Library @ Crossroads: Free Book Giveaway at the Farmers Market

Takoma Park Maryland Library

Intergenerational

Library @ Crossroads: Free Book Giveaway at the Farmers Market

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$1,001-2,500

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Byline

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Takoma Park Maryland Library acquired 500 brand-new Spanish, English and bilingual books to give to community members. We had books for babies, children, teens and adults.

In partnership with the Crossroads Farmers Market, which serves the cities of Takoma Park and Langley Park, we organized a free book distribution for market visitors. We distributed 400 books, serving 200 people (two books per person).

We stocked up on Spanish and bilingual picture books but were pleasantly surprised when older readers asked for more books en español.

Advanced Planning

Goals:

1. To promote book ownership.
2. To reach an underserved community (Hispanic/Latino and/or Spanish-speaking people) where they usually gather, instead of asking them to come to us.

Partners:

1. Crossroads Food Network, who organize the Crossroads Farmers Market every Wednesday from 10:30 AM - 2:30 PM. 89% of market visitors are Spanish-speakers.
2. Yard Dramas is an arts organization that we collaborate with to present an interactive, outdoor storytime program at this same farmers market. The facilitator planned lessons around local community helpers and the role of libraries before the book giveaway.

Planning Stages:

1. The relationship with these partners has been developed over the past three years.
2. We started planning the details of this giveaway in April, 3.5 months before the event.
3. We finalized purchasing books and collecting all donations by mid-June, one month before the event.
4. We sent a call for volunteers by mid-June, one month before the event.
5. Since this program happened outdoors, we had to use the rain date because of the extreme heat on the original date of July 17. The market opens rain or shine but we moved the event to July 24, when temperatures were more bearable for staff and volunteers.

Marketing

We created flyers (that we printed in-house) and promoted via listservs and social media. However, the bulk of participants were regular market visitors. The market receives an average of 230 visitors weekly, and we served 200 people with the book giveaway. A built-in audience is the beauty of this program!

Budgeting

Books for giveaway: $1,100.00
Flyers: $200.00

We used Scholastic Literacy Partnerships and we got 325 books at about $3.40 each.

The rest of the books were donations collected over two years. The Friends of the TPML organize book sales twice a year to raise funds for our programs. They ask community members to donate books and they let us get what we need from their lot.

We printed two-sided, full-color bilingual flyers with general information about our library. We placed these inside each book.

Day-of-event Activity

Prep Day Set Up (a day or two before the event, two hours):

1. Volunteers (five people) sorted books per category (board books, picture books, chapter books, YA, comics, or adults).
2. Placed flyers inside each book.
3. Packed and counted the books.

Day-of-Event Run Down (event runs from 10:30 AM - 2:30 PM):

1. Staff (four people) met at the library at 8:30 AM to pack and then head to the market.
2. Volunteers (four people) arrived on their own at the market.
3. Arrive at the market by 9:30 AM.
4. Set up two tents, three tables and six chairs.
5. We filled the tables with books (placed books with the cover facing up for easy browsing) and restocked them as needed.
6. Distributed two books per person present, no questions asked until 2:30 PM.
7. Clean up.
8. Volunteers were dismissed at 3:00 PM.
9. Staff head back to the library.

Program Execution

We distributed 400 books (of 500). At two books per person, we served 200 people! Comics and graphic novels were very popular and, unsurprisingly, the first ones to go.

We had stocked up on Spanish and bilingual picture books but were pleasantly surprised when older elementary school-aged kids, teens, and adults were asking for more books en español. We'll make sure to bring plenty more next year.

Advice

Partners: Collaborate with an existing farmers market that serves your target audience.

Planning: Definitely have a rain date and ask volunteers if they're available for both when they sign up. Rain and extreme heat have both affected some of our programs at the farmers market.

Advocacy: Consider using data from Scholastic's Home Libraries report to advocate for a similar program if needed. We added a quote from it in our flyer.

Volunteers: Teens make great volunteers for this program! Volunteers can get a book to take home as a token of appreciation.

Getting Books: Consider supporting a local bookstore and getting hardcovers. Last year, I asked a local bookstore to sell me as many books as they could for $3,000 focusing on books in Spanish or bilingual, by Latina/e/o authors, and/or Latina/e/o themes (I asked for this because of my target audience so you can ask accordingly). I got about 250 books with that budget. Hardcovers are nicer than paperbacks, especially for younger readers and they feel more special. We distributed one book per person instead of the two paperbacks we did this year, so we still served a couple hundred participants.

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

Supporting Materials

Document
Call for Volunteers + Flyer Library at Crossroads.pdf
Document
Report Library at Crossroads 2024.pdf
Download this Program as a PDF

- Programming Librarian Facebook Group

More Programs

Feb 7, 2024
Young Adult (17 - 20)+ | $$
Image



The Book Crawl

Audiences:

Young Adult (17 - 20)
Adults (21 and up)
Oct 3, 2023
Intergenerational+ | □□
Image



Community Displays

Audiences:

Intergenerational
Aug 25, 2023
Intergenerational+ | $$$
Image



Summer Sidewalk Poetry Competition

Audiences:

Intergenerational