

Massachusetts Good Neighbor Day Toolkit

Join us in hosting a day of community
actions and celebration of our differences
and shared values.

September 28, 2024



Massachusetts Coalition
to Build Community & End Loneliness

5 Step Planning Toolkit

- 1 Focus on the goal
- 2 Identify community partners
- 3 Determine an activity
- 4 Select a venue
- 5 Share & Promote!

Ideas and suggestions for each step can be found in the following pages, along with a sample flyer and directions for recording a PSA video announcement.

1

Focus on the goal

The goal of Good Neighbor Day is to create opportunities for neighbors and communities to get to know one another better. This is an important step in building community which can help alleviate loneliness and social isolation.

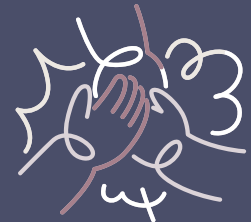
As the U.S. Surgeon General points out, loneliness and social isolation in our communities is a harmful public health threat (more information: [tinyurl.com/lonelinessma](https://www.tinyurl.com/lonelinessma)). Finding opportunities to gather with others is how we can combat the loneliness epidemic we are faced with today.

With this intention and knowledge in mind, be as inclusive as possible in selecting an activity to bring people together in your community.

“

Each of us can start now, in our own lives, by strengthening our connections and relationships





-Vivek H. Murthy, Surgeon General of the United States



2

Identify community partners

We build stronger communities when we work together. Identify organizations in your community with the shared goal of bringing people together:

-  Conduct a community organization audit, listing the agencies, non profits, municipal departments, and committed volunteer groups that offer social services and support in your district or community.
-  Reach out to the people and organizations identified in your audit and introduce the goal of Good Neighbor Day (as describe on the previous page).
-  Propose specific activity ideas (selected activity suggestions on the following page) and see what ideas your partners are enthusiastic about. Or, you may find out that your potential partners might already have an event in development that could meet the goal for Good Neighbor Day.
-  Gain a commitment from interested partners to work with you on planning and promoting activities for your Good Neighbor Day on 9/28/2024.

3

Decide on an activity

Any activity that brings people together positively helps to build community. You can keep it simple or organize something more involved. Activity suggestions:



Organize a **group volunteer activity** to clean up a neighborhood park or walking path. To reward your volunteers afterwards, visit a local ice cream shop together.



Host a **Generations over Dinner** where the challenge is to bring multiple generations together over a shared meal. More information: generationsoverdinner.com.



Arrange a **Block Party**. No need for complex arrangements, simply invite neighbors to meet outside on a specific time on 9/28 and bring a food item to share and a beverage of choice.



Dedicate a bench in your community as a **“Happy to Chat”** bench with signage encouraging people to sit and converse.



Go bowling together: Harvard Professor Robert Putnam authored *Bowling Alone* in which he points out the value of social capital. Build up social capital by bowling together.



Walk and Talk: group walks have been shown to build effective and lasting relationships and are easy to arrange. More information: walkandtalkmovement.org



Map out a musical **Porchfest** with volunteer hosts and musical performers. An example: lexingtonporchfest.org.



4

Select a venue

There are a number of venues available to host your selected activity. Take care to find a location that is accessible for as many people as possible and is ADA compliant.



Work with local municipal government to arrange for street or parking lot closures for block parties or to identify a park that needs to be clean up for a group volunteer project.



If you are looking for an indoor space to gather, reach out to your community's public library or community/senior center to see if they have space to share.



You can host a Generations over Dinner outside by setting up tables on a safe street or in a local public park. Or, partner with a local restaurant to provide discounts for multi-generational groups of diners.



Planning a bowling event? Call and reserve a lanes at your local bowling alley. Not sure where to bowl? Search on google/apple maps for "bowling alley" to find the one nearest you, or review this list:

bowlingcentersusa.com/massachusettsbowling.htm.



If you are organizing a walk, you can review and choose a walking route from this list of age-friendly trails: **walkmass.org/resources/maps/**

5

Share & Promote!

Share your planned activity with us at bit.ly/GNDActivity so we can help support your efforts. Additional ways to promote your event include:

- ✓ Put up **flyers** in your local library and other places in your community and post on any social media channels you and your partner organizations have access to.
- ✓ Extend **personal invitations** by email or even handwritten invitations.
- ✓ **Combine** a broader outreach of putting up flyers and posting online with personalized emails or phone calls to individuals you know well in your invited community group.
- ✓ **Repetition is important.** For any online postings, set a schedule to post multiple times. And if you have extended personal invitations, follow up if you have not heard back, it's easy for people to miss messages.
- ✓ Urge anyone you invite to **help you spread the word** by asking them to forward any flyers or invitations to their contacts in the community.
- ✓ Approach known members in your community to ask them to record a **video PSA** (more detail on recording a PSA is presented in the last page of this Toolkit).

Massachusetts Good Neighbor Day

September 28, 2024

**SAMPLE
FLYER**

Join the Massachusetts Coalition to Build Community and End Loneliness

Convened by AARP Massachusetts in 2019, the Coalition consists of 133 members representing 79 statewide organizations committed to addressing the loneliness epidemic in Massachusetts. Our Mission is to ensure all residents of the Commonwealth feel connected to their community and enjoy a strong sense of social health. Join us in hosting a Good Neighborhood Day Event!

What is Good Neighbor Day?

Good Neighbor Day offers an opportunity for neighbors and communities to get to know one another better. This is an important step in strengthening community which can help alleviate loneliness and social isolation.

Why is it important?

The U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy recently issued an advisory report calling attention to the public health crisis of loneliness, isolation, and lack of connection in our country. Recognizing that loneliness and social isolation pose serious health risks for both physical and mental well-being, Good Neighbor Day is an opportunity for communities to come together and help alleviate this problem.

Activity ideas:

- **Multi-generation dinner party**
- **Block Party or Meet Your Neighbor event**
- **Group volunteer activity**
- **Bowling tournament**
- **Group walk**



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VISIT US AT [ENDLONELINESS.COM](https://endloneliness.com)

Public Service Announcements (PSAs)

Sample Script

“Hello, I am [NAME]. I am here to ask that you mark September 28 on your calendar and make plans to connect. In a world where loneliness and isolation prevail, U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy has sounded the alarm. His recent advisory report highlights the devastating impact of disconnection on our mental, physical, and societal health. But there’s hope. Massachusetts Good Neighbor Day, on September 28, 2024, offers a chance for neighbors to come together and participate in shared activities that strengthen our communities. Let’s combat loneliness together! On this special day, I plan to [ACTIVITY OF CHOICE], and I invite you to join me. Together, we’ll forge new connections, making September 28th a day to build community and togetherness. Please visit endlonelinessma.com/gnd2024 for more information and a Toolkit you can use in activity planning.”

Production

Video public service announcements (PSAs) can be recorded with a smart phone and should be no longer than 30-60 seconds in length. Anyone can record a PSA and we encourage you to ask recognizable members of your community to do so.

Distribution

Once recorded, post the PSA on any social media channels you have access to and your organization’s website. Once posted, you can also include your PSA in any regular communications you or your organization uses.

Support for the homebound

In honor of Massachusetts Good Neighbor Day of Action on September 28th, FriendshipWorks is encouraging folks to think about their neighborhoods and the friendships they've made (or could make) with the members of their communities. Here are a few suggestions on how you can reach out to those who may be isolated in their homes.

**More
Information**

