

Swap Meet and Greet

Do you have a few still-perfectly-useful-but-not-to-you-anymore items lying around your house? Clothes your kids have outgrown? Invite your neighbors to attend this free, no-money-required swap meet.

You will be organizing the time and place for this event, so choose an upcoming weekend afternoon, and scope out a location suitable for a sizeable neighborhood gathering. You might choose a nearby park, an open parking lot, or even your garage. Check with your local parks department or the owner of the lot to make sure you can hold your event in the location.

To advertise the swap meet, post fliers around your neighborhood. If your neighborhood has a Web site or an email chain, send out a digital notice of the event. In the advertisement, ask your neighbors to bring their gently used, still-working items and clothes to the swap meet to give away or trade with others. State that no money will change hands – this is simply a way to “recycle” items that you no longer use and give to someone who will!

Have large blankets spread out on your grass and large tables to display items. Also have plenty of empty hangers and places to hang clothing. Rope tied between two trees or ladders works well. As neighbors arrive, assist them in displaying their items.

Helpful hint: If your choice of location doesn't have tables or raised surfaces, try to bring some portable folding tables to set up for displaying smaller items. Consider organizing your swap meet tables into categories so attendees can easily find what they're looking for. For example, try “Lawn and Garden,” “Housewares,” and “Tools.” Consider setting up a “kids only” section, where children can come to swap their toys, games, or books. This is also a great area to keep kids occupied by setting up a refreshment station where they can serve lemonade and cookies (or other simple snacks) to the attendees. Within this section, you could also host an area for families to exchange baby and toddler items or for mothers-to-be to find maternity clothing.

Instant Intentions

While you're looking for some new items to acquire, take the time to stop and chat with your neighbors. Ask them what they're looking for, and offer to help them find it. If the item they need is for a specific project or purpose, you could also offer to help them with the project. Exchange phone numbers or addresses with your new acquaintances, and follow up with them to see how you might be able to help them in the future. - From the book, *Field Guide to Neighborhood Outreach* by Group Publishing, 2007. Note: How do you reach out to your neighbors? Do you have an idea (it could be a one-time event or an ongoing effort) you'd like to pass on for others to try? Please jot it down and stick it in my mailbox (see box below) or send me an email. Your idea could end up in our bulletin and on our Immanuel website! – Lisa Jaeger

I reach out to my neighbors by:

Please share a bit about how God has blessed your outreach:

Please include your name and phone number below for publication if you'd like people to contact you for more information about implementing this idea:
