



History makes the best mystery

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By: Stacy Moore, Hi-Desert Star

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JOSHUA TREE — “This is cool,” Kacey Manter, 6, announced as she picked up an arrowhead. “Can I touch this?” she added as she gazed at a knife made of bone and rock.

Across the Bell Center gymnasium, Joey Joosten, 11, and Jason Draper, 12, played with a bone and pin game.

“These are real bones,” Jason said.

“Real bones, real stick, real leather. Everything’s real,” Joey added.

Getting kids interested in history and prehistory was one of the points of “Archaeopalooza,” a Saturday gathering of archaeologists and historians at Copper Mountain College’s Bell Center. Judging from kids like 9-year-old Lacy Lenninger of Yucca Valley, it worked.

According to Lacy, archaeology is cool. “You get to find different things, like artifacts, nobody else can find,” she explained.

She took a turn using tools and her bare hands through a sandbox to find artifacts like horseshoes buried by the National Park Service.

“We’re teaching them about the process (of archaeology) and the different types of things they could find in the park,” Jamie Peters, a ranger from Joshua Tree National Park, said.

Next to her, Ashlynn Marcum, 6, crushed seed pods on a grinding stone, and at another table, 7-year-olds Jack Roland of Joshua Tree and Cooper Jackson of Long Beach played a memory game with cards designed to teach children Cahuilla words.

“Can you tell me how you say ‘sun’ in Cahuilla?” Ranger Karen Davidson asked Jack.

“Tमित?” he replied.

“Very good!”

Outside, Stone Age weapons expert Chris Henry supervised as kids and adults practiced throwing spears using atlatls, carved wooden shafts used by ancient Americans.

“You throw them how you naturally throw,” Henry said to explain his sidearm style.

Boosting the scholarly credential of “Archaeopalooza,” experts gave lectures on topics such as fire making and rock art.

Archaeologist Justin Lev-Tov of Redlands brought his 11-year old son. “It’s been a great gathering,” he said as he looked over some of Henry’s Stone Age weapon reproductions. “It’s very nice they have this to get people interested in what you have here.”

Looking at a display artifacts unearthed from the local desert, members of the Smith family of Yucca Valley said “Archaeopalooza” inspired them to get outside themselves. “It’s pretty cool,” mom Monica Smith said.

Her 9-year-old daughter, Kaitlyn, agreed, calling the event simply, “Awesome!”

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