[Mermaid Story Time and Party](#)

[Belle Isle Library](#)

Children

|

Tweens (10-12)

Mermaid Story Time and Party

Apr 26, 2018

[$251-500](#)

$$

Byline

Katherine Hickey, Children's Librarian at the Metropolitan Library System, Belle Isle Library, Oklahoma City, Okla.

Taking advantage of the popularity of mermaids in pop culture and merchandising, the Belle Isle Library hosted a special Mermaid Story Time and Party.

A "professional mermaid" read two books while attendees enjoyed ocean-themed snacks. Afterwards, various mermaid crafts and activities were available.

Advanced Planning

Staff booked the mermaid through a local party planning agency that provides costumed, in-character personas for various events. All supplies were purchased beforehand, and food was purchased the day before the event.

A programming meeting occurred a few days before for staff to review each person's responsibilities. A staff member was assigned to each of the following duties:

- Decorations
- Food
- Sensory bins
- Slime activity
- Crafts

This group effort significantly alleviated stress on the day of the program and allowed each librarian to focus on one task.

Marketing

To promote the program, a couple of passive programs were set up two weeks before the event. For the first program, customers were encouraged to guess how many shells were contained in a jar and cast their ballot for a chance to win a bag of mermaid swag (e.g. a mermaid notepad and stickers purchased from a local dollar store). A second passive program involved small turtles printed on green paper that customers could decorate using paint sticks. The turtles were then taped to a wall.

We also hung fliers of the event to make the ocean/mermaid connection clear.

Finally, the mermaid story time was included in the system's online calendar of events and physical calendar distributed in each branch. The program was also advertised at other children and family events the month before.

The passive programs were extremely successful, with nearly 100 customers painting a turtle or guessing the number of shells.

Budgeting

Our budget was as follows:

- Professional mermaid: $225
- Food: $130
- Activity supplies: $150

Day-of-event Activity

Day-of-event actively broke down as follows:

- 1 p.m.: Decorate the room and set out the food.
- 2 p.m.: Customers arrived and were encouraged to grab some snacks and have a seat at the story time circle.
- 2:10 p.m.: A librarian introduced the mermaid and explained the flow of the events. The mermaid read two books that she had brought, a picture book version of the Little Mermaid and an Ariel story from the book ["5 Minute Princess Stories."](#)
- 2:30 p.m.: Customers were encouraged to line up to take a picture with the mermaid, and then move to the various activities.

The mermaid themed food we had on hand were:

- Mini cupcakes topped with a mermaid tail
- Wavy chips
- Lemonade with blue food coloring
- Carrot sticks with dip
- Goldfish crackers

The activities hosted after the story time/photo-op with the mermaid were:

1. **[Make mermaid slime](#)**: We pre-made the base slime and put it in small jars. Customers lined up to choose which dye and glitter they wanted to add into their slime. They then went to another table to drop sequins into the slime and stir it all together with popsickle sticks.

2. **Play in sensory bins**: One kiddie pool and one kitchen table were filled with water, water beads, shells and small plastic mermaid dolls.

3. **Make a [dingelhopper](#)**: Children could decorate a fork with beads and charms.

4. **[Paper Plate Hermit Crab](#)**: Paper plates, googly-eyes, pipe cleaners and paint were used to create hermit crabs.

5. **[Paper Plate Clam Shell](#)**: Paper plates, googly-eyes and markers were used to create clams.

6. **[Mermaid book display](#)**: Customers were invited to check out books from a themed book display.

Program Execution

The sensory bins and slime were located in the downstairs of the library (where the story time took place), while the crafts were upstairs. This layout worked well and prevented areas or stations from getting crowded.

Many of the 120 people who attended expressed appreciation for the program. All activities flowed well because staff members were on hand to help.

I have to say that staff avoided a major mess by not having the kids make their own slime from scratch. Having the pre-made base in a small cup worked great, and children were happy to wait their turn to choose their dye and glitter. Clean-up took less than 30 minutes. Many of the supplies purchased will be reused for other programs (like the sensory beads and the slime supplies).

Overall, the program was a success because it attracted new customers who were intrigued by the concept and it reinforced regular customers' perception of the library as a place that provides unique opportunities. Furthermore, nearly all of the books on the display were checked out, thereby driving circulation numbers.

Our outcomes were measured by:

- Attendance (new and regular customers)
- Verbal feedback
- Circulation numbers

Advice

The professional mermaid did an excellent job, but if you are on a smaller budget, it might be worth renting or buying a mermaid costume and having a staff member do the storytime. We had originally anticipated having the event outside but the weather did not permit.

In retrospect, this may have been for the best as the size of the group could have presented a safety concern (the library is located right next to a busy street).

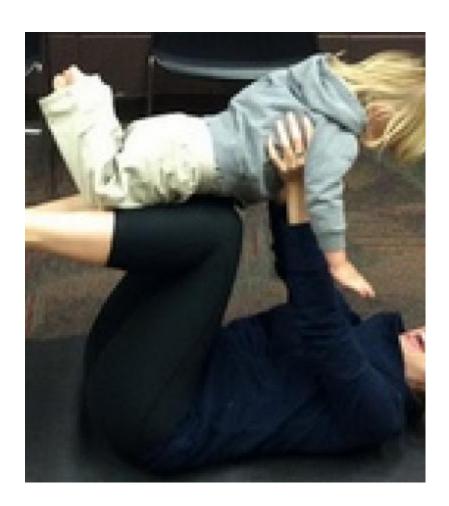Have as many hands on deck the day of!

Supporting Materials

[Download this Program as a PDF](#)

- Feedback (Coming Soon!)
- [Programming Librarian Facebook Group](#)

More Programs

Jul 27, 2015
Children (9 and under)+ |
[Image](#)

[Storytime Stretching](#)

Audiences:

Audience
Children (9 and under)
Apr 24, 2015
Intergenerational+ | $
[Image](#)

[Remember When StoryTime](#)

Audiences:

Intergenerational
Sep 10, 2015
Children (9 and under)+ | $$$
[Image](#)

Sensory-Friendly Storytime

Audiences:

Children (9 and under)