



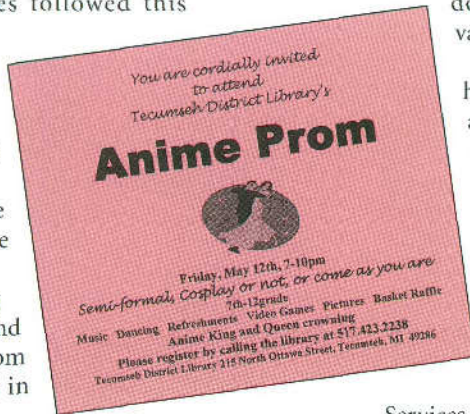
Anime Prom

Most Valuable Pop Culture Program

WHAT HAPPENED

In an innovative twist on the classic high school prom, teens were encouraged to dress up as their favorite characters from Japanese animated films (“cosplay”); compete in a video game tournament playing **Halo 1**, **Halo 2**, and **One Piece Grand Battle**; dance to popular J-Pop music spun by a deejay; purchase raffle tickets to win an anime prize basket; and vote for the King and Queen of the Prom. Pizza fueled the fun. To preserve the memories made that evening, prom photos were taken at \$3 per shot to cover the cost of film developing. Activities followed this schedule:

- 7:00 Doors open, Registration
- 7:15 Anime Basket Raffle, Music/Dancing
- 7:30 Video Game Tournament begins
- 7:45 Hurry, buy those raffle tickets to win the Anime Basket!
- 8:00 Doors close, Raffle Drawing
- 8:15 Sign up for Anime King and Queen (for cosplayers) and Prom King and Queen (for those in formal or casual attire)
- 8:30 Pizza is served
- 9:00 Anime and Prom Kings and Queens are crowned with Burger King Happy Meal crowns
- 9:15 Pictures
- 9:45 Last call for Pictures
- 10:00 Prom ends, Clean-up begins!



INSPIRATION

The creative spark behind this program came from Manda Braman, a disgruntled teen, and Teen Services Librarian Anne Keller. “At our monthly Anime Club meeting,” Keller explains, “some of the teens

were talking about the prom. They didn't know if they were going because it's the same all the time. Manda and I looked at each other and simultaneously said, 'Anime Prom,' and the idea was born.”

MEET THE PROM KING AND QUEEN.



PHOTO CREDIT: ANNE KELLER

WHAT: A creation of the library's Anime Club, the Anime Prom combined teens' love of all things anime (Japanese animation) with the classic idea of a high school prom.

WHERE: In two meeting rooms at Tecumseh District Library, Tecumseh, Michigan.

WHO: More than forty teens, including members of the Tecumseh District Library Anime Club.

WHEN: After hours on Friday, May 12, 2006, from 7:00 to 10:00 p.m. (The librarian took the advice in VOYA's April 2006 *Get With the Program* column and notified the alarm company that the event was taking place.)

Submitted by: Anne Keller, Teen Services Librarian

WHO HELPED?

Members of the library's Anime Club met for four weeks leading up to the event to plan and coordinate the evening. One teen volunteered to be the deejay and another donated the use of a projector for the video game tournament. At the conclusion of the prom, participants spontaneously pitched in to help clean up the gigantic mess. According to Keller, the cleanup was “almost the highlight of the night. They loved popping the balloons, ripping down posters, and they even vacuumed!”

The library's supportive staff helped by donating items such as Christmas lights, chips, pop, plates, napkins, and baked goods. Chaperoning the event were Adult Services Librarian Melanie Earley, who also registered guests as they arrived; Building Engineer Glenn Skinner, who also helped with clean-up; and Teen

Services Librarian Anne Keller and her husband, Brent.

Wizywig Collectibles in Ann Arbor, a store that specializes in Japanese pop culture, generously donated these items for the Basket Raffle: **Overman King Gainer**, **Dice: To the Rescue**, and **Dice and the Mystery of Heron** DVDs; three anime posters, **Stand Alone Complex OST 2** and the **Mars Daybreak Original Sound Log** CDs; one digicap and one chasocap; three postcards; and one sneak peek Peach Fuzz book. The library purchased two books about how to draw manga and kicked in three smiley coin purses, two yellow **Pacman** squeakers, and Smarties candies. McDonald's donated punch. Basil Boys, a local pizzeria, provided the pizza.

PAYOFF

The Anime Prom gave participants an opportunity to interact with other teens who share their passion for anime while enjoying elements of a school prom in a spoof of the tradition. The library's Anime Club was able to plan and facilitate a well-attended program with library



PHOTO CREDIT: ANNE KELLER

staff and in turn learn about teamwork and gain a sense of accomplishment. The prom brought two new members into the club, which hopes to make the Anime Prom an annual event.

HOW TO DO IT

Plan

Anime Club members spent considerable time devising the schedule of events to achieve their goal of combining prom traditions with anime activities.

Prepare

With no budget, the program was entirely produced with donations and volunteers. Most of the preparation involved contacting local businesses for donations and soliciting staff, trustees, and the Friends of the Library for other needed items

Anime Club members arrived two hours before the prom to help decorate the two basement meeting rooms where the event would be held—the dance in the larger room, and the food and game tournament in the smaller room, where round tables were covered with white tablecloths and streamers, with balloons as centerpieces. The sound system and projector were set up, and the walls were decked with anime posters of the club's own artwork, blank paper and a chalkboard on which teens could draw their own anime, and a poster advertising the Anime Club. A table contained donated freebie anime magazines.

Library Building Engineers Glenn Skinner and Oscar Lopez set up all the Christmas lights two days before the prom.

Publicize

The prom provided an opportunity to promote the library's Anime Club: All teens attending the event received beaded bookmarks listing the days and times for Anime Club meetings. Club members really got the word out—most teens found out about the Anime Prom by word of mouth. At every planning session, members brought more names to add to the registration list. Keller did the usual library publicity through newspapers, flyers, and telling teens who came into the library.

BLOOPERS/DO-OVERS

After getting nowhere when asking community businesses for donations, Keller learned a valuable lesson. Library Director Gayle Hazelbaker advised her to ask for exactly what she wanted. For example, Keller asked the pizzeria to donate five large



PHOTO CREDIT: ANNE KELLER

pizzas. Asking directly for specific items yielded great success.

One common occurrence at teen parties was ticklish to handle. Says Keller, "We had to be a bit vigilant in breaking up some heavy makeout sessions between couples. They were cool about getting caught and danced with a balloon between them to show their restraint." One of the chaperones was concerned about two boys dancing together. They were obviously a couple. Yet all the teens were totally accepting of the two boys being "out." Keller observed that "although society still has a long way to go, maybe this generation is the beginning of tolerance and change."

RAVES

Outstanding! More than forty teens participated in the event. Three diehard anime fans from the club dressed up in complete, elaborate costumes. A few girls wore prom dresses and brought dates wearing ties. Teen Services Librarian Anne Keller found the Anime Prom to be "one of the most innovative and rewarding programs" that she ever facilitated. "Everything was so organized that it went off without a hitch. I was very pleased with the outcome and proud of all the teens who helped planned this event."

The Anime Club thought the prom was "pretty cool." Many teens remarked, "This is free, no way!" and "Even the pizza is free? No way!"

Keller's response was slightly sarcastic and teasing: "See, libraries are cool places to hang out. Times have changed—librarians are no longer wearing buns and glasses perched upon our noses. We're not glaring down at you and shushing you for being too loud. Nowadays libraries not only want teens here, we embrace you."

Pretending to cry, the teens teased back: "We think we're gonna cry... or hurl!" ■

—Compiled by Kevin A. R. King and Anne Keller



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