Shop Small® Pickens

Pickens County Library System

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Free

Byline

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After hearing about Small Business Saturday® here on Programming Librarian in 2017, we decided to sign up our branch through American Express to be a Neighborhood Champion for Small Business Saturday® .

Once our boxes of free promotional items arrived, we made sure to “spread the wealth,” so to speak, with all four locations in our county taking part.

We invited patrons to collect their Shop Small® tote bags at the library, along with a map of downtown businesses provided by the Chamber of Commerce. At any point during the day, they could bring a receipt from a local small business and have their library fines forgiven.

Advanced Planning

The first step was to register as a Neighborhood Champion with American Express. Once we were approved we later received two large boxes full of free promotional items.

We connected in early November with our local Chamber of Commerce, who contacted the businesses for us. We told them that we had a set number of promotional items for Small Business Saturday® at the library, and that they could feel free to stop by and pick some up for their business during our open hours. Some businesses stopped by to pick things up, and some we brought items to.

Tables were set up at each branch with promotional items through the month of November.

Marketing

In addition to our standard publicity on social media, local newspapers and in our library newsletter, we connected with our county government's public relations coordinator and canvased around downtown Pickens on Facebook Live, interviewing local business owners and dropping off promo items.

The canvassing was great, and the business owners were very interesting people to talk to. We didn't let any of them know we were coming, so we were grateful they were good sports!

Local businesses also helped spread the word about our prize drawing. Our local hardware and department stores made a big difference by telling their customers, "Make sure you go by the library and get entered for a chance to win a gift card!"

Budgeting

American Express provided so much material that our print costs were negligible. We purchased nothing that we would not normally purchase for any program that we host. Besides forgiving people's fines, which our library director did not mind doing, we did not have to allocate much budget to it!

Program Execution

The promotional material sent by American Express was a tremendous help. The Chamber and local businesses appreciated the role we played in getting the material. Impact was greatest in Pickens, where I was able to personally contact businesses. Patrons always enjoy getting their fines forgiven.

The Chamber was so happy with how it went, we were named the Chamber member of the month!

Advice

We have a few words of advice for libraries planning to participate in Small Business Saturday® 2019.

One box of promo items should be for one town, not spread out around the county. It looks like quite a lot of material when you first get it, but when spread out around a town, it can go quickly. We tried to spread our one box to four locations, and we ended up running low. This year, each branch is signing up to request a box – we recommend you do this also!

Contact your local businesses early and often. Many will be delighted to be involved, but you should expect all sorts of responses. Having the Chamber contact businesses lent us some credibility, and canvassing on camera made it hard for them to turn down the promo items.

This past year being our second year, we did more canvassing, trying to get more physical material into their hands. Rather than keeping all the bags at the library, we gave most of them to businesses to hand out to shoppers. It works best when someone in each location takes ownership of the project.

The event works best if a library is within walking distance of a downtown area. It's what people think of when they hear "Shop Small®": strolling around a quaint downtown, doing some window shopping at mom-and-pops.

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

More Programs

Sep 20, 2017
Adults (21 and up)+ | $
Image



Shop Small® Lakeview

Audiences:

Adults (21 and up)

Sep 20, 2017
Adults (21 and up)+ | $
Image



Small Business Saturday® Kids’ Movie and Craft

Audiences:

Adults (21 and up)
Children (9 and under)
Sep 20, 2017
Adults (21 and up)+ | $
Image



Small Business Saturday® - Shop Small®

Audiences:

Adults (21 and up)
Nov 29, 2018
Children (9 and under)+ | $
Image



Small Business Saturday® Craft Fair

Audiences:

Children (9 and under)
Tweens (10-12)
Teens (13-16)
Adults (21 and up)
Intergenerational