Project Prom

Johnson County Public Library

Young Adult

Project Prom

May 17, 2017

Free

Byline

Kelly Staten, Adult/Teen Librarian, Johnson County Public Library, Franklin, Ind.

Project Prom collects gently used prom dresses, tuxedos, shoes and accessories and gives them to young people in need of formalwear. We started in 2012 and have grown like crazy. This year we had over 300 people attend!

Advanced Planning

We start planning about six months ahead of time. We schedule the events for several weeks before prom season, in March and April, being careful not to conflict with spring breaks.

The program has evolved since we began five years ago. Our first year, we set up our library's small community room with mirrors on loan from staff, dressing room screens borrowed from a local theater troupe, and cheap garment racks we bought on Amazon. Despite being worried no one would come, we had a line of girls out the door and around the building!

Now we hold the program at two library branch locations for three days each. We recruit volunteers through our community partners, as it takes half a day to set up and tear down at each location.

Over time, we have worked with various partners. Local consignment shops have served as donation points for dresses to be dropped off. For several years, a local seamstress even donated her time and expertise to make custom dresses for girls who couldn't find something from the donations.

Marketing

Our marketing department creates graphics for the program (see flier under Attachments at right), and a lot of promotion happens through a special Facebook page we created for the program.

We've been fortunate to get on some local news programs for more exposure. This year, Fox 59 interviewed staff about the program, and I also appeared on WISH-TV's Indy Style program with this year's partner, Zeta Tau Alpha.

Somehow we've gone national and have had calls from Washington D.C. asking if we have an affiliate there that has the same program, and we're getting dress donations shipped here from Dallas, Texas. This year we had a record-breaking number of people attend!

Budgeting

We have no offical budget for this program. As the program has grown, so has the number of dresses that we need to store. I estimate that I have about 500 dresses — which we store in a climate-controlled barn — so we purchased commercial grade

racks from a mall store that was closing.

This year we got a $1,000 grant, which will go toward buying more racks and some other odds and ends for the program.

Day-of-event Activity

Set-up takes about four hours, which includes getting the formalwear out of storage, taking it out of garment bags and then sorting it by size. Between 10 and 15 people are needed, but we don't always get that many to help. Because we have such a huge turnout, we need at least three staff at the event each day, in order to keep things flowing smoothly.

Program Execution

The program has been steadily building over the past few years, but it exploded this year! We had well over 300 people come, and nearly every teen found something to wear to the prom. Our success rate was much higher this year since we had such a large selection of dresses. All feedback has been positive!

Additonally, we established a new community partnership with Franklin College sorority Zeta Tau Alpha this year, and they have pledged to help us with the program from here on out. This was a much-needed partnership as it's becoming hard for one staff member to run the entire program.

Advice

After five years of planning and hosting this program, I definitely have tips to share:

- Find a community partner. This is a huge help in building your selection of donated dresses.
- Reach out to fellow staff, and recruit volunteers — this is not a project one person can manage alone! Build a team you can rely on to help share the

duties, such as picking up dresses businesses offer to donate, and setting up and staffing the actual program.
- Embrace social media. Keep your Facebook page active with photos of recent donations or outfits from the past program. This keeps interest, and future attendance, high.
- Keep an eye for grant funding and donation opportunities to defray costs of storage racks, etc.

Read more in a blog post we wrote about Project Prom.

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

Supporting Materials

Document
project_prom_flier.pdf
Download this Program as a PDF

- Programming Librarian Facebook Group

Slideshow Images



Image





More Programs

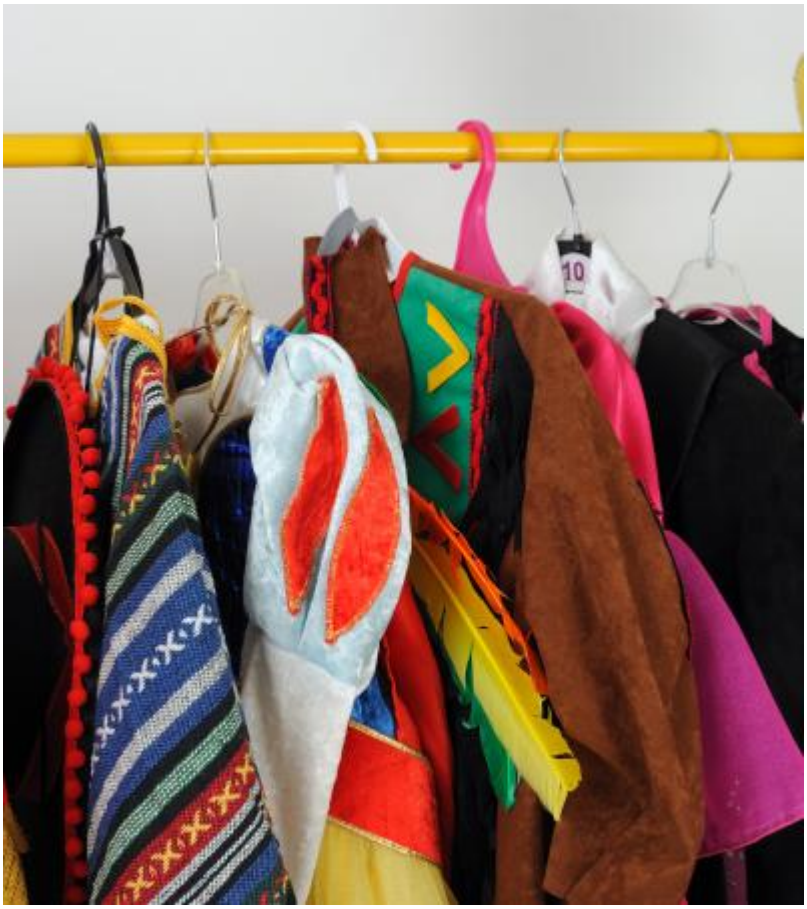
Mar 19, 2015
Young Adult (17 - 20)+ | $
Image



Zombie Prom

Audiences:

Young Adult (17 - 20)
Mar 24, 2015
Children (9 and under)+ | $
Image



Great Halloween Costume Swap

Audiences:

Children (9 and under)
Young Adult (17 - 20)
Intergenerational
Jul 30, 2015
Young Adult (17 - 20)+ | $
Image



Once Upon a Formal

Audiences:

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