

MEMORANDUM

TO: Chair and Members of Community and Corporate Affairs Committee

FROM: Douglas Davey, Manager of Children's and Youth Services

DATE: Mar 29, 2018

MEMORANDUM NO.: MEM-LIB-2018-0002

RE: Family Escape Rooms

PURPOSE OF THE MEMORANDUM:

The purpose of this memorandum is to advise the Community and Corporate Affairs Committee on the success of the Family Escape Room program at the Halton Hills Public Library.

BACKGROUND:

A typical escape room is a fun activity wherein small groups of adults and/or teens are locked in a room and must solve clues and puzzles in order to escape within a given time limit. Due to their growing popularity, escape rooms can now be found in most mid-to-large sized communities in Canada.

In keeping with Children's and Youth Services' goal of facilitating positive family engagement and interactions, staff decided to modify the escape room concept into something that families would love.

The program began with a \$500 budget supplied by the Friends of the Halton Hills Public Library. A modest fee of \$15 per team was applied, making the program sustainable in the future.

COMMENTS:

In the summer of 2017 the Library launched its first Family Escape Room, entitled "Locked in the Library" at the Georgetown Branch. The 'room' was half of the Children's Program Room.

Unlike most escape rooms, ours was made family-friendly by having:

- No actual locked doors
- No time limit (everyone escapes)
- The option of a “Spooky Mode” for those who wanted more atmosphere
- The ability to leave and reenter
- Unlimited clues and assistance
- Puzzles and clues designed for children and youth of different ages

The theme of the room was “Libraries,” and the participants learned about libraries and literature as they played.

The response from the public was phenomenal. Every instance of the program was sold out, and the feedback was universally positive. 152 people attended 46 instances.

When summer was over, the program was boxed up. However, as it is very portable, we offered to run it for Town staff, at no charge, as a team-building exercise. Feedback has been positive.

A new Family Escape Room is currently being developed with a planned June 2018 start date. The 2017 version will be offered at the Acton Branch.

STRATEGIC CONNECTIONS:

- Halton Hills Public Library:
 - *Strategic Priority B: Engage key audiences through services focused on their needs and interests.*
- Town of Halton Hills Strategic Plan:
 - *A. Foster a Healthy Community*
 - *A.9 To support and enhance a variety of arts and cultural opportunities for the enjoyment of the public.*
- Town of Halton Hills Corporate Priorities:
 - *Youth Services*

CONCLUSION:

The Family Escape Room is a true success story. It offers a fresh and inexpensive way for families stay engaged. With new Family Escape Rooms being planned, this program should have a long and healthy life.

Reviewed and Approved by,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Geoff Cannon", with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Geoff Cannon, Director of Library Services

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brent Marshall", with a long vertical stroke extending downwards.

Brent Marshall, CAO