Trucks! Trucks! Trucks!

Cherry Hill Public Library

Trucks! Trucks! Trucks!

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$251-500

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Byline

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Trucks! Trucks! Trucks! is a food truck-meets-touch-a-truck festival. Local food truck vendors come to the library to sell a variety of sweet and savory foods while people explore the many trucks brought by local government, businesses and military departments.

In 2017, we held the event on a Saturday in mid-June from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. in our library parking lot. Roughly 2,300 people attended.

Advanced Planning

The goal for this event was to host a fun summer reading kick-off event that would appeal to everyone in our community.

We started planning about eight months in advance. The program was a collaboration between the Adult Services and Youth Services departments. Adult Services booked the food trucks and the DJ; Youth Services booked all of the other vehicles. Only two staff members were involved in planning the event; the library's head of PR and special events did all the promotional work.

One challenge was that some businesses were reluctant to have kids climbing through their vehicles; others were unwilling to pay employees to attend the event. Utilizing personal connections helped with this problem, as did including the business' information on promotional materials for Trucks! Trucks! Trucks!

Another challenge was food trucks canceling at the last minute or not showing up on the day of the event. In 2017, we built this into our plans for the event by overbooking by a couple of trucks.

We first held this event in 2015, but needed a breather before holding it again in 2017. Now that we have it down, we are planning to make it an annual event.

Marketing

We began promoting the event about eight weeks in advance. Promotions included in-house fliers and postcards; a Facebook event page and advertisements; and including the event in our e-newsletter and summer events booklets. Local newspapers also promoted the event, and the food trucks shared the event on their Facebook pages.

Budgeting

In 2017 we spent $325 on a DJ. They made the event more festive with music and contests for free food from the food trucks. In 2015, we ran this event at zero cost.

Day-of-event Activity

The night before, we blocked off the parts of the parking lot that would be devoted to Trucks! Trucks! Trucks! with police barriers. The morning of the event, it was simply a matter of directing the trucks to where to park. Larger vehicles stayed in the parking lot (such as a school bus and fire truck), while smaller trucks parked on the grass. We had tables available for the groups that wanted them.

Five staff members worked the event. Two staffed the library's table, signing people up for summer reading and promoting the upcoming programs. The other staff members roamed the area supervising the event, providing breaks to the volunteers and taking pictures. A member of our maintenance department was on hand to remove trash as needed and help with set-up and breakdown.

Teen volunteers kept a count of the people attending, directed traffic, offered assistance to the groups who brought vehicles, and helped clean up after.

All staff and volunteers wore CHPL shirts so we were easily identifiable.

Program Execution

The beginning of the day is always a little stressful, with fingers crossed that everyone shows up when they're supposed to (one hour before the start of the event). For the most part, all the trucks (food and otherwise) were on time. The other tricky part is deciding where all of the trucks will park. We plan most of this in advance, but there are always day-of adjustments we have to make on the fly.

In 2017, weather was a concern. The event was rain or shine, and the forecast was not promising for the day of the event. We were very lucky, though; the rain held off until the very end of the event. Once the program got rolling, there was very little staff needed to do. Mostly, we walked around the event talking to attendees and truck owners and taking pictures.

We had 2,300 people attend in 2017 (and the same number in 2015, our first year). We received positive feedback from the attendees, from the food trucks and from the groups that brought the vehicles. A good time was had by all! The library signed up many participants for summer reading, and it was a great kick-off to the summer.

Advice

Advice for Booking Food Trucks:

- Check with your local government about food vendor license requirements.
- Find food trucks by checking who attended food truck festivals in your area.
- Only invite trucks that are a reasonable distance from your library.
- We used an online application to book trucks through Cognito Forms — it's free and you can create forms that allow applicants to upload files, like their menus/logos.
- To make a profit, food truck owners need there to be at least 200 people per truck at your event.
- Try to book a variety of sweet and savory trucks.

Touch-a-Truck Advice:

- It may take a few tries with the various government departments before you find the right person to speak with.
- Keep a spreadsheet with names, position, department, phone number and email addresses to use in the future **(see an example under Attachments at right)**.
- Local businesses may be willing to hand out fun promotional items.

General Event Advice:

- You might need a local event permit for this type of program.
- If this event will be held in your parking lot, make sure you have an alternate parking plan.
- Check bathrooms and trash cans frequently.
- Make sure there is a plan to help lost children.

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

Supporting Materials

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Audiences:

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Entrepreneur Fair

Audiences:

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Hungry for More: A Library Food Fair

Audiences: