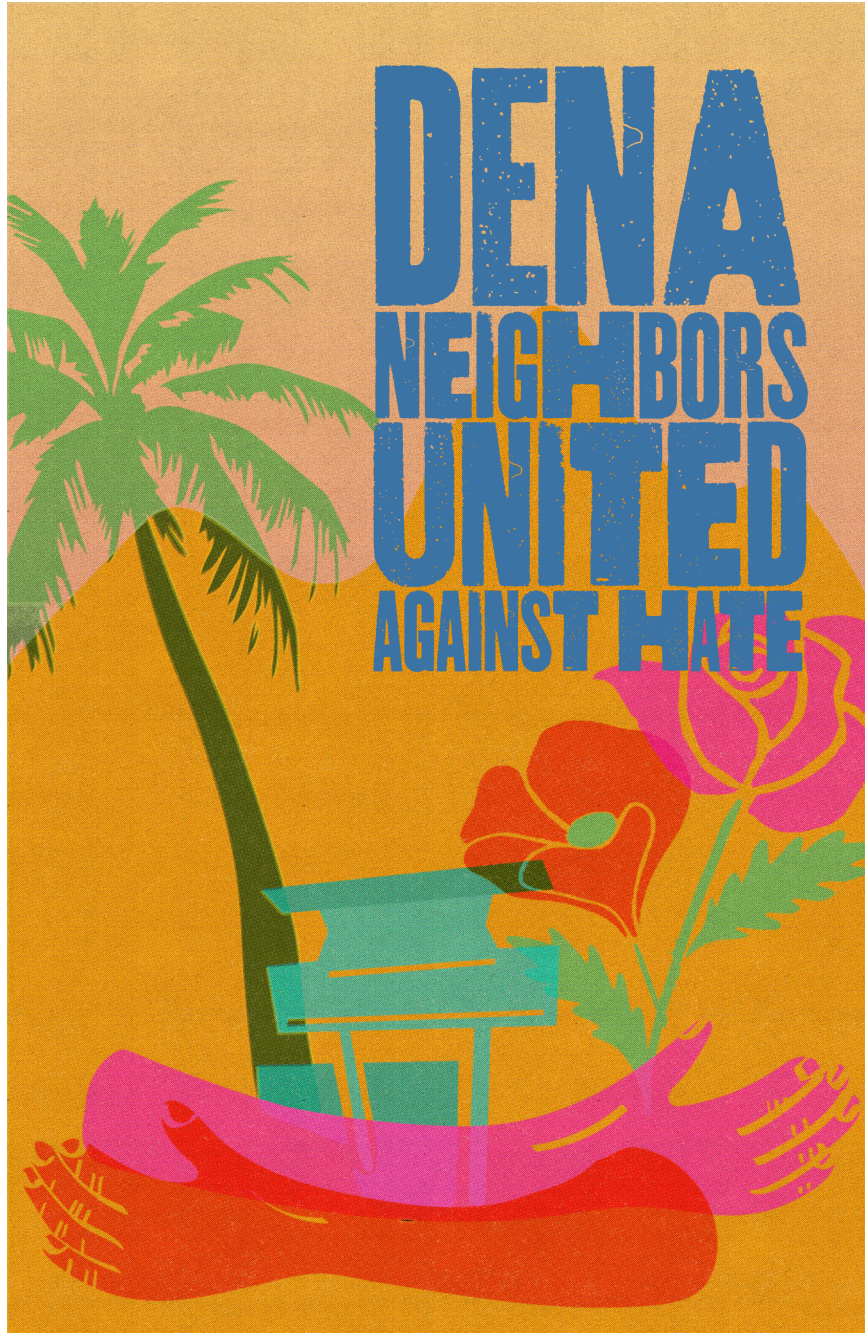


Backyard Neighborfest Toolkit

A Dena Neighborfest Toolkit



A backyard gathering keeps things intimate — perfect for getting to know the neighbors on your immediate street or in your building.

Best for 6–20 neighbors, one host yard

What is Neighborfest?

Neighborfest is a simple, low-lift way to bring people together during United Against Hate Week. There's no script to follow and no expertise required — just a handful of easy activities that help neighbors learn each other's names, swap a few stories, and remember that the people nearby are worth knowing. It works anywhere people already gather: a street, a yard, a classroom, a sanctuary, or a community hall.

Pick and choose activities, adjust timing to fit your group, and don't worry about doing every single thing — even one or two activities make for a great Neighborfest.

Why host here?

A backyard gathering keeps things intimate — perfect for getting to know the neighbors on your immediate street or in your building.

Planning Checklist

- Pick a date and time and send personal invites (text, paper invite, or a knock on the door).
- Tidy up seating areas; borrow extra chairs if needed.
- Ask 1–2 people to help with setup and pack-up.
- Keep it simple: one shared table for food, one corner for activities.
- If needed, make any safety adjustments for pets or young kids in the yard.

Suggested Timing

1.5–2 hours, early evening or a weekend afternoon.

Activities

The same activity can flex to fit a big block party or a small backyard gathering. Use what fits your space and group size.

Neighbor Name Game

10–15 minutes

Break the ice and start putting names to faces.

MATERIALS

- Name tags or index cards
- Markers
- Optional: a ball or bean bag to toss

HOW IT WORKS

1. Have everyone write their first name and street (or a fun fact) on a name tag.
2. Stand or sit in a circle. Go around and have each person say their name plus one thing they love about the neighborhood.
3. Optional: toss a ball — whoever catches it introduces themselves next.
4. Wrap up by asking how many new names people just learned.

Conversation Starter Cards

15–20 minutes, ongoing

Simple prompts that turn small talk into real connection.

MATERIALS

- Printed conversation cards (cut-out sheet included)
- A jar, bowl, or basket

HOW IT WORKS

1. Cut out the prompt cards on the sheet provided and drop them in a jar.
 2. Set the jar on the food table or in a common gathering area.
 3. Invite guests to pull a card and answer it with whoever's nearby.
 4. There are no wrong answers — the goal is just talking to someone new.
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Talents & Treasures Board

15 minutes, ongoing

Find out what your neighbors can teach — and what they want to learn.

MATERIALS

- A poster board or butcher paper
- Sticky notes (two colors if possible)
- Markers or pens

HOW IT WORKS

1. Label one side of the board “I can teach...” and the other “I want to learn...”
2. Hand out sticky notes and ask neighbors to write one skill, hobby, or bit of know-how on each side.
3. Stick them up and let people browse — you never know who lives two doors down.
4. Encourage matches to exchange contact info on the spot.

Neighborhood Dreams Wall

10 minutes, ongoing

A quick, hopeful look at what your block could become.

MATERIALS

- Poster board or wall space
- Markers
- Tape

HOW IT WORKS

1. Write one big question at the top: “What do we want our neighborhood to be known for?”
2. Let neighbors add a word, sentence, or drawing anytime during the event.
3. Read a few highlights aloud near the end, if there's a natural moment.
4. Snap a photo of the finished wall to share on your block's group chat.

Shared Table Sign-Up

Set up in advance

Food brings people together — literally.

MATERIALS

- Sign-up sheet (included)
- Tape or a clipboard

HOW IT WORKS

1. Share the sign-up sheet ahead of time — a porch posting, group text, or shared doc all work.
2. Ask people to bring a dish, drinks, plates, or ice, spread out so no one's overloaded.
3. Post the sheet at the event so latecomers can see what's already covered.
4. Optional: collect a favorite recipe from each dish for a mini neighborhood cookbook.

Take It Home Pledge

5 minutes

One small, doable commitment to carry the day forward.

MATERIALS

- Pledge cards (included)
- Pens

HOW IT WORKS

1. Hand out pledge cards near the end of the gathering.
2. Ask each person to write one small thing they'll do to be a better neighbor in the next month.
3. Have people keep their card somewhere they'll see it — a fridge, mirror, or car visor.
4. Optional: revisit the pledges at your next gathering.

Printable: Conversation Starter Cards

Cut along the lines and drop the cards in a jar for the Conversation Starter Cards activity.

What's one thing you love about living here?	Share a small act of kindness a neighbor has shown you.
If you could change one thing about the neighborhood, what would it be?	What's your go-to comfort food?
Tell us about a place nearby that feels like "yours."	What's a skill you'd love to teach someone?
Who's someone here you'd like to know better?	What's one word you'd use to describe this community?
What's a tradition (yours or someone else's) you admire?	What brought you to this neighborhood?
What are you hoping for here in the next year?	Share a memory that makes you smile when you think of this place.

Printable: Shared Table Sign-Up Sheet

Post this where neighbors can add their name so food (and helping hands) get spread around evenly.

Name	Bringing	Notes (allergies, serves-how-many, etc.)

Printable: Take It Home Pledge Cards

Cut apart and hand out near the end of your gathering.

Take It Home Pledge

One small thing I'll do to be a better neighbor this month:

Take It Home Pledge

One small thing I'll do to be a better neighbor this month:

Take It Home Pledge

One small thing I'll do to be a better neighbor this month:

Take It Home Pledge

One small thing I'll do to be a better neighbor this month:

Take It Home Pledge

One small thing I'll do to be a better neighbor this month:

Take It Home Pledge

One small thing I'll do to be a better neighbor this month:

Next Steps

Neighborfest doesn't have to end when the day does. Here are two easy ways to keep the connection going.

Neighbor Postcard Swap

10 minutes at the event, surprise arrives later

A secret-pen-pal twist on a postcard exchange; everyone writes a note during Neighborfest, and a random neighbor gets a surprise in the mail a few weeks later.

MATERIALS

- Pre-made postcards (printable included) and pens
- Small address labels or stickers
- Two boxes or baskets: one for postcards, one for address labels
- Stamps (organizer or event budget covers postage)

HOW IT WORKS

1. Set out the postcards and pens on a table. Ask each guest to write a short note—a hello, something they enjoyed about the day, or a neighborhood shoutout—and drop it in the postcard box.
2. Separately, have each guest write their name and address on a label and drop it in the address box.
3. After the event, the organizer draws one postcard and one address label at a time, sticks the label on the card (skipping any accidental self-matches), and sets it aside to mail.
4. Mail the postcards out over the following weeks—each neighbor gets a surprise note from someone nearby

Save the Next Date

2 minutes, no materials

Before people head out, put up a simple poster or sign-up sheet asking "When should we do this again?" Let neighbors jot a date, season, or just a thumbs-up. It costs nothing and turns a one-time event into an expected tradition.

Mutual Aid: Making It Last

Neighborfest is a great first step, and it can also be the start of something longer-lasting. Many mutual aid networks begin exactly this way: a group of neighbors who met once, exchanged contact info, and decided to keep looking out for each other.

If your Neighborfest sparks interest, a few low-lift ways to keep it going:

- Start a shared contact list or group text so neighbors can ask for and offer help: a ride, tools, a spare key, a hand carrying groceries.
- Keep the Talents & Treasures board (or a photo of it) as an ongoing resource, not just a one-day activity.
- Check in seasonally: a heat wave, a holiday, or an emergency is a natural reason to reconnect.

A FEW RESOURCES (if you want to go further)

- [Mutual Aid 101](#) — toolkit to help start a neighborhood mutual aid network
- [How to Create a Mutual Aid Network](#) — from the American Friends Service Committee.

You don't need a formal organization to start, just a way for neighbors to reach each other when it matters.

Participating Organizations

DENA Neighbors United Against Hate 2026

Community-Based Organizations

- Boys & Girls Club of Pasadena
- The Center for Restorative Justice
- Clergy Community Coalition
- Collaborate PASadena
- Day One
- Harambee Ministries
- Jewish Federation of San Gabriel and Pomona Valleys
- Mobility Dogs
- Muslim Public Affairs Council
- NAACP of Pasadena
- Stars
- Western Justice Center
- Young & Healthy

Government Partners

- California Civil Rights Department
- Los Angeles County Commission on Human Relations
- Pasadena Human Relations Commission

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With Gratitude

Thank you to the City of Riverside's Our Riverside, Our Neighborhood initiative for inspiration from their Neighborfest Toolkit