

A block party can be a fun way to bring people and businesses together in one location to support healthy communities. These events can be large so it is important to make a plan. The following steps will guide you through the planning process.

Choose the Date:

Think about a realistic date that will be far enough in advance to allow for planning. Also, keep in mind other events or holidays when setting your block party date. Some dates could detract from your event like July 4th while other times provide a unique opportunity. For example, you may want to hold your party on or near World No Tobacco Day on May 31st.

Choose the Setting:

What kind of location do you want for the event? Do you want a Block Party, a Town Green celebration or something in your school auditorium? Some locations may require more logistical preparation like getting city permits and having police at the locations.

Create a Theme:

Using a theme is a fun way to focus your efforts and attract attention for your event. For example, a theme like Mardi Gras for health could interest people by providing a festive and colorful environment to learn more about health. You can combine already established holidays like Halloween or Valentines Day to help create your idea. You could also use the World Health Organization's yearly theme for World No Tobacco Day.

Get Approval:

Early on, you will want to request approval for the venue or location you've chosen for your Block Party or event. Some locations like community parks or auditoriums can be booked far in advance for events so act early to secure the date you want. Make sure you get proper approval. If you want to hold an event at your school who will need to give their permission? Sometimes, you will need approval from several sources like city offices, school principal, advisors, parents and district offices.

Get Help:

This is a big event, and can seem overwhelming without enough help. However, if you enlist help early on you will be able to get everything done stress-free, and may even make some new friends or contacts in the process. Here are some possible places to look for extra help:

- Have you had other events with sign-in sheets? Ask those people if they would be interested in helping.
- Contact other youth groups or peer leader programs
- Community teen centers, Boys and Girls Club
- Girl or Boy scout troops
- Sports teams, school clubs and organizations, student council
- Teachers, parents, advisors, coaches
- Community; DARE Officers, Liquor Control Officers
- Business owners
- Youth Tobacco Control Specialist- Angela Sawyer-DeSanctis

Plan the Events:

This can be a really fun stage in planning your block party and you get to use your imagination and be creative but keep in mind;

- Does the event reflect the theme of the Block Party?
- How much money will the event cost?
- What safety measures will I need to make?
- Do I have enough help?

Try to work in categories and delegate or pass on the specific duties to a group or person. For example, one group may be responsible for music or food etc. Here are the basic categories you may want to think about in your planning process:

1. Activities and Entertainment

What will people be able to do at your event? Think about things you like to do and chances are someone else will like it too. Here is a sampling to consider;

- Games created by teen groups
- Face painting
- Graffiti Wall, Rock climbing wall
- Race-obstacle course or other physical activity
- Chalk drawing or other artistic demonstrations
- Parade

2. Food

Is there a particular kind of food associated with your theme? Could you ask local businesses to contribute their food specialty or reduce their prices for your event?

3. Music

Does the activities group want to have a dance contest? If so, you will need a DJ. Can you ask a friend or someone else you know? Think about if you want live music. Are there any school musicians you could ask? Do your parents know any musicians that would donate their services for the Block party? Once you start thinking outside the box you may come up with lots of great ideas.

4. Displays and Information Booths

Remember that the theme of your block party includes providing education about Tobacco. You will want to include as many opportunities for people to get information about tobacco as possible. There are several organizations with local chapters, which welcome the opportunity to be included in community events. Try contacting; American Cancer Society, American Lung Association and American Heart Association. Think about;

- Posters and Flyers to advertise the Block Party
- Information Booths, pamphlets, brochures etc-Contact the Tobacco Control Program for information booth supplies
- Other health organizations that may want to participate by having a table, staff representative or literature etc.

5. Decoration

This is a good opportunity for an Art club or community organization to get involved to help create the look of the Block party.

6. Speakers

Sometimes having a powerful personality or local celebrity to stand behind your event can help attract attention to your message and even get more people to attend.

7. Prizes and Awards

Estimate the number of people who will attend and plan on giving something to everyone, even if it's just a sticker. Many organizations can help provide you with prizes and awards. Additionally, sometimes they have machines that can test lung capacity and carbon monoxide levels Start here;

- Local chapters of The American Cancer Society, American Lung Association and American Heart Association.
- Tobacco Control Program-Vermont Department of Health
- Try local businesses for gift certificates.

8. Logistics

If you are having the event in a public place, find out about policing needs. Will you need a police officer present? If so, can you recruit a DARE officer or Liquor Control officer to be present? Here are some additional logistical things to consider;

- Parking needs
- Bathrooms
- Electrical outlets needed or available.
- Tents, tables, chairs
- First Aid stations
- Safety-crowd control

Advertise the Event:

This event will only be successful if people know about it. Think about all the ways in which you can spread the word about the Block Party. Also, don't forget to advertise it as an alcohol and tobacco free family event Here are some ideas;

- Send press releases to local media.
- Create posters and Flyers
- Word of mouth

Create Job Assignment lists:

Prior to the Block Party or event day create job lists so everyone knows what they are expected to do on event day. This also gives you the chance to see if you've covered all your bases. Have a master list with all the volunteers' contact and duty information. Try to post volunteer information at each station. Keep it fun and let people team up with a friend. Don't forget to reward all the volunteers with a staff party at the end, after breakdown and clean up of the event.

Press Follow up:

The day before the event put someone in charge as a media contact. Have press packets available with information about your group, statistics for your town, press releases with names of people involved including sponsors and some tobacco information. If you have any extra t-shirts or prizes, give some to the reporters.

Send Articles of Event:

Remember to cut out and send all the articles or press information to the Youth Coordinator in Burlington. We use this information to write a year-end press release highlighting the work of all VKAT groups throughout the year.

Send Thank Notes to Everyone Involved