
**UNLIMITED POSSIBILITIES MINI-GRANT
FINAL REPORT
COVER SHEET and NARRATIVE**

LIBRARY: Chappaqua Public Library

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PROGRAM NAME: Environmental Explorers!

***INSTRUCTIONS:** This report is due no later than 30 days after the completion of your funded project. Please note, along with this form you should also include any supplemental materials from your project, including flyers, programs and photos.*

***SAVE** this form on your computer and complete the questions on this cover sheet. Answer each question completely within the word limit. **SAVE** your document with your 3-digit library code, i.e. MONminigrant as a PDF document. Email your report as an attachment to pbraja@wlsmail.org with the subject line: RE: MINI Grant Final Report.*

NUMBER OF TOTAL PARTICIPANTS DIRECTLY ENGAGED IN THE FUNDED PROGRAM: 187

NUMBER OF PATRONS INDIRECTLY ENGAGED IN PROGRAM: ~400-500

(This would include parents and patrons who attended any culminating event or patrons attending an exhibit associated with the funded project. Make a best effort estimate – ultimately, we want to know approximately how many people were aware of your project and the project's outcomes).

We are including family members of participants, community members, library staff, and library patrons who were made aware, through extensive community advertising, of the program series in this number.

DEMOGRAPHICS: Indicate the composition of your audience in terms of gender and ethnicity. (limit 100 words)

We saw a great diversity of participants in our program. We had a nice mix of genders and ages, especially since two of our events were for families. The ethnicities represented most heavily were Hispanic, Caucasian, and Asian. Other ethnicities represented were African-American/Black and Arabic.

PROGRAM ACTIVITY DATES: July 29; August 6, 19

PROJECT INFORMATION: Please answer these questions on a separate page.

1. **IMPACT:** Please describe how you met your project goals, what did the participants learn or how did the participants change as a result of your project. Note any participant surveys and their result. If you were to do the project again, what would you do differently? (Limit 500 words).

As stated in our application, our goal for this series of events was “to increase community awareness of the Library as a leader in sustainability innovation, to encourage creative solutions to relevant, local environmental issues, and to bring together all demographics of the greater Chappaqua community for fun and inspired learning and exploration.” We accomplished the first goal (“awareness of the library”) by incorporating existing sustainable features of the building into our programs. During an event about native plants, children and their caregivers got to explore and learn about the two gardens at the library, study and draw the plants, and even snack on the ripe vegetables. During the session about solar power, participants heard about the solar panels used on the roof of the library building. After both classes, visitors had very positive comments about the Library’s commitment to sustainability. Our second goal, regarding “creative solutions to...environmental issues,” was directly addressed in each program. Whether it was library staff members or community leaders directing each session, the emphasis in each was not just having fun, but also learning. Participants were encouraged to think creatively about the animals, plants, and energy sources in Westchester County and how we all can protect them. Our final goal was to make every program as inclusive as possible, and to encourage people of all ages and demographics to attend. Through extensive advertising we made sure that as many people from the community were aware of the program as possible, and we saw people of all ages (many came as multi-generational families) and ethnicities.

One of the most exciting things our patrons learned about was the commitment to sustainability by the Chappaqua Library, the Westchester Library System, and our grant partners like ConEdison. Sustainability is a popular topic these days, so the idea itself was not unfamiliar to our patrons, but the knowledge that their local library system is actively encouraging programming related to environmental responsibility was new and exciting.

If a future opportunity arose to do similar programming, we might consider doing a few things differently. First, it would be interesting to do a series during the school year in order to reach a slightly different audience. Our first program had more people signed up than actually attended. We believe that summer vacation plans played a big role in the number of patrons who ultimately did not attend. Additionally, we would allocate more funds to hiring talented local professionals to be a part of the series. Two of our four events included outside speakers, which patrons really enjoyed.

2. **OUTREACH:** Please describe your outreach/ promotion methods. How did you engage the participants in this project? Note if the project brought new patrons to the library.

We almost always fill our library programs to capacity and over, so we began our publicity in the same way we always do. This meant publicizing the events on our Children's Room calendar, which is available in the library as well as online. We also made specialized flyers for each event that had more specific information. These were available throughout the library. The children's calendar is also included in the monthly mailer sent via mail to many of the households in town. Additionally, at the end of the school year, the librarians visit all of the local schools to promote the Summer Reading program as well as other summer events at the library. This year, we made a special effort to promote the Environmental Explores series. This meant that nearly every child in grades K-5 heard about the exciting classes and events happening over the summer. Our summer events were also featured through the New Castle Media Center with videos online and on local television stations. Finally, each program was advertised for approximately 1-2 weeks on the Library's marquee on the front of the building. All of these together ensured that we reached as many community members as possible. We saw a number of new faces during the summer from Chappaqua as well as families from other Westchester towns who wanted to participate.

3. **SHARE your story:** Please share a success story: Tell us a personal story about how your participants were impacted by this project; was there increased interest in the activity topic evidenced by circulation, research requests, etc.; did patron engagement increase due to the project's activity? Did this project increase community engagement in any way?

On a sequence of hot, summer afternoons, while many young people were enjoying a swimming pool or summer camp or an air-conditioned movie theater, the Chappaqua Library welcomed groups of curious young learners for another kind of summer fun. Two moments in particular stand out from our wonderful summer of discovery that reflect the ethos of the program series.

In July, we welcomed local artist and Garden Club president Peggy Post to lead a program about native plants to Westchester and their protection. Thus, a troupe of adventurous young gardeners braved the summer heat to examine, sketch, and learn about their flowering neighbors. Library programs are often indoors-only by necessity. But the students visiting the Chappaqua Library this summer were treated to something quite different. Most left with dirt under their nails, mud on their shoes, and wide smiles. Many parents and children remarked how excited they were to get to have time playing in the sun AND time learning simultaneously. The moment of the event that will forever stand out to library staff came at the end of the afternoon when participants were able to sample vegetables (tomatoes, cucumbers) while relaxing in the library garden. It was such an idyllic picture: children of all types brought together by learning at the library and summer's beautiful bounty.

Later in the summer, half a dozen families of all sizes and ethnicities, gathered for a scientific challenge and some friendly competition. Often, when we offer programs for entire

families, the events are more passive (movies, performances, drop-in craft sessions) in nature. Our “Solar Fun” program was an exciting break from that tradition. Using kits with real solar panels, we challenged each group to assemble their own bullet train and then race them in the library courtyard. Again, the most striking memory of the event was that of people from all corners of the community working and laughing together – and it was the library that had brought them all together for an afternoon of fun and learning! Moreover, it was not just the assembled kits of electric circuits and solar panels that our patrons learned about, but also the library itself and the solar panels we use that many in our town don’t know about. A number of patrons mentioned that they were pleasantly surprised to hear about the gardens, compost, and solar panels in use in Chappaqua and even more so about the grant from the county that had enabled such interesting new programs.

4. COMMUNITY NEEDS: Discuss how your funded program served local community needs. How did this program differ from your current library programming? (limit 300 words)

Currently, much of the library’s programming is based on what the staff can offer on a limited budget. This means that ordinarily we can only offer one “big” program featuring an outside professional once per season. The fact that we were able to host a series of four programs on a “hot” topic, two of which featured community members leading the classes, was a very exciting departure from our usual events and people were thrilled to learn about the grant that made it possible.

Many of our community members reported that they think of “sustainability” as something that takes a lot of time and money. We were able to show our community the simple steps that every family can consider and adopt even with a small budget. Ideas like recycling, planting a small garden, composting, conserving energy, and considering local wildlife were central to our summer series, but we presented them in a fun environment that was, as always, open and free to the public. We met our community’s needs by presenting programs that were timely and relevant, useful and informative, and accessible to people from all walks of life.

5. LESSONS LEARNED: Tell us something that you learned in the process. Is there something you would do differently? Why? (limit 300 words)

The most significant thing we learned was how popular the topic of sustainability is! There do not seem to be many other community-based programs about the idea, where children and adults can learn about the topic and have fun doing so. We would certainly seek out future opportunities to explore similar topics at the library. Any program during which we as librarians can learn more about our community and its needs is a great one.

We also learned a great deal about the wealth of talent in our neighborhood. The more we reached out to people and organizations, the more positive responses we had to our programs. In the future, we will be more confident in reaching out to potential community partners sooner. We found that many, like our local farmers’ market (which donated local, organic food to our culminating event,) were more than happy to make donations of time, money, and goods.

Events with live animals are nearly universally-appealing, it seems. Kids of all ages and their adult guardians packed our auditorium for a visit from the Westmoreland Sanctuary. Live

creatures definitely made talking about protecting local wildlife more entertaining and we would love to host similar groups in the future.

We would also be interested in doing a similar program during the school year. Although we did a lot of advertising and reached a large portion of the community, holding these events when people are not on vacation might help us attract more attendees. We also tried to have a mix of types of programs. One was more engineering-based, one was more art-based, and one was a demonstration of live animals. The engineering program (about solar power) was more popular than the art one, but we believe that summer vacation may have influenced this.