

Public Library Programs for Low Income Communities: Hair Care Services

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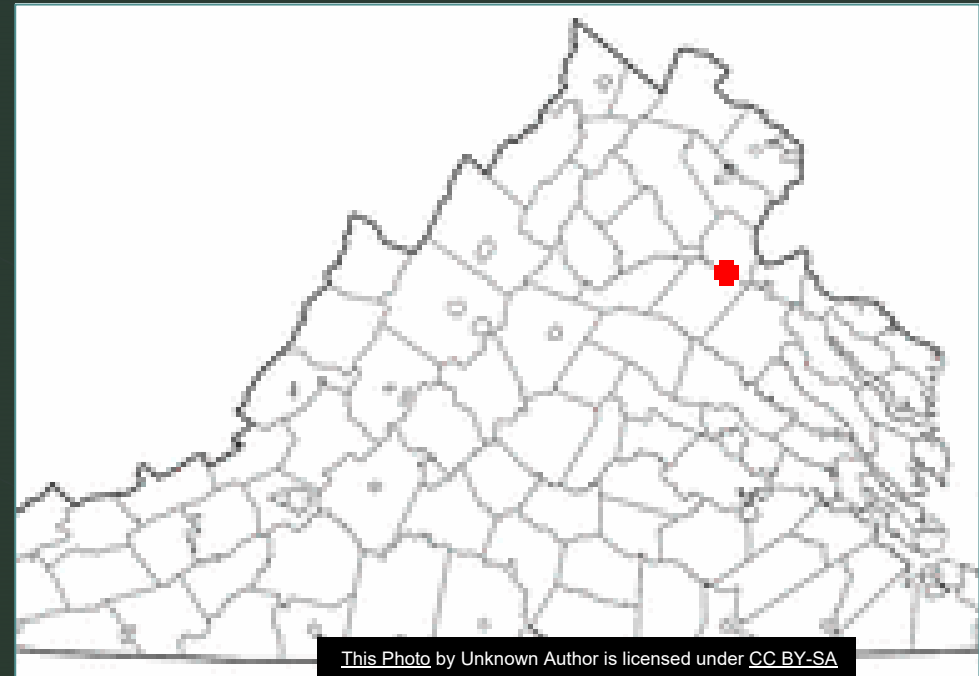
Introduction

Public libraries serve patrons of varying age, gender, racial, and economic backgrounds. In recent years, libraries in the United States have recognized the value of offering programs that serve individuals experiencing homelessness and low-income users. Many of these patrons do not have the ability to access necessary resources, including regular hair care services. Hair care is important to both the mental and physical wellbeing of an individual; hair services help maintain personal hygiene and boost self-esteem (Hu, 2023). This presentation will detail:

- Overview of the demographics of Fredericksburg, Virginia as a case study
- Benefits of proper hair care for individuals experiencing homelessness and low-income library users
- Free Haircuts program implemented at the Minneapolis Central Library
- Future trends regarding hair services presented within public libraries
- Suggestions regarding the future of hair care services provided by public libraries

Background: Fredericksburg, Virginia Case study

- City's population is around 27,982 people
- Median income per household is about \$83,445
- 3,472 residents reported to be Hispanic or Latino
 - 16% of the population speaks a language other than English at home (Bureau, n.d.)
- 38.5% of the city's population are homeowners (Bureau, n.d.).
- The city's renter population pays around \$1,462 per month on average (Bureau, n.d.)
- Around 64.3% of Fredericksburg residents are employed (Bureau, n.d.)



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Benefits of Hair Care Services

- Regular hair cuts promote hair health and benefit personal hygiene (Barber Chair, 2021)
- Haircuts and other methods of self-care often serve as a physical display of professionalism
 - This may positively impact an individual's ability to secure employment (Martin, 2023)
- Haircuts may positively influence an individual's confidence and overall self esteem

Example

- Fredericksburg Library's "LibClips: Free Haircuts in the Library," serves as a successful implementation
- Designed to make hair care accessible to low income and homeless communities
 - Targeted adults
 - Held in the library's largest meeting room
 - Library provided light refreshments
- Faded & Co. provided barber academy students to provide customers with this resource:
 - Three barber students participated
 - Program lasted 3 hours
 - Around 40 haircuts were provided






Future Trends

- Emphasis may be placed upon programming that benefits the physical and mental wellbeing of patrons
- Libraries in locations that serve a large community of individuals experiencing homelessness or low-income customers may increase personal care programming
- Libraries may increase partnerships with local organizations that may provide customers with access to services (Glover, 2023)
- Librarians may expand their reach beyond hair care services as they aim to positively impact the physical and mental wellbeing of patrons, promoting inclusivity (Mars, 2013)



Future Suggestions

- To gauge customer needs, implement anonymous surveys allowing library users to have input on programming
- Create connections with local organizations that may be able to provide a service (Glover, 2023)
- Offer participation opportunities to individuals looking for experience
 - Example: Barber program students (Faded & Co., 2024)
- Promote inclusivity by providing free access to hair care and other programming (Mars, 2013)
- Allow program participants to provide feedback, including suggestions for future



Closing Remarks

- Programs such as hair care services provide the library with the opportunity to drastically change the lives of their customers
- Public libraries may shift their focus to programs that benefit the physical and mental well being of underserved communities
- By providing such services, public libraries may be able to bolster their value and uphold their relevancy within their community



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Thank you

