Begin the New Year by Thinking about the End

Public Library of Albuquerque-Bernalillo County

Adults

|

Intergenerational

Begin the New Year by Thinking about the End

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Free

Byline

Kathleen Dull, Adult Services Librarian, Public Library of Albuquerque-Bernalillo County, Cherry Hills Branch, Albuquerque, N.M.

Begin the New Year by Thinking about the End was a program series focusing on the practical aspects that surround the end of life.

We offered four sessions: Beginning the Conversation, Affordable Funeral Planning, Financial Planning and Making Sure Everything Is Legal. The programs were held on Saturdays in January.

Advanced Planning

The end of life comes with a host of associated practicalities. We wanted to use the motivation many people feel in January to tackle a significant subject. We hoped that the series would be a catalyst for people to start difficult conversations with family and also to think about and record their wishes.

We started with the Department of Senior Affairs to get their input on the most pressing topics and for suggestions on presenters. Selecting the topics, finding and narrowing down potential presenters, and working out the details took a few months.

One of the most unexpected aspects was how eager everyone in the industry is to talk about these issues and also their services. Keeping everything informational and commercial-free was more of a challenge than in many of the other programs.

The list of presenters included the following:

- Hospice nurse
- Social worker
- Chaplain
- Local author who is an industry consultant
- State Attorney General’s representative
- Representative who talked about advanced medical directives
- Elder law attorney

Marketing

We marketed using in-house fliers, our electronic monthly newsletter, word of mouth and a display in the branch. We also distributed fliers to the seven presenters, who then used their network of contacts and social media to market the event. We also took the flier to the local senior center and nearby businesses.

Budgeting

The programming budget is small and did not extend to compensating the presenters. All of them graciously donated their time.

Day-of-event Activity

Set-up was simple: setting up chairs for attendees and a table at the front for presenters. One staff member was sufficient for the set-up and take-down.

Program Execution

We had a total of 119 attendees over the four weeks. Attendance for each session was double that of previous adult programs, and we received positive feedback. Responses were collected in the form of comment cards. Several customers came to multiple sessions and said they appreciated the information presented.

We also received a number of calls expressing interest in a repeat of the series, either at Cherry Hills or elsewhere in the city. We felt the program was a success and notable in that we received no complaints.

Advice

We were prepared to have customers who were upset that we were presenting a series about death; we even thought it was possible that no one would attend. They not only showed up, they brought their family members.

While we expected backlash, we were pleased to receive encouraging feedback on how important the topic was and how they wanted to see more.

Since Programming Librarian published this article, our readers have tried the program at their own libraries! Here’s what they have to say:

Feedback
We received many compliments on this program although it was not overly popular due to the nature of the material. People do not like thinking about the end of their life, but that is why it was such an important program. We left extra materials for patrons to pick up if they missed the talk on a table by the door and many of the informative pages got picked up by patrons. The speakers we had were: reverend (Begin the Conversation/Planning a Celebration of Life), hospice nurse (what all can hospice care entail), financial advisor (what to do with your money/estate planning), funeral home director (planning a funeral), lawyer (making in legal and estate planning). Each talk was on a Saturday at 10AM and overall we had 15 participants.
— Emma Fischer, Adult Services Coordinator, Mercer County District Library, Celina, Ohio

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

Supporting Materials

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- Programming Librarian Facebook Group

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Seniors, Don't Be Scammed

Audiences:

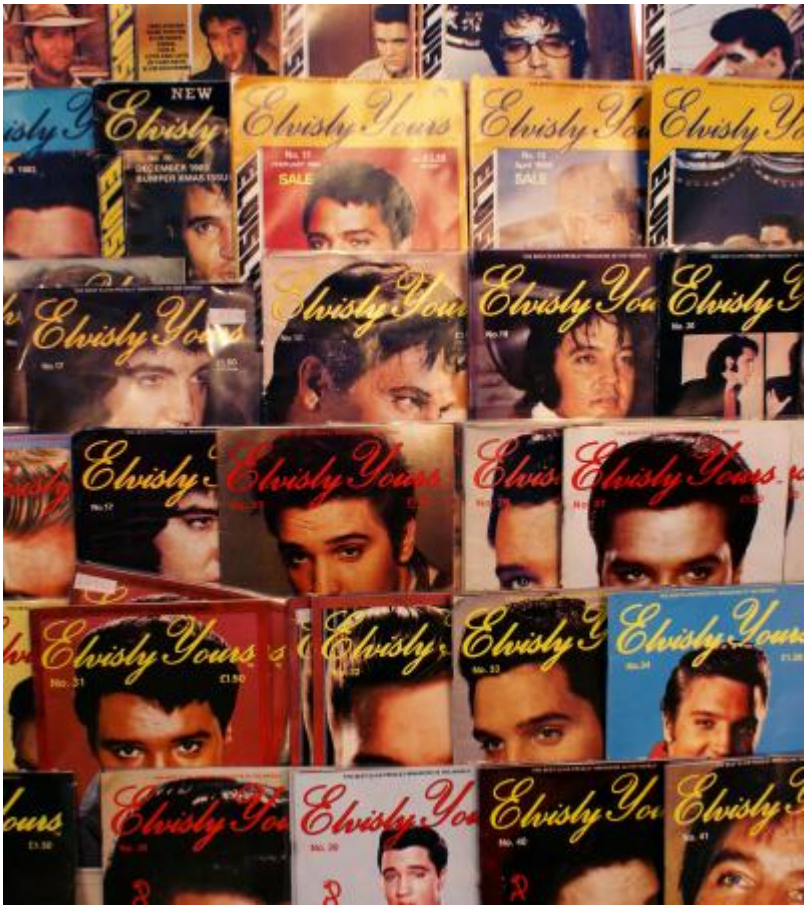
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