

Bookish Trailblazers

[Forsyth County Public Library](#)

Adults

|

Intergenerational

Bookish Trailblazers

Jun 24, 2022

Free

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Byline

Jessica Doss, Forsyth County Public Library, Cumming, Ga.

Bookish Trailblazers is a monthly outdoor book club dedicated to bringing nature and adventure to patrons. Through the program, we seek to encourage patrons to spend more time outdoors, to appreciate and learn about nature through books, and to exercise.

Advanced Planning

I began planning this book club about two months before the start date. Planning included gathering a list of books, creating promotional materials, contacting our parks and recreation department about reserving the pavilion, and alerting our materials department about purchasing more copies of the selected books.

Because our book clubs are popular among senior residents, I took into account physical accessibility and chose a pavilion that was easy to access from both the parking lot and the walking trail. I also chose Tuesday mornings as a meeting time because the park is quiet in the mornings and during the summer months the temperature is typically still comfortable for walking.

I requested patrons register so I could easily notify them of any changes, particularly during the winter months when we brought the book club inside due to low temperatures.

Marketing

The book club was highlighted on our website, on our social media platforms, and in our library newsletters as well as on bookmarks that were distributed throughout the two branches closest to the park. I created the logo in Canva using their provided graphics.

Budgeting

There was no cost for this program.

Day-of-event Activity

For the first few meetings, I set up directional signs on the park's main road, guiding patrons to the pavilion where the book club was being held. After we received a few calls from patrons who were having trouble locating the pavilion, I began to include [a map of the park with the pavilion circled on the book club's event page.](#)

The very first meeting featured our Bookmobile, which parked in the lot right in front of the pavilion, to attract people to the area. We do walk and then return to the pavilion to discuss the book. On the walk, we have casual conversations, but we save discussions about the reading for when we are all sitting together so everyone has a chance to listen in and to participate.

We always have at least two staff members present for any program held outside of the library. Not only is the buddy system with outdoor activities a good idea for safety reasons, but we've also found that having an additional staff member present enables us to break into smaller discussion groups when appropriate.

I brought a "We'll be back!" sign to display on the table under the pavilion to indicate to latecomers that the group would be back shortly after the walk around the park.

Program Execution

Two patrons attended the first meeting. We now have a loyal group of regular attendees, making the average attendance three to five patrons. Those who attend love that the program is outside and enjoy the walking part.

The nonfiction books lead to interesting discussions, and everyone enjoys hearing each other's experiences or knowledge about the subjects behind the books. There has never been a dull conversation! Most of the regular attendees have experience in outdoor recreation so they enjoy the contents of the books.

We have received great feedback from patrons. One said she wished more people would read the books we read, like "[Spirit Run: A 6,000-Mile Marathon Through North America's Stolen Land](#)" by Noé Álvarez, to "become more aware of what is happening in the world and put more thought into the everyday choices they make."

A few patrons have expressed interest in the book club but are concerned about the walking part. We always stress that walking is not a requirement for the book club and that they are more than welcome to attend and remain at the pavilion while the group walks. We also encourage patrons who are interested but have not read the book to still attend.

Advice

Make sure you allow enough time for the walk (about 10-15 minutes) and the discussion. I found that an hour is enough time, but occasionally the meeting ran over by 15 or 20 minutes. I also waited five minutes after the start time to allow time for people to arrive.

When selecting books, I try to select those with diverse authors. I also select books based on monthly themes, if possible. For example, for Black History Month in February, we read "[The Unlikely Thru-Hiker](#)" by Derick Lugo. I also select shorter books around the holidays in November and December when people tend to have less free time.

Have a back-up plan in place in case the weather is unfavorable. I keep an eye on the weather the week leading up to each meeting and if the weather doesn't look good, I notify registered patrons the day before about the location change. I move the meeting inside when it's raining, when the temperature is below 50 degrees, or when the temperature is above 90 degrees.

Supporting Materials

Document

[bookmark.pdf](#)

Document

[reading_list.pdf](#)

Document

[events_page.pdf](#)

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- Feedback (Coming Soon!)
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Adults (21 and up)+ | \$\$\$

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Audiences:

Adults (21 and up)

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Unlazy River

Audiences:

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