

*Website – sahratoronto.com
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**Our Neighbourhood**

A neighbourhood sense of community has been shown to be linked to so many positives: creating a sense of belonging, providing a physical and mental health boost, and even lowering crime rates. With benefits like these, we should all strive to strengthen our neighbourhood ties.

Here are a number of ideas for building community in our Neighbourhood

**Get to know your neighbours.**

If you can’t name more than a neighbour or two, it’s time to introduce yourself. Even if you’ve lived in your home for a while, this first introduction doesn’t need to be awkward. Simply smile and say, “Hey, I’ve been meaning to introduce myself…”. Remember to introduce yourself as well to your backyard neighbour.

**Hang out on your porch or in your front yard/driveway.**

It’s hard to get to know your neighbours if you don’t ever see them. Just by being out in front of your house you can give off a welcoming vibe that encourages interaction. If you are out in front, especially with your kids, every neighbour who walks by, even those you don’t know who may live a few blocks away, still smiles and says hello.

**Create a block directory.**

If you don’t yet know your neighbours, this is the perfect way to get started. It doesn’t need to be fancy. Just drop off a sign-up sheet in everyone’s mailbox. Establish privacy guidelines with your neighbours.

**Be respectful of your neighbours.**

Maintain your property and respect property boundaries. Clean up after your dog *and* keep it leashed when out walking. Be aware of any disturbing noise levels that you are creating.

**Organize a block party.**
You may not know most of your neighbours’ names until you have your first block party. After that one party, there will be a lot more interaction on your block. This one does involve a little work, but if you share the coordinating duties with other neighbours and keep it simple (at least that first year), this is an easy way to get to know your neighbours.

**Host a**[**porch/deck party**](http://wwwgracegritsgarden.com/2014/05/host-southern-porch-party.html)**.**

A deck party is an easy way to socialize with a smaller group of your neighbours without the work of a “real” party.

**Join a local fitness club or group.**

Attending a local fitness club or exercise group is a sure way to get to meet other local residents. In our Neighbourhood, we have the Cricket Club, the Armour Heights Community Centre, seniors exercise programs at the Armour Heights Presbyterian Church as well as commercial fitness operations on Avenue Road.

**Participate in programs at the local Community Centres.**

Again, you and your children will meet local residents with similar interests if you attend programs at the local Community Centres. The Armour Heights Community Centre is our prime centre but there are also good programs offered by the North Toronto Memorial Community Centre.

**Organize a Kids’ Play Event or a backyard movie night.**

**Help your children meet the other children on the block by organizing a Kids’ Play Event - gives the adults an opportunity to meet as well.**

**Walk in the Neighbourhood.**

**You will meet neighbours and other ‘walkers’ while enjoying a pleasant walk on our lovely residential streets and/or on our village street ‘Upper Avenue’ while doing some shopping or visiting the local restaurants.**

**Build a**[**Free Library**](http://littlefreelibrary.org/)**.**

People love the idea of the Free Library. Are you interested in creating one?

**Shop Locally.**

You will not only see and interact with your neighbours at the local businesses and along the way (especially if you are walking over to Avenue Road) but you will also get to know your *other* neighbours—the local business owners and employees. Supporting local businesses contributes to the neighbourhood’s vitality.

**Join the South Armour Heights Residents’ Association (SAHRA).**

**Your local Residents’ Association, run by a volunteer Board of Directors, deals with development (reside3ntial and commercial), safety, environmental and community building issues. Support their work by becoming a contributing Member. Review the SAHRA website to get information on the Neighbourhood, what SAHRA does and Membership information (**<https://sahratoronto.com/>). Even if you cannot/do not want to be involved in the specifics, show your support for the volunteers who are spending their time on community issues.

**Address concerns or issues directly with your neighbour.**

Don’t let a problem fester and escalate. Before reporting a problem to the City, first try to work it out with your neighbour directly.

**Create a tool-sharing program.**

You can just ask Joe next door if you can borrow his drill, but consider establishing a tool-sharing program amongst the neighbours in your block. Tools are one of those things that you generally only use once in a while, so why not share them when they’re not in use?

**Talk to other parents at the school/park.**

If you have kids, the neighbourhood/school playground can offer a wealth of info…which schools parents like and why, where the best activities for kids are, which new restaurants are coming to the neighbourhood. Exchanging neighbourhood info at the park is a time-honoured tradition among parents.

**Welcome new families.**

You can drop by with a traditional baked good, but you can also welcome newcomers by sharing your favourite local restaurants and businesses or perhaps share a stack of your favourite local take-out menus, along with the latest SAHRA newsletter, wrapped up in ribbon.

**Arrange a Coffee event either at your home or at one of our local coffee shops.**

Invite your neighbour(s) over on a weekend for a Coffee. Investigate whether you could set up a regular get-together either rotating amongst the homes on your block or getting together at one of our local establishments.

**Volunteer with the South Armour Heights Residents’ Association (SAHRA).**

**Volunteer with SAHRA to become involved with the Board or to do some project-oriented volunteer work. Are you a walker in the neighbourhood? SAHRA has a variety of projects that might be of interest to you. Student volunteers are also welcomed. Contact** info@sahratoronto.com**.**

**Call 311 if you see something that needs to be fixed.**

Help keep our Neighbourhood safe and in good condition. A simple call or email to 311 (311@toronto.ca) can get street lights replaced, damaged street signs repaired, broken tree branches removed, etc.

**Participate in the Neighbourhood Watch Online program.**
This program can be an effective deterrent to neighbourhood crime. Join in with the neighbours on your block or a section of your neighbourhood to operate a Neighbourhood Watch Online program. An important component of the program is to “get to know your neighbours” and to develop communication strategies amongst the neighbours. Contact SAHRA for more information.

**Participate in Neighbour events organized by SAHRA, i.e., Neighbours Night Out.**

It is an easy way to meet your neighbours at various social events.

**Become a catch-basin monitor with your neighbours.**

To avoid flooding, we need to ensure that the catch-basins on both sides of our streets are clear of debris so that water will drain, reducing the likelihood of flooding. Talk with your neighbours – locate your catch-basins (otherwise you won’t be able to find them in the winter) and develop arrangements with your neighbours to keep them clear of debris, especially in the Fall and Winter.

**Organize a regular quarterly gathering of your closest neighbours.**

Set up an event to get the neighbours together quarterly either for a casual (perhaps pot-luck) dinner, rotating through the homes or visit our various restaurants on Avenue Road. Each family could take on the responsibility for organizing one of the events.

**Join/organize a walking or running group.**

This could be as easy as a walking/running group or a couple of your neighbours that meets at the same time every week/month.

**Start a neighbourhood book club.**

A block book club makes it easier to participate when only have to walk two houses over.

**Help your neighbours shovel snow.**

If you neighbours are older or perhaps just going through a hard time with a new baby or sickness, spend some extra time to clear/help them clear their sidewalk or driveway. In the major storms, a ‘street snow clearing’ approach is a great ‘sharing’ opportunity with your neighbours.

**Support your neighbourhood schools.**

The most successful schools are the ones where parents are actively engaged. Good schools have successful, if informal, partnerships between the administration, the parents and the community-at-large. Even if you don’t have kids at the school, it is important to remember that the local school is also a member of the community, and can greatly impact the neighbourhood, positively or negatively.

**Let your neighbours know when you will be out of town.**

You should ask your neighbours (and they will likely ask you in turn) to keep an eye out on your home while you are away. Ask them to contact you or the police if anything suspicious happens.

**Subscribe to SAHRA’s eBlasts, Newsletter and website for News in the Neighbourhood.**

**Your Residents’ Association communicates neighbourhood information via eBlasts (usually twice a month), Newsletter (once or twice a year) as well as maintaining an active Website (**<https://sahratoronto.com/>). Please send your email address to info@sahratoronto.com to be added to our email distribution list. Please also encourage your neighbours, including new families to the neighbourhood, to send us their email address to us.

**Let your neighbours know when there are going to be outside contractors at your home.**

**With the Break & Enter situation today, it is concerning when ‘contractors’ arrive with ladders. Let your close neighbours know when you’ve arranged for contractors so that they know that it is a ‘valid’ situation.**

**Support our young entrepreneurs by buying the neighbour kids’ lemonade/cookies/chocolates.**

Buying whatever kids are selling on card tables in their front yards or from going door-to-door goes back to the “[it takes a village](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/It_Takes_a_Village)” concept…you’re helping to encourage the initiative and resourcefulness of the young. Think back to when you were a kid and you were so excited with your venture.

**Share your skills/knowledge.**

Are you tech savvy or knowledgeable on particular things? Perhaps you can sew or like to tinker with cars or you know a lot about home maintenance and/or home service suppliers. Your neighbours would love for you to share these skills with them, either by teaching them or just helping on a one-time basis.

**Coordinate a neighbourhood yard sale.**

Garage sale, tag sale, yard sale…whatever name you go by, this is a good way to clear out your home’s clutter and help your neighbours do the same. It also brings a lot of neighbours out for the event – a good time for a chat.

**Welcome new little ones to the neighbourhood.**

Years ago, when a family had a new baby, the neighbours would decorate the families’ front porch with pink or blue ribbons. Find a small gesture to recognize a baby’s birth, welcoming the baby into our community.

**Share small neighbourhood gifts at holiday times.**

Why not surprise your neighbours with a holiday treat? Keep it simple…baked goods, seasoned popcorn, or some special treat will be welcomed by most.

**Drive like your kids live here.**

We all like to live in vibrant/bustling neighbourhoods, but this means people, especially kids, need to feel safe when walking or biking around.

A recent article in Toronto.com talks about how building a good Toronto community starts with a community association…

<https://www.toronto.com/opinion-story/9509490-building-a-good-toronto-community-starts-with-a-community-association/>

 *Do you have more ideas to add to the list? Email them to* *info@sahratoronto.com**.*

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