Fairy Tale Tea

Stewart C. Meyer Harker Heights Public Library

Children

Fairy Tale Tea

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Byline

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The Fairy Tale Tea Party was a part of our Summer Reading Club 2016 programming schedule. We wanted to do an elegant tea party for a number of years and wanted to focus on fairy tales and princesses. We decided to host two registration-only tea parties in the afternoon. The program included several crafts, refreshments, visits with costumed princesses, performances by our princesses and a large sing-along to “Let It Go” (from Disney's "Frozen") at the end.

Advanced Planning

The Fairy Tale Tea Party took some advance planning. We share a building with the Harker Heights Activities Center and are able to book their rooms at no charge. We booked the ballroom a year in advance to make sure that we would have it for the date we wanted. The tea party ended up taking place in June.

We had the broad strokes of the program mapped out by March or April so we knew what we would be purchasing. We rented round tables so the program would have a more elegant feel. We learned that renting linens is more expensive than renting tables, so we purchased the linens for future use.

We also decided on crafts early on so we could purchase the items with enough time to receive everything a week before the program. My director, Lisa Youngblood, and I did all of the planning beforehand. Our princesses were all library volunteers, so one week before the program we had them all come to the library to try on costumes and be fitted. We already owned every costume used on the day. Lisa is a seamstress and was able to sew, modify and alter all of the costumes herself.

Marketing

We put out an eight-page Summer Reading Club Programming Guide every May that contains all of our programs for the entire summer. We marketed the event on the back page of our booklet. (**See the back page under Attachments at right.**) This was our first marketing push for the program. We also sent out social media posts about the program the week prior to Facebook, Twitter and the library's blog. We announced the program at every weekly program we had leading up to the day. The tea party was registration-only, and despite that, we had everyone but two families register prior to the day.

Budgeting

We spent $1,200 on this program. That amount was for two tea parties, so approximately $600 was spent per tea party.

These costs were for food, crafts, table linens, décor and the table rental. The largest portion was spent purchasing the table lines, which will not be spent again on future tea parties. We also overspent on food and had a lot of leftovers. We were able to use the extra food the following week, but it was an oversight on our part.

We were fortunate that we already owned the costumes we needed. Lisa had purchased or made the costumes for other programs. Some of the costumes were also hers personally. It would have been an extremely expensive program if we had to purchase the costumes.

Day-of-event Activity

We started preparing for several days beforehand. There were many small details that we had volunteers work on. For example, we had paper crowns for each place setting that the children could pick up and decorate. Volunteers taped each crown together for us. One staff member worked on ironing all of the linens, which took a long time. We were able to set up the tables and do all the table settings the day before the program.

We had four staff members and fifteen volunteers the day of the program. Two volunteers and two staff members blew up the balloons, decorated the room and arranged the food and drink tables in the morning. One hour before the event, I set up the welcome table to check off families as they arrived. I had one staff member and one volunteer working the food. They were able to arrange the food on trays and prepare the drinks during this time.

For this program, everything seemed to take a little longer because we wanted it to be perfect. Our goal was for every child to have a magical experience! The task that took the longest was ironing the tablecloths. I did not think we would need hours for that task, but it took about six hours total to iron 12 86-inch tablecloths.

Program Execution

As each family arrived, I checked them off of my list and gave each child a small notebook so they could get autographs from each costumed princess. Once it was 2

p.m., Little Red Riding Hood (our director) came out and started helping everyone into the room. She explained that everyone would find a seat they liked, take their crown and their name card, and take it to the back of the room. Once this happened, each child decorated their crown, made a wand out of an ink pen, silk flowers and washi tape, wrote their name on their name place card and took it back to their seat. This was a great way to get everyone in and settled.

After the crafts, Little Red Riding Hood brought in the princesses. She announced all their names, and then the Queen of Hearts gave a quick etiquette lesson (how to curtsy, etc.). At that point, Little Red sent each princess to a table. The tables without a princess got to grab refreshments.

We also had Princess Tiana sing and Belle bring her favorite librarian (me, of course!) a story to read to the crowd. At the very end of the program, Little Red brought up all the princesses and all the children, and they all sang “Let It Go” together. She then led all the princesses and children out of the room and into the library for a Princess Parade.

Afterwards, we flipped the room, cleaned and restocked food for the next tea party. We had about two-thirds of everyone who registered come to the tea parties. It was a great turnout, and we received many compliments about the high quality of the program from the décor to the food to the events.

Advice

We learned a lot doing an event like this. First, we would give ourselves more time between tea parties. We went over the allotted time for the first tea party, which started at 2 p.m., so we were scrambling to get ready for the second one, which started at 3 p.m. We had about 15 minutes to prepare between the two tea parties.

While we have a very enthusiastic volunteer group, some of them were also not prepared to stay in character for the duration of the program. Next time, we will have a practice session for every costumed character so they can practice not breaking character. Several of our volunteers already dress up and do this regularly, but that doesn’t come naturally to everyone.

I would definitely urge anyone doing this program to require registration. We overbought food even though we had people register for the event, but we could

have easily not had enough food if we hadn’t asked families to sign up for the event. We wanted an event where people could sit down and be comfortable, so we had a maximum number in mind and did end up closing both tea parties a few days before the event because we were getting too close to that number. We had enough room to seat 96 people comfortably in each party and had a total of 165 show up that day, so we were extremely happy with the turnout and the registration process.

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

Supporting Materials

Document
summer_program_guide.pdf
Download this Program as a PDF

- Programming Librarian Facebook Group

Slideshow Images





Image









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Children (9 and under)+ | $$$

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Cinderella Ball

Audiences:

Children (9 and under)
Mar 9, 2016
Children (9 and under)+ | $$
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Mad Hatter Tea Party

Audiences:

Children (9 and under)
Young Adult (17 - 20)
Adults (21 and up)
Jul 20, 2016
Adults (21 and up)+ | $$
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The Basics of Tea

Audiences:

Adults (21 and up)