

101 Ideas for Getting Creative and Expressing Yourself @ Your Library

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Children:

1. If your library has removable ceiling tiles, have a program where the kids paint and decorate them to brighten up your children's area.
2. For libraries that are closer to Indianapolis, consider borrowing the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra's petting zoo. You can do it for a \$50 deposit, but you have to pick up and return the instruments yourself. To find out more, visit:
http://www.indianapolissymphony.org/learningcommunity/elementary/petting_zoo
3. While doing a storytime based on music, play musical chairs.
4. With your school aged kids, try a reader's theater during a program. Two scripts can be found here:
<http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/alsc/initiatives/kidscampaign/libraryactivities.cfm>
5. Create cool posters of word clouds with summer reading words using www.wordle.net
6. Host an origami program.
7. Surprise art contest: create multiple grab bags with same items in it (i.e. a feather, some pom-poms, a few Ellison shapes and other items); tell the kids that they cannot add to the elements included other than attaching them to a piece of paper. Have area art teachers be the judges.
8. In a program about water, try making a motion-ocean. Instructions can be found here:
<http://kids.nationalgeographic.com/Activities/FunScience/Motionocean>
9. Present a program on the art of Eric Carle. His website www.eric-carle.com has some great slideshows of how he creates his papers and pictures. Invite the patrons to make their own collages in Carle's style.
10. Author/Illustrator Denise Fleming has several arts and crafts ideas on her website. Consider hosting a program about her work and try your hand at some of the activities. Her website is www.denisefleming.com.
11. Have a contest inviting the children to make book covers for their favorite book. Have the patrons vote on their favorites.
12. Using the template from ALSC's Kids! @ Your Library Campaign, host a bookmark contest. The template can be found here:
<http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/alsc/initiatives/kidscampaign/libraryactivities.cfm>
13. Also from the ALSC Kids! @ Your Library campaign, try a few reader's theaters with your kids. Scripts can be found at the bottom of this page:
<http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/alsc/initiatives/kidscampaign/libraryactivities.cfm>
14. For a trivia event, post the first line of famous books asking the kids to guess what the title is.
15. Make flowers out of coffee filters and have a science lesson at the same time. Instructions can be found here:
<http://www.stevespanglerscience.com/experiment/00000201>
16. Present a program where the kids can make their own magnetic poetry kits using magnetic tape.
17. If you have room outside, have a "Paint like Pollock" party. Here's YouTube video of how much fun it can be: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-xSCU19SCZ8>
18. For another painting activity, you might try letting the kids use watercolors in a Mondrian painting. Instructions can be found here: <http://www.artprojectsforkids.org/> on the Friday, November 14, 2008 posting.
19. For an easy and inexpensive program, try painting with brewed coffee.
20. Host a program featuring edible play dough. The kids can make their own dough and then create sculptures out of. Beware, however, that the recipe includes peanut butter! Instructions can be found here: <http://www.kinderart.com/kitchen/eddough.shtml>

21. For a fun and sort of gross program, make goo out of cornstarch and water. Instructions can be found here: <http://www.stevespanglerscience.com/experiment/00000088>
22. Try another science based program by inviting the kids to do a nature walk and then make prints on sun print paper with found objects. Instructions can be found here: <http://www.stevespanglerscience.com/experiment/sun-print-paper1>
23. Kirigami is the art of cutting paper (think snowflakes), but there are lots of neat patterns available for kids. Check out this site for suggestions: <http://www.origami-resource-center.com/kirigami-for-kids.html>
24. Host a tea party and invite the children to come dressed as their favorite book characters.
25. While summer is a bit late for kite season, that's no reason to avoid having a kite-making program. Super easy instructions can be found here: <http://www.aloha.net/~bigwind/20kidskites.html> The kids can easily decorate their own kites. You can even display them around your library.
26. Jan Brett's website features several drawing videos. Host a program featuring her books and use the videos to show the kids how to draw several of her characters. Her website is www.janbrett.com.
27. Present a program on Aboriginal art. The kids can easily create didgeridoos and dot paintings. Simple instructions can be found here: http://kidscraftweekly.com/aboriginal_culture_issue.html
28. To teach your patrons about African art, check out: <http://pbskids.org/africa/mask/rabbit.html> for printable masks. There is also a video of a Swahili folktale on the site.
29. Chinese lanterns are easy to make and would be a great craft for a program exploring the arts in China. You find instructions here: <http://www.enchantedlearning.com/crafts/chinesenewyear/lantern/>
30. Another country that is fun to learn about is Guatemala. Here's a toilet paper craft of a bird from Guatemala: <http://familycrafts.about.com/gi/dynamic/offsite.htm?zi=1/XJ/Ya&sdn=familycrafts&zu=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.dltk-kids.com%2Fanimals%2Fmquetzal.html>
31. Host a luau and teach basic of hula dancing.
32. If you are really brave and have a bit of drawing talent, you might try a drawing program highlighting the books in your collection. Here is also another site with step-by-step instructions: http://drawsketch.about.com/od/drawanimalsstepbystep/Easy_Animal_Step_by_Step_Drawing_for_Kids.htm
33. For a display, encourage your patrons to draw their favorite book characters and submit them to the library.
34. Have a marshmallow program inviting the kids to make sculptures or other objects out of marshmallows. Here are directions for making a couple of cute animals: <http://kitchenretro.wordpress.com/2008/04/16/marshmallow-favors-how-to-part-1-a-little-lamb-and-a-piglet/>
35. For a fun craft featuring recycling, ask patrons to bring in juice boxes and try your hand at making these cute dolls: <http://crafts.kaboose.com/juice-box-dolls.html>
36. Introduce the art of mosaics to your patrons. Here are easy instructions on how to make them with paper: http://www.wityliving.com/crafts/kids/make_papermosaic.html
37. Have your kids create their own jigsaw puzzles. Have them draw their own picture on heavy tag board, then cut the picture up randomly. They can spend time figuring out each other's puzzles.
38. Here are TONS of ideas on shapes to make out of fingerprints: <http://www.123child.com/UBB/showthread.php?p=50992>
39. Play "Simon Says" with your patrons using book character names instead of "Simon."
40. Kaleidoscopes can be easily made with recycled materials donated by your patrons. Here are very simple instructions: <http://kids.nationalgeographic.com/Activities/FunScience/Be-dazzled>
41. Host a Lego competition. To see how another library does it, check out this site: <http://www.greenvillelibrary.org/index.php/Newsflash2/Lego-Competition.html>

Teens:

42. Invite a local dance instructor in to give a basic dance class. Afterwards, you can host your own "Dancing with the Patrons" event.
43. Have a card making program inviting your teens to create blank cards to send to the troops overseas so that they may send them back home to their friends and families.
44. For your teens who are interested in set building, try this activity:
http://school.discoveryeducation.com/lessonplans/programs/behind_the_scenes/
45. Create a creative writing contest for your teens. Give them a writing prompt to start.
46. Host a cake decorating contest for your teens.
47. Have your teen group play charades based on popular book titles or characters.
48. Host a collage program with a twist...make it a group project that can be displayed in the library. Here are simple instructions:
http://redstudio.moma.org/in_the_making/diy/diy_collaborative.pdf
49. Using donated books from your Friends group, have your teens create a miniature golf course. You can have the books standing on end, opened spine-up to create a tent to put the ball through... You can use balled up paper and yard sticks for golf balls and clubs.
50. Again using donated books, offer them up to your teens and have them create a work of art only using recycled materials. Display them around the library with placards listing the materials used and the teen's name.
51. Consider having a battle of the bands contest for local teen music groups.
52. Put up a magnet board (or a cookie sheet) in your teen area with magnetic words and encourage them to create their own poems.
53. If you have a computer lab available, present a program on how to make your own comic strips using Bitstrips: <http://www.bitstrips.com>
54. Offer an open mic night or poetry slam where teens are encouraged to share their poems.
55. Host a poetry party with stations featuring different types of poetry, i.e. concrete, acrostics, haiku and limerick. Activities could include having pre-printed public domain poems available on bookmarks for the kids to color, examples of acrostic poems using first names to get the kids started on ones using their own names, having play dough or other artistic medium available for teens to create with while listening to poems.
56. Present a duct tape program for teens. Activities can be found here:
<http://www.ducktapeclub.com/ducktivities/> To cut costs, you could ask the teens to bring their own duct tape.
57. Make mini-books with your teens. Simple instructions can be found here:
<http://library.thinkquest.org/J001156/makingbooks/minibook/index.htm>
58. Canon's Creative Park has TONS of paper crafting ideas: <http://cp.c-ij.com/en/index.html>
59. If you have a knitting group, consider making plarn out of plastic grocery bags. Instructions and ideas can be found here:
<http://www.gather.com/viewArticle.jsp?articleId=281474977197154>
60. Host a t-shirt tie-dyeing party and ask the kids to bring their own shirts.
61. Invite your teens to paint like Jackson Pollock on the computer at:
<http://jacksonpollock.org/>
62. Make Alka-Seltzer rockets with your teens using film canisters. You can have the teens decorate their own rockets before setting them off. Instructions can be found here:
<http://www.stevespanglerscience.com/experiment/00000068>
63. Host a paper airplane contest. Have the kids design their own, and have races outside of the library.
64. If you have a stack of old CDs that are too scratched to play, try making disco balls out of them: <http://kids.nationalgeographic.com/Activities/Crafts/Recycled-disco-ball>
65. If you have an active teen group, you may consider doing a puppet making workshop where they make their own puppets and later put on a puppet show for your younger patrons.
66. If you haven't tried knitting with your teens, this is the perfect time to try it. Simple instructions can be found here: http://www.learntoknit.com/instructions_kn.php3

67. Host a program on creating your own creative space for teens. Here's a great article on how to get one started: http://www.dominomag.com/howtos/advice/2008/08/creative_space. You can also talk about feng shui and how to use it in a small space.
68. Host a "If You Were the Casting Director" program. Invite the teens to read a popular title (or you can read part of one aloud) and then ask the kids to cast the roles as if the book was being made into a movie. This could be a great activity to add on to a movie program.
69. Bead writing is a fun activity for teens that can be done on the cheap. Instructions can be found here: http://cdn.dickblick.com/lessonplans/pdfs/bead_writing.pdf
70. Host a Christmas in July party for your teens. Have sugar cookies for them to decorate, play a few games (bingo, Christmas trivia, name the Christmas song) and have a simple ornament making craft.
71. Invite your teens to having a texting contest. (Yes, you'll have to make sure that the teens have a phone and that their parents will agree to any charges that may occur.) Here are rules for how one organization did it: http://www.unitedwireless.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=47&Itemid=44
72. Your teens may enjoy taping their own book trailers. Ask them to create one for their favorite book and post them to your library's website.
73. Post riddles at your reference desk asking teens to solve them. Lots of riddles can be found at www.riddlenut.com
74. Recycle all of those old magazines by presenting a program on creating dream boards. Instructions can be found here: <http://top7business.com/?id=64>
75. Teach your teens a basic course on ways those with disabilities express themselves. You can find out how to spell the alphabet in American Sign Language here: <http://www.lifeprint.com/>
76. Try your hand at paper mache. Let the teens create bowls and paint them to their liking.
77. Get your teens involved in gardening. Host a program where they can paint their own flower pots and give them seeds to plant.
78. Teen may like to try their hand at making more difficult mosaics. Here are instructions for making them with recycled materials: <http://familyfun.go.com/arts-and-crafts/drawpaint/feature/famf97masterpiece/famf97masterpiece5.html>
79. Try perfume making with your teens. Simple instructions can be found here: <http://www.pioneerthinking.com/basicperfume.html> You can have them decorate baby food jars to store their perfume in also.
80. These yarn bottles are a great way to use up all that donated yarn and to recycle water bottles: <http://cdn.dickblick.com/lessonplans/pdfs/yarnbottles.pdf>
81. Introduce your teens to artist Dale Chihuly and then give them a chance to make their own pieces like his work. This is a difficult, but amazing project: <http://cdn.dickblick.com/lessonplans/pdfs/chihuly.pdf>
82. Here's a easy way to make lava lamps with your teens: <http://kids.nationalgeographic.com/Activities/FunScience/Lavalamp>
83. If you have access to a karaoke machine, host a karaoke program.

Family:

84. Host a family scavenger hunt around the library focusing on your arts collections (music cds, poetry books, books about artists...)
85. Invite families to paint a tile for a mosaic that could be displayed in the library's entrance.
86. If you have local private music teacher in your area, offer your community room up for a recital and invite your patrons to attend.
87. Quilting groups are usually looking for projects to do for the community. Have a family program where the attendees are invited to decorate a quilt square and then have your quilting group put the squares together. You can display the quilt in the library.
88. Let your families create their own Family-Opoly boards. Supply them with large pieces of paper to make their own boards to take home and play with.
89. Show the diversity of playing cards by hosting a family card party. Here are instructions to several easy card games:
<http://www.usplayingcard.com/gamerules/childrenscardgames.html>
90. Have a family food art contest inviting families to enter different categories such as "on a plate," "baked goods" or "stuff from the pantry." For some great started ideas, check out this site: <http://www.brucevanpatter.com/foodart.html>
91. Invite families to create a Family Trivia game. Suggestions on how do to it can be found here: <http://oldfashionedliving.com/familytrivia.html>
92. At the end of June, host a 4th of July craft program. Several craft ideas for the 4th can be found here: <http://familyfun.go.com/arts-and-crafts/season/specialfeature/july-4th-crafts/>
93. To encourage creativity and to help clean up your craft supplies, here are several projects that would be great for using up your old crayons:
<http://www.thriftyfun.com/tf666289.tip.html>
94. Host a sing-along program for families using musicals or your sing-along DVDs.
95. Do a video scavenger hunt as a part of a movie program. Show a short movie or cartoon and ask the patrons to look for things in the movie that you've listed on a sheet of paper. You can talk about where they saw those things after the movie is over.
96. Create bingo cards with different book characters and invite your patrons to play as a part of a bigger program.
97. Invite families to create their own seed packets and give them a few seeds to add to them. A pattern for packets can be found here:
<http://www.daniellesplace.com/images/seedpacketblank.gif>
98. Here's a fun game called "Celebrities" that would work well for a family activity:
http://familyfun.go.com/games/indoor-outdoor-games/game/famftday_celeb/
99. Invite families to create art pieces by doing rubbings of different textures around the library. You can highlight portions of your collection to help with this.
100. Host a "Family Tree" program where families can create mobiles of family photos. Instructions can be found here:
<http://kids.nationalgeographic.com/Activities/Crafts/Memorymobile>
101. Have a movie night featuring films about creativity or the arts such as Finding Neverland, The Sound of Music or Ratatouille.