Fit Lit Book Discussion

Indianapolis Public Library

Adults

Fit Lit Book Discussion

Jun 11, 2020

$501-1000

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Byline

Carri Genovese, Librarian, Indianapolis (Ind.) Public Library

The Fit Lit Book Discussion group is a virtual book group where we discuss a book, listen to a health expert and encourage each other in healthy habits and physical activity.

It includes a monthly Zoom meeting and a Facebook group for encouragement and resource-sharing. The first five people to register for and attend each session will receive a free copy of the book for next month.

Advanced Planning

This program was originally planned to be a walking book group where participants would read a book, meet at the Central Library and discuss it while going for a walk. When that became unsafe due to COVID-19, we decided to transform it to an online program that would encourage fitness. Our programming manager, Melissa Wooton, had already been in talks with the Marion County Department of Health to do something together during this stressful time and decided this would be the perfect fit.

The first month, since the library was closed, we decided to let patrons choose from a themed booklist of available e-materials we called Motivational Memoirs. We coordinated with the Marion County Department of Health on a relevant talk about creating healthy habits, and Katie Buloff in our Communications department created a Facebook group.

After the first month we plan for participants to read a single title, with five lucky patrons receiving a free copy, so we purchased five copies of June's book, which will be "The Body" by Bill Bryson. Two days before the event administrative staff Dallas Simms emailed participants the link to the Zoom meeting.

Marketing

We did not do very much marketing for this initial meeting. We were initially concerned about getting too many people. The event was promoted on the library's website and Facebook page.

Budgeting

A budget of $625 was provided by the Indianapolis Public Library Foundation to purchase books for this program. They are also prepared to ship the books to patrons who do not wish to utilize our curbside service at this time.

Day-of-event Activity

Librarians Mariannne Kruppa and Carri Genovese are the two staff spearheading the program. One unexpected challenge was using the licensed Zoom account. Our administrative expert, Dallas, realized we had to link Carri's personal account to the licensed library Zoom account so she could host the event. In the end, she heroically found a login Carri could use and disaster was averted.

We created an outline of how we thought the event would go and shared it among all the staff who had helped for suggestions. We also prepared a book talk in case participants were shy or unwilling to discuss their books. Tariq Robinson, our adult program development specialist, attended the event as well to lend his support.

Program Execution

Four people showed up, one of whom left relatively quickly after logging in. Library staff described the program, introduced themselves, thanked the Foundation, provided a link to the online program evaluation form and introduced Sara Lukach, the physical activity and wellness coordinator at the Marion County Department of Health.

Sara did a 15 minute presentation titled Scheduling Habits: how to choose, begin and keep with healthy habits. It was engaging and fun. She stuck around for a few questions and then left. At this point we began our book discussion. Only one of the three participants had realized from the event description that she was to read a book from the suggested list.

However, the other two had recently read memoirs that were motivational and were excited to share those. All participants are excited to read "The Body" by Bill Bryson for June.

In the end, we had a small but fun and enthusiastic conversation about the books we'd read and about our healthy and unhealthy habits. Several people have already joined our brand new Facebook group, and eight people have already registered for next month's meeting. We are planning on reaching out to local fitness groups next week to try to increase our reach, since such a small, yet fun and invested, group of patrons participated this time.

Advice

One thing that gave me a lot of peace of mind was being very prepared for people not being willing to talk. Double-checking technology is also very important — if we had not discovered our Zoom issues very early in the day we would have been scrambling.

It is sometimes difficult to straddle the line between writing a clear event description and staying within word count limits. Judging by the fact that two-thirds of our participants did not understand what they were supposed to have read, I have to say we missed that mark. Having someone unfamiliar with the program read the event description and describe the event back to us may have helped with that.

It has been a pleasure to work with the staff at the Marion County Department of Health. They are eager to help and knowledgeable.

If I could give one piece of advice to anyone intimidated by creating a program from scratch it would be to remember that experts at other community organizations are often available and excited to share their resources.

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

Supporting Materials

Document
fit_lit_book_discussion_outline_1.doc
Document
motivational_memoirs_-_book_talk.pdf
Download this Program as a PDF

- Programming Librarian Facebook Group

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Health and Wellness: Worthy of Full-Time Programming

Audiences:

Audience
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Community Engagement: Healthy Living Outreach for Seniors

Audiences:

Intergenerational
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Cooking Matters® Online Grocery Store Tour

Audiences:

Adults (21 and up)
Intergenerational