My Community Reads Bedtime Stories

Bienville Parish Library

Intergenerational

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Free

Byline

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*My Community Reads Bedtime Storie*s is a heartfelt literacy program from the Bienville Parish Library that brings families together through the comfort of storytelling. Each week, local voices, including librarians and community leaders, read beloved children's books in short audio bedtime segments. Aimed at nurturing early literacy, emotional bonds, and multigenerational involvement, the program turns familiar voices into storytime companions, helping young listeners fall asleep while strengthening community connections. It's more than just a reading program;

it’s a shared tradition that fosters trust, heritage, and the quiet magic of being read to.

Advanced Planning

The program originated from a simple question: What if bedtime stories could come from our neighbors and community leaders?

From there, the Bienville Parish Library assembled a list of beloved children’s books suitable for short, entertaining nighttime reads. Local volunteers, including librarians, teachers, and civic leaders, were invited to serve as guest readers. Recordings were scheduled and edited using Adobe Premiere Pro to maintain a consistent format. Stories were shared on social media and the library’s website. The focus was on selecting popular titles that were familiar with listeners and readers. Each reader received brief coaching on tone and pacing to boost the story’s warmth and accessibility.

Marketing

To generate excitement and build trust around *My Community Reads Bedtime Stories*, Bienville Parish Library used a friendly, community-focused promotion strategy. Custom graphics were created with Photoshop and shared on Facebook, Instagram, and the library’s newsletter. Word of mouth was key as participating readers, many of whom were local leaders, shared posts with their networks, turning listenership into a sense of community pride.

Budgeting

The program was created to be affordable and impactful. Most resources were already on hand, including access to audio editing software and a dedicated staff member for coordination. Volunteer guest readers donated their time, and all books came from the library’s existing collection. Graphic design and promotional materials were produced internally, with printing costs incorporated in the general

printing budget. The main investment was time: preparing readers, recording sessions, editing the content, and engaging the community. This inexpensive model allows for replication by libraries of all sizes, especially those in rural areas, aiming to strengthen connections through storytelling.

Day-of-event Activity

Staff members included the Children's Outreach Librarian, who scheduled and recorded each introduction, and the Public Relations Specialist, who operated the recording applications (Adobe Creative Suite: Audition).

Challenges: Beyond minor scheduling issues and monitoring voice levels, there were the odd intrusive noises during recordings (leaf blower and motorcycle!).

Program Execution

Each episode of *My Community Reads Bedtime Stories* followed a consistent format. Guest readers recorded their favorite stories, as well as diverse tales that reflected the local community. Natural pauses, the sounds of page turning, and other ambient noises were included to create a sense of spontaneity. Families were encouraged to comment or share how the stories affected their evenings, fostering ongoing dialogue between the library and its patrons.

Success was measured by stories shared in return. Parents wrote to say their children were choosing books featured in the program during library visits. Engagement on social media increased with each episode, particularly when readers included retired teachers and civic leaders familiar to parents. Many readers were grandparents reading the same stories they read to their children. While view counts offered useful metrics, it was the emotional feedback, social media posts, and community conversations that truly showed the program's impact.

Example stories:

"The Sneetches and Other Stories" by Dr. Seuss, read by Eddie Holmes, an avid reader and a staunch advocate for the public library. Mr. Holmes comes by his easy-

going reading style from reading bedtime stories to his son. Mr. Holmes is a local community leader. He serves as the Clerk of Court for Bienville Parish.

"Jazz Cats" by Daniel Davis, read by Mr. Ricky Davis. Mr. Davis is a retired Musical Director of the Pinebelt Headstart school system. In his retirement, he remains very involved in his community as a men's spiritual leader. A talented pianist and organist for all religious denominations. He is in high demand to perform at weddings, celebrations, and funerals. Mr. Davis is also a dedicated musical choir director for the Gibsland-Coleman High School choir group, introducing students to African-American Spiritual Hymns and ensuring that these powerful and historically significant songs are passed on to future generations.

Advice

Start with the stories your community already loves — the ones that get passed down or requested at local storytime. Invite readers from different roles and generations to add their voices; the more familiar the voice, the greater the impact. Keep production simple and intimate; even a smartphone and a cozy corner can become a stage. Use social media not just to broadcast, but to tell stories: share the “why” behind each book and reader, and encourage families to respond. If possible, establish a regular schedule so families can anticipate and include the stories in their routines. Most importantly, remember that this is not just about reading, it’s about building memory, trust, and belonging through the quiet magic of voice. The stories are a gift, and every reader becomes part of a child’s library of love.

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Supporting Materials

Document
story. author.pdf
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Pawsome Storytime

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