**Tips When Booking Programs**

**Suggestions from Rick Eugene Brammer**

**January 20-21, 2012**

1. Check references:  Unless you are already familiar with the program don’t be afraid to check them out.  Find out where they have been before and call (not e-mail).    Don’t ask them if they liked the program (if they didn’t they will still be nice and say “they were ok”). The question to ask is: Would you hire this person again?    If there is any hesitation in the voice then that’s your RED FLAG.
2. Background Checks:  Some libraries run a police background check on their programs/performers.   The ones that do this get it for FREE from their local police department.   In today’s world, not a bad idea.   I am aware of two unpleasant stories in Iowa and three in Illinois.
3. Websites:   I am not saying not to look at their websites. However, you can have the best website and be a horrible performer.   I know of an entertainer that has the best website I have ever seen but if he came to your library to perform, he puts razor blades into his mouth or needles and pulls them out all connected on a string.    It is a cool trick, but it should not be performed in front of children.  So my point is, after you look at the website still call their references.
4. Mileage:   This is one area that a lot of you get taken advantage of.   This can be negotiated.   A lot of performers double dip on this one.      Mileage is a legitimate tax deduction.   Most of the performers you pay mileage to also take it as a tax deduction at the end of the year.   If you add up all of the shows that they do this is a huge amount.  If they ask for mileage, ask them if they take it as a tax deduction at the end of the year.  If they say yes, then ask, “Why do I need to pay you?”  If they say no just tell them to take it as a legal tax deduction.   It’s a huge RED FLAG if they are not taking the legal deduction.   Either they are lying or not reporting any of their income.  This is what I suggest if they still ask for it.   Tell them to write it off and then just offer to pay for their gas.  Also, most entertainers will forgive mileage if they are getting multiple shows in one day. Remember, the money you save in this area can be used for other things.   Would you rather spend it on the kids or the performer?
5. Guarantee:   Ask them if they guarantee their work.   If they are confident in what they do there is no reason for them to say no.   If they don’t and you hired them anyway, then there will be only one person to blame if things go wrong.
6. Discounts:   Many of you already know about discounts for multiple programs in one day.   Most of the time you can get a cheaper price if you share the day with another library.    If you are a library that doesn’t worry about the discount, I promise you there are other libraries near you that would like to take advantage of the discount using your buying power.  So please ask around.    The more you all work together the stronger all of you will be.
7. Performers’ set up:  This is optional. I have always thought that when you are paying someone a lot of money per hour that they should bring all of their own equipment.        What would you think if you hired an electrician, and he asked to borrow a circuit tester from you?     I’m not saying not to supply them with things, but when they ask for a table or make you supply them with bottled water, maybe just say this: “Yes, I can supply these things for you, but you would make it a lot easier on me if you could bring your own materials.”    The reason why I bring this one up is I have heard of a performer that wouldn’t show up if the library would not provide him with all of his requests.   He was being paid $400 for a 45min program.   That’s around $535 an hour.    A bottle of water was the issue.   I haven’t met a librarian yet that makes this kind of money per hour and yet you all are able to provide your own bottled water.   LOL!!!
8. Contracts:    Most of you know this one too.   Get all of the info in writing or e-mail.
9. Books:    With the amount of money you’re paying, ask the performer to promote the books you have on the subject being presented.   This is a great way to get books checked out that might normally be overlooked.

One last comment:     As anything in life, things happen.   A performer can cancel, be late, or have something wrong with costume all beyond his or her control.    So if something does happen, give them a chance to make it up to you.   It could be a discount or even free program.   If you are not happy with things after that, then do what you need to do.

**FREE PROGRAMS**

1. Ronald McDonald:    This one is greatly overlooked.   He does not promote fast food or the restaurant.  Every two years they come up with a theme for their shows.  This spring it will be a show about volunteering and helping others (I highly recommend this one). Every Ronald has his own territory and his own set of skills.  From jugglers, magicians, clowns, or whatever the skill is.   If you want them, call your closest McDonalds and ask the manager for the booking agent number for Ronald McDonald.  Once you are talking to the agent tell them who you are and you want to know what Ronald can do for your library.  They all will do a “meet and greet” and all will read stories to the kids if you wish.   If you have any trouble in this area let me know.  My good friend is Ronald for my area.    I have heard from some of you that you are afraid they might promote the restaurant or fast food.   Talk to other libraries that have had him if you think this is the case.  These guys are true professionals.
2. Orkin Bug Program:  Orkin the pest control company has a program where they come out to the library and talk about insects.  I heard they also bring samples.   I have also heard this is a great program.  If interested get on the Orkin website.  Click where it says schools(same info for libraries) and just follow the directions.
3. Dogs:   Police , therapy, search and rescue dogs.    I have been told there is no cost to these programs but they do accept donations to their organizations. I was at a small  library in Illinois where they closed off the street in front and had a police dog demonstration.    Every type of police dog was there from drug, bomb, crowd control and son.  They had officers in padded outfits that would run at top speed and the police dog would chase him and bring him down.   They showed how highly trained the drug dogs were.  They laid out 10 backpacks with the drugs in one of them (number 7).   When they let the dog go he ran right to number seven and laid flat all in about 3 seconds.   The bags he passed up all had fresh opened cans of dog food in them.  Contact your local county sheriff and see if he can help you out with your request.
4. Sign Language Classes:  If you contact a college near you that offers these classes ask the teacher if she can recommend one of her students that would be a good teacher for your library.  In order to graduate from school they have to do so many hours of community service to practice the skill.   We had two that came out to our magic club for over 2 years for free.   This can easily fit into any summer theme.
5. Free Magic Shows, Balloon Shows, Magic Classes, Balloon Sculpting Classes.   You need to purchase some of your children’s books from this company.    If you want more info contact rebrammer@mediacombb.net
6. Living Land & Waters-----    This is the organization that goes out into the rivers and streams to clean them up.     You may have heard of their barge coming up the Mississippi to clean it up.  The founder has met with three presidents for his organizations work.     They like to show a lot of the stuff they find in the creeks and rivers they clean.  I have seen this myself and I thought it was pretty cool to see.  They do accept donations if you wish to. Contact is   Mike  at 1-309-236-7034
7. Schools---- A lot of you know this already but I have seen several libraries from time to time bring over  groups from the  high schools or colleges such as the choir, band, drama dept, chess club, and so on  to help with programs at the library at little or no cost.     Even some martial arts centers, dance studios and tumbling demonstrations I have seen at the library events.

    These are not guaranteed that you will always get them but there are a lot of libraries that do.

**EASY GRANTS**

1. Casino grants:   A casino in the state of Iowa has to give money to the community in the county it’s in.  It also is required to put money into a pot that gets divided by the counties that do not have a casino in it.  You then apply for grants through your county for the money.  A lot of times it has to be used for projects.
2. Wal-mart:   The grant you are looking for is called Community Fund Grant.  It’s a 5 page on-line form from what I have been told.  Libraries that have a Wal-mart in town average around $500 to $1000.  Libraries that do not have a Wal-mart in town average $250-$500.  Some of the libraries also receive bikes to give as a prize for summer reading.  Wal-Mart refunds their Community  Grant in February of each year.   I would start asking from March on.    If they say no in the fall it could be they are all out.
3. Kohl’s :  This store has a wonderful Volunteer Program.   They will bring up to 5 people to help out your library for 3 hours of whatever you want them to do for you.  You will also receive $500 which they will mail to you after your event.  The store makes the decision whether they will travel to your library.  Several libraries in Iowa have already benefitted from this grant.  To apply go to the customer service Dept. in the store is where you may pick up an application form and this is also where you drop it off.
4. Target:  you must have Target in your town from what I have heard.  I have heard anywhere from $2000--$4000.

1. Dollar Store:  In some libraries, the  local store has donated $500 to the library and some have received the corporate grant which can be for up to $5000 I’ve heard.
2. Shop-CO: Also has money that can go to the community.  They bought out Pamida.    To get Shop Co to help you  will need to speak to the manager or know an employee that would be willing to help you.    The store  lets the employees  give out grants to organizations in the community.   This is one of those grants that if they say they can’t the first time keep trying.
3. Bi-State Literacy Council  Grant:  If you to be in these counties to receive this one.  Scott, Clinton, and Muscatine.
4. R.J. McElroy Trust:  This one is based in the Waterloo area.   You must be in the Northeast corner of Iowa, however the library that told me about this was on the west side out of the area and she has received this 3 times $2000 each time from what I understand.  She recommends a Thank You card
5. I have heard of these types of places giving money as well.  Fire Depts, Farm Bureau, Lion Clubs, Local Banks, Optimists Clubs, and more.

**BOOKS**

1. Capstone Rewards:   This is an awesome program that benefits the library with FREE books from Capstone. Picture Window and Stone Arch.   You may purchase these books from your favorite venders that you are already buying from.  It doesn’t have to be purchased directly from Capstone.  Example: Baker and Taylor,  Rainbow, and many other Jobbers.  For every one of their books you receive points and when you reach a certain level you get a free book.  I have heard it averages 26 purchased books to receive a FREE one.  Here is the good part,  you may accumulate the points over a 5 year period so even a small library can benefit.  Just turn  a copy of your invoice to them and they keep track of your points on line.  You may look them up anytime.  If interested go to capstonerewards.com

**Businesses known for helping out libraries with Summer Reading Programs.**

 (Please email me at sarah@aldenlibrary.org or Rick Brammer at rebrammer@mediacombb.net with any additional ideas to add here!)

1. AppleBee’s: Donations
2. Hy-Vee:   Donations, Also some libraries receive apple coupons to give to all of the children.  Tami Finley and I had talked with the corporate office and they did tell us it was ok for the stores to be approached on the apples.   It is also up to the store director if this is something that the store would want to do.  The point is just ask and let them know that some of the stores do this and hope for the best.
3. Wal-Mart:  Some libraries receive bikes to give away every year.   One of my libraries that was told NO from Wal-Mart and not to bother them again told me that they would not help their library.   I talked to a friend that works there in management and he couldn’t help her, but suggested that she call the corporate office and tell them she wants some help.  The man on the phone told her that he couldn’t help her because he was at too high a level but would have the local store call her.  Within 5 minutes after hanging up from the  corporate office the local store manager called her and said YES I would be glad to help you.(This is the same manager that told her NO and not to bother him with this again).  Since then she gets a bike, and other giveaways for the library.  The town’s population is 5000.   Some libraries double dip and get their grant and summer help.
4. Buffalo Wings: Donations
5. Casey’s:  Donations
6. Happy Joes: Donations
7. Pizza Hut: Donations
8. Banks: Donations. I heard of one that gives the kids ½ dollars
9. Ice Cream Parlors: donations
10. Noodles: Donations
11. And much more

**MORE IDEAS**

1. One of the coolest and cheapest snack idea I have heard of is a half- gallon of ice cream and a box of bugles and you have miniature Ice Cream Cones.   Goes a long ways.
2. One of my libraries when she was doing a Gross-Ology  program  had a punch bowl filled with yellow lemonade and placed a( brand new) toilet seat over the punch bowl and they used a ladle to scoop up the drink.   Huge success she said.
3. I know of one library in Iowa that closed off the street  in front and brought in a Hot Air Balloon and inflated in front of the library.   Very visual.        If interested contact your local Hot Air Balloon Club and see if they have someone that will come out.     Some donate and some cost.