Vision to Learn

Cobb County Public Library System

Children

Vision to Learn

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Free

Byline

Tom Brooks, Communications Specialist, Cobb County (Ga.) Public Library System

In Cobb County, officials say about 20 percent of the 50,000 elementary school children alone would fail a vision screening, and about 8,000 will need glasses.

Cobb libraries collaborate with the Atlanta office of the national nonprofit Vision to Learn (VTL) to host vision clinics for low-income communities. VTL provides on-site mobile vision clinics for children. The visits include free vision screenings and eye exams. Kids who get eyeglass prescriptions select free frames, and their new glasses are later delivered.

The VTL events at Cobb libraries were the first at a Georgia public library since the program launched in the state in 2017.

Advanced Planning

Library officials were introduced to VTL by the Learn4Life Metro Atlanta Regional Educational Partnership, which is addressing vision with the Georgia Lions Lighthouse Foundation.

Our chief goal for this program is connecting as many children in need of vision care and glasses as possible to VTL appointments. VTL can serve about 25 children in a six-hour period. Still, the waiting lists exceed the number of available slots.

Another goal is using the VTL visits to elevate vision as a literacy issue for families, educators and community leaders.

Staffing and volunteer support will need to be planned in advance. Our library arranged for one or two people to assist in two- or three-hour shifts.

Marketing

Our initial marketing efforts included listing the VTL events on the library system's calendar and posting fliers at library locations soon after the schedule was confirmed.

The promotional strategy also included e-mails sent to public school leaders in Cobb. The e-mails listed the VTL events and cited Cobb County Public Library's involvement with the Learn4Life regional collaborative.

Cobb County government officials included announcements in e-newsletters, and the county communications department posted a video on a VTL visit. We also sent the information to a Cobb school social worker, who shared it with many Cobb educators.

Media outreach resulted in a front-page article and photographs in the Marietta Daily Journal.

With many in the community now aware of VTL, marketing and media release submissions appear to be welcomed by area media outlets, schools and others.

Budgeting

The summertime 2018 VTL events at Cobb libraries were staged like regular library events without a special budget except for limited flier printing costs.

Day-of-event Activity

The VTL mobile clinic is staged in the library parking lot. An extension cord for electrical service is provided by the library.

At least one library staff member or volunteer assists in signing in the parents or caregivers with the children and accompanying them from the library to the clinic vehicle.

Program Execution

The seven summertime VTL visits at Cobb libraries resulted in 154 eye exams and 119 free eyeglasses and prescriptions. A similar level of results is anticipated for our upcoming spring break and early summer break programs. It is anticipated the total of children receiving free VTL glasses at Cobb libraries will reach 300 by mid-2019.

Feedback is very positive from Cobb families, education officials and community leaders.

A future scenario may involve a celebratory VTL glasses-dispensing event that would include refreshments, signage, balloons and more, like similar events staged at elementary schools across the United States where VTL is based.

Advice

Vision as a surmountable community challenge. Vision events are opportunities for libraries to elevate eyecare as a critical education and literacy issue, partnering with local school districts. I recommend exploring the collective impact approach of the national nonprofit StriveTogether.

Also check out a Johns Hopkins University research study on Vision for Baltimore, a community learning initiative involving Vision to Learn, and a UCLA study of Vision to Learn

It's helpful to find collaborators. The Learn4Life Metro Atlanta Regional Education Partnership is a “cradle-to-career” collaborative of schools, nonprofits and businesses led by an executive committee of officials of the Metro Atlanta Chamber, United Way of Greater Atlanta, Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta and the Atlanta Regional Commission. Moving forward, we will be talking with Learn4Life leaders about strategies for data collection and other ways to improve the partnership. Other collaborators include the Georgia Lions Lighthouse Foundation and the Lions Clubs.

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



More Programs

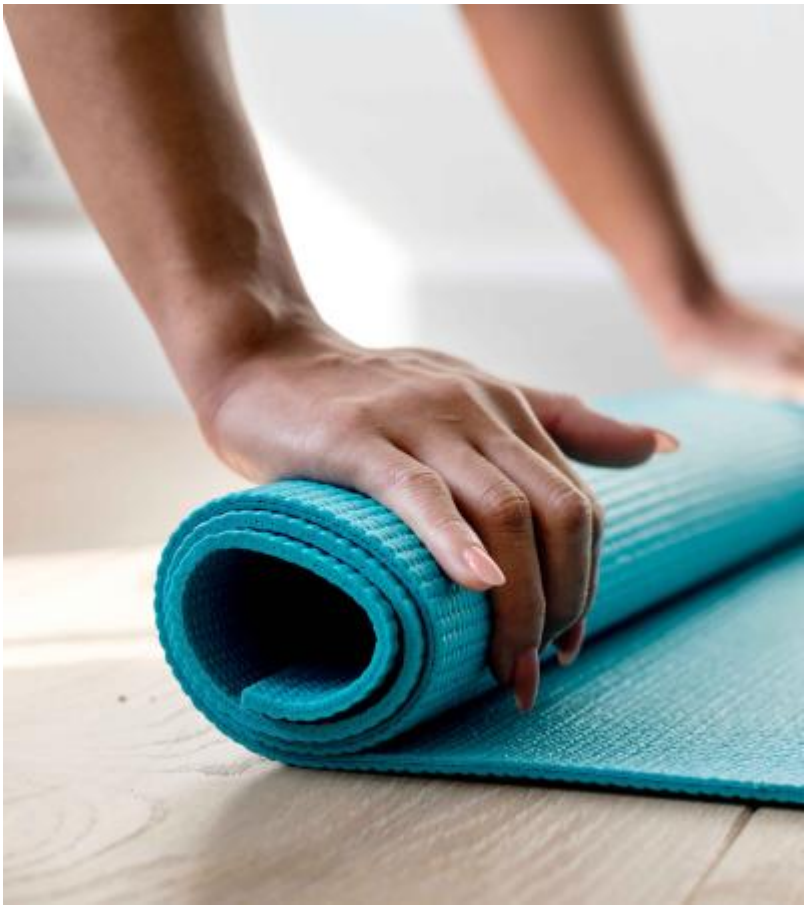
Aug 2, 2018
Young Adult (17 - 20)+ |
Image



Collaborating with Local Businesses

Audiences:

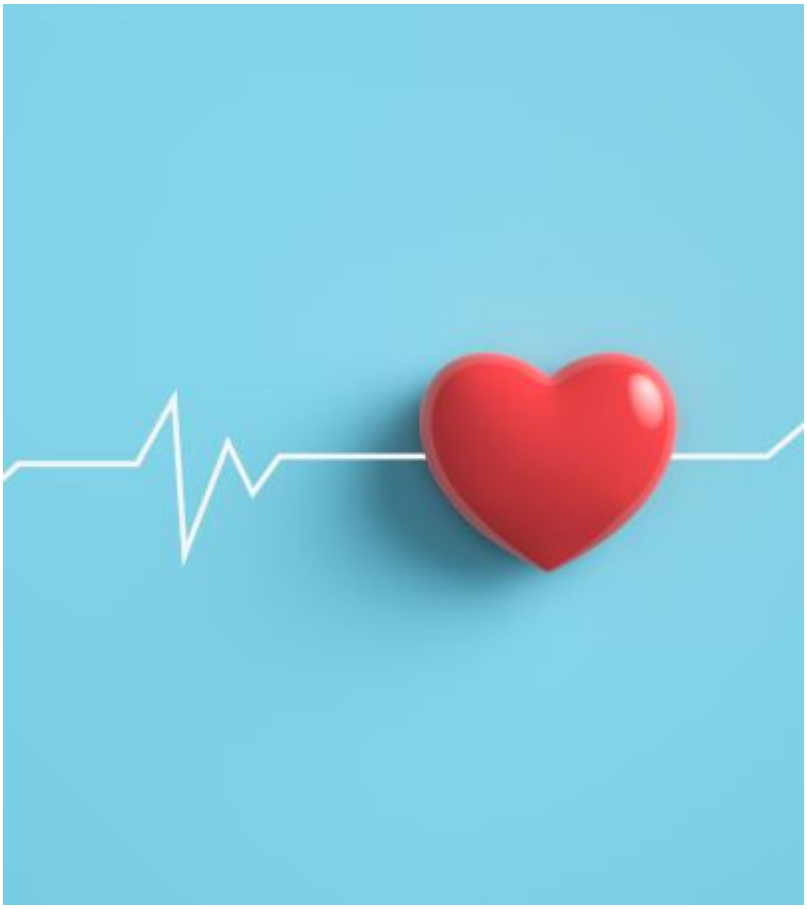
Audience
Young Adult (17 - 20)
Adults (21 and up)
Intergenerational
Aug 15, 2018
Children (9 and under)+ | □□
Image



Health Programs through Partnerships

Audiences:

Audience
Children (9 and under)
Adults (21 and up)
Intergenerational
Mar 7, 2018
Children (9 and under)+ | □□
Image



Family Health and Safety Fair

Audiences:

Children (9 and under)
Tweens (10-12)
Teens (13-16)
Young Adult (17 - 20)
Adults (21 and up)
Intergenerational