Cryptid Hunt

Montgomery-Floyd Regional Library

Children

|

Tweens (10-12)

Cryptid Hunt

Oct 31, 2024

$1-50

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Byline

Sally Stauffer, Bookmobile Manager, Montgomery-Floyd Regional Library, Christiansburg, Va.

Bigfoot and his friends visited a local public park and took over the playground! Patrons were invited to hunt them down in a scavenger hunt to earn a special sticker, tattoo and a custom coloring book.

Advanced Planning

Pre-Planning: I began planning this event a year ago, after accepting the position as Bookmobile Manager. Having done something much smaller but similar with hiding Mothman in the J-Fic/J-Nonfic section of the first library I worked in, I had an idea and experience to grow on.

Active Planning: I began putting together the materials (drawing the cryptids, gathering information, and putting together the coloring book) in September. I used Procreate on my iPad to draw the cryptids and Canva to put together all the materials. Before the event on the 27th, I printed 100 copies of the coloring book, 100 checklists, and a plethora of Halloween and autumn-themed coloring pages and puzzles.

How to Hunt: I created two different ways to hunt the cryptids:

1. The Checklist - the easiest method. The checklist has matching images of the hidden laminated cutouts, you just have to check the box beside the picture.
2. The Coloring Book - this coloring book has a page of information about each of the 12 cryptids, but one word is missing on each page. This word is on the cutouts that are being hunted, and the player has to fill in the words to finish the book (which has black and white pictures of the cryptids as well to color). I also printed a few copies of the version without the missing words, for any younger kids who wanted the book but couldn't fill it in.

This gives the players some variety that takes into account age, skill level, and interest. For older (upper-elementary) kids, I offered two prizes for completing the book, but only one for doing the checklist. I called the book 'Hard Mode' and the checklist 'Easy Mode' for them, posing it as a challenge, which most kids gladly took me up on.

Location, Location, Location: I had several parks in mind when planning this, but the top of my list was the Hand-in-Hand Playground in Blacksburg. I reached out to the town Parks & Recreation Center, who were overjoyed to partner with the library for the event. I met with the head of the department, who gave me a tour of the playground and helped advertise the event.

Prizes: Stickers and temporary tattoos were ordered from Amazon a month in advance. That was surprisingly the biggest issue: finding family-friendly sticker packs and tattoos that also featured more than only Bigfoot or Mothman.

Goals: My goal for this program was to create an outreach program that matched the Halloween season, caught the interest of children of all ages, and taught them about the weird, wonderful world of cryptids.

Marketing

A month before the event I began marketing it through the bookmobile's Facebook page, as well as sending flyers and handouts to all four of the libraries in our system. I also had flyers at every bookmobile stop in late September/all of October and used two cryptid plushies I had to draw attention when out and about.

Blacksburg Parks & Recreation also posted flyers around the park to inform visitors of the event. At a library Trunk-or-Treat event two weeks before I had a simplified version set up in the library courtyard, as well as handouts for the proper event on the 27th. It was wildly successful, despite being very simple, with a whopping 115 kids completing the hunt. Many who came to the Trunk-or-Treat took flyers and came to the full event on the 27th.

Budgeting

The cost of the program was minimal, amounting to around $20 for the prizes. Everything else including the handouts, laminated cryptids, etc., I created myself.

Day-of-event Activity

I arrived at the park with the bookmobile at noon. The event was slated to run from 1:00 - 5:00. There were a handful of families at the park as I set up, including some very interested students from a private school I regularly visit!

The Cryptids: I taped twelve laminated cryptids around the playground, all within a fenced-in area. I made sure they were visible from the ground and that they were easily accessible to make sure everyone could find them. None were hidden within tunnels or in hard-to-reach places. I spaced them apart, kept them away from high-

traffic areas where little hands were likely to pull them down, and made sure the tape stuck where it was supposed to.

I posted two flyers by the two main entrances to the park, designed as 'warnings' about the cryptids visiting, and asking visitors not to touch them ("they like to nibble!"), and to come to the Bookmobile if they were curious about the visitors. This prevented older kids from messing with the cryptids, and let parents of toddlers/younger kids know there was an event going on and why there were random pictures taped to the equipment. None of the laminated figures were stolen or messed with!

The Bookmobile: The bookmobile was parked across from the main entrance to the playground, beside the main walking path. I set up two tables: one with the Cryptid Hunt information, check sheets, coloring pages, and prizes, and the other with free books, coloring sheets, and puzzles. All of the books were either weeded or donations, and free for patrons to take and keep. Patrons/visitors were also able to come onboard the bookmobile and check out any books they wanted, as long as they had a library card. Before the event, I stocked up on J-Nonfic books about cryptids (Bigfoot, Loch Ness Monster, etc., anything from the 001.944 section), almost all of which were checked out by the end of the event.

Program Execution

In total, 181 visitors interacted with the event by speaking with me, playing the scavenger hunt, picking up books and coloring sheets, and checking out books. Having only expected 30 to 50 people, I was pleasantly surprised (and a bit frantic) at the high turnout! Fortunately, I am an eternal optimist when it comes to programming, and I had enough checklists and coloring books for all the visitors.

Pros:
-Large turnout
-Kids and adults alike were interested in the subject of cryptids, and I had several adults complete the scavenger hunt without their kids, or with their infants
-Kids were over the moon with the hunt being large enough to take up the full playground and worked together with friends and strangers alike to complete the list. Several older kids took over helping younger ones find the cryptids they were

missing - it was adorable!
-Over half of the attending kids/families came from church trunk-or-treats and were in costume
-I was able to geek out about cryptids, folklore, and the importance of oral traditions with kids and adults of all ages!

Cons:
-One person was not enough for the large turnout - I worked it by myself and while everything went great, it would have been easier with a second person.
-The Wampus Cat cutout was taped above a sign that was flush with the wall behind it and ended up falling and vanishing into the crack. Luckily I was able to print the picture from the Bookmobile and replace it when there was a lull.

Advice

1. Scavenger hunts are a HUGE draw for kids of all ages - they love them! Themed or not, they're a great program for engagement.
2. Cryptids are hot. There's a rising interest in them, take advantage of it! Especially around the spooky season.
3. Don't reinvent the wheel unless you have time. I did 99% of the artwork myself because I couldn't find good pictures, or generate good images with the Canva AI. If your scavenger hunt isn't niche enough to need a coloring-book-style image of a Snallygaster, use clipart. It's a lot less stressful!
4. Reach out to local parks, public landholders, etc., about using their spaces. I now have a standing invitation to do programming with the Hand-in-Hand Playground, and the P&R director in Blacksburg is excited to see what else we can do together!
5. Have fun with it!

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

Supporting Materials

Document
Cryptid Scavenger Hunt.pdf
Document

My Little Book of Cryptids.pdf
Document
THERE ARE CRYPTIDS ABOUT!.pdf
Download this Program as a PDF

- Programming Librarian Facebook Group

Slideshow Images







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Audiences:

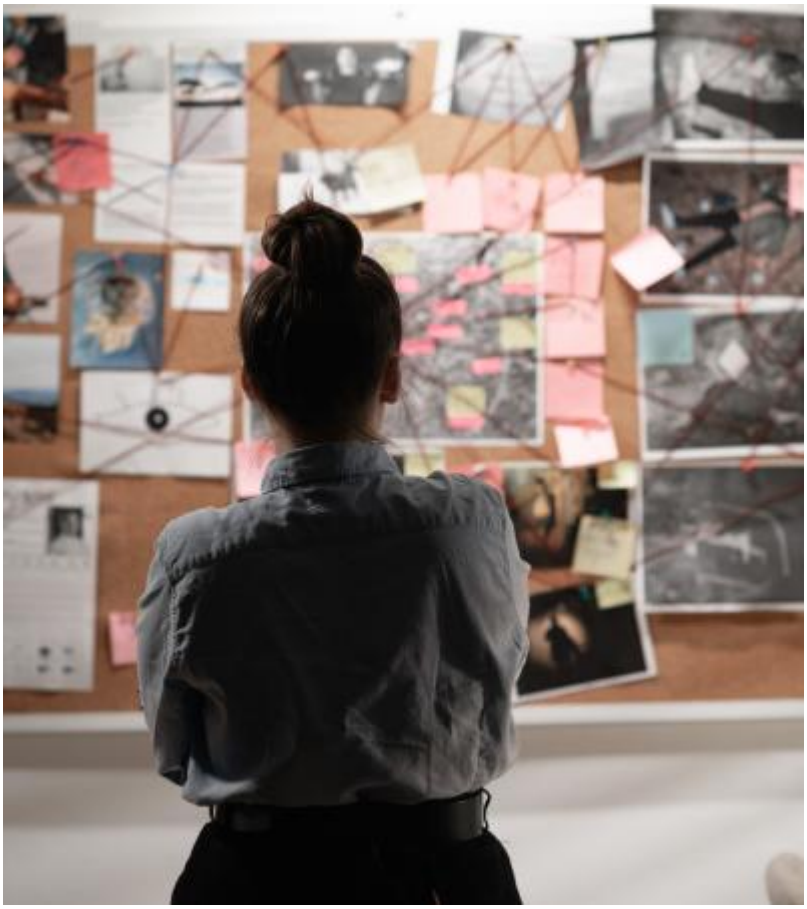
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The Oregon Trail: A You Choose Adventure

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