

## Books and horror: Lowell Junior High students put on ‘haunted library’ event in Bisbee

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Wednesday, October 31, 2018



Lowell Junior High seventh-grader Koel Sube helps set up for the "haunted library" tour at the Copper Queen Library.

Photo by Emily Ellis

BISBEE — There are few things more frightening than the macabre flights of fancy in classic horror literature such as “Frankenstein,” “The Raven” and “Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.”

On the night before Halloween, students from the Builder’s Club at Lowell Junior High made the most of those stories and others, using the 130-year-old Copper Queen Library as the setting for a literary-themed haunted house and murder mystery tour.

Poltergeist activity wreaked havoc on the computers, shady masked characters lurked behind the bookshelves, and spooky tomes ranging from “Goosebumps” to a “Taste for Death” were strategically placed around the library during the haunted tour, which took unsuspecting visitors through a series of frightening, literary-themed scenarios.

It was the first year the library had done such an event, said manager Jason Macoviak, although the staff had had the idea for a while.

“Horror is a huge genre of library fiction, so we kind of tried to play up that literary element,” said Macoviak. “We’ve been working on this for a month, meeting with the Builder’s Club every Friday, and we’ve had a lot of donations of props. It is also sponsored by the Friends of the Copper Queen Library, who actually gave us funds to get some stuff that we can use year after year.”

While the library staff and other adult volunteers helped to develop some of the literature-based concepts, it was the students who put on the show.

The Lowell Junior High Builder’s Club, a local branch of an international Kiwanis organization that focuses on creating middle school-aged leaders through community engagement and service, teamed up with the library to put on the fun, free event.

Club president and eighth-grader Ember Gulden said putting on a haunted library instead of a typical haunted house was a good representation of Bisbee.

“It’s not something that most people’s towns usually have,” said Gulden, who dressed as a Victorian ghost for the event. Old Halloween costumes and the books in the library inspired many of the ideas, she said.

“It just opens more to the community, to get a taste of who this town really is.”

When asked what she thought the town really was, she laughed. “Crazy!”

Student guides led community members of all ages through the library on the tour, which started with a fortune teller who accurately predicted that one of the group would die. It then moved on to a seance, where a medium attempted to summon the spirit of Reverend J.G. Pritchard, the Copper Queen’s first librarian.

The tour ended in a Dr. Frankenstein-esque laboratory where it was revealed that the murderer had been among the group the whole time.

Bisbee resident Mary Lou Weiner, grandmother of eighth-grader Scout Day, who served as a tour guide, said that she was impressed by the hard work and creativity that the students had put into the event.

“I find that the kids here are so very involved in so many things,” she said. “It’s always the next event, the next fundraiser, the next thing that they can do for the community, and I’m so proud to be the grandmother of a child that’s involved in this way.”

Approximately 300 people attended the event, said library program coordinator Alison Williams.

“We love collaborating with the Bisbee Unified School District,” she said. “We want to give particular thanks to Principal Laura Miller and the Builders Club for their help and support.”

Although the haunted library tour was only held on Tuesday, never fear if you missed it: Working with the students while providing the community with some good scares was too much fun to be a one-time event, said Macoviak.

“This is going to become a tradition,” he said. “We already have ideas for next year, but I won’t spoil those!”



Shedunnit: Lowell sixth-grader Alexandra Liebmann pretends to have done in fellow sixth-grader Mia Rodriguez during the tour

Photo by Emily Ellis





Library Program Coordinator Alison Williams poses as a Medium during the Haunted Library Tour.

Photo by Emily Ellis



Lowell students Paloma Asaro and Breanna Postles act out a scenario.

Photo by Emily Ellis