Daebak, It’s K-Pop

McCracken County Public Library

Teens

Daebak, It’s K-Pop

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$1-50

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Byline

Alaysia Hamilton, Library Assistant, McCracken County Public Library, Paducah, Ky.

The goal of this program was to create a safe place for teens and tweens who are interested in K-Pop (Korean pop music). The program had a dance station, snack station, craft station and language lesson station. We bought snacks from a international supermarket and used our library's partnership with a local dance studio and language center to help staff the event.

Daebak (translates to "awesome"), It’s K-Pop brought so many people together from all over the area. Many participants had expressed they hadn't met any "in real life" friends that liked K-Pop, and this was a wonderful chance for them to meet in person, make connections and have fun.

Advanced Planning

The first step to planning a K-Pop event at the library is to figure out how you would explain K-Pop to a western audience. Some Americans have turned away from the genre because of the language barrier. As Oscar-winning director Bong Joon Ho stated at the 2020 Oscars, "Once you overcome the 1-inch tall barrier of subtitles, you will be introduced to so much more." And it's true! If you are able to move past the language barrier, you will see that K-Pop isn't that different from western music. Not only are you getting a Korean culture awakening/exchange, you are also exposed to a really fun fandom.

Do your research on K-Pop before you start planning the program. Thanks to the internet, we are able to connect with people that live on the other side of the world. Social media is your ticket in to learning about K-Pop! The marketing of this genre is exquisite and they adapt to meet the needs of the fans.

Try to make the unqiue experiences of a K-Pop fan part of your library program. Activities like karaoke, random dance mobs, dinners and celebrations at local coffee shops are just a few examples. Collecting merch is also a huge part of the community. Knowing about these things inspired the activities I provided at the event.

Marketing

I put fliers in and outside the library, at local coffee shops, places like Hot Topic, and anywhere I thought teens would hang out. I invited them while working at the library and sent email invitations to schools and neighboring libraries.

Inviting teens personally worked the best. Everyone that I personally invited showed up. I belong to multiple K-Pop groups on social media and I sent invitations to them. I also found local K-Pop groups via social media and sent invitations there as well. I found a few groups in neighboring states and I actually had a couple families travel from two and four hours away.

The event went on to have an audience of all youth ages. We had littles, about age 5, come in to see what was going on because they heard music, and tweens that

came along with their siblings and didn’t have a clue what K-Pop was. Murray State University is about 45 minutes away from Paducah, and many college students attended as well.

Budgeting

Using materials that you already have will help with budgeting. Thinking of crafts that you can make out of the materials that you already have is a librarian superpower.

For this event, our crafts were K-Pop keychains and bias (favorite member of a group) buttons. The K-Pop keychains were made of beads, string and keyrings. For the bias buttons, we used our button maker and pictures of artists.

We spent roughly $50 at a local international market for snacks.

If your budget allows, an album giveaway would be very popular.

Day-of-event Activity

We divided the room into stations with the dance station set aside as the biggest space. We used a projector to play music videos, which really set the mood of the event. Random Dance is just a mix of popular songs, usually the chorus, and you dance. It plays a huge part at K-Pop events. I wanted the dancing station to be the highlight of the event. There was also a mini choreography lesson, and we had an instructor come from a local dance studio to teach BTS’ Boy with Luv.

The craft station held the materials for the K-Pop keychains and bias buttons. Because merch is such an important thing in this community, I wanted to make our own "unofficial" official merch. Before the event, I made Black Pink, BTS and NCT 127 images that were made to use with the button maker. There are so many groups that it's impossible to have them all. I even thought about having them edit their own button, but after it took me so long to make the images, I knew that I shouldn't.

The snack station was a little "try-it" section for popular Korean snacks.

Partnering with a local language center, we were able to provide a basic 10-15 minute Korean lesson. This consisted of learning greetings and how to introduce yourself.

There was a photo wall for attendees to take photos with their favorite group. I felt like this made up for not including every group in the bias button craft.

With a staff member at the craft station and snack station, we were able to use our community partners from the local dance studio and language center to help staff the event.

Program Execution

I was worried that there weren't going to be enough people that had an interest in K-Pop, but with the help of social media, we are able to connect with music fans across the world and reach new communities!

The choreography and the language lesson were the favorite activities. I was surprised that my teens were comfortable enough to dance around each other. A few coworkers had mentioned that this usual wasn't the norm; that just shows you how different K-Pop fans are! The K-Pop environment encourages self-love and acceptance.

We talked about starting a monthly K-Pop club but, unfortunately, COVID-19 shut us down the following week.

Advice

Make it fun! K-Pop fans just want to meet up and talk about the latest comebacks, new groups and show off their merch!

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at ahamilton@mclib.net.

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Supporting Materials

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- Programming Librarian Facebook Group

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