Can-Unity

Huntington City-Township Public Library

Can-Unity

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Byline

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On Saturday, July 22, we hosted a Can-Unity building event to wrap up our summer library program. The summer's theme was architecture, so we thought it was fitting to end with a community building event.

The night before, local organizations created incredible structures made entirely from cans, boxes and bags of nonperishable food items. Participating organizations gathered and donated all of the food that was used in building their structures.

During the public event on Saturday, people were invited to the library to see the structures and vote on their favorite. Votes consisted of cash or food donations. All food donations were given to the local food pantry, and monetary votes were divided between the Friends of the Library and United Way.

Advanced Planning

This program had been in the works since the theme for the summer library program was announced (Build a Better World).

First we spaced out the areas of the library that we were going to use, then divided participants into different sized spaces. Businesses had 12-by-10 and 15-by-10-foot spaces, while individuals were given 4-by-4-foot spaces.

We sent letters to local businesses to give them first dibs on spaces, and about two weeks later we opened it up to the public so individuals could sign up to build. We discovered that dropping off letters face-to-face garnered a better response than mailing them. (See the letter under Attachments at right.) Seven organizations and three individuals signed up to participate.

Marketing

We sent a press release to local media outlets, advertised with our summer reading program materials, sponsored a post on Facebook, and had fliers to hand out at the desks.

Budgeting

Our budget included:

- $104 for cookies for during the event
- $11 for containers to hold the "votes" for each sculpture
- $30 for a plaque and 2 trophies (a community choice winner, second place, and most food used)

The night of the build we provided pizza for all of the builders, all of which was donated by Papa John's Pizza.

Tickets — which we handed out to kids for voting — were already on hand, as was the popcorn that we distributed on Saturday.

Day-of-event Activity

The night before the program — when the building occured — two staff members supervised. Since the library had already closed, one staff member let in the builders while the other walked between the spaces supervising. All of the organizations came to build their sculptures. Unexpectedly, a few builders brought their children, which was a bit of a challenge when they got bored.

Builders could use tape to hold their structures together, but it had to be able to be disassembled without ripping or opening any of the food items. (Since most folks did tape them, at the take-down we used a box cutter to cut the tape in between the items and wrap the tape around the item if there was any sticking out. That seemed to work well, and I don't believe we lost any of the food items to tearing.)

Three staff members worked the day of the public voting event. One kept an eye on the sculptures and explained to patrons about the event, where the "votes" were being donated to, etc. Another passed out kids' voting tickets and explained where all the sculptures were located. The third passed out popcorn and kept an eye on the snack table.

Program Execution

The program played out fairly well, although we ran into some issues with it being the same day as the beginning of the 4-H fair.

We had a total of seven participants show up the day of. (All of the registered organizations came, but the individuals did not.) Participants included three banks, two nursing facilities, the local Literacy Coalition and the local Boys & Girls Club. The organizations were allowed to put their names anywhere on their creations, but surprisingly not many took advantage of that. This was our first year, so I am hopeful that with the positive experience the participating organizations had, we will get more businesses and organizations involved next year.

We also had a bit of an issue where parents would not "vote" for items because their child had a free vote ticket. When kids came in they were given tickets, along with a

treat bag, as part of our summer reading club wrap-up. They walked around with their parents and indicated which creation they liked the most by putting their ticket in the same container that the money was put in. This gave kids a way to participate.

Roughly 200 people attended on Saturday. Nearly 2,600 food items were donated to the local food pantry, and $162.80 was raised for United Way/Friends of the Library. The builders were enthusiastic about the program and were already discussing the sculptures they were going to build next year.

The event also sparked new library partnerships. We became a United Way Pacesetter, our local food pantry was very grateful, and I think it made folks rethink what a library is/can do.

Advice

I cannot stress enough: talk to businesses face-to-face and follow up. We had three submissions not show up.

It can be difficult to explain to patrons in a short elevator speech, so bring photos of examples.

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

Supporting Materials

Document
flier.pdf
Document
registration_form.pdf
Document
invitation_letter.pdf
Download this Program as a PDF

- Programming Librarian Facebook Group

Slideshow Images









Image







More Programs

Apr 18, 2016
Young Adult (17 - 20)+ | □□
Image



Giving Food for Fines

Audiences:

Audience
Young Adult (17 - 20)
Adults (21 and up)
Intergenerational
Nov 1, 2016
Adults (21 and up)+ | □□
Image



Programs that Empower

Audiences:

Audience
Adults (21 and up)
Aug 16, 2017
Children (9 and under)+ | □□
Image



Helping Hands: Upcycled Sleeping Mats

Audiences:

Children (9 and under)
Tweens (10-12)
Teens (13-16)
Young Adult (17 - 20)
Adults (21 and up)
Intergenerational
Sep 21, 2017
Adults (21 and up)+ | $
Image



Twiddlemuffs for Charity

Audiences:

Adults (21 and up)
Intergenerational