event.

- a. **Guests gather, mingle, and enjoy the time together.**
- b. **Welcome your guests and tell them why you invited them!** Your personal sharing about why community matters to you helps to set the tone for the event. If any of your guests don't know each other, have them introduce themselves. Include a fun question to allow them to get to know each other a little bit more deeply. Gathering expert Priya Parker calls these "magical questions." ([Click here](#) for some of Priya's favorites.)

7. Report back to let us know how your event went.

Let us know what went well, how the support was, and what you might hope for in the future. This helps us improve the support we're able to provide to you and helps others who are planning to host a party.

Send your pictures to info@networklobby.org. Photos especially help us to promote your great work and inspire others to join you! Please let us know who is in the photo and if we have permission to use the photos in a future NETWORK publication or social media post.

- 8. Continue building and strengthening your relationships with your neighbors.** If the conversation during your gathering turned to the challenges members of your community are facing or their concerns about preserving our democracy, consider scheduling follow-up one-on-ones with people who might take future action with you.

NETWORK Support

NETWORK organizers are here to support you. If you have any questions or want to talk through any ideas or concerns you may have, reach out!

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