Haunted Library

George Reynolds Branch of the Boulder Public Library

Children

|

Tweens (10-12)

Haunted Library

Sep 26, 2023

$501-1000

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Byline
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On the Sunday before Halloween every year, the George Reynolds Branch Library is taken over by the Haunted Library for two fun-filled hours in an open house-style program.

We have fun and spooky activity stations throughout the entirety of the library. Activities include crafts, Bobbing for Donuts, Not-So-Spooky Storytime, face painting, candy guessing game, Spooky Photo Booth, Slime Walk (like a cake walk, but you win slime), Monster Bowling, Spooky Creatures and more! Each station has a treat or a prize to give out to participants.

Advanced Planning

The whole staff contributes to our plan for Haunted Library. The main goal is community engagement and to help the community foster a love of the library and feel more connected to it. The program has grown every year since 2014 and now the community expects and looks forward to it.

We start by planning the stations and then we plan the budget for each station. We have hired a professional face painter and local animal educators to bring animals for the event. However, when we started, we did everything ourselves, or our Teen Advisory Group (TAG) did. In fact, it was TAG that first suggested we "haunt the library" as a program for families.

Preparation is done throughout the year at Staff Meetings but also while on or off the desk to come up with the budget requests. Closer to October, around July or August, I ask staff at other locations if they would like to be a storyteller or help with Haunted Library in any capacity to bring in the entire library system. Finally, we map out and schedule everything.

Marketing

The program is included in our quarterly program booklet. We display flyers throughout the library and use digital signs that are in all the libraries of BPL. We also advertise through the local school district’s monthly email sent to all parents in the district.

On the day of Haunted Library, we place an inflatable lawn Halloween decoration (a stack of pumpkins) outside in a place that is easily seen from the road. Our biggest marketing is word of mouth and the longevity of the program.

Budgeting

Since the program is so large, it started with a $300 budget from the Boulder Library Foundation. With that funding, we purchased candy to hand out, donuts and string for Bobbing for Donuts, paper bags to decorate with Halloween stickers, cupcakes for a cupcake walk, face paint and fake spider webs for decoration. Because it has grown so much, this year the budget is $1,000 and includes a professional photo booth, a reptile educator and a professional face-painter. We negotiated a cheaper price with the photo booth company and offered to use their logo on our promotional materials.

We will also have three crafts that use supplies that are in storage and some supplies we need to purchase. We have changed the Cupcake/Slime Walk to a Truth or Scare game which uses a prize wheel that we already have. The other large purchase is the candy to hand out to Haunted Library participants.

For cost-cutting ideas, enlist your Teen Advisory Group to help design and run the program instead of paying for a professional face painter. Use an iPad or other tablet for a photo booth and use a standard photo printer to print out the photos.

Day-of-event Activity

We have four to six staff members and two to four volunteers to help with set up, clean up and keep things running smoothly. Again, this program takes over the entire 3,000 square feet of the library except for the computer area. There are stations near the stacks and in the Children’s Area as well as the Meeting Room.

It usually takes about thirty to forty-five minutes for set-up, especially if using fake spider webs as décor. Each station has at least one staff member/volunteer in charge of that station, even if it’s being staffed by a paid performer. This person ensures that things are going smoothly and also gives out the treat/prize that is available at that station to all participants.

The first year we tried to do everything in the Meeting Room but it was far too loud and crowded, which is why the Branch Manager felt it needed to move into the library.

Program Execution

Haunted Library’s attendance has grown from year to year. What started out as a TAG initiative was carried on by the staff when TAG hibernated because of how beloved the program is. This program has grown from attracting about 50 people the first year we did it to over 250 people last year. and almost all of them came in costume — even the adults! Staff also came in costume, which participants enjoyed.

Since it is an Open House style program, we don’t have the entire attendance in the library at the same time – otherwise, we wouldn’t fit. Some participants go around the library several times, participating in different stations more than once, and that’s great! Each station gives either candy, a spider ring or slime to participants. One of the crafts is usually a paper bag which they can decorate and use to hold their goodies.

Each year, we have a debrief meeting where Haunted Library’s program coordinator asks staff during a staff meeting, or individually as time permits, what worked, what didn’t work and suggestions for improvement. We learn something new every year that could have worked better. All feedback we’ve received about the program has been positive from the participants. In fact, they start asking in late August/early September if we’re doing it again this year. This feedback and anticipation show us that we are reaching our goals of community engagement and library ownership.

Advice

Designating one person to be the program coordinator has worked the best for our small library.

We've found it best to have one staff member/volunteer greeting everyone who comes into the library to welcome, explain what’s going on and tell participants where all the stations are. That’s especially important if your library has more than one level, so the participants can find everything you have to offer.

It’s important to find a quieter place for the Not-So-Spooky stories so that the storyteller(s) will not lose their voice by the end of their reading time as this is a very loud and boisterous program, although we are trying to combat that with a microphone and sound system this year.

Last year, the staff was frustrated by the Photo Booth’s photo printer. It was a portable photo printer and was slow during printing and tended to malfunction. We decided to hire a photo booth professional this year.

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

Supporting Materials

Document
haunted_library_2023_.pdf
Download this Program as a PDF

- Programming Librarian Facebook Group

Slideshow Images





Image



More Programs

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Young Adult (17 - 20)+ | □□
Image



Boooooks and Eeks-hibits

Audiences:

Audience

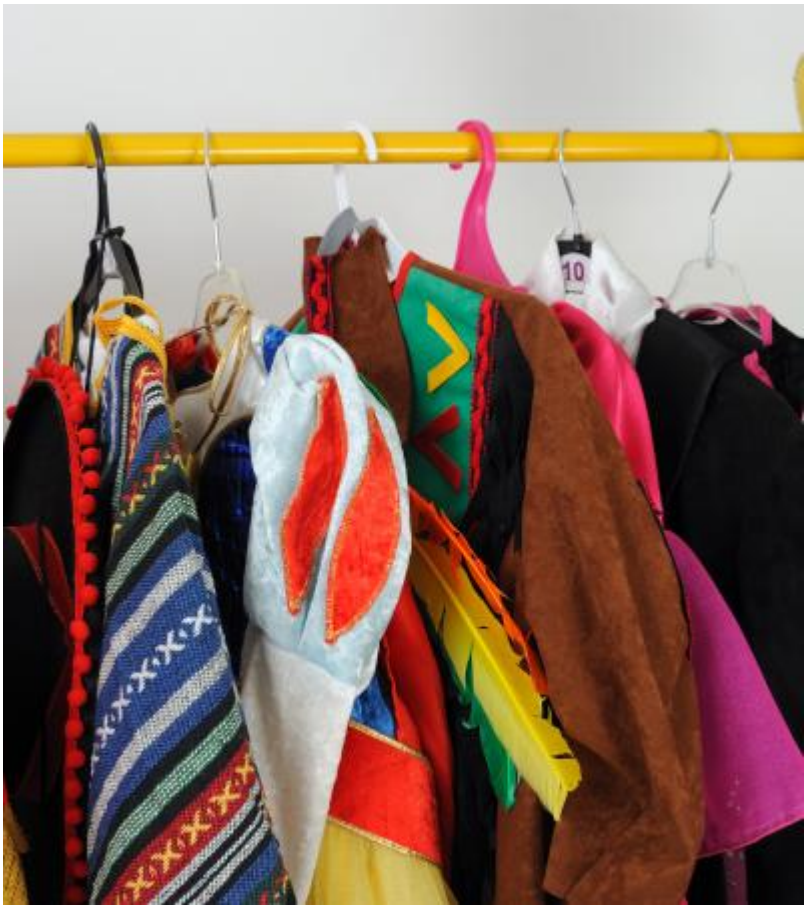
Young Adult (17 - 20)
Adults (21 and up)
Oct 15, 2021
Children (9 and under)+ |
Image



Halloween Craft Video Round-up

Audiences:

Audience
Children (9 and under)
Teens (13-16)
Mar 24, 2015
Children (9 and under)+ | $
Image



Great Halloween Costume Swap

Audiences:

Children (9 and under)
Young Adult (17 - 20)
Intergenerational