

I'm Going to Maplewood Porchfest



A Social Story of
Music, Community, and Belonging

By
**Together
We Bloom**

CONNECTION • COMMUNICATION • COMMUNITY

About Social Stories (A Note for the Grown-ups)

Social Stories are first-person narratives written to introduce a new, unexpected, or challenging situation with simple language and pictures . They help the reader know what to expect and provide options for support.

Anyone can benefit from learning about situations ahead of time but social stories are often particularly helpful for neurodivergent individuals including Autistic people or people with anxiety.

Social stories should be used as a tool to empower and support inclusion and access, not to force compliance with social norms.

This Porchfest Social Story was created by Together We Bloom.

We are also hosting the Porchfest sensory-friendly quiet room located at DeHart Community Center, 120 Burnett Ave, Maplewood. Please visit us at our Porchfest Bakesale on Franklin Ave between Prospect and Princeton.

Together We Bloom is a local 501(c)3 nonprofit with a mission to empower young children with disabilities and their families through equitable access to connection, communication, and community. We advance this mission through two vital strategies: sliding-scale, neurodiversity-affirming speech and language therapy and disability justice, equity, and belonging initiatives to make our community a more inclusive place.

To learn more or support our work for inclusivity please visit:
www.TogetherWeBloom.org.

I am going to an event in my community called
Porchfest. I will go with my grown-
up/parent/family/friends.



Porchfest is a celebration of music and community in
Maplewood, NJ.

At Porchfest, musicians perform on neighbors' front yards or porches. I can go around to see the different musicians.



At the start, there is a big parade through the neighborhood with music and dancing. I can walk in the parade or watch if I want.





I will hear lots of different types of music at Porchfest. Some music is fast and loud. Some music is slow and quiet. Some performers sing. Some performers play instruments. Some do both at the same time!



There are lots of people who come to watch the performers at
Porchfest.



Some people dance and sing. Some people jump and flap their hands. Some people talk. Some people walk around. Some people sit and listen to the music.



I can choose to do whatever feels right for me and my body!

There are lemonade stands and bake sales that have food and drinks for people to buy. I can bring my own drinks and snacks too.



There is a lot going on at Porchfest! I might feel excited, happy, overwhelmed, or another feeling or many feelings at once. I can always tell my grown-up how I'm feeling.



If watching the musicians feels too loud or overwhelming, I can take a break.

Everybody's body and brain are different. I can listen to what my body and brain need.



If I need a quiet, calming space, I can take a break at the sensory-friendly quiet room at DeHart Community Center. In the sensory-friendly room, there is no music. There are soft lights, a cozy tent, and some sensory toys and books.



If I need to move my body or run around, I can take a break at DeHart Park and Playground. There are swings, slides, climbers, and a big grassy field.



I can stay at Porchfest for as long as I want and go home when I feel ready.



I am an important part of my community.

**Music and Community are for everyone!
Porchfest is for everyone!**





maplewood porchfest

Special thanks to the Maplewood Porchfest Committee and the following musicians and photographers for use of their photos available on the Porchfest website, www.maplewoodporchfest.com.

Musician and Photo Credits:

Cover: Rites of Springfield - Photo by Tracy Sham Photography

Page 3: City Roots - Photo by Gregory Burrus Productions.

Page 4: "Maplewood Porchfest Honk Parade" - Photo by Tom Melee.

Page 5:

A. Lady Rose - Photo by Gary Stein

B. Sarah Hodd + Mark Loughney- Photo courtesy of Sarah Hodd

C. Willie Williams + Ace Williams - Photo by Tracy Sham Photography.

Page 6: "Porchfest 2022" - Photo courtesy of Vic DeLuca

Page 8: "Lemonade Stand" - Photo by Tracy Sham Photography

Page 13: Sarah Partridge + Band - Photo by Gary Stein



Social Story Suggestions and Supports for Parents and Caregivers

Social stories can be a wonderful tool to support your child's access to Porchfest, but YOU are their most important support. Here are some suggestions for supporting your child's communication and regulation at Porchfest.

- Introduce the social story in advance and offer the book frequently to support their understanding and processing, even if you're not sure your child understands yet.
- Feel free to adjust the words to fit your child's language level, interests, or specific needs.
- Consider that your child may not yet be able to ask for a break (with or without words); many young children need adult support to know when to take a break or how to take a break.
- Be prepared to notice your child's nonverbal communication, which may express that they may be getting dysregulated and need a break. Notice your own regulation needs, too, because "you can't pour from an empty cup."
- Use the communication board on the next page as a visual support for understanding. Try pointing to the pictures on the board as you read the social story and make comments during Porchfest. *A child should never be required to point to the board, but we can model and provide opportunity.*
- Talk with your child about how we all have different brains and bodies so it's ok if their experience or the way they act is different than other people. We should have discussions about disabilities and neurodivergence even if your child is non-disabled or neurotypical. Disability is an important and beautiful part of human diversity!
- If you are seeking support, empowerment, and connection as a caregiver of a child with disabilities, consider joining the SOMA Peer Support and Action Network group on Facebook.

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Speech-Language Pathologist
Executive Director, Together We Bloom

Porchfest Communication Board

