Traveling Stanzas: Immigrant Voices

Lakewood Public Library

Children

|

Tweens (10-12)

|

Teens

|

Young Adult

|

Adults

|

Intergenerational

Traveling Stanzas: Immigrant Voices

Apr 11, 2019

$5,000+

$$$
Byline
Molly McGirr Norris, Program Coordinator, Lakewood Public Library

Acknowledging the unique experiences of immigrants in our community, Traveling Stanzas: Immigrant Voices is an interactive exhibit that engages a dialogue through the intimate and inclusive voice of poetry. The exhibit, created with Wicks Poetry Center at Kent State University, includes creative writing tools and activities and incorporates original poetry written by people in our community.

Advanced Planning

The goal of this exhibit and accompanying programming was to highlight the diverse population of Lakewood, which is largely diverse due to its immigrant population.

We started 13 months in advance by bringing in the design firm Each & Every, which works with Wick Poetry Center to create the modular pieces for the exhibit and to plan the components our exhibit would include. We choose to have the exhibit during March and April so we could use the it for National Poetry Month.

We also worked with a teaching artist from Wick Poetry Center to organize workshops through organizations the library had partnered with in the past, including Cuyahoga Community College's Aspire ESOL program, ASIA Inc. and Lakewood City Schools. These workshops — in which immigrants used writing prompts to write about experiences from their childhoods, their home countries and daily life — produced poetry and videos that were used in the exhibit.

We then planned a multigenerational program series that includes 30 programs over a six-month period.

Marketing

We promoted our event in several ways, including a nine-page section of our library's bi-annual program guide. This guide is mailed to 35,000 households in Lakewood and is distributed within the library and by community partners.

We also created a landing page on our website and promoted the exhibit and programming on Facebook and Twitter. Two articles were featured in the Lakewood Observer and the Cleveland Plain Dealer.

The library created printed promotional materials, including posters for individual events, brochures listing all of the programs, and postcards advertising the Grand Opening.

For the Grand Opening, we sent approximately 150 personalized invitations to elected officials, community partners and other organizations. We also emailed local organizations to invite them to use the exhibit as a group for our staffed exhibit times, poetry workshops and for guided tours. This has resulted in over 50 students touring the exhibit with staff.

Budgeting

We kept our programming costs low by incorporating the Immigrant Voices theme into our longstanding program series. For example, we have a performance series that takes places each Sunday afternoon, and we choose to book four of those performances as “Music of American Immigrants” and selected musical performances that are reflective of some historical immigrant populations. This allowed us to execute our theme without adding the additional cost of a separate programming series.

The exhibit itself was funded by the Friends of Lakewood Public Library.

Day-of-event Activity

Docent and technology training was given to our staff so they would be able to answer questions and assist patrons with the exhibit, including the four iPads and one touchscreen.

The iPads run an app called Emerge, which allows participants to create erasure poetry, which then can be printed and displayed in the exhibit. The touchscreen plays video of community members reading and explaining their poetry.

Our reference staff is responsible for the upkeep of the exhibit (e.g., pushing in chairs, basic troubleshooting of the iPads).

Program Execution

Over 125 people of all ages attended the exhibit opening, and supplemental programs have been well received. Patrons passing by the exhibit often remark on its originality and are delighted to find out that the exhibit was constructed using work created by our community.

The exhibit itself has received extremely positive feedback. Visitors comment on how beautiful it is and how excited they are that the library is creating a place for this conversation. A group of local college students has selected to review the exhibit for an assignment for a class on immigration. Attendance for the theme-specific programs has been outstanding.

The most visceral outcome is the positive experience of the people who shared their work. We invited the individuals to read poetry created in the workshops at our Grand Opening. We had a variety of readers, from middle-school to adult, some of whom were born in the United States and others who had immigrated from all over the world. What all participants had in common was a newfound confidence while reading their poetry. The younger participants worked with teachers to practice before the reading, and their dedication to the performance showed. The adults who read showed a sense of accomplishment in reading their poetry in English.

This programming has also strengthened our relationship with our community partners.

Advice

Although we encourage other libraries to consider bringing the Traveling Stanzas exhibit to their own libraries, a similar program could be modeled after this one on a smaller scale. Any library that wanted to use poetry to give a voice to an undeserved group in their community could facilitate outreach programs and use the content created there as a jumping-off point for thematic programming as we did.

One piece of advice: see which groups or community organizations are already utilizing your library to serve the community you would like to reach. The organizers of those groups will likely understand the importance of what you are doing, and together you will be much more successful at accessing people and getting willing and enthusiastic participation.

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

Supporting Materials

Document
traveling-stanzas-immigrant-voices-exhibit.pdf
Document
traveling-stanzas-immigrant-voices-drop-in-storytime.pdf
Document
traveling-stanzas-immigrant-voices-presentation-by-aklilu-demessie.pdf
Document
traveling-stanzas-postcard.pdf
Download this Program as a PDF

- Programming Librarian Facebook Group

Slideshow Images

Image









Image

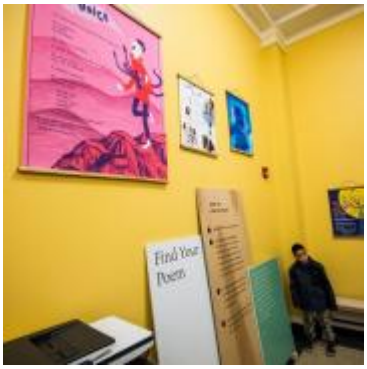








Image









More Programs

Apr 5, 2016
Young Adult (17 - 20)+ | $

Image



Express Yourself, It's Poetry Month!

Audiences:

Audience
Young Adult (17 - 20)
Sep 16, 2015
Adults (21 and up)+ | $
Image



Poetry Matters

Audiences:

Adults (21 and up)
Mar 7, 2018
Adults (21 and up)+ | $$
Image



Financial Literacy Workshops for New Americans

Audiences:

Adults (21 and up)
Intergenerational
Teens (13-16)
Dec 21, 2018
Children (9 and under)+ | $
Image



Community Poet-Tree

Audiences:

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