

Senior Speed Connect @ Igo

San Antonio Public Library

Intergenerational

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\$251-500

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Byline

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To celebrate [Older Americans Month](#) in May 2016, San Antonio Public Library (SAPL) hosted a special event called Senior Speed Connect @ Igo. (Igo is the name of our branch.) The program was patterned after Senior Speed Dating, which was depicted in ["The Age of Love,"](#) a documentary shown at the SAPL Central Library in February.

Unlike Senior Speed Dating, the Igo event was to renew and make new friendships rather than romantic connections. The event featured a catered lunch, meet and greet activities, door prizes, vintage music and more.

Advanced Planning

Our goal was to bring older adults together for a social/get acquainted event to commemorate Older Americans Month. The Igo Branch has an active seniors group called the Elderberries, which is about 200 strong.

In April, the SAPL Adult Services Committee informed us that there was extra programming money available (\$400) and asked if we were interested in doing a Senior Speed Dating event. With time short to accomplish this in May, we immediately began to plan the event. My colleague and I were the major planners, since we coordinate the Elderberries programs and events. Since it can be difficult to get an equal number of men and women for a speed dating event, we decided to change it to Senior Speed Connect.

Marketing

PR went out about two weeks before the event. We created marketing materials, which included fliers and submissions to local media. About 10 days before the event, we emailed or called our Elderberries with information about the program. We also included details about the event in the Elderberries' monthly newsletter, "The Elderberry Vine."

Our library PR and marketing department released information about the event a day before and on the day of the program. A few local news stations ([Ken 5 Eyewitness News](#) and [KSAT 12](#)) also featured the event.

The news coverage resulted in a large number of people who wanted to attend after we had already reached our maximum capacity of 50 participants. This was more than we thought we could accommodate, especially for the lunch. Despite this, we allowed everyone that expressed an interest to come, counting on some not showing up who had RSVP'd. As it turned out, we were able to accommodate everyone.

Budgeting

Almost all of the \$400 budget, given to us by the SAPL Adult Services Committee, was spent on the catered lunch. The Elderberries already had supplies on hand that could be used (plates, cups, utensils, napkins, tablecloths, etc.), which helped cut costs. The caterer also donated some potted plants, which we used for door prizes.

Day-of-event Activity

My colleague and I, with the assistance of the custodian, set up for the event. This included putting out tables, chairs, decorations, a sign-in table with information about Elderberries programs and the "get acquainted" sheets that were used in the "speed" connect part of the program. **(See examples of the "get acquainted" sheet under Attachments at right.)**

The unexpected challenge happened on the day of the event, when we learned that the program had been widely advertised on city-wide media. We received a large number of telephone inquiries, many angry that they could not attend because the maximum number had already been reached. After consultation with SAPL administrators, we decided to allow everyone to attend and stretch the food, door prizes and handouts as far as we could. As mentioned above, everything worked out beautifully, since not all who registered showed up.

Program Execution

About 50 people attended the event, and we received only positive feedback. The "get acquainted" activity consisted of five different worksheets, each with ten questions. The goal was for each attendee to ask ten different people one of these questions. The questions were such as to encourage conversation (e.g., Would you rather go forward 50 years or back 50 years? If you could have one magical power, what would it be?). **(See the event agenda under Attachments at right.)**

The presence of the media also added a great deal of interest for the attendees. Several were interviewed, and the press covered the "get acquainted" activity very well.

We used our standard program evaluation form, and 100 percent of the attendees gave it the highest rating (some even adding a few pluses).

Advice

Do it! Seniors need such events to find others that share their interests and to help overcome loneliness, which is now considered a health concern for older adults.

Supporting Materials

Document

[activity_sheet_1.pdf](#)

Document

[activity_sheet_2.pdf](#)

Document

[activity_sheet_3.pdf](#)

Document

[agenda.pdf](#)

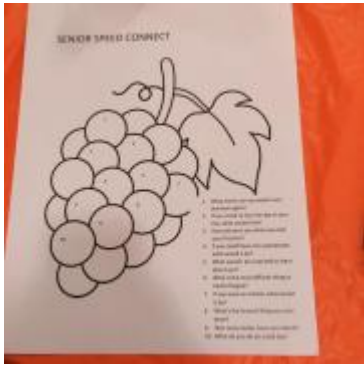
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