

Developing Public Outreach Programs for Urban, Rural, and Descendant Communities

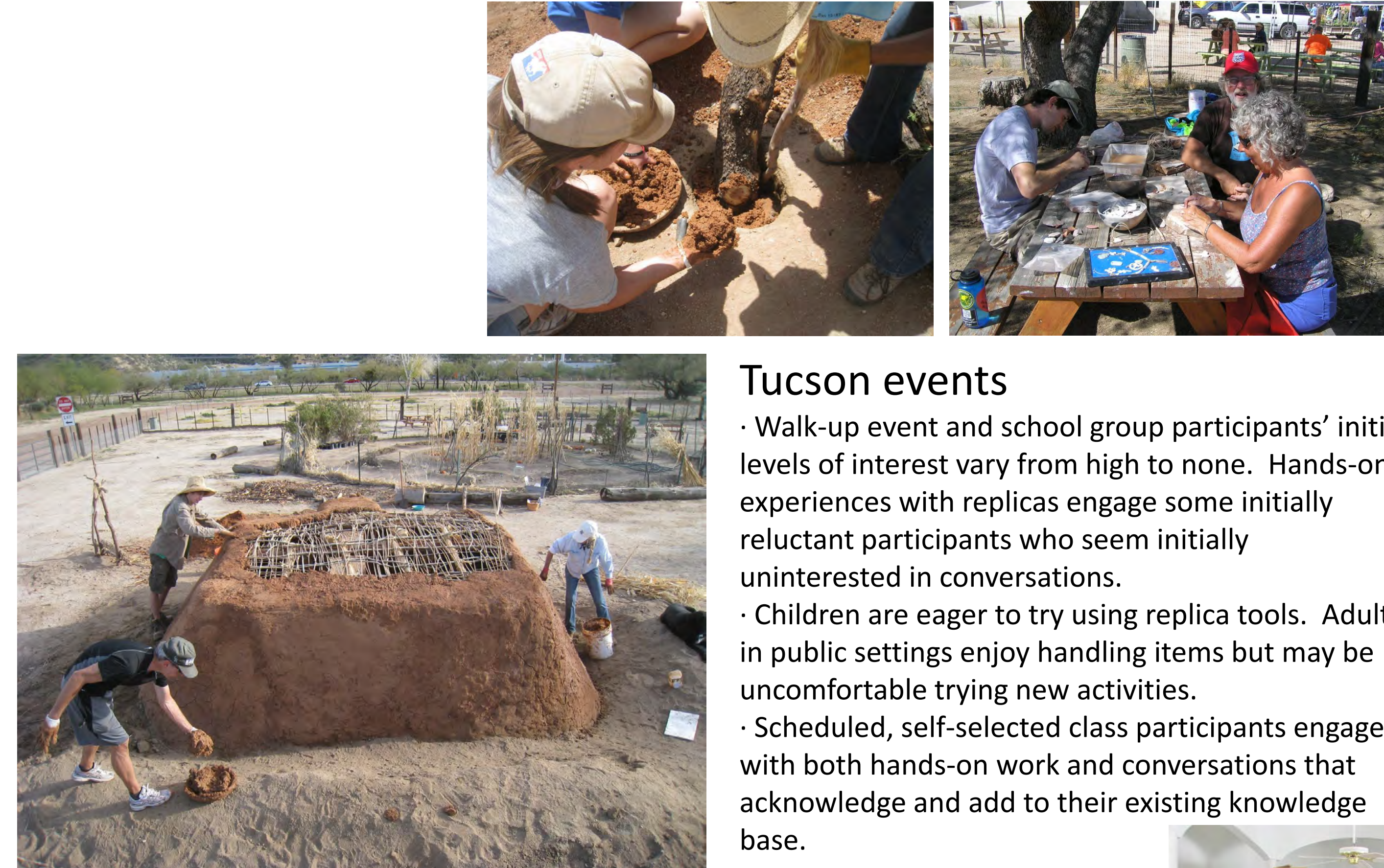
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Making outreach engaging for different audiences

Outreach programs that encourage meaningful community engagement are most successful when they can be tailored to the interests of specific communities. This poster presents lessons learned from public outreach events aimed at children and at adults in three different settings:

- Descendant communities in southern Arizona
- Urban communities in Tucson, Arizona
- Rural communities in the Upper Gila area of Grant County, New Mexico



Tucson events

- Walk-up event and school group participants’ initial levels of interest vary from high to none. Hands-on experiences with replicas engage some initially reluctant participants who seem initially uninterested in conversations.
- Children are eager to try using replica tools. Adults in public settings enjoy handling items but may be uncomfortable trying new activities.
- Scheduled, self-selected class participants engage with both hands-on work and conversations that acknowledge and add to their existing knowledge base.



Cultural Center events

- Hands-on activities have great potential
- Children’s hands-on activities introduce skills the ancestors used in a tangible way to increase appreciation for traditional knowledge
- For all age groups, activities increase appreciation for the effort involved in ancestors’ ways of accomplishing daily tasks



Lessons from our experiences

- Emphases on local connections (whether to ancestors, or to previous inhabitants of a local landscape) engage visitors in each setting
- Hands-on items encourage engagement by contributing to a less “stuffy” atmosphere, whether as objects to hold or tools to be used in experimental activities
- Having variety of topics and activities available is important to engage visitors’ varied interests, even in fairly specialized events for self-selected audiences
- Conveying respect for (and receptiveness to) local knowledge is important in all settings



Goals for outreach interactions and program content

Cultural center events

- Scheduled events for small groups examining facility collections
- Goals: discovering or enriching connections to shared heritage

Tucson events

- Walk-up events for large audiences (primarily farmers’ markets) introducing local archaeology
- Goals: generating interest in local archaeological resources
- Scheduled presentations for school groups on local archaeology
- Goals: enrichment of classroom content, generating interest
- Scheduled classes for adults on specific topics and skills
- Goals: developing participants’ skills and knowledge in a subject area

Upper Gila events

- Walk-up fairs for general audiences summarizing summer field school results
- Goals: sharing research results with host communities, generating interest in local archaeology
- Scheduled presentations for school groups on local archaeology
- Goals: enrichment of classroom content, developing pride in local archaeology
- Scheduled library presentations for children and adults on specific topics and skills
- Goals: developing participants’ skills and knowledge, sharing research results with host communities



Upper Gila events

- All event attendees are somewhat more self-selected because of distances to event locations, and interest is medium to high.
- All ages engage well with emphases on connections to their local landscapes and to everyday tasks (e.g., chopping wood, hunting).
- Respect and consideration for local knowledge and customs is important, including vocabulary and non-judgmental discussions of preservation and ethics



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