

OPENING AND CLOSING EVENTS

Many libraries start and/or finish their summer reading clubs with a major event. Often, it is easier to attract participants with a large-scale, special program. This will draw more people to the library and encourage more children to join the reading club. A closing event frequently will serve as a celebration of the children's achievements during the summer. You can book special performers for these events (please see the list beginning on pg. 328), or you may choose to run your own. The suggestions in this section can be either opening or closing events, as best suits your library.

Tree Planting Day

Discuss the possibility of planting a tree with your director and determine with which local officials the tree planting must be cleared. If you have an active garden club in your town, it may be willing to work with you to determine and plan a site. Send letters to a local service organization such as the PTA, Rotary, Kiwanis, garden clubs or Friends of the Library asking for a donation of a sapling. Ask for planting instructions at the nursery where the tree is purchased. Arrange with the necessary municipal agencies to have a staff member present on the day of the event to plant the tree. Invite the mayor, local officials, school and library administrators, service clubs and other community organizations active in your town. Invite the mayor or his designee to say a few words at the event. Discuss with your director which other individuals should be invited to talk briefly.

On the day of the planting, the children's librarian or library director either can introduce the Read and Grow theme and highlight the activities planned for the summer or can congratulate the participants for their progress. Complete the day by serving cookies and punch and giving out Read and Grow prizes.

Flower Planting Day

You can carry out a much simpler version of the above event by having a family day at which participants plant small flowering shrubs, flowers or plants on the library grounds or plant them in flower pots to be exhibited in the library.

Have registration for this event to determine the number of people who will attend. If you will be planting on the grounds, purchase flats of flowers, small shrubs or plants. Have on hand shovels, trowels, small rakes and sprinkling cans filled with water. Participating families may be willing to donate these items for the event if they are contacted ahead of time.

If you will be planting in flowerpots, buy enough flowerpots for each family or have families bring their own. When the planting is finished, families can display their flowers in the library, and children can be responsible for watering them. Some pots can be planted with seeds, and the children can bring these pots home.

If there is an active garden club in your town, it may be willing to work with you on this project.

Books and Berries Ice Cream Social

Sponsor an ice cream social for the families, using fresh or frozen berries for the toppings for the ice cream. This event can be used to introduce upcoming programs or to celebrate the achievements of the summer with prizes, certificates, etc.

Family Scrapbook Night

Each family gets 2 to 5 pages to decorate in any way it wishes using family photographs, pictures or magazine clippings depicting favorite family activities, books or movies. Writing about favorite books can be a part of the scrapbook. Have scrapbook pages, crayons, markers, gel pens, glue, old magazines, ribbon and doilies on hand for people to work with. The scrapbook would remain in the library.

Serve fresh fruit salad and fresh veggies and dips as a nutritious snack.

Library Carnival

As with the other events, this can serve to kick off your program or conclude it. But preparation is time-consuming, so make sure to leave enough time to plan and execute your ideas.

There are many ways to run a library carnival. One effective method is to give the project to a core group of teen volunteers. Let them come up with the games and activities, plan and organize the event, and then run the program with your supervision. This will actively involve young adults in a major library program, give them significant responsibility and provide a great event for your library. For specific suggestions for running a carnival with teen volunteers, please see the Teen Section, pp....

Whoever runs the program, even a simple carnival can involve a great deal of time for planning, creating the games and running the program, so start the process early. You can take many traditional carnival games and design them so they are related to the theme. Some games to consider are:

Garden Ring Toss: Purchase a ring-toss game, or create your own, and decorate the poles with silk flowers that are small enough for the rings to go over.

Fishing for Families of Fish: Create fish of different sizes so that you have families of fish. Tape one paper clip to each fish. Use a long dowel as a fishing rod. Tie a string to one end and tape a small magnet to the end of the string.

Bowling for Bugs: Decorate 16 small, plastic water bottles with different bugs. Fill each with about 2 inches of water. Set the bottles up in a bowling pyramid. Use a tennis ball as a bowling ball. As a variation, you can decorate the bottles with anything that grows.

Bean-Bag Toss: Create or borrow a bean-bag toss. It should be made of sturdy plywood and be able to stand on its own. Paint flowers, baby animals or anything that grows on the front (you can trace using an opaque projector as an alternative to drawing free hand). Cut at least two holes for bean bags.

Bucket Toss: Decorate buckets of varying sizes with paper flowers or plants and

place them on the floor. Toss bean bags or tennis balls into the buckets.

The carnival also might include a craft area, a scheduled musical performance or a magic show. You also can include prizes and snacks, as your budget allows.