

# **Birthday Parties for Sheltered Children**

**Mission:** *BRIDGES brings the housed and the homeless together in community to share our human experience. We enable our student, adult and organizational affiliates to give immediate comfort to the homeless and create an occasion for housed and homeless people to share in fellowship.*

**Birthday Parties:** Our goal is to give every child living in the Emergency Residency Program, a shelter in Newark a birthday that will make him or her feel special. It is our expectation that every party will be different, but will be consistent with other parties.

## **Party Guidelines and Information**

**Volunteers:** Between five and ten volunteers will be necessary for an organized birthday party. The shelter will also provide staff support. This is a great opportunity for volunteer groups or friends and families to plan a birthday party.

**Scheduling your party:** Parties will be held on Saturday at 12:00 (set-up at 11:30) usually on the last weekend of the month for every child having a birthday in that particular month. Sign-up on-line at [www.bridgesoutreach.net](http://www.bridgesoutreach.net).

**Ages of Children:** Ages of children at the shelters range from 1 to 13. The majority of children celebrating birthdays and participating in the parties will be from 2 to 12 years old.

**Number of Children:** Birthday children and guests (also residents of the shelters) are expected to be between 20 and 40 children.

**Theme Parties:** It is not necessary to have a theme party, but can often help to organize party ideas and be memorable for the children. Remember to keep theme interesting for boys and girls of all ages. Some ideas:

- Space
- Ocean
- Cowboys
- Pirates
- Carnival

More ideas:

- [www.amazingmoms.com](http://www.amazingmoms.com)
- [www.partydirectory.com](http://www.partydirectory.com)

**Games:** Homemade games work well for all ages and are inexpensive and fun. There are hundreds of possibilities that will help to keep every party fresh and new (many of the children will participate in several parties during the year.) Here are some ideas:

- Drop clothespins in a milk jug – make it more difficult by blindfolding the contestant
- Musical Chairs – do a variation, have a chair for everyone! Start with 2 sets of colors or shapes. Put one color or shape on each chair, when the music stops, pull a matching color or shape from an envelope. The matching chair wins!
- Penny Toss – use gallon jugs, buckets or hoops to toss the pennies into.

- Treasure Hunt – fill a shoe box with treasures – one for everyone – then send the party goers off to find the hidden treasure. Finder gets applause and shares the loot.
- Bingo! Use a standard set or make your own with farm animals
- “Simon Says”
- Red Light, Green Light
- Limbo

More ideas:

- [www.familyfun.com](http://www.familyfun.com)
- [www.birthdayexpress.com](http://www.birthdayexpress.com)
- [www.allthatstuff.net](http://www.allthatstuff.net)

**Prizes:** Small prizes can be given, but do make sure everyone has an opportunity to “win.” Please refrain from small items that could be potential choking hazards. Stickers are good prizes or consolation prizes.

**Music:** A “boom box” and party music will be available. However, you may want to bring your own music.

**Crafts:** It is often nice to have a “quiet” activity for the children. Find a few easy craft projects that will appeal to younger and older children. Designate a volunteer to help at the craft table.

Some ideas can be found at:

- [www.familyfun.com](http://www.familyfun.com)
- [www.partypalooza.com](http://www.partypalooza.com)
- [www.dlk-kids.com/crafts](http://www.dlk-kids.com/crafts)

**Food:** The party will be around lunch-time and should include a healthy meal or enough healthy snacks to make a meal. Keep the emphasis on fun food that is also healthy. Please avoid excess sugar. Here are some ideas:

- trail mix (label if it has nuts)
- pretzels
- sandwiches in cookie cutter shapes
- cheese chunks with crackers
- turkey chucks
- cheese sticks
- yogurt
- bread sticks
- veggies and dip
- Popcorn balls (please no loose popcorn!)
- Fresh fruit
- Dried fruit
- Granola bars
- Tortilla chips and salsa
- Juice boxes (avoid spilling and cups).

More ideas:

- [www.birthdayexpress.com](http://www.birthdayexpress.com)
- [www.cspinet.org](http://www.cspinet.org)

**Cake:** What would a birthday party be without cake? Sheet cakes or cup cakes – get creative!

Ideas:

- [www.kidsdomain.com](http://www.kidsdomain.com)
- <http://www.dltk-kids.com/crafts/birthday/cakes.html>
- <http://www.birthdayexpress.com/bexpress/planning/BirthdayCakes.asp>

**Supplies:** Make the room festive with balloons, tablecloths, plates and napkins. Don't forget spoons and forks, if needed.

**Gifts:** Bridges will provide gifts either purchased or donated for each birthday child. Gifts may need to be picked up at Bridges in advance of the party. Call ahead to make sure they are ready.

*Please, no goodie bags.*