

KATY

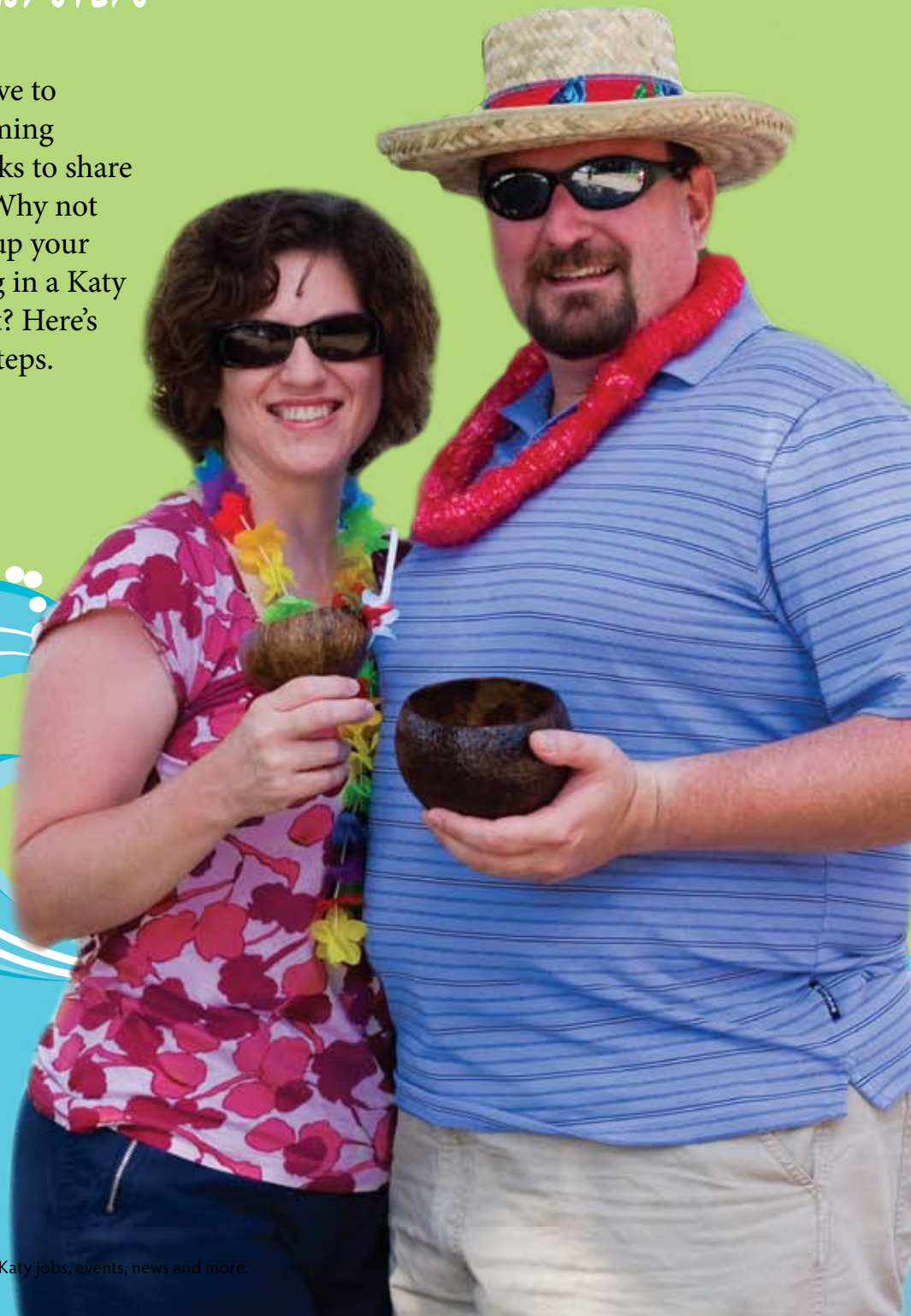


Written by Kelly Isenberger

BLOCK PARTY BASICS

HOW TO THROW A SPECTACULAR BLOCK PARTY IN SIX EASY STEPS


Each summer, Katyites love to congregate around swimming pools, backyards, and parks to share the joy of summertime. Why not fire up the grill and rally up your neighbors in participating in a Katy block party on your street? Here's how it's done in six easy steps.



Dieirdre and Duanne kick it Hawaiian style
Photo by Lisa Mangos



Lexi enjoys an ice cream



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STEP 1: MAKE A PLAN AND PICK A DATE

Begin planning your block party by establishing the basics such as when and where the party will be held. It's good to try to consider your neighbor's individual needs when setting the date and time. Stephanie Ouellette, a Seven Meadows resident and block party veteran suggests, "Get to know your neighbors ahead of time so you are better aware of possible allergies, religious practices and/or food preferences." Keep in mind though you will most likely never pick a date to suit everyone on the block. If you are planning to host the entire party outside, then do consider setting a rain date since Katy summers can be wet as well as hot.



A yard sprinkler gives the kids a way to keep cool



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STEP 2: GET EVERYONE TO JOIN IN

To keep things simple and as stress-free as possible, involve a few of your well-connected neighbors in the planning process. Doing so will not only create a better sense of com-

Anthony, Blake and Ryan



Kevin, John, Jeremy, George and Duane

munity, but will establish a sense of ownership with the overall event. Assign everyone a task for the party. You can even solicit the children's help with decorations, invitations, and making flyers.

Photo by Lisa Mangos





Amy and Elise

STEP 3: INVITE THE NEIGHBORS

Gather together and distribute flyers to the houses on your block and maybe even your side streets. Another great alternative if you have everyone's email address is an on-line invitation -- you can track responses and who's doing what. "Just be sure to make all the expectations clear for the party. Include a start and end time, specify whether it is family-friendly and whether alcohol will be involved," suggests Ouelette. If you're asking people to bring items, be specific as to what each family is to bring.



Peyton having summer fun

Photo by Lisa Mangos



Taylor on the Slip and Slide

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Lone enjoys some watermelon

Photo by Lisa Mangos

STEP 4: KEEP IT SIMPLE

Keep your block party simple with a menu of hamburgers and hot dogs or other traditional summer block party fare. If you go this route, assign each family a food item to bring, then haul out the grills, and get cookin'. Or, each family can make their own main course, and provide a side dish for everyone else to share in. Add a fun, competitive angle by having a block party barbecue cook-off or other kind of contest. Each family samples the wares from participants, then vote on their favorites.

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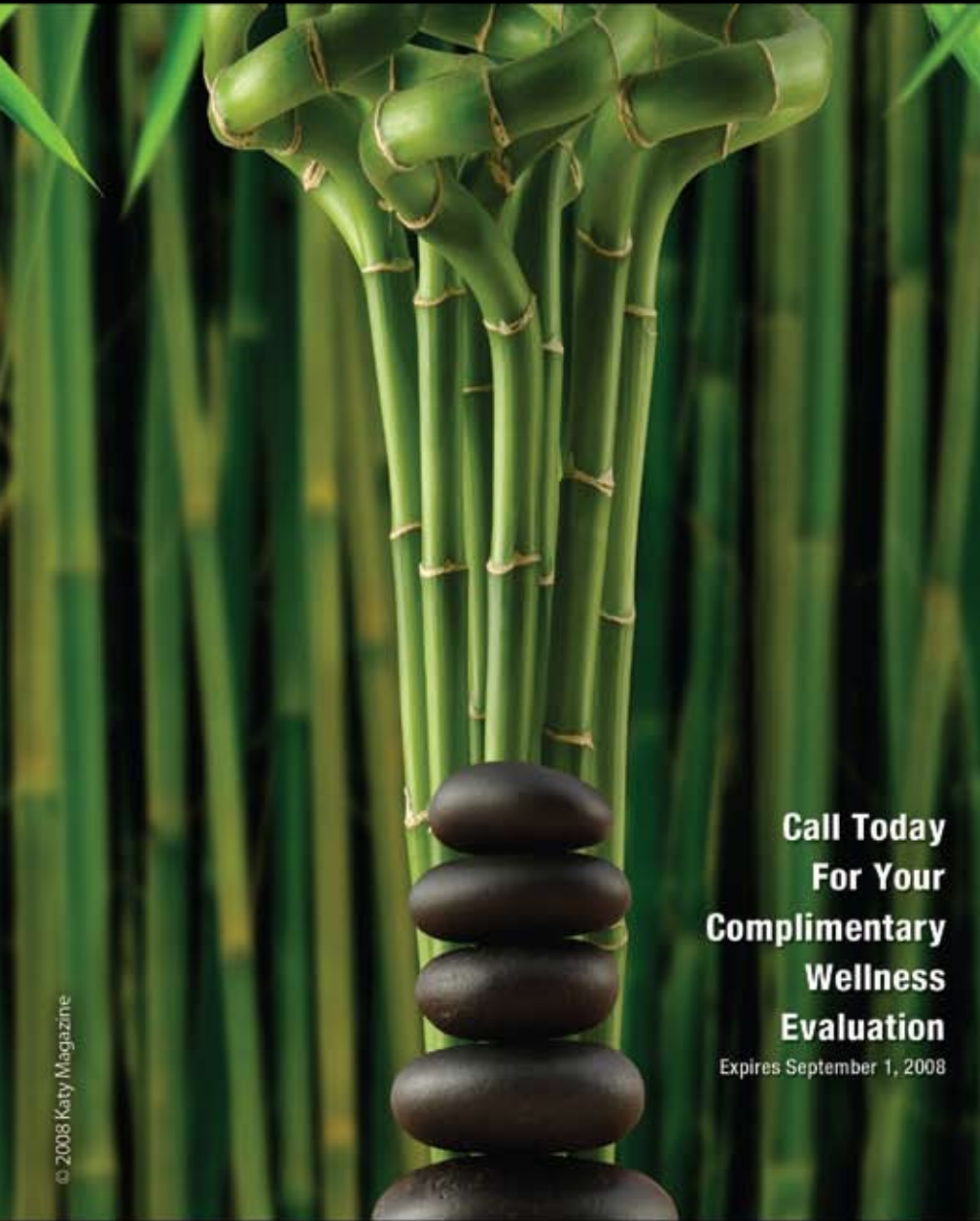
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Emily cools off



STEP 5: PLAY SOME GAMES

While the grills are hot, keep the kids entertained with good ole fashion games – bike, foot or even wheelbarrow races. Ouellette says, “An inflatable water slide area is a great idea, but make sure you tell the adults that there is a weight limit!” Alternatively, you can bring a karaoke machine and have your own American Idol contest or talent show. Water balloons are always a hit but make sure and set the ground rules as to who is playing and who is not.

STEP 6: HAVE A BLAST

You’ve planned a great summer block party and now its time to enjoy the fun. Keep in mind that not everything will go as planned so be ready to roll with the mishaps of the day. The goal of a block party is to have fun, get to know your neighbors, and, perhaps most importantly, make great memories together. Now get busy planning your spectacular Katy block party! **KM**

KELLY ISENBERGER is a Katy resident and mom to two young girls. Her family enjoys spending time with their new neighbors.



Karli and Peyton have fun with bubbles

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WHY PLAN A BLOCK PARTY?

- Get to know your neighbors and make new friends
- Build a sense of community
- Have fun and make memories
- Experience cultures other than your own

BLOCK PARTY DETAILS

PICK A THEME

Maybe a luau, carnival, or patriotic theme to make it fun and festive. Plan decorations, music and games accordingly.

BRING NAMETAGS

Save yourself from the embarrassment of not knowing everyone by name.

TAKE TURNS COOKING

Rotate those on the grill so one person doesn't get stuck the entire party.

BRING LOTS OF ICE

You'll need lots of it and coolers to keep it in. Separate ice for cooling food and drinks from the ice that will go into drinks.

CHOOSE A RAIN-OUT DATE

Have an alternate day set in case of rain.

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