Drive-In Movie Night

Dedham Public Library

Children

Drive-In Movie Night

Aug 30, 2024

$1-50

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Byline

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Cruise to the library in your hotrod for an old-fashioned drive-in movie! For the first half hour, kids had the chance to decorate their own cardboard box car before "parking" for showtime.

Advanced Planning

My goal for this program was to provide a fun, family-friendly event that was relatively simple in concept but allowed the kids to be creative and spend time with their grown-ups.

I began planning this summer event during the spring to ensure it was on all our summer marketing and could be adequately marketed. The more in-depth work happened in the two weeks prior to the event. My program manager helped me collect boxes, but I did the rest of the work for this program.

I first made sure we had enough large boxes for each child that registered. I cut a door into each box using a box cutter and also prepared a Ziploc for each car containing four smaller paper plates (about 6 in) for wheels and one larger plate for the steering wheel. The biggest challenge was sourcing enough boxes that were large enough for the kids to sit in and checking in with local stores and Facebook Marketplace for potential leads.

Marketing

We included this event on our Summer Reading calendar which was distributed to elementary schools and available to patrons at the library. We also featured this program on our social media rotation on Facebook and Instagram and had physical fliers on display outside the children's room. The posts got a decent amount of positive attention.

Budgeting

We didn't need much of a budget for this program. We used boxes we already had or that we sourced from donations. All the decorating supplies were materials we already had on hand. The only associated cost was for two big bags of popcorn from a grocery store.

Day-of-event Activity

On the day of this event, I moved all the boxes into the children's room and set them along a wall for the kids to pick from. We don't have a separate programming space, but luckily evenings are usually light on foot traffic (we held this program from 5:30 to 7:30).

I set all the items we needed to decorate our cars onto the tables: coloring materials (crayons, markers, fast-dry paint sticks), decorative supplies (stickers, die-cut letters/numbers, colored/patterned paper, fancy duct tape, etc), and functional tools (safety scissors, glue sticks, round head fasteners for the wheels and steering wheel).

I loaded up the movie so it was ready to go. A teen volunteer helped fill small popcorn bags with popcorn, which were set out next to juice boxes for use during the movie. Beyond the teen volunteer, I was the only staff member needed for this program.

Program Execution

For the first half hour, children were invited to decorate their cars. They could move freely among the supplies and use what they wanted. After the first half hour the kids 'parked' their cars in front of the TV. I provided our storytime cushions for the kids to put inside their cars and sit on.

They were provided a juice box, a bag of popcorn, and a napkin. From there I turned the movie on and let it play. I left the supplies out so that kids could continue to work on their car during the movie if they so choose.

Unfortunately, a couple of hours before I held this program, there was a severe rain and thunderstorm. It ended a little before the program began but I think it really impacted our attendance. However, the families who did come had a great time and were thrilled that they were allowed to take their cars home.

Advice

My biggest advice for this program is to just have fun with it! I made a display car using a smaller box but only half-decorated it. There are lots of great tips on how to make different cars online and lots of things you could add (license plates, driver's licenses for the kids, taped-off spots for each car to park in) to make it unique.

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

Supporting Materials

Video file
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- Programming Librarian Facebook Group

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