

Programs in the Park

Or, how to get 658 people to come out to a park to see a penguin walk around on a stage

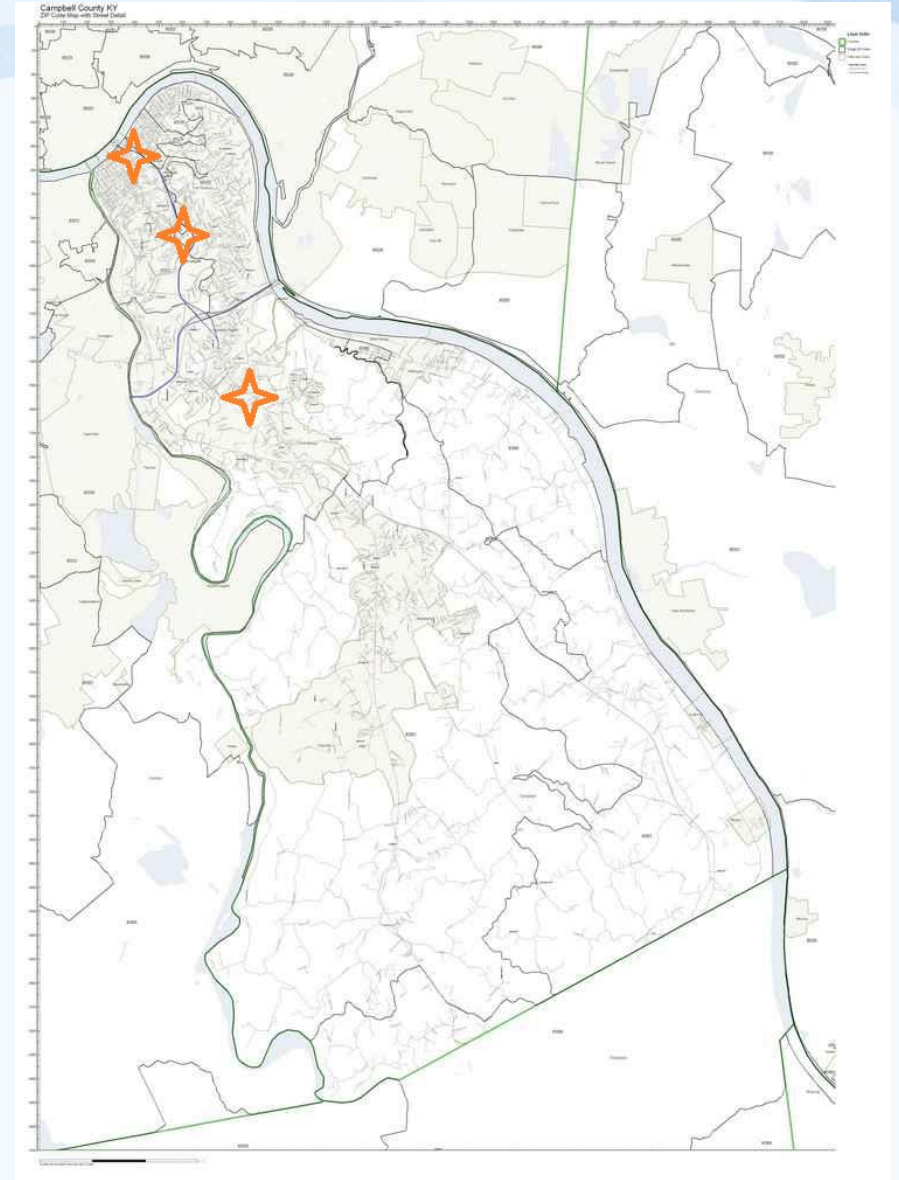


Who we are

- Campbell County Public Library
- 3 branch system serving 90,000 residents.



The PR department made me put this here.



Location, location, location...

- What area/population are you trying to serve?*
- What resources do you have in your county?*
- Do these things match up?*

What population are we trying to serve?

- Outreach events for patrons on the edge of service area.
 - Shows what a library can do for potential supporters.
- Outreach events for patrons smack dab in the middle of our service area.
 - Reminds them what we do just down the street at the branches.
 - They vote, too.
- We tell ourselves that we're fighting summer learning loss, but we're really just there to see the Mentos/Coke fountain.

What resources do you have in your county?

- *New in 2014, Stapleton Pavilion at AJ Jolly Park*
- *Covered, has power, seats 100+ kids on the floor*
- *Parking for 100+ cars nearby*

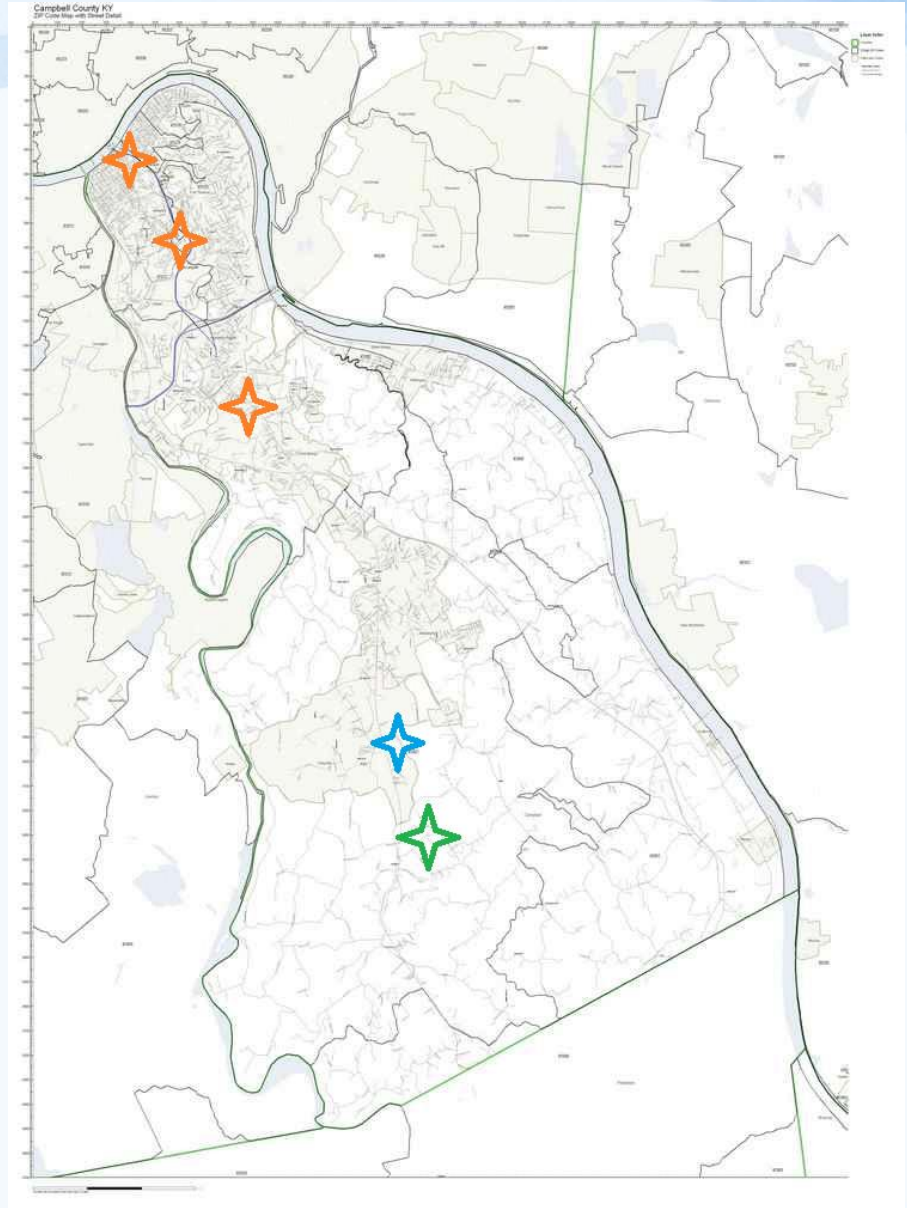


What type of outreach do *you* need to do?

- *Series events?*
 - *Continually demonstrate what a library can do.*
- *One time festivals?*
 - *Celebrating the end of a season, paying back loyal patrons.*
- *Roving park visits?*
 - *Getting the word out to a target audience.*
 - *Bring patrons to your branches.*

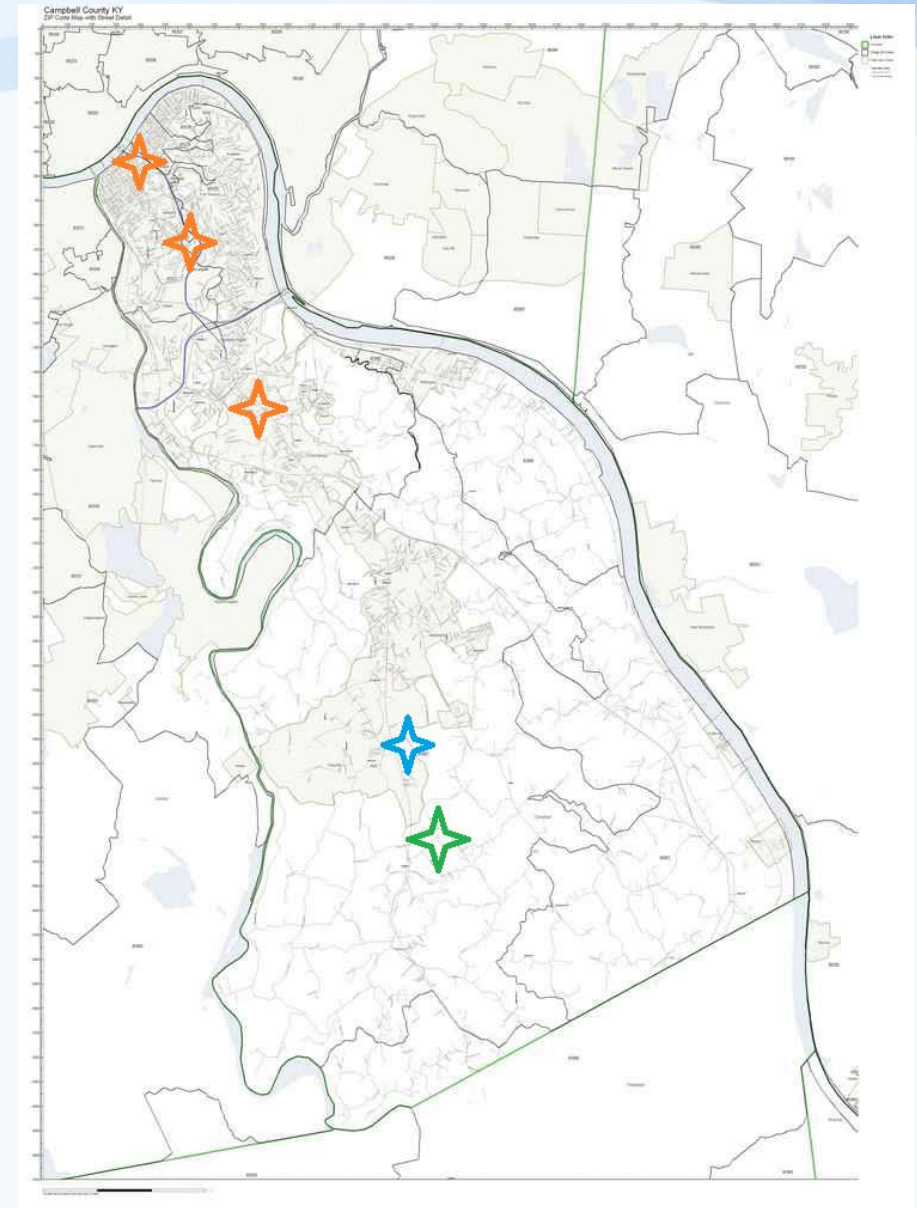
Location, location, location...

- What area/population are you trying to serve?
 - CCPL wants to reach the underserved southern half of the county
 - CCPL wants the patrons down there to see what all a library can offer
 - CCPL wants goodwill from future voters



Outreach events for patrons on the edge of service area

- Blue star marks land owned for potential 4th branch.
- Green Star marks AJ Jolly Park.
 - Largest county run park in the state
 - Site of Jolly Thursdays



So we started Jolly Thursdays

- Based loosely on Kenton County's "Wild Wednesdays" that they've been doing for almost 20 years
- Kenton County Parks and Rec funded through budget, grants, and partnerships.
- Greater Cincinnati Foundation, Toyota, Subway.

What is Wild Wednesdays

- Greater Cincinnati Foundation grant for combating summer learning loss.
- KCPL does a warm-up story time beforehand, as the crowd gathers.
- Toyota, very large employer in area.
- Subway, food at half price.
 - Doesn't have to be a grant. Can be a deal to buy lots of food at half price, win-win situation.
 - They have the geographic ability to serve lunch and make it a picnic event each week. We do not have that ability, but it adds to it if you can.

Jolly Thursdays

- *Greater Cincinnati Foundation grant for combating summer learning loss still applies.*
- *No large employer like Toyota in the county, plenty of smaller employers though.*
- *No warm up story time, no food for us. Food not close by, we start earlier and we are the presenters, so no warm-up.*
- *Important point: Parks and Rec should sign off on the grants. Grant givers perceive libraries to have more money than parks departments for this sort of thing.*

Bang for the buck

- Average event costs \$300
- 175 attendees average first year
- 350 attendees average second year
- Total ROI is about \$1.50 per attendee for CCPL, or about \$2.50 for all 3 sponsors together.

Public Library	Parks and Rec	Cooperative Extension
Cover 4 events	Cover 2 events	Cover 2 events
\$2,000 budget	\$1,000 budget	\$1,000 budget
3 staff	3 staff	2 staff

Jolly Thursdays – Important lessons and stuff

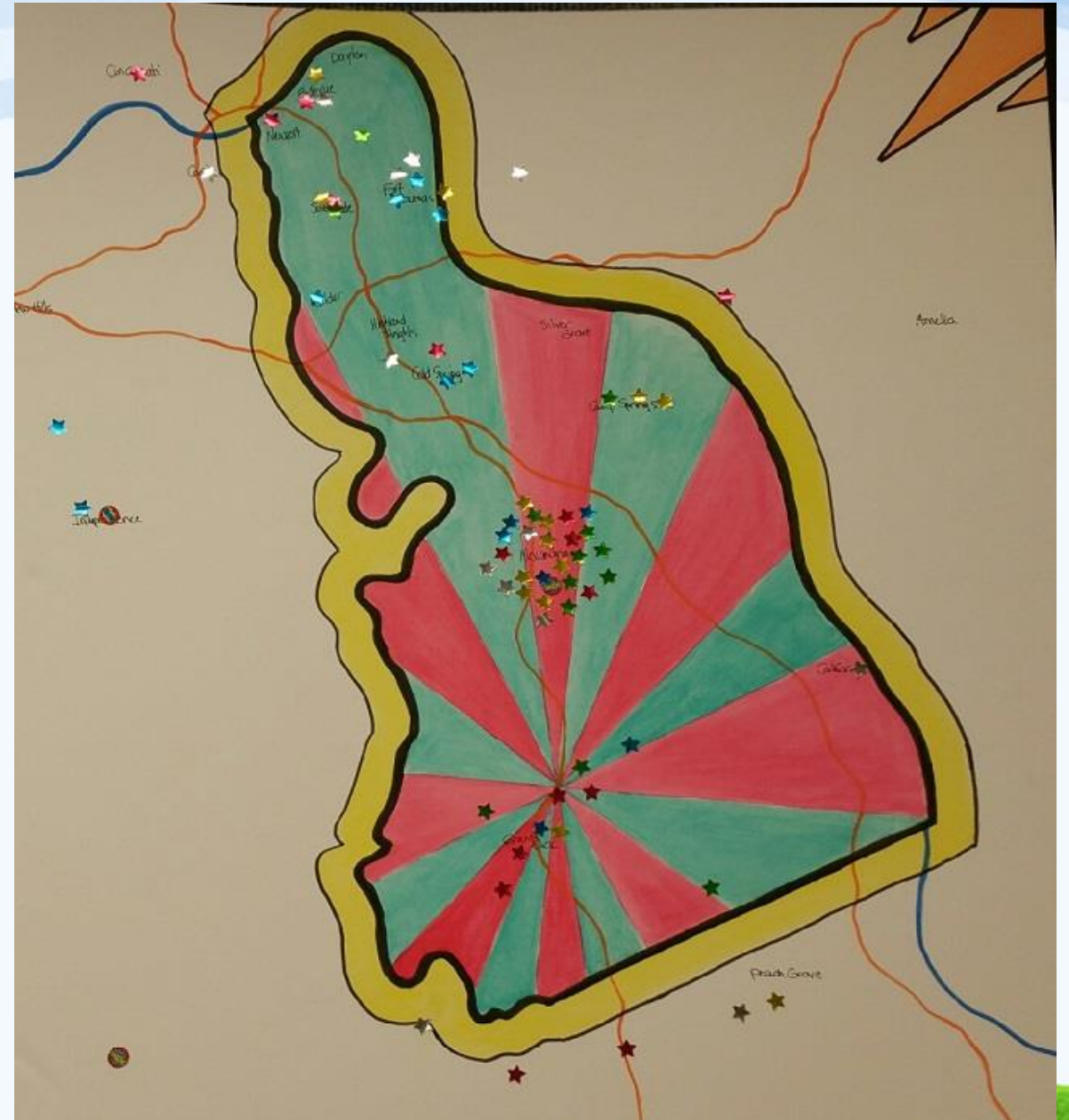
- Make it a mix of education and entertainment.
- Partners with Parks and Recreation, and Cooperative Extension Service
- Parks and Rec had no programming budget. They do now!
- Cooperative Extension never hosted a program with more than 50 participants. They have now!

Jolly Thursdays – Important lessons and stuff

- Two years of a mix of education and entertainment taught us...
 - Wind is a factor. Science demos do not like wind or humidity. Plan accordingly.
 - One Penguin is cool, but a whole petting zoo is way better for a crowd.
 - Musicians are great outside for a crowd of 200 kids, magicians are not (unless they plan on making the entire park disappear)
 - Magic shows and Science demos can work, just know your space.

Jolly Thursdays – Measuring for results

- An early Jolly Thursday was a Superhero party.
- We asked the kids to put their house on a map to show where they would be the local superhero.
- Now we know where the patrons are coming from.



Jolly Thursdays – Important lessons and stuff

- Find a sound system or learn the ins and outs of the local system.
- Headsets are important. Hard to do a magic trick holding a mic with one hand.
- Kentucky Reptile Zoo is very cool, but bring a stout friend.
- It's summer, provide water. Or better yet, get the Kona Ice guy to show up.



Jolly Thursdays – Important lessons and stuff

- Book in the winter. Performers start booking up quickly for summer.
- You don't have to have a performer every week.
 - We finish the season with a Big Finale: Touch-a-Truck.
 - Costs us next to nothing, Fire, Police, Public Works, and Military will all come out, generally for free.
 - We also used our friends and connections to find a race car, an 18 wheeler, and a boat.

Jolly Thursdays – Important lessons and stuff

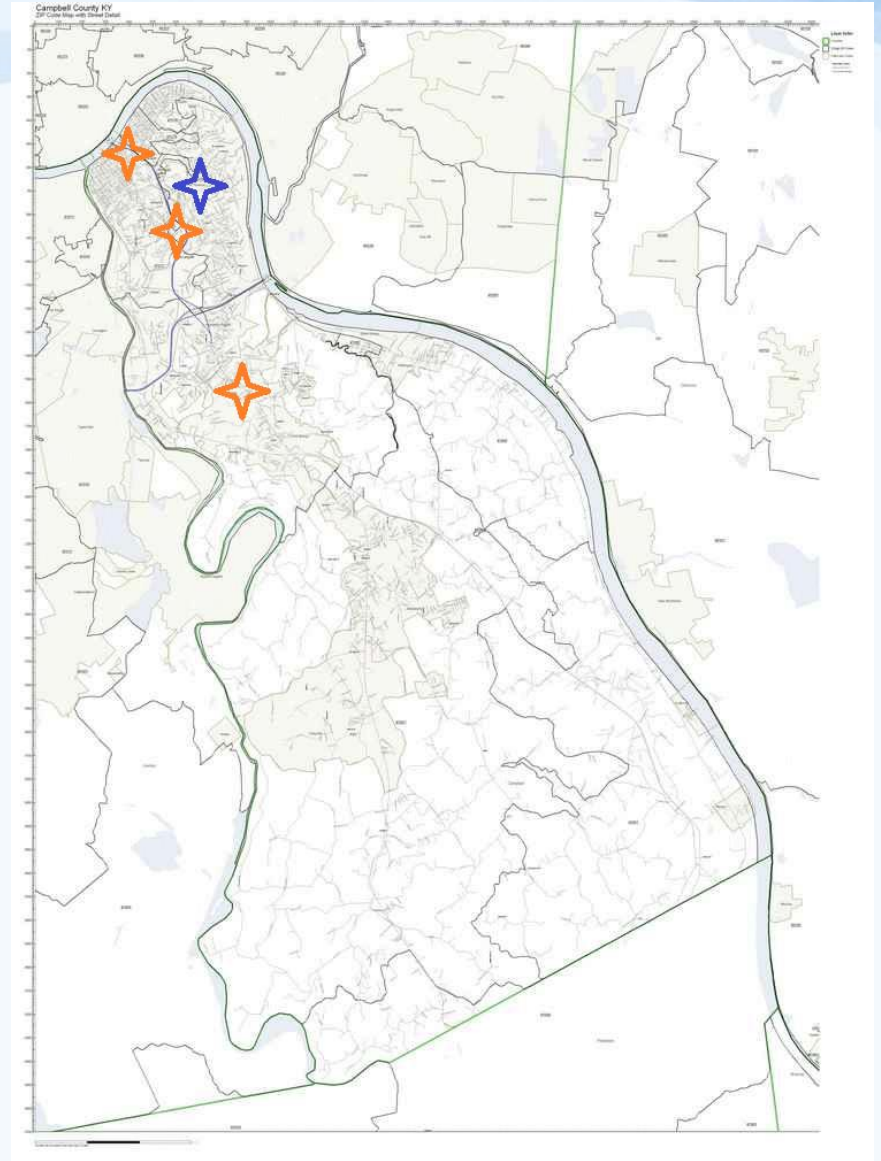
- Have other stuff to do.
 - Siblings of all ages attend, even if the main audience is the 6 year old in the family. So, have stuff for the bored teens and the little siblings.
 - Bubble and water play tables in a shady spot for the littlest kids.
 - Honor book table if you can't remotely circulate books. And, have books for all ages, even the parents might find something to take home.

Again, what type of outreach do *you* need to do?

- *One time festivals?*
 - *Celebrating the end of a season, paying back loyal patrons.*
- *End of summer/back to school pizza party?*
 - *Worked with Campbell County Middle and High schools to have a special Summer Reading log simply printed in their school colors.*
 - *Anyone who completed it could attend a pizza party at the school in September.*
 - *49 kids completed 30 hours, about a 33% completion rate.*

One time we all read a book...

- Also newly constructed Fort Thomas Amphitheater
- Covered, has power, seats 75+ kids on the floor, hundreds in the bowl
- In one of the larger city parks for the northern part of the county



World's Largest Story Time

- Partnered with Cincinnati Enquirer and the Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County to celebrate the 175th birthday of the Cincinnati Enquirer.
- Was a one-off event but patrons loved it so much we're making it annual.



A really involved reading of Chicka Chicka Boom Boom.

- Kona Ice for refreshment. Struck a deal on bulk price
- Giant beach balls to roll around while the crowd gathered
- Craft tables **Board President** not pictured
- Balloon artists, also to kill the time before the start.



What we learned about the August heat

- August is a warm month.
- Noon is a warm part of the day.
- Kids take naps and eat around noon.
- Newspaper people might not know these facts.



Bang for the buck

- The event cost \$800, plus incidentals and staff time of a dozen people.
- 250 to 300 kids and parents attended
- Is \$3.00 per attendee, plus a month of planning and lots of staff time, worth it?

Item	Cost	Use
Kona Ice	\$450	300
Balloon Artists	\$250	150
Crafts	\$100	150

Roving park visits

- Nothing creepy at all about a van pulling up in a city park and offering something to kids for free.
- Promo materials work well here. Pop-up story times... not so much.
- But, the lesson is, if you have a vehicle, use it.





Stock image of extremely photogenic children in nicely matching raincoats. Not actual CCPL patrons.

But, it brings me to the rain question...

Alternate locations

- *Do you care?*
 - *Is this a one time big investment or ongoing series?*
 - *Will the presenter still charge for it? Do they require a rain-out policy?*
 - *Can you make it up with a rain date?*
 - *How big are the crowds? Will rain diminish them?*
- *If so, what options do you have?*
 - *Gymnasiums, fire departments, cooperative extension office, other parks, go back to the branch...*

Alternate locations

- Does it still meet your original purpose?
 - For Jolly Thursday it had to serve the southern reaches, so it had to be nearby.
 - We settled on a space that can hold about 100 people total, figuring that the rain would cut the crowd anyway.
 - For World's Largest Story Time it had to be as large a space.
 - The park has a gymnasium as well, so we booked it just in case.

In summary

- People don't arrive on time, at all, for outside events. We call it parent vs. grandparent time.
- You might have to pay for the first year or two alone. Once Parks and Recreation or Extension or other partners see your numbers they'll get more enthusiastic.
- Granting agencies also want to see a track record.
- Involve your Board members! They have connections, they know people.

In summary

- Social media is your best friend. Double your numbers in a year!
- Cancellations and delays should be announced on FB, Twitter, website, whatever you have.
- Mothers and grandmothers are on social media, and they talk and share.
 - We had one grandmother drive 45 minutes to bring the grandkids after a friend shared a post.
- Take pictures! Your social media person will need them next year.

It's expensive, but worth it.

- *It takes a lot of time in planning and execution, but worth it.*
 - *Expect 3 staff for 4 hours for something like Jolly Thursdays*
 - *Expect 6-8 staff for 3 hours for a end of season festival*
- *Nature stinks and going outside is a pain, but worth it.*
 - *Remember to relax your dress code, you will get warm*
 - *Remember to bring a change of clothes, you will sweat*
- *Nature is beautiful and you are being paid to make children happy while spending your workday in a park.*

You should totally do this

- People really want/need something to do with kids in the summer.
- Children like anything and everything; animals, explosions, music, magicians, drum circles, superhero parties, big trucks, musicians with animals...
- The point is, you'll do well no matter what you do.

Questions?



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Thank you!

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