



PRESS RELEASE

August 22, 2025

Block Party USA Announces 2025 Back-to-School Challenge! **Now...until September 28, 2025** (National Good Neighbor Day!)

Join the nationwide 2025 Block Party USA Back-to-School Challenge to strengthen neighborhoods and neighborly connections, create opportunities for face-to-face conversation, decrease loneliness, and encourage children's neighborhood free play!

Challenge Residents of Which State Will Hold the Most Block Parties?

[Sign up to enter your state in the challenge!](#)

What 2025 Block Party USA Back-to-School Challenge

How Organize a Block Party

Who You and Your Neighbors

Where In Your Building, Block, or Road

Why To Build a Life Worth Living**

When Now...until September 28, 2025 (National Good Neighbor Day)

** full of connection, support, relationships, well-being, and play

Whether you're new to your neighborhood or have lived there for decades, the back-to-school season is the perfect time for a block party. Block Party USA takes the awkwardness out of reaching out to neighbors and gives you the guidance and tools to make organizing easy – and free.

Our relationships and social connection are the basis for our family's, our community's, and our nation's well-being and prosperity. Together, let's make connection with your neighbors a priority and take action.

Gather your neighbors, fill the coolers, dust off the lawn chairs – and keep it simple and “old fashioned.” More at [Block Party USA](#). You'll be grateful you did.

Block parties have many benefits.

- **Block parties encourage free play for children.** Get them out of the house and off tech and reverse the negative impact of “play-deficit disorder.” An abundance of free play can make children happier, better problem-solvers, and more energized to pursue learning and develop deep interests. Free neighborhood play improves mental health.

- **The United States is lonely. Block parties offer social connectedness.** To address our nation's epidemic of loneliness and isolation, the former 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 disagree on many issues, but you can still laugh together, offer a helping hand, and share grilling tips! We all have more to offer each other, and the world, than our politics.
- **And countless benefits reported by block party alumni around the country!** Make new friends and reconnect with long-time neighbors. Get advice and recommendations. Help in a pinch – borrow sugar, carpool, or run an errand. Meal trains for new parents or those in need. Group walks and game nights. Knowing who lives on your block makes your neighborhood safer. Celebrate holidays and milestones. Share street-specific info – construction updates, pet locator, and power outages. Intergenerational learning for young and old, and everyone in-between! In an emergency or time of need, someone is nearby to help. A connected neighborhood is more desirable for new buyers. Block parties help neighbors feel grounded, supported, a sense of belonging, and joy.

How did Block Party USA 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 effort had a two-pronged goal of creating opportunities for face-to-face connection and neighborhood play for kids. 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 New York Times 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](#).
- 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 New York Times best seller, [The Anxious Generation](#).

- [Vanessa was one of 25 innovators honored by Reimagine and author Allison Gilbert](#), recognized as an exceptional leader reimagining what it means to foster connection, belonging, and community in our disconnected world – and how she’s working to combat loneliness with Block Party USA.
- As part of Dr. Vivek H. Murthy’s "Recipes for Connection" initiative, Block Party USA is a featured resource that supports building social connection through gathering. [View the Office of the U.S. Surgeon General website](#)

Does organizing a block party seem too daunting? Here are free resources to jumpstart your planning!

To help you organize a block party in your neighborhood, Vanessa provides free resources:

- [Download the free Block Party USA Guide](#). The 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.
- [Fillable Invitation and Contact Form](#). Include the details of your block party then drop it off at neighbors’ doors! At the block party, encourage neighbors to provide their info on the contact form so it’s handy for all sorts of neighborly needs – last-minute babysitter, car battery needs to be jumped, extra eggplants available from a garden!
- [Free 30-minute Block Party USA Zooms with Vanessa. The next one is August 28](#). Join her to learn – with others from all over the country – why it’s important, how to make it easy, and find answers to your questions.

“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.”

Will your state hold the most block parties?

[Sign up to commit to the 2025 Block Party USA Back-to-School Challenge](#). We can’t wait to see your block party photos and videos, and hear your stories! Help your state get there.

Vanessa says, “Folks may think, ‘I’m too busy. Why should I bother?’ There are so many practical reasons why!”

- Increase your sense of belonging.
- Desperate to get your kids off technology?
- Find neighborhood playmates for your children (yay-neighborhood free play!).
- Meet and connect with your neighbors.
- Get outside, make friends, and have fun.
- Opportunity for face-to-face connection and conversation.
- Meet some of the long-standing neighbors and learn about your community history.
- Find support and decrease the stress of snow days, power outages, and emergency situations.
- Create a neighborhood contact list.
- Find resources, referrals, a babysitter, and a pet sitter.

- Improve your, and your family's, mental health.
- Build a life worth living.

America, create some block party magic before September 28, 2025!

About Vanessa Elias

Vanessa Elias helps people build relationships and community both within their home ([Thrive with a Guide](#)) and outside their home ([Block Party USA](#)). Vanessa is a human connection and 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*. She is the founder of Thrive with a Guide and serves as a parent support group facilitator for the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI). In 2023, she founded Block Party USA as a free and simple cure for our country's loneliness, social isolation, divisiveness, and the youth mental health crisis. As part of Dr. Vivek H. Murthy's "Recipes for Connection" initiative, the Office of the U.S. Surgeon General features Block Party USA as a resource that supports building social connection through gathering. 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 New York Times best seller *The Anxious Generation*. Vanessa is a member of The Aspen Institute's Weave Speakers Bureau.

Free Block Party USA Tools

Download your free Block Party USA Guide, Fillable Invitation, and Contact Form [here](#).

Free 30-minute Block Party USA Zoom with Vanessa on August 28 from 12-12:30pm ET.

Visit [Block Party USA](#) for details.

Sign up to commit to the 2025 Block Party USA Back-to-School Challenge.

[Visit here](#) to enter your state in the 2025 challenge, and share your block party stories and photos.

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