Story Time in the Orchard

Boyertown Community Library

Children

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Tweens (10-12)

Story Time in the Orchard

Aug 10, 2018

$1-50

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Byline
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Story Time in the Orchard is an all-ages story time hosted by Boyertown Community Library and Frecon Farms. It is held outdoors on Thursdays at 9 a.m. from mid-June through October, weather permitting.

This program enhances awareness of local agriculture, provides a family experience of nature and boosts health literacy while having fun.

Advanced Planning

In spring 2017 Josh Smith, retail manager and marketing director for Frecon Farms, invited me and my director, Susan Lopez, to visit the orchard. He showed us the area where he envisioned hosting story time, and we talked through some ideas together.

I put together a list of possible books and began planning interactive songs. We tried to troubleshoot, thinking of access for strollers and visitors with mobility challenges. We began with a plan for three Thursdays during the first three weeks of countywide summer programs.

Our goals were to increase access to fresh, local food; provide an opportunity to enjoy the outdoors and learn about nature; and highlight the agricultural character of our community.

Marketing

Story time was advertised with posters in the library and in the Frecon Farms store. The poster also was shared via social media for both places and promoted at other events (for example, during announcements at preschool story time).

We drew attention from local media. The story time was visited by writers from the Reading Eagle newspaper and also featured in the Boyertown Times weekly newspaper.

Budgeting

The cost for the library is in the time of the youth services staff person (prep, marketing and about 1.5 hours each week at the orchard). For Frecon Farms, the cost also is primarily time from the general manager (prepare parking signs, fliers with directions, guide visitors on the walk).

In addition, the orchard provides about $30 worth of fruit each week. The amount of fruit provided is at the discretion of the orchard.

Day-of-event Activity

The program is run with two staff, the youth services coordinator and the general manager of the orchard market. It takes place prior to the library opening, so staff can be spared.

At the beginning of story time season the orchard manager makes sure that the orchard entrance and parking area are well marked. During our first season we learned the importance of having parking clearly marked and printed directions available for distribution.

The orchard manager also sets up fruit on a table in the story time area and the youth services coordinator brings books. Together, we welcome visitors.

Program Execution

Our attendance ranged from 50 to 80 people of all ages during the summer of 2017, and in autumn when school resumed our numbers ranged from 20 to 45. In 2018, the first story time of the summer drew 90 people.

Beginning in March, patrons were asking if we would return to the orchard again. Word of mouth is the most powerful marketing tool, and patrons who had a positive experience began inviting friends and family. We have received very positive feedback from participants, including messages from families with special needs. The calming benefits of nature, combined with the enhanced freedom of movement, means that being outdoors makes story time more accessible for some.

Since we began this partnership, Frecon Farms often supports our library with in-kind donations of refreshments when we have special events. We have supported their programs, such as cooking classes in their store, with book displays when possible. Josh and I are working on a winter program, Orchard in the Library, to bring fruit tastings indoors and continue to support nutritional literacy in our community.

Next spring we will celebrate apple blossoms with a storywalk in the orchard, where people often don't visit until picking time. We will continue to support access to nature and knowledge of agriculture for our community. Perhaps most importantly, we have received feedback from any program participants who say, "We're very glad you are working together."

Advice

Participants will need to be prepared for an outdoor program. Be clear about what weather will require a cancellation of your program. If there is rain the night before, but a dry morning, we will post on Facebook. The ground might be wet, and there might not be shade. Try to communicate as clearly as possible about the nature of your terrain (steep, uneven, open to the sun).

We have a portable bathroom at one site, but the initial spot we chose did not have this. Make sure families know what amenities will or will not be present.

Did you try this program at your library? Share your experience using this form.

Supporting Materials

Download this Program as a PDF

- Programming Librarian Facebook Group

Slideshow Images











Image



More Programs

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Children (9 and under)+ | □□
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Parks & Rec: A Health Programming Partner

Audiences:

Audience

Children (9 and under)
Adults (21 and up)
Sep 10, 2015
Children (9 and under)+ | $$$
Image



Sensory-Friendly Storytime

Audiences:

Children (9 and under)
Jan 19, 2016
Children (9 and under)+ | $$
Image



Nature Detective Workshops for Kids

Audiences:

Children (9 and under)