



Curious George @ Your Library!

Curious George will be visiting up to 40 Idaho communities in November during Idaho Family Reading Week! This year's theme is "Join the Curious Crowd, Read Aloud!" and the Idaho Commission for Libraries' Read to Me program and local libraries around the state will be sponsoring special events to show families there's no better place to satisfy their curiosity than the library.

The Read to Me program will pay the shipping costs for the costume at \$140 per site. First preference for costume character placement is public libraries who share a costume with another public library. Libraries are also encouraged to arrange for the character to visit at least one other venue (school, Head Start center, etc.) in their community and to invite opinion leaders to your event during Idaho Family Reading Week, November 14 - 21, 2010.

Tips for a successful character visit include:

- The person wearing the Curious George costume should be 5' 2" to 5' 6" and approximately 100 to 130 lbs. We have found that teenage boys seem to be some of the best performers and have the stamina that is a good match for this job!
- Choose performers who are animated, highly personable, and ready to entertain.
- Provide a place away from public view to change in to and out of the costume.
- Remember costumed characters may need a special assistant to help handling groups, reading stories, help seeing little raised hands and answering questions.
- An operator must have a capacity for pantomime as characters don't talk.
- Practice and experiment in front of a mirror in full costume. If you want to engage someone else, watch them in action in costume first to see if they know how to bring your character to life.
- The costumes get hot, even in winter, and it's important to drink plenty of water. Which then creates another problem. The costumed performers must be able to take breaks.

More Tips & Tricks for Arranging Character Visits:

- During the week the character could play "library ambassador" and visit a several sites. In 2006, Blackfoot Public Library staff and Curious George delivered bananas to their local newspaper staff and city council members. They loved getting their pictures taken with Curious George and it was a great public relations visit! Brainstorm a list of local opinion leaders and policy-makers that you might be able to invite to your Family Reading Week events or arrange for a special visit.
- The costumes will arrive in a big shipping crate. You may need to figure out where you will stash these big containers during the week.
- Friends and a special character could visit hospitals, WIC sites, grocery stores, Head Start centers, daycares, etc. as "library ambassadors."

Costume Specialists, Inc. is a company in Columbus, Ohio that provides children's book characters on behalf of several publishers. The only cost is second-day air shipping arranged by Costume Specialists to send the costume to its next event. The company has a great selection of storybook characters in addition to Curious George. For more information about booking a costume on your own, visit www.costumespecialists.com/index.html .

The Houghton Mifflin web site (www.houghtonmifflinbooks.com/features/cgsite/) has some wonderful Curious George Activity Kits and resources for librarians and teachers for family events and storyhours. Be sure to check it out. And look for the Idaho Family Reading Week CD with more resources from the Idaho Commission for Libraries coming your way in early September.

One Idaho Library's Experience with Curious George (from their 2006 report):

We at the Blackfoot Public Library are very pleased and excited about the success of our Idaho Family Reading Week celebration! This was, in no small part, due to the Commission's support with materials and the wonderful Curious George character costume. There are children in our area that are still talking about Curious George sharing a storytime and a hug with them. Working with the American Falls District library in the use of the costume worked very well also.

To help promote our special week, Curious George visited the offices of our newspaper "The Morning News" and the local Wal-Mart store. He handed out activity schedules, autographs and, in some cases, bananas. Daily activities were listed in the Community Calendar.

We coordinated special storytimes with our program partner, HeadStart. The children had a ball having *Curious George* come and visit them at school and participate in fingerplays, songs and stories.

On our Banana Blitz Day, 103 of "George's favorite treat" were given out and 142 banana-nut muffins were distributed during our Muffin Munch activity. The Wednesday family storytimes were well received with an attendance of 114 to start the day and ending with 30 families coming together in the evening for a *Curious George* memo board, pictures with *George*, and more stories. Coloring and listening activities were offered all day, every day throughout the week. Over 200 craft or coloring pages were completed.

Many family scrapbooks now include a picture with *Curious George* and a child surrounded by books in the library. How can you beat that for promotion?

Our sentiments, exactly! Special thanks for Brenda Wilcox and Lisa Harral at Blackfoot Public Library for their detailed report and for sharing some great ideas we hope you'll borrow!

Ready to sign up? Go to <http://libraries.idaho.gov/page/idaho-family-reading-week> and sign up on the Survey Monkey form. We hope to finalize the list by the end of September, so please sign up by September 29 at the latest.