



PRESS RELEASE

August 14, 2024

Block Party USA Announces 2024 Back-to-School Challenge! Now...until September 30, 2024

Join the nationwide 2024 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 2024 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 30, 2024

** 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 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 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 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](#).
- 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 New York Times best seller, [The Anxious Generation](#).

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 this summer, 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.
- [Free 30-minute Block Party USA Zooms with Vanessa on August 22 or 27](#). 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 2024 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 30, 2024!

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 best seller *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 New York Times 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), join Vanessa for regular Zoom calls to connect about the joy and importance of block parties, and [sign up to commit to the 2024 Block Party USA Back-to-School Challenge](#), 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 New York Times 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.

Download your free guide [here](#).

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

Sign up to commit to the 2024 Block Party USA Back-to-School Challenge.

[Visit here](#) to enter your state in the 2024 challenge, and share your block party stories and photos.

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