

# Programs on a Shoestring

## Library of Michigan Beginning Workshop...May 24, 2010

### Colleen Leddy, Director, Stair Public Library, Morenci, Michigan

#### Kinds of programs

- Usual...storytime, Summer Reading, book discussions
- Supplemental: performances, speakers, authors, classes, exhibits, demonstrations, contests

#### Why should library offer them?

- Intellectual, cultural value
- Economic value
- Sense of Community
- Outreach

#### Stair Public Library's history of programs

In 1997, built new library. Went from a very small space 1700 sq. ft. with little room for programs to 5300 sq ft. still small, but with rearranging furniture, we have hosted up to 200 at a time...with lots of little kids sitting on the floor.

In 2004, we hosted Smithsonian Institution Barn Again! Celebrating an American Icon traveling exhibit through the Michigan Humanities Council for 6 weeks on display at our library, many programs and exhibits planned in conjunction with it.

At a gathering of the coordinators from all the Michigan sites hosting the exhibit, one woman mentioned a presenter who she said was really cheap...Liz and I got excited at the prospect of hosting him...until she said the cost was \$250. We both burst out laughing because we thought it was so high...we were expecting to find local presenters to do programs for free. But we saw what other places were doing and what their expectations were and we just started going for it. Second part of application asked us to think about legacy of BA...so we worked in a program about stained glass windows.

We just thought of everything we might want to do that was related to barns and then started going for grants or finding a way to do it. Barn Again changed our entire outlook on what we could offer for programs. So, we used to do programs on a little white shoestring and now we have a really long colorful shoestring.

#### Party Time

Planning a program is like planning a party. It's special and fun... and you want to offer your guests a good time and you're thinking about what they might like. But, also, you're cooking up foods you enjoy...pursue program ideas for which you have excitement and enthusiasm...be genuinely interested and excited about what you're promoting.

#### Sample Programs at Stair Public Library

##### Grant related:

- **Library of Michigan Foundation Michigan Notable Book Author Tour**: One of finest programs offered in state...but it's still what you make of it. \$400 grant to host author; author must be given \$300 plus lodging if needed, plus other stipulations in agreement to host. "Barn Again" it...plan lots of programs, activities, displays around the topic of the book. Examples: Michael Rosenberg, War as They Knew It about U of M/Ohio State football rivalry: Tailgate party, Pre-

game show, painted football display, psychedelic decorated paper footballs plastered on walls of library. Tyree Guyton, Connecting the Dots about Heidelberg Project: school district art exhibit, altered book exhibit, dots all over the library.

- **Michigan Humanities Council “Their Journey: Vietnamese in Michigan” exhibit** for Great Michigan Read: Stealing Buddha’s Dinner. Exhibit was free, no grant; but we applied for a \$500 Quick Grant to host scholar for book discussion, buy 25 books (also checked out set to high school teacher who had two classes read it), promotion, refreshments. Library paid for bus to bring students to the library for Poetry Jam/Slam. Also has high school exhibit of Happy Meal art project.
- **National Endowment for the Humanities Picturing America** art posters and We the People Bookshelf on Picturing America: art exhibit from the high school of gourds carved and many painted with American Indian designs. Celebration with hat display, local businessman reading “Midnight Ride of Paul Revere,” Paul Keller Trio playing jazz, Liz made New Orleans style king cake.

#### **No cost, very low cost or can be modified to be very low cost:**

- **Fantasy Village**: Create cardboard gingerbread houses in advance, ask community to donate stale crackers, cereal, pretzels, old Halloween candy, etc.; make royal frosting; need knives to spread frosting
- **Game Day**...Collect board games (purchase on sale or at garage sales or ask staff and patrons to share); Wii Is fun, but not necessary, collect prizes...any kind of junk, offer refreshments donated by Friends or patrons. Participate in National Gaming Day Nov. 13, 2010 ( <http://ngd.ala.org/> ). Sign up early...may be free games available.
- **Book discussion group**: Interloan books from MeLCat, choose titles that are not in high demand; meet monthly; rotate discussion leaders or seek out volunteers.
- **Speakerphone Chats**: Contact authors that patrons would enjoy...It's surprising when authors agree to do it, but they want to promote their books. Find authors on their websites, facebook, Michigan Center for the Book, <http://www.bookclubcookbook.com> (click “Choose a Book / Invite an Author” link). Need speakerphone or use Skype if author does. Print headshot of author to put near phone in plastic display frame. Either you call author or they call you at pre-set time. Inquire about getting multiple copies of their next advance reader edition. Stair chats: Steven Sorrentino, Chris Bohjalian (Chris\_Bohjalian@mail.vresp.com), Jacqueline Mitchard, Adriana Trigiani (contact Kelly Meehan: adrianaasst@aol.com), Lesley Kagen (contact [melissa.broder@us.penguin.com](mailto:melissa.broder@us.penguin.com)), Bich Minh Nguyen, Susan Wittig Albert (find her on facebook). It helps to have some kind of a hook...something that author can maybe relate to...e.g. Elizabeth Berg. Got nowhere with David Sedaris, Sara Gruen, Jodi Picoult, Elizabeth Gilbert, Anna Quindlen
- **"Talk @ Two" Discussion group**: Meets every Thursday at 2 p.m. to discuss issues from local to international, from abortion to religion.
- **Art exhibits** from schools: Partner with art teachers at local schools to create art that relates to programs you are planning or just to showcase student talent. Teachers like that their students' work gets a different audience, parents come to library to see the work and attend related program. Use tops of bookshelves, any

wall space (attach lightweight art with blue tape).

- **Ask a lawyer**, Ask a financial planner: Professional gives an overview of what they offer, patrons can ask any kind of questions. Strictly informational, no promotion or sales.
- **“How to”** programs such as making a fruit cascade, knitting...give people what they want to know or what you are excited about, but also consider ideas from others: “How to sell on Ebay”...given by a representative of the Post Office
- **Living Library** (now known as the **Human Library**) (get sponsors for shirts, donations for refreshments). See white handout.
- **Magnetic Poetry Jam/Slam**: Buy Magnetic Poetry sets, give set amount of time for patrons to come up with poems, have people come up to lectern and recite what they came up with.
- **Ultimate Cheapskate**: Jeff Yeager, Ultcheapskate@aol.com
- **Baby/Toddler Time**: Nursery rhymes easily found; props such as scarves, ribbons can be found cheaply, shakers can be made out of plastic Easter eggs and rice
- **Pre-School Storytime**: Consider volunteer readers; snacks and craft provided by parents on rotating basis...how we used to do it.
- **Red Hat Society**: Morenci Millinery Mavens chapter. Events/outings originate at the library, planned by staff.
- **Passive programs**: Puzzles, games, coloring pages, Magnetic Poetry

### Programs on a long fancy shoestring

\$300-\$400 range and worth every penny (All qualify for MHC grant)

- La’Ron Williams: Storyteller [LaRontalk@aol.com](mailto:LaRontalk@aol.com) 734-665-0857
- Drummunity: Lori Fithian [lorifithian@mac.com](mailto:lorifithian@mac.com)
- Fiddlers ReStrung: Jennifer Wright [eandjwright@comcast.net](mailto:eandjwright@comcast.net)
- Cirque Amongus <http://cirqueamongus.com/> Variety of programs (We had them for 10 circus acts, limit of 100 kids, need 10 teen and at least 20 adult volunteers, but it’s a great program...staged in school gym.)

### Finding ideas/inspiration for programs

Bunny...inspiration comes from the craziest places. Bunny dress inspired wallpaper for bathroom. Follow your interests and passions.

#### 1. Awareness (Keep an eagle eye out for opportunities)

- Join listservs: cooperative listserv, Michlib-L <http://listserv2.michigan.gov/> Pay attention to anything from your co-op director, Karren Reish (Library of Michigan), Angela Thullen (ALA), Scott Hirko, Michigan Humanities Council
- Be informed through list servs, listening to what’s going on in other libraries, cruising libraries’ websites for ideas; newspaper/TV/radio
- Attend Co-op meetings and local librarians group e.g. Lenawee Librarians...good source of ideas
- Build relationships with other librarians, with presenters
- If you see a rave review on a listserv, file it for future reference or act on it immediately: Banana Slug String Band, Betsy Hull sent Pennies for Peace/Three Cups of Tea email on listserv (google it), Dogs in the library.
- Go to performer showcases whenever available.

- Go to other libraries' events so you can see if the program is something you might want to host down the road.
- Don't be afraid to ask anybody to do anything...e.g. Elizabeth Berg...personalize the request
- Listen to patrons you trust...what they want...leads they have about programs...Patron suggested Tom Springer, author of Looking for Hickories. Within a week of visiting us his book was named a 2009 MNB winner. Same patron suggested Ohio barn artist; we contacted him to paint a local barn, another library supporter told us where to find the money.

## 2. Sources of established programs (offer freebies such as posters, bookmarks):

- **Library of Michigan** ( [www.michigan.gov/mde](http://www.michigan.gov/mde) ) Click on "Library Programs and Events" on left side of page, click on **Michigan Center for the Book**, **Michigan Notable Books** (also contact authors that were selected previously), **Michigan Reads** (One State, One Children's Book Program). Library of Michigan Foundation sponsors Michigan Notable Books Author Tour (MNB program scheduled in April and May, application available in fall. Click on Library of Michigan (bottom left) at any time and then click "For Librarians." Scroll down for other relevant links.
- **American Library Association** Public Programs Office: Subscribe to pubprgrms and ppogrants lists:
  - a. Go to <http://lists.ala.org> (opens a new window)
  - b. Click on "Login" (First time users will need to get a password)
  - c. Click on "List of lists," found near the top of the page.
  - d. Scroll down to select "ppogrants@ala.org"
  - e. Select "Subscribe," found in the left column of the page.
  - f. Follow same steps above for "[pubprgrms@ala.org](mailto:pubprgrms@ala.org)"
- **ALA Programming Librarian** <http://www.programminglibrarian.org/> Incredible wealth of information on this site. Click "library" on top right of page, Click "Read More" link at bottom left of page (Under Family & Youth Programs), scroll down to EZ Library Programs Directory...use fewer limitations to get more responses e.g. select "adults" and "0-\$20 price range to get 74 program ideas for adults. Check out everything on this site...lots of ideas.
- **Michigan Humanities Council**: ( [www.michiganhumanities.org](http://www.michiganhumanities.org) )
  - a. PRIME TIME Family Reading Time (literacy program)
  - b. Arts and Humanities Touring Program (grants for up to 40% for listed performers)
  - c. Great Michigan Read (lots of support materials)
  - d. Poetry Out Loud (program for schools; have winners recite)
  - e. Picturing America in Michigan (grants available)
  - f. Arts and Humanities Media Project (ideas in archives)
- **National Endowment for the Humanities** ( <http://www.neh.gov/> )
  - a. We the People Bookshelf: free books on a variety of topics; offers endless ideas for programs; next round to be announced in September
  - b. Picturing America ( <http://picturingamerica.neh.gov/> ) Application period is over, but click "Educators," "Picturing America Award Recipients" and see if a school or library near you has a set you could borrow.

## Collaborations

Schools: Make friends with teachers and administrators, promote programs for kids in elementary school weekly newsletter.

Churches: Ask to have programs mentioned in church bulletin (We limit request to major programs of broad appeal)

Chamber of Commerce, Kiwanis and other service clubs, and area organizations such as Garden Club, 4-H groups. We gave a program at Kiwanis and they built us a mini-corn maze.

Senior Center

## Planning

- **Scheduling:** Contact schools about date you are planning event to avoid conflicts...check school online calendar and confirm with school secretary. Consult with schools about major events. Sports are hard to compete with, and major events that involve a wide range of ages such as band performances will really cut down on your audience.
- **Volunteers:** Friends group, VolunTeens and high school Volunteer Club, Notice in newspaper for whatever is needed, sign-up sheets in library. You can't do it alone...
- **Space issues:** Consider moving furniture around to create open space. Put furnishings on wheels or gliders to facilitate. Enlist teen volunteers to help set up before and clean up afterward. Have DPW move big items out temporarily. Borrow chairs if necessary.
- **Sound system:** Small, cordless, portable one is nice, especially for older people with hearing problems.
- **Details:** Water for speaker, TP &PT in bathrooms, table set up to sell books
- **Flexibility:** Try to work in time to take advantage of programs that come up suddenly. Take advantage of reviews on the pubprgrms listserv...The Ultimate Cheapskate, MHC Quick Grants. Last minute or close-to-event planning also keeps things fresh and interesting. For example: Message in a Bottle project proposed by Lori Weaver, Mount Morency County. Plan too far in advance and by the time SRP comes around, I don't want to read those books anymore. Or a million other things get scheduled on the event date that hadn't been on anybody's calendar when planned far in advance.

## Publicity/Promotion

- In-house signs on doors, bulletin board; simple bookmarks created in-house on colored paper, 4 to a page, for each event, are easy to pass out in the library and stores around town, schools; simple posters to hang around town; notice in school newsletter, church bulletin; friendly businesses, especially pizzerias, hardware store, laundromat...any high traffic store...ask local grocery store to stuff flyer in bags.
- Target your anticipated audience: For whatever program you are hosting, consider who would enjoy it the most and reach out to that group. We get a class count list from the elementary school and count out the number of flyers needed for each classroom, labeled with teacher's name. Senior center: deliver bookmarks on the day they're having the best meal.
- Make email contact group for media (newspapers, radio, TV) and email announcements, make follow-up calls on important events

- Make contact groups for patrons who regularly attend events, Friends group, etc. Remind all groups a day or two before events.
- Call regular patrons day of event to remind them to attend.
- Banner outside library...if budget allows
- facebook, etc.

## Enhancements to programs

- Refreshments...serve good ones. Ask for donations of baked goods, cut up veggies, fruits. Have a wide variety of easy-to-eat finger foods: offer good things so people linger and visit with each other while munching. Tablecloths, nice serving dishes
- Hearing impaired section...seats reserved
- Treats for people who sit in the front row or who do something that makes you happy.
- Treat the presenter as an honored guest. Provide snacks or meal, water at the podium, anticipate their needs, sell their books

## Grants:

- I often say for the amount of time this application takes for the amount I'll get, I'll just throw in my own money and be done with it. But grants can be a source of inspiration for innovative ideas, not just the money, e.g. Picturing America.
- Michigan Humanities Council ( [www.michiganhumanities.org](http://www.michiganhumanities.org) ) is a good source. Quick Grants for \$500, limit of one per year, apply at least one month before event. Arts and Humanities Touring Program grants: available for 40% of cost to book performers in the directory. See above for other programs that are available through MHC grants.
- Grants...a whole new session.

Other programs to explore:

<http://www.sc.edu/library/inthecards.html>

[www.pbs.org/pov/outreach](http://www.pbs.org/pov/outreach)

## End:

It's a great big world of ideas out there, with lots of pretty shoelaces. Follow your passion, consider your community and get out there and plan some cool programs.

## Addendum:

Angela Thullen announced 6.2.10 on the pubprgms listserv:

ALA Public Programs Office and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) offer a "Louisa May Alcott: The Woman Behind Little Women" \$2,500 grant: Libraries must register their institution at [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov). Resources to help begin the application process for the grant may be found at [www.ala.org/louisamayalcott](http://www.ala.org/louisamayalcott). Online applications must be completed by July 30.

It's worth it to apply for grants like this. Our library was just notified that we are to receive one of the 30 \$2,000 Picturing America grants, so it's possible for small libraries to win these grants. If you are passionate about Little Women or think your community would enjoy events related to Louisa May Alcott, develop some interesting, innovative, creative programming and apply! "Nothing ventured, nothing gained." Even if you don't apply, you may get some great programming ideas just by clicking on the "online resources" link once you go to the ALA page.