

Great Halloween Costume Swap

[Peters Township Public Library](#)

Children

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Young Adult

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Intergenerational

Great Halloween Costume Swap

Mar 24, 2015

\$1-50

\$

Byline

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The Great Halloween Costume Swap is a free annual event run by volunteers from the library's GO Green Club. Gently used Halloween costumes and accessories for all ages are collected at the library by GO Green Club members. Participants are given

a token for each donation. They return to the library for the swap, and in exchange for their tokens, they select costumes from among the donations. Any leftover items are donated to a local nonprofit community service organization for their annual Halloween party.

Advanced Planning

The library's GO Green Club came up with the idea to participate in National Costume Swap Day in 2013. Our goal was to encourage the community to swap their slightly used costumes to save resources, packaging, transportation costs and money. With a core group of only seven members, we publicized the swap, collected and sorted costumes, displayed them in a large meeting room and assisted participants the day of the swap.

One challenge we have encountered is people trying to drop off costumes at the library outside of the designated collection times. Storage was an issue, so we could not accept items at alternative times, nor did we want library staff members dealing with donations. We have handled this challenge by adding an evening collection date. We also learned to review other community calendars before selecting a swap date. For example, our local school district was not in session the Friday preceding the 2014 swap. This caused an issue since some families take advantage of long weekends to travel out of town. In the future, we will be consulting the school calendar before selecting a date.

Marketing

Promotion of this event began approximately 30 days in advance.

- A press release was emailed to local media contacts.
- A poster-size display was placed in the library lobby.
- A letter-size flier was created and posted throughout the library. The flier was also reduced in size, and copies were printed and placed in several locations in the library for patrons to take as a reminder of the dates and details.

- An e-newsletter was sent to over 2,000 library subscribers in 2013 and over 6,000 subscribers in 2014.
- Our local school district sent an email announcing the swap to parents, and info was posted on the library Facebook/Twitter accounts.
- We were interviewed both years for feature articles about the swap, which were later printed in a large Pittsburgh newspaper.
- The library's popular local cable TV program "Book Buzz" highlighted the swap details during their October broadcast.
- The event was also posted on several free online event calendars in the area.
- The staff in the children's department announced the event to parents attending children's programs.

Budgeting

Total cost for this program was about \$25. Any paper materials needed were printed in-house using the library copier and paper. Two posters outlining the swap guidelines were printed at a local copy shop for under \$20. Two bags of spider rings, purchased at a dollar store, served as tokens for each costume donated.

Day-of-event Activity

For each day costumes are collected, two large tables were set up in the library lobby. One was used to register participants for the swap, record their donations, and give a token for each costume brought in. The second large table was used to collect the costumes. Our volunteers picked up the costumes from the second table and took them to another room to be sorted by size and stored until the day of the swap.

The evening before the swap, we set up large tables in our meeting room to display costumes, sorted by size. A volunteer made large signs out of recycled cardboard showing the sizes on each table. Adult costumes were displayed on hangers and hung on a coat rack in the room. We attempted to match donated accessories with costumes, but we still had one table filled with assorted hats, wigs, capes, etc., so we allowed participants to choose one each to take.

Full-length mirrors were leaned against the walls in a few places. A table to “check out” -- trade their token for their costume -- was placed near the door. We decorated the walls with Halloween decorations.

Program Execution

Our goals for the Great Halloween Costume Swap were achieved. The day of the swap, participants were given a number as they arrived and were directed to our Family Activity Center (an area with books, toys and games) to wait until their number was called to enter. Depending on the size of the family, we were generally able to allow 10 families into the room at a time. They made their selections and checked out with their tokens. Then we would allow the next 10 families in. In 2013, 46 families participated and donated 139 costumes. In 2014, 31 families participated and donated 90 costumes.

Feedback was very positive. Our volunteers kept the costumes organized and arranged neatly in the room, and they helped participants find items or sizes. Most of our helpers were adults, although we did have a mother and her two teen children volunteer. This would be an excellent program for teens looking for a community service project. All families that donated returned to the swap and found costumes. We did have a few people who only wished to donate costumes and not participate in the swap portion, as their children were grown.

Advice

Select a weekend early in October before people start shopping for new costumes. Choose a date that does not conflict with other activities or holidays in your community. Get the word out early so families can collect their donations. If possible, collect costumes over a couple of days with daytime and evening collection hours. Give everyone a copy of the swap guidelines when they register so they understand how the event will work. Solicit adult and teen volunteers to help.

Be prepared for a crush of people at the beginning of the swap, but control the crowds and chaos by allowing only a limited number of people at a time into the swap room. Collect phone contact numbers as people register for the swap; this is

helpful to call no-shows as you prepare to conclude the swap. Find a community group or nonprofit organization that will be happy to have any costumes or accessories leftover from your swap. Take photos during the event to use for publicity in marketing the swap in the future.

Supporting Materials

Document

[green halloween flyer2013.pdf](#)

Document

[Guidelines for swap.pdf](#)

Document

[press release Great Halloween Costume Swap Oct 4 and 5 2013.pdf](#)

[Download this Program as a PDF](#)

- Feedback (Coming Soon!)
- [Programming Librarian Facebook Group](#)

Slideshow Images



Image



More Programs

Mar 19, 2015

Young Adult (17 - 20)+ | \$

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Zombie Prom

Audiences:

Young Adult (17 - 20)

Mar 24, 2015

Young Adult (17 - 20)+ | \$

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Ghost Hunting at the Library

Audiences:

Young Adult (17 - 20)

Adults (21 and up)