

## Estevan Public Library (EPL) Programming with Jess Kelly, Adult Program Coordinator

- *Are your programs all free of charge?*

Yes! All of our programs are free.

- *Do you provide supplies for participants?*

For our Take and Make kits, we supply unique items people may not have at home, like yarn, paint or beads. We also send an instruction list with tools participants will need to help make the project, like pencils or scissors. We don't provide supplies for our virtual cooking programs like Kids Cooking and A-Z World Foods since it's challenging to keep produce fresh for more than a few days. We do always supply a list of ingredients and substitutions along with the videos, though. Once we are back to in-person programming, we'll be able to provide the supplies and the tools.

- *You have a great monthly program guide. How do you distribute it?*

Thank you! We have several methods physically and digitally to distribute the program guide. We send out monthly newsletters to patrons and organizations that are interested in receiving the guide as soon as it's out. We also post a PDF version onto our website and provide links to it through our social media pages. The City of Estevan has also generously shared our guide and added our programs to the list of community events, programs and new services coming to the Estevan library and we post it on our You Tube channel. And of course, we always have plenty of physical guides to hand out to curious patrons.

- *Did you offer this kind of vibrant programming pre-Covid, or has programming expanded over the past year?*

I joined the Estevan Library in the middle of the pandemic, but from speaking to co-workers and viewing past guides, there is a little bit of overlap between our pre-Covid programs and our current ones. Our cooking program has expanded a bit since it's easy to do virtually, though hopefully we can offer them in person again soon. Our trivia and bingo games have also continued, though all virtually as well.

- *What are your most popular programs?*

Our Take and Make kits are very popular. We encourage patrons to sign up so we know how many to make, but we always make a few extra to give away.

- *What have been some challenges of offering virtual programming?*

The challenge I face the most is online glitches with 'live' programs. We have hosted a couple online games for tweens, but sometimes the game will boot us off or someone is disconnected suddenly. This occasionally happens over Zoom, too. Getting supplies for all the programs can be tricky. The EPL has partnered with the Weyburn Public Library (WPL) to share programmers this year. The WPL's Children's Program Coordinator, Cora-Lynn Sexton, and I work together to make sure all the programs have the supplies they need and are distributed smoothly. We send each other a list of supplies we need and what needs to go into each kit. We also order supplies for each library if we can't find it in our towns.

The biggest issue I've run into offering virtual programming is finding a balance between online and offline activities. I know lots of people are experiencing Zoom fatigue and are tired of being online so much, so I try to offer more programs that patrons can do off-line or on their own time. I'm also working on finding more outdoor programming that patrons can participate in now that we have warm weather.

- *EPL offers both pre-recorded virtual programs and 'live' Zoom programming. What are some of the pros and cons of each type of delivery?*

Pre-recorded programming is nice because I can film as many takes as I need if I mix up words or do a step out of order. I can also edit or record a voice over if I'm not happy with the shot. When you're 'live', whether in person or over Zoom, you only have one 'take'. However, pre-recorded programs don't allow for the same kind

of interaction from patrons you get from doing it live, which can lead to unexpected fun moments between people and create new connections.

- *How do you find instructors?*

I start by looking through our past program guides to see which instructors we've had before if we are working with a similar topic. I'm new to Estevan, so I also ask other library staff members if they know of anyone who would like to be an instructor. Then I look for local organizations through our city website, newspaper, and good old Google.

- *Has virtual programming helped you find a wider audience?*

In a way. Virtual programming has opened up more opportunities for patrons, especially those who live out of town, to participate in programs they may not have been able to before. While I don't have statistics or analytics, our YouTube channel has made it easy for anyone in the country to follow along with our programs, whether or not they have signed up for a Take and Make.

- *When it is safe to offer in-person events again, do you intend to also offer virtual programming?*

We plan to offer virtual programming, but not to the same scale we are currently. Videos can take a long time to film and edit (depending on how picky you want to be). While our current plan is to offer one or two Take and Makes per month, along with some Grab N' Go items, our virtual programming will slow down. I am hoping to continue bi-monthly online trivia games with a couple in-person games sprinkled throughout the year, though.

- *Is there anything else you would like to add?*

Virtual programming has been challenging, but it's been beneficial in many ways besides keeping everyone safe. It's opened up programming to those who lived too far out of town or didn't have the time to attend. We've been able to hold programs – especially crafts that take a long time – that would have been tricky to hold in person. It's also taught me new skills that I wouldn't have considered learning before, such as video editing. While I'm looking forward to doing in-person programming again, there has been a lot of good to come out of doing it virtually.