

Community Block Party

One great way to interact with the community surrounding your church is by having a block party. The block party brings together neighbors, the congregation, and friends of both in a fun atmosphere for all ages to enjoy. Having a successful block party requires planning in order to be successful. Following are tips and ideas on how to plan your own successful event.

The Basics

Who – What – Where – When – Why

These all need to be defined prior to planning specifics for your event.

Who – Who are you planning to serve? Kids? Seniors? Pets? Families?

What – What are you going to do? Have a picnic? Do a food giveaway? Have a craft night? Carnival? Plan what you want to do and then add the details of what is needed to match your theme.

Where – hopefully you can host a block party on your church grounds, but if not, where will you host? Park? Community center? No matter where you host, there needs to be access to bathroom facilities.

When – what day of the week works best for your volunteers that also meets the community's needs? What time of the weekday or weekend will get you the best attendance - morning? Evening?

Why – Most importantly, what is the purpose of all this planning? Do you intend to fill a specific need the community has asked for or one that you want or *think* they need? For example, back to school supply giveaways have become very popular and a great way to help families afford the back-to-school season. However, when there are 12 giveaways of the same items in a 2-week period in the same area, the need has become saturated and likely the items generously collected and donated are not given away. Make sure what you are doing is truly needed and not just a trendy bandwagon to jump on.



Planning



Planning is a big umbrella where almost all the work falls. You need to plan the activities, plan the food, pick a giveaway if you are doing one, organize volunteers and make sure your finances are covered. A small team where one person oversees several of these topics is ideal, but in small churches not always practical. Volunteers are in short supply, so often one or two people are wearing most of the hats.

Finances

There needs to be money to pay for at least a few things your block party needs if donations cannot cover costs. Are you serving food – how much will it cost? Are you giving away toys – food – shoes, etc. – that donations will cover?

Ask for donations or discounts for local business as they might also want to take part in a community event. They could be utilized as a partner for advertising, promoting and even being volunteers at your event. Donations don't always have to be monetary; they could be in man-hours. Many large corporations are giving employees time during the work week to volunteer and be a part of their communities – so ask! The worst they can say is they aren't able.



Volunteers

Cast a wide net for people to help at the event. Your first line of volunteers are your congregation members – youth, young parents, single people, older adults, etc. Anyone can come to a community event and be a valued volunteer. There are a lot of roles for people in every capability. Someone needs to be seated – have them at the entrance passing out a map, schedule, flyers, etc. and greet people as they enter. Someone likes to cook – put them in the kitchen.

Civil servants – police, fire, ambulance – like to interact within their communities and might be able to attend. While they may not be a member of your congregation, they are capable adults who are in place and can help watch over your event. They could be in charge of a first aid station, handing out water, passing out freebies or anything you might need.

Businesses – the companies who donated or gave discounts might want to be involved. They could have their own booth or table to promote their business or to hand out items to giveaway or explain services they provide.

Giveaways

Do not assume you know what the community needs without getting some kind of feedback from people who are “in the trenches.” Some needs could be clothing, food, school supplies, toiletries, etc....but not if what you are giving away is a duplicate of what another local group is doing. Consult with school leaders if they think their kids need supplies before you buy them. Ask parents in a community forum what their greatest need is...that is where your best answers will come from...not an Ad Council meeting where you pick something easy to give away.

Fun Stuff

So, you know how much money you have and what you are giving away – but what other fun things can you do? Consider some of the following which can be done by volunteers or hired out:



Face painting ** inflatables ** snow cones ** cotton candy ** popcorn
** water events ** crafts ** activities ** bubbles ** sidewalk/parking lot
chalk ** food truck ** lunch ** Food eating contest ** relay races **
community leaders ** police ** fire ** EMTs

Advertising

Create a Facebook event for your community event as soon as you have the basics of where and when. The longer your event is online, the more recognition and reach it will have. Facebook is free, but you do have the option to pay and boost your post so it has even more reach.

Create a banner to hang at your event location that's colorful and includes when, where and what.

If you have a budget for copying, consider copies of the flyer to pass out in the neighborhood. Send the flyer via email and have all your congregants copy and hand out to their friends and neighbors.

Clean Up

Clean up isn't the obvious cleaning up after your event. Cleanup means receiving feedback and reviewing if your goals were met. You can always use feedback to tweak your event if it will be an annual undertaking so it flows smoother each time.

The planning committee can sit down after and review feedback from attendees and volunteers. How can it be improved? Where were your strong areas?

Lastly, were your goals met? Did you giveaway all the items you intended? Were people fed? Did children get clothing, shoes or haircuts as needed? If the goals were not met, why? How can you meet them the next time?



Events are a lot of work to plan, but they are so worth it when everyone works together and a goal is met. Congratulations on your willingness to take on planning an event for your community. If you have any questions on planning an event for children, families or the community, email tinamarie48604@gmail.com