

McMicken

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*The Legacy
of Darwin*

Summer 2009

UNIVERSITY OF
Cincinnati



BRINGING THE ANCIENT WORLD TO LIFE

While utilizing ancient artifacts, hands-on learning and engaging presentations, the Classics Department introduces its outreach program as a resource to local educators. Young students throughout Cincinnati are now learning about ancient civilizations from one of the most well-known Classics departments in the world.

With a towel draped over her propped-up leg and a thick glove covering her hand, Classics graduate student Anne Feltovich looks up to the students. “Don’t try this at home,” she says with a laugh, before regaling them with a tale of a professor who almost chopped his finger off when he failed to be cautious.

Then Feltovich takes a palm-sized rock and strikes a bigger rock that lies on her leg, causing small flakes to break off the larger stone. The process is called percussion flaking, she says, and it’s a tool-making technique that was used during the Paleolithic era—does anyone know what lithic means?

The half-hour presentation could have easily occurred in the lecture hall of an introductory course to ancient civilizations. But while the demonstration did take place in UC’s Blegen Library, Feltovich wasn’t introducing stone tools to undergrads that day.

Rather, her captive audience consisted of a large group of sixth and seventh graders from Pleasant Run Middle School. The students, 38 in all, visited UC’s McMicken College on a blustery March day to learn more about the ancient world.

Feltovich demonstrated how the ancestors created stone tools (called flint knapping) using soft and hard stones to make things like arrowheads and other types of projectile points. The presentation, “Hunting with the Ancients: Stone Tools and the Atlatl,” is just one of more than 20 offered by the Classics department’s outreach program.

Classics graduate student Anne Feltovich demonstrates percussion flaking to Pleasant Run Middle School students during a presentation on “Hunting with the Ancients: Stone Tools and the Atlatl.”

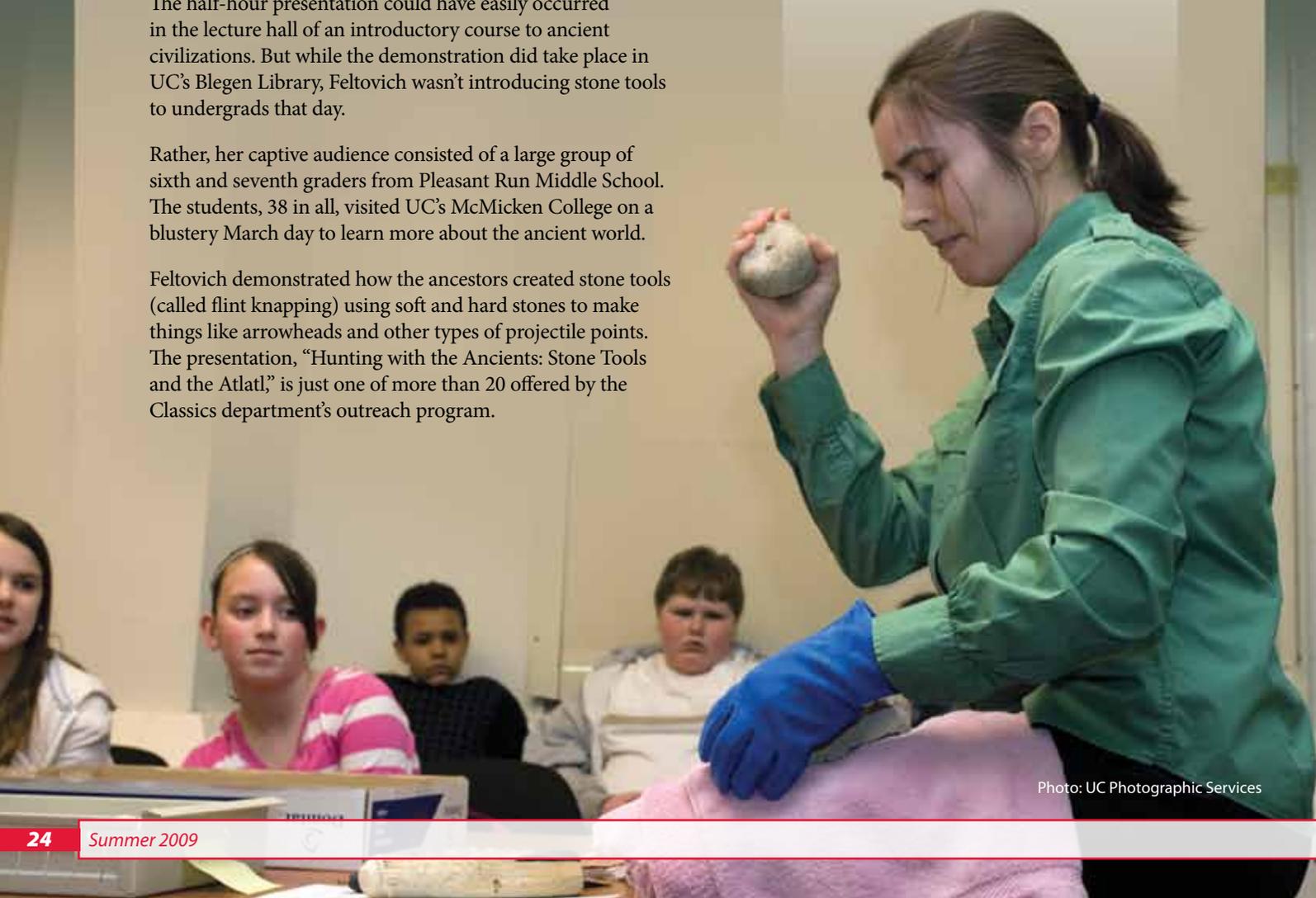


Photo: UC Photographic Services

Right: Professor Steven Ellis gives a presentation on Pompeii.

Below: Students pass around artifacts.



Photos: UC Photographic Services

The program, created only two years ago with support from an anonymous benefactor, aims to teach classical studies to middle and high school students across the region. Since its inception, 10 presentations have already taken place, and many more are scheduled in the future.

“It’s important for us to interact with the community and generate some interest in what we do,” says Kathleen Lynch, professor in Classics. Lynch and fellow professor Steven Ellis co-founded the outreach program that brought the students to UC. “The students are excited to learn it, the teachers are grateful for the opportunity, and the graduate students can communicate in a different way the passions they have for their field.”

“There are so many of us that are passionate about what we do. It just seemed wise to share that passion, especially with young people,” she continues. “We want to keep our field alive and we want people to join us.”

Haley Duko’s similar passion for ancient civilizations is what spurred her to contact the Classics department.

Duko is a language arts and social studies teacher at Pleasant Run Middle School. When her seventh grade honors students began learning about Mesopotamia and ancient civilizations, she wanted to look beyond the textbook so they could truly understand the importance of these ancient societies.

That was when she stumbled upon the department’s Web site (classics.uc.edu/outreach) and found the slew of presentations her students could see. After informing the students of a few options, they voted to see Feltovich’s stone tools presentation as well as another about Pompeii, a Roman city buried in the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 AD.

The presentations are created by graduate students about their own individual interests and can be catered to a specific age

group. Examples include “How to Pick Up Chicks in Rome: An Introduction to Love and Love Poetry at Rome” and “Let the Games Begin—The Ancient Olympics.”

“What we wanted them to get from this experience is that archaeology and ancient civilizations aren’t as abstract as they appear to be in their textbook,” Duko says. “They learned that people are in Pompeii today and artifacts are still being discovered everyday. It was so interesting to see them light up.”

An extra treat, she says, was having Ellis step in as the presenter about Pompeii. At the last minute, the graduate student meant to run the presentation became ill, so Ellis, a Mediterranean archaeologist who excavates annually in Pompeii, presented the material. The personal anecdotes and experiences he discussed with the young students brought the ancient city to life.

“It puts things in perspective for them,” Duko continues.

The outreach program is geared for the presenters to visit the students at their school, but Duko and sixth grade teacher Sue Engel decided it would be more beneficial for the students to come to UC so they could experience life on a college campus—and hopefully see themselves at a university someday.

While on campus, Duko took the students on a short tour, pointing out sorority houses, dorms and a few academic buildings.

The students, Duko says, were excited by what they saw.

“They wanted to know what a kid was majoring in or where they lived and where they came from. They were really impressed with the experience of being on campus,” she says. “We’re glad we could come to campus and give them a chance to see what it’s like.”

Perhaps the biggest highlight of the visit was Feltovich’s demonstration with the atlatl—a tool that uses leverage to achieve a greater distance while throwing a spear. After the two



Feltoich demonstrates how to throw an atlatl.

Photo: UC Photographic Services

presentations, the students followed Feltoich to a grassy area outside and watched as she propelled a spear a few hundred feet away. When the spear hit a distant tree, the students cheered.

“I really enjoyed this trip and my favorite part was when we got to see how an atlatl was thrown,” sixth grader Heaven Cox says. “If I ever got the chance, I would definitely come back to UC.”

Back at school, the students were able to take their experiences from the visit and apply them to their studies. The sixth graders created a timeline of ancient stone tools and the seventh graders made a map and a survival guide of things they would need to escape Pompeii unharmed.

“The presentations were very different than the regular day experiences at school. During the school year we learned about ancient Rome and daily life but I had never really thought what it would be like to experience a horrible volcano eruption,” says Cara Molulon, a seventh grader. “There was a tremendous amount of effort put into excavating Pompeii which really sparked my interest in learning what might be buried in my own backyard.”

Duko hopes to make the trip to Blegen Library an annual one.

The Classics department is eager to see them, Lynch proclaims.

“We think it’s important to educate these young students because classics will always be here,” she says. “It’s the foundation of western culture and students may not even realize how important we are to the everyday lives they lead. Their government, their political system, even cultural values are rooted in the past.

“We’re hoping that if they get these foundations early on, maybe they’ll get interested in learning more—in college and later in life.”

Reaching Out

Classics isn’t the only department in McMicken that knows the importance of outreach efforts for K-12 students in the Cincinnati area. A few other examples include:

African and African American Studies

“The poetry project” allowed Hughes High School students to visit campus to hear work of published African-American poets and original work from UC students.

Biological Sciences

Scientists Promoting Evolution Education in Cincinnati (SPEEC) is comprised of UC scientists who visit K-12 schools and provide assistance to local teachers about evolution.

Chemistry

The department invites K-12 students to Rieveschl Hall to introduce them to the subject of chemistry through fun laboratory experiments—including everything from Kool-Aid to dry ice.

Political Science and Asian Studies

The two programs work together to host Model APEC—a student simulation of the Asia Pacific Economic

Cooperation forum that brings 150 high school students to campus to discuss global issues.

Physics

At the international Hands-on Particle Physics Masterclass, Anderson High School students come to UC to work with particle physicists and students around the world via satellite about particle collider experiments.

Mathematical Sciences

More than 80 teams from middle and high schools participate in the annual Math Bowl, a creative problem-solving competition.

German Studies

The department hosts an annual “German Day” that brings high school German classes to campus to participate in a day-long series of academic competitions, ranging from poetry recitations to cultural knowledge quizzes.