

Michlib Responses Compilation 11/21/2024

QUESTION: My Chamber of Commerce recently approached me to ask how we can better support each other's organizations and they are looking for ideas for how we can work together. We already have a booth for our Friends Book Sale during their summer event and we are involved in the other community events that the Chamber holds, but it seems like they are looking for more collaboration outside of these community events.

So, my question- How does your library work with your local Chamber of Commerce? Any ideas, recommendations, and details are appreciated. I am definitely open to partnering with them, I just want to make sure that the partnership is beneficial to both organizations.

RESPONSES:

Hi Kelsey,

I was embedded with the chamber of commerce in Clarkston for nearly 5 years when I worked at that library. It was hugely beneficial both to the library and to Chamber members. The mutual support morphed into financial support from Chamber members when some large projects arose. One large Chamber member still provides significant support for SRP (\$5,000) when I left, which continues today.

If you want to chat about it, feel free to give me a call sometime and I'm happy to talk about how I developed that relationship over time.

Cheers,
-Trevor



Trevor Winn

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Library Advocacy is the most important thing! Even if all you can do is a two to five minute elevator speech, people will eventually remember that support for libraries is vital.

It sounds like you are already participating in the community and that is great. I gave a presentation / overview of library services for a similar organization as an official part of their meeting / on their agenda, etc.

I talked about services the library has to offer for their members and also used every opportunity to advocate for libraries.

For example, if your library / library system doesn't have a business librarian / business liaison, you need to advocate that the city/ county / community needs to support such positions that could actually have a huge positive economic impact on the community. In all cost/ benefit analysis calculations I have seen, library services always provide more than they actually cost but unfortunately most people don't realize or see it.

I'm from Southeast Florida and am shocked how poorly Michigan libraries are supported. (Education as well. Our bond proposal here in the Sault did not pass!) It is a shame that educators and librarians are barely paid a living wage.

I just did a presentation at MiALA about partnerships and we mentioned that we need to be careful that the other organization isn't "using" you in a way that burns your organization out by overextending staff to their events, etc. The ideas for a partnership that would benefit you is that members from the chamber would come and join the Friends of the Library organization and/or do a presentation / panel for the community on a certain topic such as how to start a business etc. or other program that your customers actually would be interested in attending and would benefit from.

Hope that helps,

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Suvi Katriina Manner, MLS, MAEd
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Hi Kelsey,

Something we have done during library card sign up month is to have local businesses accept a library card as a discount card for September. Each business chose what the discount was for.

If you want to include social media you could hide an object or a photo or a book in the Chamber businesses (we used a gnome) and have patrons post a photo when they find it or mention it at the register for a discount or a library sticker or something.

Ms. Kendra D. Williams, MLIS

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Hi! We are a member of our chamber of commerce. We often attend networking events with local businesses to explore partnership options/ summer reading sponsorships. Sometimes there are interesting professional development options like an armed intruder training. Also, the chamber has an events page where we can post/promote library events. Things we do that they benefit from are letting business know about resources the library has that entrepreneurs can benefit from (ex: mobile hotspots, public computers, niche academy, etc). Sometimes the partnerships we develop with businesses in the chamber end up beneficial for them as well.

Cierra Bakovka, MLIS

She/Her

Director

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DANGER Kelsey!

I'm kidding.

I was asked to be on the board of directors of the Leland Chamber several years back, and here it is a few short years later and I'm the president. It is not a great fit because I have trouble getting time to visit all the businesses in town but they understand and I'm well received as a member of the community.

It started with the large pine tree we have next to the river. The Chamber wanted to add it to two other trees they have decorated for the holidays in the village, and the Library helped with the initial buying of the lights and now the Chamber pretty much pays for the contractor to string them up when he does the other trees, which requires a large lift (picture of tree attached). It ends up being \$6,000 a year to put up and take down the lights because the trees are so large and there are some other smaller trees that get done but the Chamber will cover all that cost this year. If it was just the library tree it would probably be at least \$1,500.

We also partnered with the Chamber for a work fair using our community meeting room by having businesses that were looking for teens to work during the summer set up tables. We then moved it to the school the following spring so they were where the potential workers were.

There have been dozens of other small things we have done together with the biggest benefit being the Chamber members that might not normally interact with the Library now having a face (mine) to connect to the Library and have generally good feelings about us. One way it has paid off is if we have some kind of meet and greet or author event, etc., and we request

things like charcuterie boards or wine from wineries or restaurants (there are liquor laws that can apply for donations) members of the Chamber are glad to donate because they know us. Another benefit has been a local winery that has reached out to us to offer their space for events at no charge to us.

My working with the Chamber has also helped with our fundraising as we are doing a capital campaign for an expansion and renovation of the library and it has given me a lot of connections in the community.

The Chamber sponsors a Wine Festival, with a completely separate committee that runs it, which generates \$20,000 or \$30,000 profit which is used for 4th of July fireworks, the holiday lights, and other things like trash receptacles, with a contractor to empty several of them on a regular basis. Along with many flowers for village beatification. I think it has been worth it, even if it is just the networking opportunities.

Mark

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Mark Morton

Director

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I would go to the chamber of commerce meetings. Just being a constant face might help. If that's not the case, you could try offering to host a chamber meeting at the library (if it works with your policy) or having a community round table with other organizations in the community. The round table would be open to the public and each organization can give updates and news on what they are doing.

Sarah Rick

Library Director

Bath Township Public Library

Hi –

Here are a few things:

- Our Chamber does a monthly coffee at different member businesses. We hosted one at the library. It was a great event!
- The Chamber hosts a “Spookacular” Trick-o-Treating event, and we participate.
- Our library is adjacent to a new park in downtown, that was developed along with a new

city hall & police station (notice... not a new library! 😊). There is a stage, and the Chamber holds summer concerts out there once a week in the summer. We let them use our garage to store some stuff. It does bring people to the area and into the library.

What I have found to be most valuable is our connection to businesses in the Chamber. By attending meetings and events, I have learned more about what businesses provide and I think of how to connect with them. But those connections go beyond that. For example, I met an attorney who I ended up working with on a city initiative. Now he is on the City's Civic Foundation Board who just donated money to the library.

I hope you found this to be useful!

Sandy Irwin (she/her/hers)

Director

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Hi Kelsey,

The library has been a member of our local Chamber of Commerce since 2012 and I have served as president, vice president, and secretary, a position I currently hold. I attend board meetings and take minutes.

I also serve on the Chamber Business Luncheon and Networking Committee and attend the Chamber Executive Committee meetings. I attend most of the monthly business luncheons, Chamber networking events, the annual Chamber/City Christmas party, Person of the Year Banquet, and other Chamber events as I can. I also attend ribbon cuttings and ground-breaking ceremonies for new businesses. Being involved with the Chamber and the connections (and friends!) I have made has been invaluable to the library. I represent and promote the library at all meetings and events and the library is seen as a participating member of the community.

The library has received many sponsorships for library programming from Chamber members and the Chamber itself. Our big sponsor for the summer reading kickoff is a local credit union that I connected with through the Chamber years ago and I still serve on the board with their representative. I have also gotten discount coupons and gift certificates from local businesses that we use as giveaways at library programs and I received a large donation from Sheetz, a new business that recently opened in Romulus.

The Friends of the Library are also Chamber members and they hold an annual Bowling Fundraiser with the Chamber. The Chamber is usually able to get pizza and pop donated by a Chamber member and they have a basket raffle, 50/50, high game, and mystery game drawings. The profits from the event are split between the Friends and the Chamber. My husband and I attend every year and it's a lot of fun.

I hope this is helpful and that you can get more involved with your local Chamber.

Have a good Tuesday!

Patty

Patty Braden, Director
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Secretary, Board of Directors
Greater Romulus Chamber of Commerce

Some ideas I have heard from various libraries at which I have worked, that have turned out well:

One library has a regular table at the local Farmer's Market (this one is put on by the city- I see you mentioned a similar thing going on already); one has an absentee ballot box outside in front of the library; some have had meet-and-greets for candidates running for election; blood drives (may or may not count with Chamber of Commerce?). My current library sometimes offers events outside in the park where the library is located, and ones with staff from local state and/or metroparks that feature native plants and animals.

Some I thought of on my own: events where a city worker explains how this or that process works; local historical /genealogical society speakers; possibly events focussing on local tourist hotspots?

Stephanie

Taylor Community Library, Taylor, MI

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Stephanie B. Herm
Paraprofessional,
Taylor Community Library
& Braille and Talking Books

Hi Kelsey,

Our Chamber will hold meetings outside of its building in an effort to bring more attention to the Chamber. We always offer up our meeting room for them to use. It works nicely to help spread the word about our services too.

Best of luck -

Holly Hentz

Director
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Hi Kelsey,

Our Library belongs to the Chamber here. I go to monthly meetings and get time to present library happenings to the other members. They help promote library programs and sometimes provide small stipends. It's win-win for a small membership fee! Thanks, Mary

Mary Harrison
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Hello--we are members of the local Central Business Association (CBA) in Tecumseh, which works in close cooperation with the Greater Lenawee Chamber of Commerce. We attend the monthly CBA meetings and are on the agenda so that we can present what is happening in the library. As a result of this outreach, local city officials have met with us to collaborate on events such as our upcoming Ice Festival in January. We also have an opportunity to hear weeks and months in advance what is being planned in the city of Tecumseh--the heart of downtown is a block away from us. The CBA includes local businesses (not just downtown), city officials. Tecumseh Public Schools and other organizations sometimes participate in the CBA meetings as well.

It is beneficial to all of us because we are able to publicize what we have to offer on a regular basis, and because of the relationship that we have, they can depend on us to support and even participate in their events. In general, it builds trust and goodwill. Please write back if you need any more details--

Andy

Hi Kelly: We're a small class 4 library, located right downtown, so we participate with our DDA/CC at almost every community event: Bike units at summer parades, pre-parade support activities for fall, winter and spring parades (we have a *lot* of parades around here), Fall festival, Halloween and Easter activities that tie into DDA/CC events, summer activities and so on. We began to participate/support gradually over the past 10 or so years, and now we've built a pretty tight system of interlocking activities. The community knows when they come downtown for an event, the library will have something going on too-- and we have places to park, get a drink, use the bathroom and just sit and rest too.

Jean Fellows
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