Communitree: A Community Art Project

Vernon Area Public Library

Intergenerational

Communitree: A Community Art Project

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Byline

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“Communitree” is a living work of art, displayed in the library lobby, that celebrates our shared roots, diverse voices and collective hopes. We partnered with The Art Impact Project, a local non-profit organization that enhances emotional wellness through creative expression. They believe that art-making is one of the most powerful untapped sources of intervention available, especially at a time when access to mental health care is extremely limited and the need has never been

higher.

Advanced Planning

This project was a component of our year-long focus on Wellness. During the fall quarter, we offered a selection of programming that explored how creative expression leads to emotional well-being. We asked our partners at The Art Impact Project to collaborate with us on a community art project. Our goal was to create art together as a community and display it in a thoughtful manner that reflected our goals and dreams.

We started planning six months in advance. The Art Impact Project proposed the concept of a “Communitree.” We wanted patrons to help us grow our “Commmunitree” by adding a leaf and become part of a living work of art that celebrates our shared roots, diverse voices, and collective hopes. The tree would symbolize the strong foundation that connects our community.

One of the most critical elements of this project was working with our Facilities staff to create the structure for the tree. We had a vision of having tree branches displayed in our front window and attaching the leaves to the structure. We were unsure what materials would be used, or even how this could be installed. Our Facilities team really enjoyed this challenge and came up with a great concept. Using branches from a tree on our property that needed to be cut down, they created a natural looking, yet solid, framework for the Communitree.

This surpassed what we could have imagined on our own. During September, we provided patrons with fall-colored paper leaves and markers at a display in our lobby. We asked them to select a leaf and write a word or phrase that described their wish, hope, or goal for themselves or our community. In early October, our partner at The Art Impact Project affixed hundreds of paper leaves onto our beautiful tree. This colorful structure is visible as soon as you enter the library – both inside and outside - and tells a story about our patrons.

Marketing

A lobby display explained the project and its objectives. We also promoted the project in our quarterly newsletter.

Budgeting

The costs were minimal – the cost of the colored paper. We asked our volunteers to use a die-cut machine to create the hundreds of leaves, which saved money on staff time.

Day-of-event Activity

Since this was a passive program, the primary activity involved setting up the tree. It required time from our staff and partners. Our Facilities staff encountered some initial challenges with installing the tree in the window frame, but they problem solved and came up with a solution. Since the tree branches were different sizes, our initial plan of using nails to attach the leaves to branches was replaced with punching holes in each leaf and using wire to attach the leaves.

Program Execution

Patrons are enjoying the Communitree, looking for their leaf and seeing other patrons' contribution. We collected several hundred leaves from our patrons. We achieved our goal of involving patrons in a community project, providing an opportunity for their creative expression, and creating a visible expression of our goals and hopes.

Here are some of the responses to the prompt, "Select a leaf and write a word or phrase that describes your wish, hope, or goal that you have for yourself or our community."

- My limit is beyond the sky!
- Read more to be smart
- Always keep learning

- Have more fun this year!
- One day at a time
- Pick up trash to make the world a better place
- Be different and love pickles!
- “Without libraries what have we? We have no past and no future." Ray Bradbury

Advice

Ask your Facilities team to use their imagination and skill to create a structure that best suits your building. They might welcome the opportunity, as ours did. Similarly, provide your patrons with a challenging question, they might surprise you with their deep – and sometimes funny – responses.

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

Supporting Materials

Download this Program as a PDF

- Programming Librarian Facebook Group

Slideshow Images



Image









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Community Displays

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1000 Paper Cranes

Audiences:

Intergenerational
Aug 25, 2023
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Summer Sidewalk Poetry Competition

Audiences:

Intergenerational