

Reading Rocks

[Nicholas P. Sims Library](#)

Children

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Teens

|

Young Adult

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Adults

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Intergenerational

Reading Rocks

Oct 20, 2017

\$1-50

\$

Byline

Holly Browning, Children's Library/Community Liaison, Nicholas P. Sims Library

Waxahachie has a social group called Rocks-a-Hachie, which paints and hides rocks all over town for others to find and re-hide. The 12-year-old founder of this group and her mother came to Nicholas P. Sims Library (NPSL) wanting to do a book-themed rock-hiding project that would get families excited about reading. Several group members painted all the rocks and wrote "return to library" on the back.

Once someone finds the rock, they come to the library to check out the book that matches the rock, and they receive a small prize. They can then check out another rock to hide, encouraging someone else to visit the library and keep the fun going.

Advanced Planning

Once the Rocks-a-Hachie group partnered with NSPL, a group administrator organized local artists and children to paint the rocks. The group was asked to paint rocks of authors/series/characters that they enjoy, and they chose book themes, scenes and characters to paint on smooth rocks. The majority of the artists chose children's titles for their rocks' inspiration, but some chose general fiction (C.S. Lewis) and popular YA fiction (The Hunger Games series). On the back, they listed their Facebook group name and wrote "Return to Library." (**View the finished rocks under Photo Slideshow at right.**) They then brought the rocks - about 75 to start with - to the library, and the library organized the program details, marketing and program implementation.

The main goal of the program is to get families excited about books, to discover new books, and to get them to explore places in town that they may not have visited. Other goals include reaching potential library users/families that otherwise have not known about the library and to get more families signed up for library cards and programs.

Our main concern is participants keeping the rocks instead of hiding them because they are so beautifully done! To keep rocks in circulation, we will also host rock painting programs for tweens and teens in conjunction with the Rocks-a-Hachie group continually providing book-themed rocks.

Marketing

Our local newspaper [published a story](#) about the Reading Rocks program, spreading the word throughout the community. We do most of the marketing on social media, specifically Facebook, since the collaboration is with the [Rocks-A-Hachie Facebook group](#).

Many of the participating families have shared the posts and tagged friends that live in town or in nearby towns. Photos of the beautifully painted rocks have been the best promotional tool thus far.

Budgeting

We spent nothing for this program, since Rocks-a-Hachie donated their time and talents to prepare for the program's kickoff.

For prizes, we have many leftover toys from our summer reading program. As these supplies run down, we will be spending a little money to get rocks, paints, brushes and more prizes.

Day-of-event Activity

As this is an ongoing program, it only takes one staff member to manage the activity. Library staff explain the concept to interested children/families. When a rock is found and brought into the library, staff check out the matching book.

Program Execution

We initially received about 75 painted rocks from the Rocks-a-Hachie artists, and on the day the program began, over half of the rocks went out the door. We chose to begin on a Saturday since children and teens were not in school. Each participant found a rock and the book to match it. A week later, we have seen three rocks returned and several "hint" photos placed on the Rocks-A-Hachie Facebook page.

We are about a month into the program, and we have seen an increase in families that have not been to the library before. Almost all families that borrow materials in the Children's Library ask about the rocks, look through them, and end up going to get a book that will allow them to get a rock to hide. We usually have about 20 rocks in the basket for folks to hide. One thing we are seeing is that the rocks taken by families with young children are hiding them on the library lawn or in the parks, so they come back to use more often. The older kids (tweens) find tougher locations, and are also able to post hint-photos on the Rocks-A-Hachie page. But I can see on the Facebook page that the rocks are definitely moving!

There are some folks that don't seem to understand they bring the rock in for a prize, and they end up re-hiding the rock elsewhere.

We expect to receive another 15 or so rocks from a few of the original artists. They have popped in to see if the rocks are going out, and taking suggestions from the kids/families of what should be painted next.

Excitement for this program has been high, and still gets attention on local social media. While it has helped with circulation, it will still be some time before we can judge as to whether or not it generated any new library users.

Advice

Painted rocks groups have [increased in popularity](#) throughout the country, and we definitely recommend that you partner with your local painted rocks group to make things easier. Painting this large quantity of rocks will take one person too much time and effort. If you do not have a painted rocks group in your area, see if one can be started. If there are any library users that are artistic, or if there is an art club/association in your area, they can also help with painting the rocks.

Include young adult books in your rock painting to get teens involved, as well. This does not have to be only a children's program. Adults have enjoyed hiding and finding rocks on their daily walks/runs. Our first rock return was by an elderly woman that walks in the park every morning!

[Did you try this program at your library? Share your experience using this form.](#)

Supporting Materials

[Download this Program as a PDF](#)

- [Programming Librarian Facebook Group](#)

Slideshow Images



More Programs

Mar 29, 2013

Young Adult (17 - 20)+ |

[Image](#)



Reaching Teens through Passive Programming

Audiences:

Audience

Young Adult (17 - 20)

Jul 23, 2015

Adults (21 and up)+ | \$\$

[Image](#)



Paint Night

Audiences:

Adults (21 and up)

Sep 21, 2016

Children (9 and under)+ | ☐ ☐

[Image](#)



Pokémon Go Walking Tour

Audiences:

Children (9 and under)

Tweens (10-12)

Young Adult (17 - 20)

Adults (21 and up)