

2013 VACo Achievement Awards

Application Form

Program Information:

Locality: Gloucester County, VA

Title: Public Library + Emergency Services = Stay Informed, Make a Plan, Get a Kit!

Category: Communications

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2013 VACo Achievement Awards

Program Title:

*Public Library + Emergency Services = Stay Informed, Make a Plan, Get a Kit!
June 1 – July 31, 2012*

Challenge/Partnership:

Gloucester County's employee utilization policy for adverse weather and emergency conditions states that in preparation for or in response to either natural or man-made conditions additional manpower may be required to meet emergency response obligations.

During adverse weather and emergency conditions library staff is utilized to answer incoming calls to the County's Emergency Information line. I coordinate staff and work with the Emergency Services Department during these events.

As a result of working closely with the Emergency Services Department I discovered that, despite living in an area that is susceptible to severe emergency conditions at times and extensive local media blitzes urging residents to make a family emergency plan, Gloucester citizens are not prepared.

I wondered how the venue of the public library could be used to spread the word about emergency preparedness. Providing emergency pamphlets and other information was a given but what peaks the interest of the public? Freebies! Giveaways! Thus the idea was born to offer emergency kits as giveaways during the annual summer reading program which coincides with the beginning of hurricane season!

Description of Program:

After working with Emergency Services during several county emergency events I realized that the residents of Gloucester County are not prepared for emergencies. Using the venue of the public library and in an effort to spread information about emergency preparedness to the community in a fun and unique way I decided to offer the chance to win an emergency kit!

The library system already provides information for other county departments and services offered to residents. This was an opportunity to collaborate with the Emergency Services Department and spread emergency preparedness information to the public.

The Gloucester Friends of the Library were approached and asked if they would provide monetary support of this endeavor for the community. Our Friends are great and always willing to support a new venture!

Once the monetary support was established the kit contents were purchased, put together and stored. The promotion of winning a kit would coincide with the annual summer reading program and the beginning of hurricane season, both which begin on June 1. In our library system, the summer reading program runs from June 1 through July 31. Two months of programming, two library locations, a winner at both locations for both months of programming = 4 winners!

In an effort to reach as many residents as possible, to encourage residents to prepare for the upcoming hurricane season and to spread the word about winning an emergency kit, I scheduled a slot on the monthly meeting docket of the Gloucester County Board of Supervisors to introduce the idea and share kit contents (May meeting). These meetings are aired for residents to watch from the comfort of their homes and provided an excellent vehicle to reach a group of citizens that might not visit the library but could be enticed into the library to win an emergency kit! Also, some people are visual learners and the ability to see what was included in the kits was helpful.

After the presentation, I heard from numerous residents that they visited the library to enter a chance to win!

An exploded kit was on display in both library locations for perusal along with emergency literature. Visitors were intrigued by the kits and enjoyed looking at the contents and hoping to win! Again, because some people are visual learners the chance to see what was included in the kits was appealing.

We marketed the emergency kit giveaways in numerous ways: displays of exploded kits, displays of weather related books, Ready Virginia literature, posters, library website content, library newsletter and local newspapers. By providing a fun activity we were able to spread the importance of emergency planning to residents! Libraries make learning fun!

Financing:

Flyers/brochures/pamphlets: Free/Received from Ready Virginia

Kit contents (recommendations from the Ready Virginia brochure):

Essentials:

Pre-packaged Food, water, battery radio, batteries

Additional suggested items:

Cooler, blanket, hand sanitizer, wipes, bug spray, dry sacks, duck tape, trash bags, matches, manual can opener, tarp, toilet paper, rope, flashlight, extra batteries, medical kit, car phone charger, picnic kit

TOTAL: ~ \$150/kit or ~ \$600 for four prepared kits

Results of the Program:

Four excited winners received emergency kits. The local newspaper provided a start-up article on the program interviewing the Emergency Services Director and me. We discussed the importance of emergency preparedness and that residents could win a prepared kit. A follow-up article was written to provide the winners' names.

Using the venue of the library to display visuals made an impact on residents! Children as well as adults studied the contents of the kits and were eager to win but realized that making their own kit was something that could be accomplished and was not the paramount struggle it seemed. Many of the items were probably already on hand at home! Having visitors make this realization was a step toward progress!

This program demonstrates how two county departments can work together and disburse vital information to county residents in a unique way by using the venue of the public library, a department that welcomes over 200,000 visitors every year!

Short Overview of Program:

In an effort to work collaboratively with another county department, Emergency Services, and to spread emergency preparedness information to the community via the venue of the public library, emergency kits were prepared using the Ready Virginia checklist of suggested contents. Four emergency kits were donated by the Gloucester Friends of the Library for giveaways during the annual summer reading program.