Afterhours: Extreme Hide-and-Seek

Athens-Clarke County Library

Young Adult

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Byline

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Extreme Hide-and-Seek is a building-wide hide-and-seek competition for teens that takes place after the library is closed. It is a high-energy, fun-filled program that is a big hit with teens. It can be expanded or modified depending on the size of your library, takes minimal planning and is very low cost! We offered it as part of Afterhours, a regular Friday evening teen program.

Advanced Planning

Our Extreme Hide-and-Seek competition was extremely easy to plan. One of our teens came up with the idea for playing hide-and-seek in the library during one of our Teen Council meetings. The YA Department has a monthly program called Afterhours where we have programming specifically for teens after the library is closed. Afterhours is always on a Friday because the library closes at 6 p.m., so the program runs from 6 to 8 p.m.

We created some ground rules ahead of time, which were: no running or pushing; when you are out you must return to a centralized point so staff can do a head count; and no moving library furniture. We made a map of the areas that were off-limits during the game and roped off those areas on the day of the competition.

We decided to use our library's intercom system to call the games and have the teens meet up again for head counts. We also came up with different ways to play hide-and-seek. Variations included: rounds of teams playing against each other; teens hiding and staff finding; staff hiding and teens finding; one teen finding everyone; and a very tight game of sardines.

The whole YA staff was involved in planning and implementing this program, as well as some teens who were very vocal about how they saw this program going. We planned for three weeks before the program, which gave us time to flesh out the rules and game variations.

Marketing

The library promoted the event on our YA event calendar, which is available at the library and also emailed to local educators, media specialists and homeschool email lists. We promoted it on social media (Facebook and Instagram) and by placing ads on our local NPR station. We also utilized our library's digital signage and advertised in our weekly local alternative newspaper, as well as the paper's website.

Budgeting

We provide a pizza dinner before every Afterhours event. We usually buy 10 pizzas at $5 apiece and offer either water or Capri Sun pouches. We have found that this meal is pretty much the cheapest — and easiest to clean up — and the teens LOVE it. We've tried to switch up the menu, but the teens always prefer the pizza!

This cost could be cut if you decide not to provide food, or if you find a really awesome and generous restaurant to partner with for discounted or donated food. Without the food cost, this program is free!

Day-of-event Activity

There was very little day-of set-up needed. We set up our public meeting rooms with tables and chairs for the pizza portion of the evening. We used some leftover crepe paper streamers to block off areas that the teens could not hide in, as we did not allow them to hide in any staff areas or offices.

The YA staff is required to attend Afterhours, so we had five staff members on hand as well as our security guard. Staff arrived at the library an hour before the program. Some staff signed up teens at the door and then served pizza, while others roped off no-hiding zones.

Program Execution

Forty teens signed up for the event, which was almost too many. We signed up all teens at the door and informed parents that they could pick up the teens between 7:45 and 8 p.m.

The teens ate for 30 minutes while we explained the rules and the no-hiding zones. We stressed that if any rule was broken, the teen's guardian would be immediately called. and the teen would not be able to participate in the rest of the program.

We waited to explain each round's variation until right before the round began, instead of trying to explain everything at once. The teens were so excited to get started.

All the teens participated and really had the best time. We had water breaks between rounds and voted on which version of the game to play the next round.

Advice

If you decide to do it, just have fun. It gets a little wild, but it's so much fun — and great exercise for everyone! Both staff and teens were exhausted by the end, but there was not a single complaint.

Just be very clear at the beginning of the program what the rules are, and enforce them. The teens will run, but only because they are excited! We became a little more lax about the warnings we gave for running because it was a fast-paced program. Also, the teens will need some breaks, so plan for plenty of water breaks or have bottled water on hand.

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Supporting Materials

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