East Lansing Welcomes the World

East Lansing Public Library

Children

|

Tweens (10-12)

|

Teens

|

Young Adult

|

Adults

|

Intergenerational

East Lansing Welcomes the World

Dec 21, 2016

$2,501-5,000

$$$
Byline
Kristin Shelley, Director, East Lansing (Mich.) Public Library

East Lansing Welcomes the World is an annual program in which the city of East Lansing welcomes international students from Michigan State University (MSU), and their families, to the city. The program is held on a Sunday in September or October from 2:30 to 4:30 p.m. It is a partnership between the library, the city of East Lansing and Michigan State University.

The event includes an American-style picnic with food from a local caterer, music, family activities and welcoming remarks by the mayor, president of the university, director of the Office of International Students and Scholars (OISS) and me. The OISS office schedules buses to loop around to three campus area stops to bring students and families to the event.

Advanced Planning

East Lansing Welcomes the World was created in 2010 as a way to welcome Michigan State University's international students to the city. A committee meets three or four times from May to September to plan the event.

The library sets up the event and arranges for the food, speakers and family activities such as face painting, bubble tables, sidewalk chalk art, miniature golf in the library, bowling, 3D printing and country flag activity drawing sheets. Community information tables are also set up and the library makes sure community volunteers and staff are there to greet the students and work the event.

Marketing

The city of East Lansing’s communication department provides fliers to hand out and to post at various campus events, the library, area businesses and city buildings.

Press releases go out in August to all media venues. **(View the fliers and press release under Attachments at right.)**

Budgeting

The majority of cost is for the food and the buses, which amounts to around $3,500. $2,000 comes from MSU and $1,500 comes from the city of East Lansing. The library closes on the day of the event, and staff are scheduled to work as if it is their regular Sunday rotation.

Day-of-event Activity

Library staff come in early to move furniture and set up tables for food and community information. The caterer comes to start cooking by 12:30 p.m. Since the food is "American backyard BBQ," the caterer brings her food cart to the front doors of the library and sets up to cook chicken, hot dogs and hamburgers. She also has a lot of vegetarian options. In addition, we get donations from Buffalo Wild Wings, Insomnia Cookies, Grand Traverse Pie Company and other area restaurants.

In the past, the community information tables have represented organizations such as Capital Area Transportation Authority (CATA), the Islamic Center, the Jewish Center, Community Volunteers International Program (CVIP) and area agencies that serve refugees and immigrants.

We have a short program at 3 p.m. with welcoming remarks by Mayor Mark Meadows and James Dorsitt, the director of OISS. Shuttle buses, which are free for anyone who wants to go to the event from MSU, run through the campus from 2 to 5 p.m., making stops at North Hubbard Hall, the International Center, Brody Hall and the Spartan Village Community Center.

Program Execution

This program has been an annual event since 2010, so many of the kinks have been worked out. Each year we get more community organizations who want to display information or who want to volunteer to greet the students. We use community volunteers as ambassadors to greet and talk to the students about the community.

Approximately 300 or more people attend — mostly international, undergraduate and graduate students and their families. Other attendees include city staff, library staff and community members. Many of the community members are also the ambassadors at the event, who greet and engage the international students in conversation or explain how things work in the city of East Lansing.

In earlier years, we just had the food in buffet lines, and attendees served themselves. We have learned to have volunteers serve the food because when the students were able to serve themselves, we found that some of them were making five or six heaping plates for themselves to take home, and we were running out of food during the event. It was frustrating for the caterer, so we decided to have volunteers help with dishing up the food. Area restaurants also like to donate food to the event, so we have additional food donations.

The committee meets after the event to debrief and recommend changes for the program next year.

We receive lots of verbal accolades from students, families, community members and staff about how wonderful the event is and how much they love talking with each other. One student from India shared how the event impacted him. He left his family, friends, wife and children behind to come study at Michigan State University for at least five years. He told me how he was so depressed when he got to Michigan that he wanted to go home right away. He heard about the event at the library just a few weeks after he arrived, and he decided to come to get a library card and meet some people. The student signed up for a card, looked around the library and talked to staff until others arrived. He was reserved and not comfortable approaching people to start a conversation. He decided to look at books about India to quell his homesickness. Library staff saw him and pulled him into conversations with other international students. From that day on he credits and thanks the East Lansing Public Library for welcoming him and making him feel comfortable. He now volunteers at this event as an ambassador. He goes back to India for the first time at the end of December, and we will all miss him!

Advice

Definitely partner with area organizations and business who work with the international population. Talk to area businesses about donations for food or giveaways.

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

Supporting Materials

Document
welcomes_the_world_flier.pdf
Document
welcomes_the_world_flier_2.pdf
Document
press_release.doc
Document
2015_assignments.pdf
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Image



Hosting a Human Library at Your College

Audiences:

Nov 12, 2015
Young Adult (17 - 20)+ | $$$
Image



Multiracial in a Monoracial World

Audiences:

Young Adult (17 - 20)
Adults (21 and up)
Dec 19, 2016
Young Adult (17 - 20)+ | $$
Image



Speed Friending

Audiences:

Young Adult (17 - 20)
Adults (21 and up)