

OLD PUEBLO ARCHAEOLOGY

Old Pueblo Archaeology Center's Fresh Start by Allen Dart, RPA Executive Director, Old Pueblo Archaeology Center



The Old Pueblo courtyard at the Ajo Service Center, view northwest, February 2009. Barbed wire along top of fence has since been removed.

On September 9, 2008, the Governing Board of the Tucson Unified School District (TUSD) gave a fresh start to the not-for-profit Old Pueblo Archaeology Center's educational programs in archaeology, history, and cultures. At its regularly scheduled meeting on that date, the TUSD Board approved an agreement under which the school district would provide a new facility from which Old Pueblo was to begin offering our programs starting in January 2009.

Our New Place

Old Pueblo Archaeology's "new digs" are located at TUSD's Ajo Service Center (the "ASC") at 2201 W. 44th Street in Tucson. Situated just a few hundred feet west of La Cholla Blvd., the ASC is a 10-acre property in the foothills of the Tucson Mountains, surrounded by park lands. On its south and east, the ASC property is bounded by the City of Tucson's 168-acre John F. Kennedy Park. Immediately to the

ASC's west is an unspoiled Sonoran Desert vista preserved in Pima County's Tucson Mountain Park. At approximately 20,000 acres, Tucson Mountain Park is the largest natural resource area owned and managed by a local government in the U.S.

Lead-Up to an Agreement

I think it's an interesting story that led up to the Tucson Unified School District Board's agreement with Old Pueblo, so I'd like to digress to share it with you. In the fall of 2007, TUSD was going through heart-wrenching decisions about how to cut its expenses so it could live within an annual budget that had recently been reduced drastically because of a downturn in Arizona's economy. The District weighed many cost-cutting options, including a recommendation from its then-superintendent to close four schools. Another TUSD facility that potentially was on the chopping block



which had been the inspiration for our “Old Pueblo Educational Neighborhood” children’s learning programs that we had begun ten years earlier (see sidebar about Tucson Unified School District’s Cooper Environmental Science Campus). Part of our proposal was to take over the management of Camp Cooper, to lower the District’s expenses so that the Cooper Environmental Science Campus (Camp Cooper) could remain open.

As a result of our 2007 inquiry to TUSD, one of its central office administrators (Lisa Long), its Regional Science Center Coordinator (Marleen Kotelman), and others evaluated Old Pueblo’s education program offerings and contracting experience. This caused TUSD to recognize the contributions that Old Pueblo Archaeology Center has made in educating TUSD students and other youths about the heritage and modern cultures of the Southwest since 1994, when Old Pueblo was incorporated in Arizona. Seeing the value of our programs, the District offered us a counterproposal: They invited Old Pueblo to move our entire facility onto a school district property from which we could offer even more archaeology and culture education programs than previously, to complement the environmental programs being offered by the Cooper Environmental Science Campus (which, fortunately, has continued to operate since those dire days of 2007).



Top: Excavation of the building footprint for Old Pueblo’s new modular building at the TUSD Ajo Service Center, December 2008. Tucson Mountain Park is in background to west.

Bottom: Old Pueblo’s new shade structure over the newly created OPEN3 simulated archaeological site, view west.

was its renowned Cooper Environmental Science Campus, known more affectionately as “Camp Cooper” by the many children and educators who had taken advantage of the Science Campus’s outstanding environmental and cultural programs through the previous decades (including my own two children).

When my wife Janet Chumbley (a librarian in TUSD) informed me in October 2007 that Camp Cooper was being targeted for possible closure by the District, I contacted TUSD to propose an Old Pueblo Archaeology Center-TUSD partnership designed not only to keep Camp Cooper open, but also to reinstitute its archaeology learning program,

As our negotiations progressed, TUSD provided Old Pueblo with a list of its vacant properties for us to look at, in case one of those properties might be a suitable new location for us. We narrowed the choice down to two parcels in the western part of Tucson, upon which TUSD’s Lisa Long turned over the responsibility of hammering out an agreement to Bryant Nodine, one of the school district’s planners.

The Agreement

Realizing how difficult and costly it would be to develop one of TUSD’s vacant-land parcels from scratch to accommodate Old Pueblo, Bryant came up with the idea of having Old Pueblo share the existing facilities at the District’s Ajo Service Center, a regional facility that houses many of



“Building C,” site of Old Pueblo Archaeology Center’s new administrative office at the TUSD Ajo Service Center.

TUSD’s Gifted and Talented Education (GATE), physical therapy, and occupational therapy teachers.

Bryant arranged to have TUSD move an 1,800-square-foot modular classroom building onto the grounds of the ASC for Old Pueblo’s exclusive use, and to provide Old Pueblo with a half-acre of adjacent, fenced land on which we could construct a new simulated archaeological dig site for our flagship “Old Pueblo Educational Neighborhood” (OPEN) children’s learning program.

The arrangement also allows Old Pueblo to utilize other support spaces at the ASC, including four staff work cubicles in an existing ASC office building (Building C), the ASC’s central ramada, its parking area, and its restrooms facilities. Old Pueblo agreed to this proposal, so a five-year agreement was drawn up, and it was approved by the School Board this past September.

The Exchange

TUSD determined a fair monthly rental rate that the District could expect to charge an outside organization for the use of an 1,800-square-foot portable building and shared use of the existing Ajo Service Center facilities, and calculated what the total rent should be for a five-year lease period. However, instead of having Old Pueblo Archaeology Center actually pay cash rent, the District requested that Old Pueblo provide TUSD with archaeology and heritage education and assessment programs sufficient to match the projected rent estimate. Specifically, the five-year lease worked out with TUSD specifies that Old Pueblo will provide its “OPEN” simulated archaeological site-excavation, field-trip, learning programs; its OPENOUT in-classroom learning programs; its guided tours to archaeological sites in southern Arizona; and other educational services to be negotiated with the District; and Old Pueblo will provide TUSD with cultural resource

The Tucson Unified School District’s Cooper Environmental Science Campus – “Camp Cooper” – was the inspiration for Old Pueblo Archaeology Center’s “Old Pueblo Educational Neighborhood” (OPEN) program.

Although Camp Cooper traditionally has focused on environmental science learning, it also used to have an archaeology education component that included a simulated archaeological dig, which was conceived and established by Marc Severson (one of Old Pueblo’s founders), Sharon Urban (a former Arizona State Museum archaeologist, now with the Harris Environmental Group in Tucson), and others. Around 1994, the same year Old Pueblo Archaeology Center was incorporated, TUSD had to close Camp Cooper’s archaeology program to cut costs.

Shortly after the Camp’s archaeology program demise, many TUSD teachers called Old Pueblo to ask if we offered a similar simulated archaeological dig learning program for children. Their calls were the inspiration for Old Pueblo to begin our OPEN program in 1997 with the establishment of the “OPEN1” simulated archaeological dig education program site, at our first office facility on Fort Lowell Road.

When Old Pueblo moved to a new location on West Ina Road at the end of 2003, we established the “OPEN2” simulated dig learning site there, and now that we’ve moved to West 44th Street we have just created our third incarnation of the simulated archaeological dig experience, named “OPEN3.”

The OPEN endeavor also includes our “OPENOUT” (Old Pueblo Educational Neighborhood Outreach) program, in which Old Pueblo’s educators go directly into schools to provide presentations about southwestern archaeology, history, and cultures.



Children’s Program Instructor Cris Wagner in Old Pueblo’s new ASC classroom while it was still being organized.



Laboratory Director Darla Pettit (left) and Children's Program Instructor Cris Wagner in Old Pueblo's new office-laboratory room while it was still being organized; the classroom is in the background.



Above: Critter and Kokopelli imprints in the sidewalk beside Old Pueblo's new ASC modular building.

Below: Imitative Magic? "Poopin' Bunny" imprint in the sidewalk beside the new modular building. Since this photo was taken we've found real bunny poop on the premises more than once!

(archaeological and historical site) surveys of up to five properties that are either owned by TUSD or being considered for purchase. Already the properties to be surveyed for cultural resources have included the undeveloped portions of the Ajo Service Center and another TUSD property near Mission and Irvington roads where TUSD wants to construct a new school.

In addition to providing these in-kind services of monetary value, Old Pueblo also had to move, store, and again move all of our furnishings from our old Ina Road offices to the new ASC facility; install electrical, phone, and internet service, including new local area networks inside the two ASC buildings that we are using; transport all of the high-quality topsoil from our old OPEN2 simulated dig site, and the 22 railroad ties that enclosed that dig site, to the new property for construction of the OPEN3 site; purchase materials for and construct the new OPEN3 simulated archaeological dig site itself; and construct a new 40 by 30 foot shade structure to protect the new OPEN3 simulated dig site and its users.

The Costs

Obviously, the set-up of this new facility comes at substantial cost to Old Pueblo Archaeology Center. Therefore, Old Pueblo asks for support from our members and the general public in the form of both monetary and volunteer-time contributions to help defray the costs of our move and to finish getting the new facility up and ready for use by children and the general public. Persons who wish to donate



funds using Visa, MasterCard, or Discover credit cards can do so by contacting Old Pueblo at 520-798-1201 or info@oldpueblo.org.

Donation checks can be made payable to Old Pueblo Archaeology Center (or simply "OPAC"), and can either be dropped off at our new location (2201 W. 44th Street, Tucson) or by mail to PO Box 40577, Tucson AZ 85717-0577. Stock donations can also be accepted, as can cash, of course.

The Fresh Start

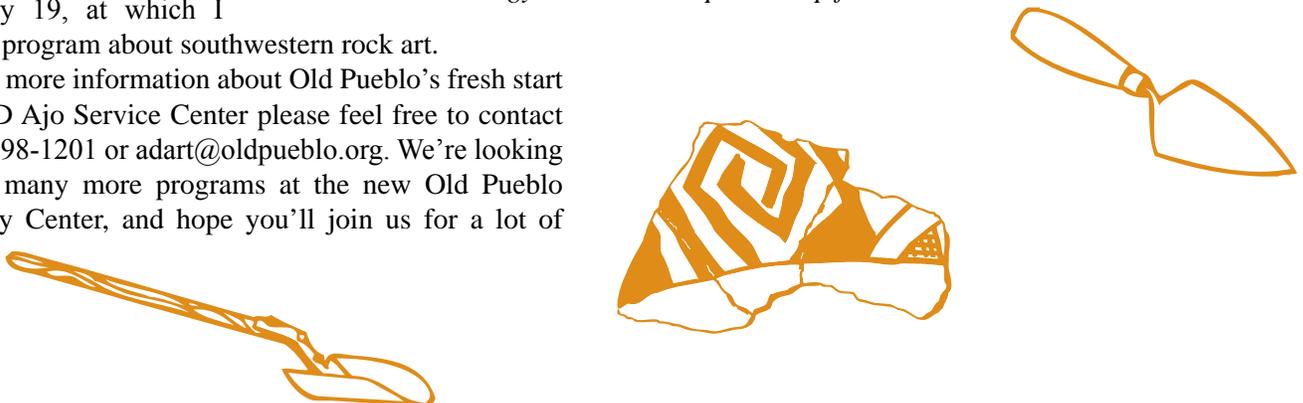
There have been some construction and organizational delays in getting started, but Old Pueblo Archaeology Center's first education program at our new TUSD Ajo Service Center facility was held on February 11, when 26 fourth-graders in teacher Patricia Young's class at Rio Vista Elementary were the first to experience a simulated archaeological dig in the new OPEN3 site. (Rio Vista School is in the Amphitheater Unified School District; TUSD's agreement for Old Pueblo's joint use of the ASC allows Old Pueblo to conduct programs for schools in other districts, as well as for private and charter schools.) Our first ASC program for adults was the "Third Thursdays" monthly free lecture program on February 19, at which I presented a program about southwestern rock art.

For more information about Old Pueblo's fresh start at the TUSD Ajo Service Center please feel free to contact me at 520-798-1201 or adart@oldpueblo.org. We're looking forward to many more programs at the new Old Pueblo Archaeology Center, and hope you'll join us for a lot of them.

**Old Pueblo Archaeology Center's Facilities
at the Tucson Unified School District's Ajo Service Center**

Old Pueblo Archaeology Center
2201 W. 44th Street, Tucson
520-798-1201 info@oldpueblo.org

Old Pueblo Archaeology Center aerial photo map for visitors.



Doolen Middle School Students Dig the Old Pueblo Archaeology Site

