

Promoting

The better the promotion, the higher the attendance. With the numbers so high after school at Aspen, numbers were struggling at Cook Park. Even when changing the time, tweens didn't seem very involved in programs. After talking to the tweens about programs, some tweens and their parents mentioned how the programs listed on our events calendar didn't give a lot of information regarding the specific program. At the Cook Park location, patrons were more concerned about the specifics and not just using it as a time filler. We have always had fliers, newsletters, and posters promoting events, but missed a key element with our events calendar and promotions on our website.

Feedback

As a growing library district with new buildings and an ever changing population, we were interested in the opinions of the tweens we were entertaining. After asking them what types of programs they were interested in, we found about their love of food and that they love more game type of activities. Also, if we didn't talk to tweens or their parents we wouldn't have made the connection to the timing of our programs and what the tweens were interested in. Open communication with our tweens have made us better librarians and programmers.

Additional resources

These were some fantastic websites with lessons and program ideas!

- <http://sites.google.com/site/thetweenscene/home/january-1>
- <http://sites.google.com/site/thetweenscene/home/december-1>
- http://chemistry.about.com/od/chemistryactivities/ss/scientistparty_8.htm
- <http://www.kidactivities.net/post/Mad-Science-Theme-for-Club-or-Party.aspx>
- http://forensics.rice.edu/pdfs/csi_spread.pdf
- <http://forensics.rice.edu/html/educators.html>

Tweens

“Bridging the Gap between Childhood and the Teenage Years.”



413 N. Milwaukee Avenue
Libertyville, IL 60048
Phone: 847-362-2330

Meeting the needs for grades 4-7

Cook Memorial Public Library District is located in Libertyville, a northern suburb Chicago. The district has grown in population and circulation numbers have increased the need for a new, larger branch library. In July 2010, Aspen Drive Branch Library opened in Vernon Hills, the southern most portion of our district. The new branch library opened across the street from an elementary school district. As the school year progressed, the need for structured programming for the tween age group was very obvious.

In the past, tween programming was based at the Libertyville location and was sparsely attended. In planning the new season's programming, more attention was drawn to planning events to keep the tweens' attention occupied and disruptions to a minimum on the main library floor.



Aspen Drive Branch Library,
Vernon Hills



Cook Park Library, Libertyville

Developing Programs

In previous years, the tween programs were managed by one librarian. With the library district's expansion more help was needed in planning. Three more librarians with diverse backgrounds in planning and this age set signed on to brainstorm enticing programs.

Despite a wealth of databases and resources, Google is truly a librarian's best friend. To start the brainstorming process, a quick search on various tween program ideas produced topics to be developed in full. The best information came from educational and other library sites for ideas such as CSI, Mad Scientist, and Amazing Race. After finding the initial lesson plans from the educational websites, more research was pulled from books in-house, especially for the Mad Scientist program.

Examples of Programs

- ◆ Yoga
- ◆ Mad Scientist
- ◆ CSI
- ◆ Chess
- ◆ Wii Games
- ◆ Amazing Race
- ◆ Cartoon Madness
- ◆ Olympics
- ◆ Crazy Cooking

Trial & Error

With the excitement of planning new programs for our tween friends, we discovered that like all plans, some things don't go the way we envisioned. As a team we noticed some key elements that made some programs more successful than others.

Know your Audience

Doing two programs between our different locations showed us that the communities were completely different. At Aspen, the tweens came directly from school at 2:15 and needed more active programs to keep them entertained. At Cook Park, more tweens attended in the evening rather than after school due to other obligations. Also, at Cook Park, they were happy doing programs that were relaxed in nature.

Food

The most important element to the tween programs was FOOD! No matter the group or location, the tweens are more willing to participate if there is food involved. We offered a nutritional snack to the tweens and sometimes even had to wait until the end of the program to serve it. We have also decided to include programs that involve food projects, such as the Crazy Cooking program.