

NEIGHBORS CREATING CONNECTIONS: MEETING YOUR NEIGHBORS

The first time you introduce yourself as a neighborhood block leader, here is a list of things you can begin with.

- Your name
- How long you've lived in the neighborhood
- How long you've been a block leader
- Reasons why you've decided to be a block leader
- Activities your neighborhood has been involved in
- Your hopes for the neighborhood and ways that the neighborhood is better off because of the participation of your neighbors

After you've introduced yourself, your neighbors are likely to respond differently. Here are some possible ways your neighbors may respond and some things that you might want to do.

Scenario #1: If the person is enthusiastic and interested in what you have to say

Of course, this is the best possible scenario. If your neighbor's response to the neighborhood program is enthusiastic you may want to ask him or her to get involved in ways that go beyond attending a meeting. For example, perhaps s/he could help you plan or host an event, meet other neighbors, or work with you on a neighborhood roster. Use his or her interest and skills/abilities as an opportunity to get a deeper level of involvement that makes the work of your neighborhood easier.

Scenario #2: If the person is open but hesitant

This may mean that the person may not know much about what your role is as a neighborhood leader and what you might be expecting of him or her. If you have your ID card it would be good to show this to your neighbor to help establish your credibility. After explaining your role as the neighborhood leader and the things you are planning for the neighborhood, it's important to let your neighbor know that he or she does not need to commit to anything s/he doesn't want to. You might end your conversation by asking the person if there's anything s/he would like to see happen in the neighborhood or if s/he has any questions or concerns about this program that you can address. You may want to leave a flyer or letter which reinforces the information you've discussed as well as your contact information (see the sample letter in Section 2).

Scenario #3: The person is clearly not interested

If you have a neighbor who clearly wants to be left alone, it's important to respect his/her right to privacy. Before ending the conversation, however, you might ask if there are any future programs s/he would want more information about or conditions or emergencies (for example, an earthquake) in which connection to the neighborhood would be useful. If s/he says yes, you have an opening for future involvement and you and your neighbor can decide together how best to proceed. If s/he says no, respect your neighbor's wishes knowing that s/he may change his mind in the future.

Scenario #4: The person doesn't speak English well

Once you realize the person does not speak English well and you find out what his or her native language is, you* can ask another neighbor who speaks the same language to help translate. If none of your neighbors speak the language, contact the Family Resources Services, City of Palo Alto to find a translator.

Scenario #5: If the person doubts your credibility.

This is where having your city ID will come in handy. Once people see the ID they usually will take your role as the neighborhood leader seriously. If your neighbor is still skeptical, you can ask him or her if s/he would feel more comfortable talking with you if you showed him the letter from your neighborhood association or the PAN Eprep Committee, acknowledging your role as a block leader.