

Creepy House SRC

Overview

A Creepy House was constructed in partnership with Bridgend's Arts service by a Newport based stage and set design company. The House was then taken on tour around Bridgend county. Children were invited into the house to sign up for the challenge and receive a 'lucky dip' prize. Children were then given the opportunity to have their photograph taken outside the house with some of the 'creepy' characters. The house is now available for rent and has been used by other departments as a haunted house at Halloween. The house can be adapted and used for other different style events.

AIMS

1. What do you want to **achieve** from event?

To increase membership to the SRC by taking the programme out into the community where children would be able to sign up without coming directly to the library. To tell people about the SRC, in a fun way, who might not have otherwise been involved.

2. What are the **main issues** to be addressed?

To promote the SRC to young people and their adults who might not usually be aware of the SRC and what it offers. To promote the library service as a fun and relevant organisation that to dispel negative stereotypes and old ideas about what a library service is and what it provides. To put ourselves in the middle of areas where young people congregate, to attract those who might not normally be attracted to the SRC. To sign up as many new members as possible.

3. What geographical **area** should it cover? **Bridgend County**

NATURE OF EVENT

4. How **long** should the event (or events) be?

Sessions will last approx. Throughout the first few weeks of the challenge.

5. **When** should the event be? (dates)

The week leading up to the challenge and the first three weeks of the challenge.

6. What **specific activities** should take place, and in what order.

Choice of Venue

The house was scheduled to visit busy areas throughout the county on days when key events were taking place. E.g. The Pyle and Porthcawl carnivals, outside Bridgend and Pencoed recreation centres, inside Maesteg sports centre, at Bryngarw gardens and on main Bridgend shopping streets.

Marketing the event

The event was marketed during a two week lead up period. The marketing department were given a brief and liaised with the designer to create a poster and leaflets that would appeal to parents and children as something to do during the summer holidays. The event was marketed much in the same way as Santa's grotto. Children were invited to visit the house, sign up for the SRC, receive a gift and have their photograph taken.

Schools were contacted and leaflets distributed.

A press release was sent to local media during the week before the event.

Social media was used to provide information about where the house would be visiting and to display photographs of the event.

Preparing for the event

Discussions were held with the Arts department and a set design company and plans were drawn up. We had to consider transportation, design, weather and cost implications. The house is 'shed like' in design and consists of four walls, one with a hinged door and a roof that are held together with special pins. This means that the house can be taken apart and transported relatively easily. The house was painted in the 'Creepy House' style. Inside the walls are black and the roof has a felt covering to ensure darkness once the door is closed! Librarians and a volunteer were recruited to dress up and encourage children to visit the house, to sign up children and man the lucky dip inside the house and to pose for photographs outside the house. A volunteer photographer was hired to take photographs of children with the 'creepy' characters. We worked with the library van driver to organise a route. Staff and the van driver were on hand to put the house together and take it down again after the event. Discussions with town centre managers and other centre managers took place to arrange the tour timetable. A lucky dip was prepared, this was a covered dustbin filled with shredded paper, toy spiders and small prizes. This was placed inside the house alongside a table.

It was agreed that the house was to be stored at Pyle life centre in-between visits. After the tour the house remains at the centre and is available for hire.

The Event

The tour kicked off at Pyle fun day at the rugby ground. It was a lovely, sunny day and the event was very well attended. We were kept very busy welcoming children into the house, there were constant queues outside. Staff explained the reading challenge to the children as they waited.

Children were welcomed to the house via the backdoor by a member of staff in character costume who had been waiting inside the house ready to 'welcome' visitors. Once inside children were signed up on specially marked cards to enable staff at the branches to recognise those that had joined up at the Creepy House. Often there were doubles as children signed up in the house and at the library. Marked cards enabled us to deal with this. After being signed up to the SRC children were invited to take a prize from the lucky dip and given a special Creepy House book provided by the Reading Agency and only available to children who visited the house.

After their visit children were invited to have their photo taken with characters at the front of the house. Prints were made available for collection in nominated Bridgend libraries throughout the remainder of the SRC. Staff and the House visited 10 locations throughout the tour plus a special picnic event at Bryngarw, a 'creepy' walk in partnership with Bridgend's Love to Walk and a special event at Bridgend recreation centre in partnership with the Summer Play Groups. At Bryngarw the house was set up in the gardens with a picnic blanket nearby. At the picnic children were told creepy stories by staff in costume. Parents were invited to bring along food. We provided snacks and drinks. Children were entertained by our volunteer who dressed as a ghost and chased them around the grounds.

The Creepy Walk involved 'Creepy House' characters i.e. staff 'ambushing' children on their walk to local historical place of interest Island Farm. Characters, again told stories and joined in the organised activities in Creepy House character whilst promoting the challenge.

The final visit was to the local recreation centre, where approximately 100 children on the summer play group scheme were invited to attend a special Creepy House tour finale. Local poet and children's entertainer Mike Church entertained. Local councillors were in attendance and had their photos taken with children outside the house. The marketing team were on hand to take photos for press release.

Local newspapers The Gem and The Gazette both picked up on the story

Conclusion, evaluation and legacy

Children really enjoyed visiting the house. All but one of our visits resulted in huge queues to get in. Lots of the visitors took advantage of the free photographs, making special visits to the library to collect their prints

We did manage to increase numbers finishing the SRC in 2013 although numbers starting were very much on a par with those from 2012. Many of those who visited the house completed the challenge, though it is difficult to gauge whether it was a direct result of visiting the house.

Visitor comments were all very positive and children really enjoyed their visits.

Comments

"What a fantastic thing for children to enjoy whilst we're out shopping, will definitely bring the children along to do the reading challenge!"

"It's really scary in there!"

"Can I go in again!"

"Wonderful promotion, thank you!!"

"I liked the ghost"

"Lovely to be able to enjoy something without spending money! Kids loved the visit and the picnic and chasing the ghost"

"Great fun, and a great way to get kids reading, love the house"

The house is currently stored at Pyle Life Centre and is available for hire for anyone interested.





Ghost playing with children at Bryngarw picnic



With local poet and children's entertainer Mike Church

Creepy House inspires thrilling fun day

Bridgend Library and Information Service has got the summer off to a spooky start by unveiling its Creepy House at Kenfig Hill and Pyle Festival Fun Day.

Scary inhabitants invited excited little monsters to sign up to the Summer Reading Challenge inside the house, before daring them to delve into a lucky dip.

The house is inspired by the Creepy House theme for this year's free-to-enter Summer Reading Challenge, which welcomes children from across the county borough go on a thrilling adventure through the 'Awful Upstairs', 'Gruesome Ground Floor' and 'Spine-tingling Cellar' by reading six books from their local library during the summer holiday.

Councillor Lyn Morgan, Bridgend County Borough Council's Cabinet Member for Wellbeing, said: "The Summer Reading Challenge is one of our libraries' most popular programmes with children, and with such a thrilling theme for this year's challenge, I'm sure it's going to be bigger and better than ever.

"It's great that so many of the children braved the Creepy House and signed up for the challenge at the fun day; it's a brilliant way for to keep their brains active over the summer so they're ready to go back to school in September."

Bridgend Library and Information Service is taking the Creepy House on a terrifying tour of Bridgend County Borough this summer. Its next stop is at Caroline Street, Bridgend town centre between 11am – 3pm on Saturday 13 July.

To keep up-to-date with when the house will be visiting your local area, like Bridgend Libraries on Facebook or follow @BridgendLibs on Twitter.

Libraries across the county borough will be helping children to complete the challenge throughout the summer holiday at a series of FREE Creepy House events, starting at Pyle Life Centre on Thursday 25 July.

Parents and carers can find out more about the events taking place in their local library by viewing the summer brochure, which is being given to all primary and infant school children in the county borough and is also available online at www.bridgend.gov.uk/libraries.



Walk Programme 31st Oct - 1st November

Walk Programme Thursday 31st October

1. Creepy House Walk (1 mile) - start at 5.30pm | St. Johns House, Newcastle Hill, Bridgend, CF31 4EY.

A walk which incorporates creepy stories and local history, fun for the whole family. Suitable for 7-11 year olds, accompanied by an adult. <http://www.stjohns-bridgend.org.uk/index.php>

Walk Programme Friday 1st November, 2013

2. Sands of Time - Archaeology in Merthyr Mawr and Tythegston (5 miles) - Start at 2pm | Location: Meet at Merthyr Mawr Warren car park. | Grade: Moderate

Join Dr Edith Evans from the Glamorgan Gwent Archaeological Trust to explore a Neolithic chambered tomb, traces of an Iron Age/Romano-British farmstead, relics from the Age of Saints, a medieval church and a castle whose village was swallowed up by drifting sand in the Middle Ages. Please note: Brisk pace mainly on minor roads, tracks and paths through farmland with stiles - may be muddy. Sorry no dogs. <http://www.ggat.org.uk/>

3. Meet the Dairy Cows (1 mile) - Start at 2.30pm | Location: Ty Tanglwyst CF33 4SA | Grade: Leisurely <http://www.tytanglwystdairy.com/home.htm>

From paddock to bottle find out how Ty Tanglwyst award winning milk, cream and butter is produced. Starting at the farm yard, this walk will take you to see the cow shed and see the dairy where the milk is processed and finished ready for the shops. Sorry no dogs.

4. Lantern Workshop/ Parade (1 ½ miles) - Start at 4.00pm | Location: Ogmere Valley Life Centre, CF32 7AJ | Grade: Leisurely | Booking is essential

Join us for a lantern making workshop where you can make your own lantern and then take it with you to light your way on a gentle stroll on the Ogmere Valley cycle path. Sorry no dogs. Booking is essential for the workshop, please call [01656 815078](tel:01656815078) to book your place(s).

In partnership with Love 2 Walk