



Blue Star Families Block Party Toolkit

Around 600,000 active-duty and transitioning military families move each year, and these days, those moves are not only onto bases but also into local neighborhoods where folks can face isolation. **Blue Star Welcome Week** is a nationwide campaign to build a better sense of belonging and community for all of us.

Together, we can make a difference for the men and women who serve, Veterans, and their families, simply through participating in **Blue Star Welcome Week**. When families DO feel a sense of belonging, everything else improves – financial security, mental health and wellness, resilience, and even military retention.

People build belonging through shared connections with others, however, only 41% of military family respondents to the 2023 Military Family Lifestyle Survey reported that they feel a sense of belonging to their local civilian community.

Military families need the support of their civilian neighbors and to know they care. **One way to showcase your support for military families is by hosting a block party!** Hosting and inviting military families to block parties allows them to get to know their new neighbors and build community bonds. In this toolkit, you will find tips and ideas on how to host a successful block party.

Planning a block party can be a fun but detailed process. Here are some steps you can follow to organize a successful block party:

- **Select a date and time:** Choose a date and time that works for most residents on your block. Weekends or evenings are often good choices when people are more likely to be available. Hosting a block party during the summer season would also allow military children to meet new friends before the school year begins
- **Choose a Location:** Determine where on the block the party will be held. A block party can be as big or as small as you prefer. It can be hosted in a living room, a backyard, a park, or even a rental space.
- **Plan Activities:** This could involve games and challenges that both kids and adults can participate in (e.g., card games, musical chairs, Pictionary, three-legged race, etc.). Additional activity ideas are listed below.

- **Arrange for Food and Drinks:** Depending on the size of your block party, food and drinks might be arranged differently. You might have snacks or might want to organize a potluck or barbecue.
 - **Send Invitations:** Create and distribute invitations to your friends and neighbors (these could be physical invites or e-invites). Include the date, time, location, and any special instructions (like bringing a dish to share). You can even create flyers and posters that you can hang around the neighborhood or leave at a local library or school. Block parties can also be listed as a Blue Star Welcome Week [Partner event](#). Download Blue Star Welcome Week branded templates [here](#).
 - **Set Up and Decorate:** Depending on the type of block party, you might want to set up tables, chairs, and decorations and prepare any activities to be played. You could also encourage community involvement and have volunteers help with set up and clean up
 - **Enjoy the Party:** Enjoy your detailed planning coming to fruition! Thank your neighbors for participating and welcome any new neighbors into your community.
 - **Share on Social Media:** Post pictures of your block party on social media using the hashtags #BlueStarWelcomeWeek #BSFBlockParty.
 - **We would love to hear more about your experience hosting a block party.** Please fill out the following survey [here](#).
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Block Party Ideas and Themes

- **Outdoor Games:** Set up various games like sack races, three-legged races, tug-of-war, cornhole, or a water balloon toss.
- **Sports Tournament:** Organize a friendly sports tournament such as basketball, soccer, volleyball, or even a mini-golf competition.
- **Potluck:** Have a potluck-style meal where each household brings a dish to share.
- **Barbecue:** Fire up the grills and make hamburgers or hotdogs.
- **Craft Stations:** Set up craft stations where kids can make things like friendship bracelets, tie-dye shirts, or scrapbooks.
- **Movie Night:** Throw a movie onto the TV or use a projector and a sheet for an outdoor movie night. Don't forget popcorn and blankets!
- **Pet Show:** Organize a pet parade where neighbors can show off their furry friends, or even have a mini pet show with awards for categories like "best dressed" or "most talented."
- **Talent Show:** Encourage your neighbors to show off their talents.
- **Cooking or Baking Contests:** Hold a friendly competition for the best dessert or food.

- **Fitness Activities:** Invite your neighbors to a fitness class (e.g., yoga or Zumba) or plan a group fitness activity such as a neighborhood walk/hike.
- **Gardening or Plant Exchange:** Organize a plant or seed swap where neighbors can exchange gardening tips and plants. You could even have a pot-painting activity.
- **Community Service Project:** Plan a small community service activity like a neighborhood cleanup or a fundraiser for a local charity.
- **Themed Party:** Choose a fun theme like Hawaiian luau, 80s retro, or a costume party.
- **Ice Cream Social:** Buy various ice cream flavors or set up a DIY sundae bar with different toppings.
- **Sip and Paint:** Set up painting stations and hand out drinks and snacks. Everyone can create their own art piece or you could throw on a Bob Ross painting tutorial for everyone to follow.
- **Book Club:** Pick an interesting book and set up a night to exchange thoughts and opinions on the story. If there is a film adaptation, you could also end with a movie night.

Helpful Sites and Links to Use

Below are a lists of sites that can be helpful in finding the best dates and times for a block party, creating invitations and flyers, or sending invitations:

- Use [Calendly](#) to find what days and times work best for the people in your community.
- [Canva](#) can be used to create invitations, flyers, or decorations for your block party.
- Create an online invitation for your block party on [Evite](#) and send it to people in your community.
- Use [Trello](#) to plan out different stages of your block party or to delegate tasks.
- Use [Spotify](#) or [Apple Music](#) to create a music playlist that you can play at your party.

Online Party Ideas

- **Codenames Online:** Two teams compete by each having a “sPYmaster” give one-word clues that can point to multiple words on the board.
- **Spyfall:** You are given a location card and have to guess who among your friends is a spy by asking questions regarding the location.
- **Virtual Scavenger Hunt:** Create a list of objects and give participants an amount of time to find that item and bring it back.
- **Movie Night on Zoom:** Share your screen on Zoom and watch a movie together.
- [skribbl.io](#): Invite people to a round of skribbl and compete to see who can draw their assigned words the best.