Remember When StoryTime

Westerville Public Library

Intergenerational

Remember When StoryTime

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Byline

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"Remember When" StoryTime is an interactive storytime for older adults designed to get them engaged in sharing their own stories and memories. Each month is based on a different theme and includes stories, songs, pictures and props. Topics have included holidays, fashion, pets, school and family/home. I tend to coordinate themes with holidays -- for example, I might do a storytime about moms for Mothers Day. A few times a year we talk about travel, and we discuss a specific country. I even have little passports for them, and we stamp them.

Advanced Planning

I had two main goals when planning this program. The first was to create a program that got the older adults involved, engaged in listening and hopefully sharing information about themselves. The second was to make our outreach department and library more visible in these communities. If they cannot come to us for programs, we will go to them!

I started planning this program a few months in advance, first by contacting the activity directors at the facilities to see who would be interested, then by planning my first storytime theme. From there, I scheduled specific days I would do the program. One of the biggest challenges I've faced is that some places do not want to try it, even though I think their residents would benefit from the stimulation and conversation.

Of course, you have to give some thought in advance to your theme for the month. Sensitivity is important; I did one storytime about World War II, which was difficult because it brought up bad memories for some people. The holidays are usually fun and easy, and it's fun to sing holiday songs. I also did a storytime about entertainment, and I played old TV show theme songs for them to guess. For a storytime about mothers, I show them pictures of famous television moms to guess. I try to find music for each topic, preferably older songs that they would know. Their favorite by far was "Take Me Home, Country Roads" by John Denver. So many people sang along.

Marketing

I started promotion as soon as I was able. I started by contacting the senior facilities where we deliver materials through our outreach services. At first, there were only a few interested, but now I go to eight facilities each month. Once they agree to do the program, it is up to the facility's activity director to promote and put it on their monthly calendar. Overall, that arrangement is successful, but some facilities are better at promoting and gathering people than others.

Budgeting

The only costs I have are printing the stories I read, the lyrics we sing and the pictures I use for each story. (I put them on construction paper and laminate them.) I also use an iPod and iPod player for the songs. It is a fairly low-cost program, especially once you buy theose music-playing devices. Some libraries may already have something similar in other departments that they could share.

Day-of-event Activity

There is not much set-up involved. I keep all of the materials for that month in a bag (stories, lyrics, iPod and player) and carry it with me to each storytime. Then I plug in my player and start reading.

Program Execution

Overall, the program is very successful. I've been doing it for almost two years and go to more facilities than when I started. People seem to really enjoy the program. Depending on the day and place, I generally get about 4 to 20 people at each storytime.

I would say that the longer you do it, the more people get to know you and feel more comfortable. I know how much they appreciate the program; they often thank me and ask when I'm coming back. Good feedback has also come from the activity directors. I feel like I did achieve my goals. People are talking more in our groups and getting engaged. It definitely made the library and our services more visible, since I can remind people of what other programs we have to offer.

Advice

Don't be afraid to contact facilities to offer your services. Don't wait for them to contact you, because they may not know what you have to offer. If you don't get return emails or phone calls, go visit in person. Many activity directors are extremely busy and an in-person meeting can be much more successful. Bring your calendar

and suggest a repeating monthly date for the program. That way, they don't have to re-schedule the program every month, which is a lot of work. Basically, the easier you can make it for them, the more likely they are to participate. That being said, some facilities may still forget about the program, even if it is scheduled monthly. For those places, you might call ahead to remind them. Or just be patient as they gather residents after you get there. Patience is a virtue!

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