Library Circus

Grand Island Public Library

Children

Library Circus

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$101-250

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Byline

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Each summer, we hold a popular children's program called the Library Circus. Designed for children from preschool to fifth grade, the one-hour program offers a variety of hands-on stations for kids to visit. Several hundred people attend each year, including families, preschools, day cares and summer school.

Advanced Planning

We begin planning a couple of months in advance. We have done the Library Circus for about four years now, so it's become easier to plan; we keep a big plastic tub of the things we have created or bought, so everything is organized. We try to add new things each year.

Marketing

This program is on our summer reading program calendar, so it goes out to all school-age and preschool children in our city of approximately 50,000. We also put up fliers and notify the newspaper of all our programs, so there is usually a mention of the upcoming event.

Budgeting

Our budget is less than $300. We buy the prizes from Oriental Trading Company and the Dollar Tree, so we don't spend a lot on them. We also buy the craft supplies, but get popcorn donated from the local theater for a treat for everyone.

Day-of-event Activity

We have 20 stations set up. At the first station, kids pick up a bag, pencil and a list of the other stations. Other stations include a photo booth, Bingo, an Olympic race, a fish pond, face painting, a duck pond, bean bag toss, disk drop, spin a prize, parachute (exercise), sack race, ring toss, ring of fire, cannonball shooter, bubbles, cotton candy walk, Olympic craft, and fortune-teller. At the last station, the kids turn in their station list and get a cup of popcorn.

Our staff does a terrific job decorating outside the library, inside the foyer and in the big meeting rooms and children's section. We put up lots of balloons, have plastic tablecloth tents, animal cracker displays with stuffed animals in them where we put out animal crackers as snacks, a tent, a ring of fire for kids to jump through, a fishing pond, and an area where we put up face-in-hole cutouts of circus men with big muscles for the kids put their faces in and have their pictures taken. We also put up a big circus display of books for kids to check out. **(See photo slideshow at right.)**

Program Execution

We have around 20 to 25 volunteers, plus library staff, to man the stations. Our volunteer coordinator gets teens that take part in the library's teen programs to volunteer. They are looking for things to do and do a super job, and we usually have around 15 teens that help. We play circus music, and spread everything out so the lines at each station are not too long. That said, we do usually have lines at face painting, because it's so popular!

The circus is a lot of fun. It's hectic getting everything out and the decorations up — and then taken down, packed up and put away again — but all of the thanks and kudos we get from our patrons, teachers, etc. are worth it.

Advice

Plan ahead and watch out for cheap prizes to stockpile; kids love pencils and school supplies such as erasers, individual tissues and small notepads. Get a big group of dependable volunteers to help! It's a lot of work setting up. Find someone that is good at decorating. Pinterest has lots of ideas for craft stations. If you want it to be a huge event, you could get more community groups to be a part — but we keep this pretty simple and fun.

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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Audiences:

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Audiences:

Children (9 and under)