Homeschool Resource Fair

Pikes Peak Library District

Children

|

Adults

Homeschool Resource Fair

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Free

Byline

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The Pikes Peak Library District holds an annual Homeschool Resource Fair the second Friday in August to introduce our homeschooling families to the multitude of resources in our community. What started out several years ago as a small group of vendors (several support groups and our local community college) has now expanded to 50 groups, organizations and individuals offering support and enrichment to the homeschool community. Last fall, our Homeschool Resource Fair had more than 600 attendees.

Advanced Planning

We schedule the Homeschool Resource Fair in early August so families have time to sign up for classes and lessons before the school year begins. The event takes place on a Friday from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m.

As lead organizer and head of the Homeschool Committee, I begin planning in mid-May by sending emails to more than 70 possible vendors, inviting them to participate in the fair. Teachers involved in school district enrichment programs are often unavailable during summer vacation, so it's important to get those emails out before school ends for the summer. If the vendors are interested, I ask if they need a whole table or half, if they could provide their own table and whether or not they need electricity. I set up a spreadsheet to keep track of those who respond and what their needs are. Once I know who will participate and their table and electricity needs, I plan their placement on the "room map" I drew to scale that shows locations of the electrical outlets, the positions of the tables we own and where extra tables brought by vendors might fit. **(View the placement map and vendor list under Attachments at right.)**

Our library's Homeschool Committee also arranges signage, makes "table cards" so vendors know where to set up and develops an online survey that participants can take after the fair. Security is alerted that vendors will be arriving before the library opens.

Marketing

We advertise in multiple places and with different platforms. For print promotion, we hang signs and fliers at all library locations **(View the fair's flier under Attachments at right.)** and write about the event in the PPLD's monthly newsletter, as well as our quarterly Homeschool Connections publication. We also promote the program through the Homeschool Hub (our Homeschool Committee's website for homeschool patrons), PPLD's online calendar and Facebook pages and with our monthly Homeschool Event newsletter, which is emailed to nearly 1,000 local homeschooling families.

Budgeting

This event is completely free for us to host!

Day-of-event Activity

Everyone on our Homeschool Committee helps out the day of the fair. Our Facilities Department sets up the room, and we arrange the table cards according to my map. We set out directional signs by the entrances to the library and the room we are using. One of us will bring a folding table from home as a check-in/survey station so we don’t tie up one of the library’s tables. At the table we also have a laptop so library staff can show visitors online homeschool resources and useful databases, as well as sign families up for the library’s newsletters. We also distribute a list of participating vendors to families when they arrive.

Vendors arrive one hour before the fair opens to set up. We check them in and show them to their spaces. Many vendors bring tablecloths to spruce up their space. Some set up simple activities for kids. When the Homeschool Resource Fair opens, we greet visitors and have them sign in with their name, email address (to add them to our newsletter distribution list) and home library. This helps us plan homeschool program locations. Once everything seems to be running smoothly, I visit the vendors' tables to introduce myself or greet those I know from past years, thank them for coming and see how the fair is going for them. Vendors pack up promptly at noon.

Program Execution

This past August, we had 50 vendors participate in our Homeschool Resource Fair, including scouting groups, music teachers, dance studios, a children's theater school, scuba instructors, a soccer club, a homeschool band, our community college (which offers college classes to high school students), school districts and charter

schools (which have one-day-a-week enrichment programs), tutors and homeschool support groups (including one that caters to parents who homeschool special needs children). More than 600 people visited last year's Resource Fair.

New and seasoned homeschoolers appreciate the opportunity to talk in person with vendor representatives. Newly arrived homeschooling military families are thrilled to learn more about what is available in their adopted community. Vendors are pleased with all the contacts they make.

We always have an evaluation questionnaire for visitors to fill out. It's available on several tablets as well as in print so patrons have a choice of format. We ask them a few questions to gauge reactions:

- Was attending the fair worth your time?
- Did you learn something that will help you homeschool your child?
- Did you like the location and time?
- Do you plan on attending the following year?
- Would you recommend the Resource Fair to others?
- Do you plan on attending other PPLD homeschool programs?

More than 90 percent of the respondents said they agreed or strongly agreed with these statements. Their added comments help us get an idea of how we’re doing. Our last question asks what other organizations they’d like to see at the fair, which gives us some wonderful ideas for next year! The main complaint we've heard has been about how noisy it gets in the room (it has a very high, open ceiling). Screens to separate the vendors have been suggested, but we don't own anything like that, so I have started warning vendors about the noise and encouraging them to bring their own screens if they want to. We also always have several people who request curriculum companies, but we have decided not to include them. Our aim is to provide contact with organizations, groups and individuals within our own community, not national companies.

Advice

After years of executing the program, I’ve learned a lot on how to plan a Homeschool Resource Fair. Here are some tips I’ve found helpful:

- Use the largest room you have available. We had to move our fair to a different location because of its popularity.
- It’s helpful to have a “runner” in case you run out of library fliers or need someone from the Facilities Department quickly. (We had a sudden leak last year.)
- Don’t put two similar groups next to each other, such as two sports programs or enrichment programs, since they are potentially “competing” with each other.
- Make a list of the groups you want to include in your Homeschool Resource Fair and be sure to ask homeschooling parents for their suggestions. Then start contacting the possible vendors to gauge their interest. After you’ve held one Resource Fair, vendor will start contacting you!

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

Supporting Materials

Document
fair_vendor_list.pdf
Document
ppld_room_map.pdf
Document
resource_fair_flier.pdf
Download this Program as a PDF

- Programming Librarian Facebook Group

More Programs

Sep 10, 2013
Children (9 and under)+ |
Image



Supporting Community Civic Engagement

Audiences:

Audience
Children (9 and under)
Young Adult (17 - 20)
Adults (21 and up)
Intergenerational
Mar 19, 2015
Intergenerational+ | $
Image



Senior Expo

Audiences:

Intergenerational
Mar 24, 2015
Children (9 and under)+ | $
Image



Animal Fair

Audiences:

Children (9 and under)
Young Adult (17 - 20)
Adults (21 and up)
Intergenerational
Sep 17, 2015
Adults (21 and up)+ | $$$
Image



Entrepreneur Fair

Audiences:

Adults (21 and up)