



## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Block Party USA announces Block Party Weekends!**

**June 8–9, 2024**

**September 7–8, 2024**

Did you know that block parties in Wilton, Conn. have been featured at The Aspen Institute's Weave events and as a powerful tool for positive change in a New York Times best seller?

In a continued effort to strengthen neighborhood connections, create opportunities for face-to-face conversation, and empower children's free play, Block Party USA is encouraging Connecticut-wide block parties during the 2024 weekends of June 8–9 and/or September 7–8.

If those weekends won't work for you or your neighbors, don't worry as any other will do! The goal is just to make it happen. Each road, building, or neighborhood chooses their own day and time. Whether you're a block party veteran or new to your neighborhood, let's show our country how Connecticut cultivates a culture of showing up for one another in countless ways! Gather your neighbors, fill the coolers, dust off the lawn chairs – and keep it simple and "old fashioned." More at [Block Party USA](#).

Block parties have many benefits.

- **Block parties encourage free play for children.** An abundance of free play can make children happier, better problem-solvers, and more energized to pursue learning and develop deep interests.
- **The United States is lonely. Block parties offer social connectedness.** To address our nation's epidemic of loneliness and isolation, the U.S. Surgeon General, Vivek H. Murthy, released [The Healing Effects of Social Connection and Community](#). Be a part of the solution, combat loneliness by rounding up your neighbors for a few hours at the end of a driveway or in adjoining yards!
- **After block parties, you may see an uptick in teenagers being hired – a win-win!** Babysitting, pet sitting, watering plants, mowing lawns, raking leaves, shoveling snow. Part-time paid work helps teenagers build agency and confidence.
- **When we get together face-to-face, we realize that we have more in common than we are different.** Neighbors may vote differently and they may disagree on many issues, but you can still laugh together, offer a helping hand, and share grilling tips!
- **Here are some of the daily kindnesses reported by one street in Wilton, Conn.** Neighbors share recommendations on everything from restaurants to home repair. They pick up packages from porches when fellow homeowners are away. They locate lost dogs, and give neighbors a heads up when raccoons, coyotes, and bears are walking the street. During power outages, those with generators offer refrigerator space for perishables and charge phones. A senior citizen with Alzheimer's was returned safely to their home after they were seen wandering without a caretaker. A neighborhood girl placed decorations by everyone's mailboxes, including red, white, and blue pinwheels for Memorial Day and oversized heart signs "Friends 4 Ever" and "U R Loved" for Valentine's Day.

### **How did it all start?**

In 2018, Vanessa Elias launched Wilton's first Big Block Party Weekend, a project under Wilton Youth Council's Free Play Task Force, with the mission of "building community one block at a time." The inaugural weekend

brought together more than 1,200 residents for approximately 40 block parties. The joy and benefits could be felt immediately and continue to grow.

Vanessa was so encouraged by the feedback she heard from residents that she founded [Block Party USA](#) in 2023 as a cure for our country's loneliness, social isolation, divisiveness, and the youth mental health crisis. Since then, Block Party USA has brought neighbors together in buildings, streets, sidewalks, and yards to help the nation connect and heal.

- Vanessa's block party movement is featured as a powerful tool for positive change in the NYT bestselling book [Never Enough: When Achievement Culture Becomes Toxic—And What We Can Do About It](#).
- Vanessa was selected for The Aspen Institute's Weave Speakers Bureau for launching Block Party USA and her work as a community weaver. [Meet weavers and hear Vanessa's story](#).
- Vanessa met with Senator Chris Murphy and other community leaders to share her Block Party USA passion project to address the epidemic of loneliness and social isolation.
- To help end the phone-based childhood and restore the play-based childhood, Block Party USA was named an [Aligned Organization](#) of Jonathan Haidt's NYT best seller [The Anxious Generation](#).

### **Does organizing a block party seem too daunting?**

To help you organize a block party in your neighborhood this summer, download the free [Block Party USA Guide](#) and join [30-minute Block Party USA Zooms on either June 17, 2024 or June 26, 2024](#) to learn from others all over the country as they plan block parties.

The Block Party USA Guide makes it easy to plan a fun and unpretentious event – from inviting neighbors by dropping off flyers to each home, to encouraging neighbors to bring a favorite dish from their family table.

“Keep it simple!” Vanessa says. “No expensive venue. No decorations or favors. No elaborate menu. Nothing staged for social media consumption. Block parties are about putting away phones, meeting and enjoying neighbors, and fostering more free play for children.”

There are a lot of reasons why people may be reluctant to have a block party. They're concerned no one will come, or that they don't have the right space, or they don't have the time or money for it to look perfect, or they may have had a falling-out with a neighbor.

The positives after the block party will far outweigh your initial reluctance, even if just a handful of people attend. Your neighborhood will be more connected, you may feel safer and will have someone to call nearby if you are short-handed or have an emergency, and block parties may even increase home values. Just this week, a woman mentioned to Vanessa that she told a new neighbor about their annual potlucks, and she replied “Yes, my real estate agent told me!”

“I founded Block Party USA as an easy way to achieve connection, civility, and community – and especially to foster free play for kids, which is proven to reduce anxiety and boost their independence,” Vanessa shared. “Neighbor talking to neighbor, away from devices and enjoying face-to-face time. I believe gathering for a block party just once a year can have a profound ripple effect.”

Connecticut, create some block party magic this summer!

You can download the free [Block Party USA Guide](#) at [Block Party USA](#).

### **About Block Party USA**

Vanessa Elias founded Block Party USA as a cure for our country's loneliness, social isolation, divisiveness, and the youth mental health crisis. Her block party movement is featured as a powerful tool for positive change in Jennifer Breheny Wallace's New York Times bestselling book [Never Enough: When Achievement Culture Becomes Toxic—And What We Can Do About It](#) and Block Party USA was named an [Aligned Organization](#) of

Jonathan Haidt's NYT best seller [The Anxious Generation](#) to help end the phone-based childhood and restore the play-based childhood. Vanessa was selected for The Aspen Institute's Weave Speakers Bureau for launching Block Party USA and her work as a community weaver. To learn more about block party benefits, how to organize a block party (it's easier than you think), and join Vanessa for regular Zoom calls to connect about the joy and importance of block parties, visit [Block Party USA](#).

### **About Vanessa Elias**

Vanessa Elias leads a culture shift of hope, connection, and action for individuals, families, and communities around the world. She is a mental health activist, certified parent coach, speaker, and writer featured in the WSJ, NPR, PBS, and in the NYT best seller [Never Enough: When Achievement Culture Becomes Toxic—And What We Can Do About It](#). Vanessa is the founder of [Thrive with a Guide](#) and serves as a parent support group facilitator for the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI). [Block Party USA](#) is her passion project. Vanessa is a member of the State of Connecticut's Advisory Committee of Behavioral Health Advocate (ACOBHA) and The Aspen Institute's Weave Speakers Bureau.

### **Free Block Party USA Guide**

Please see attached or visit [Block Party USA](#).

### **Contact**

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