Elk Knob Community-Based Art Project

Appalachian State University
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Project duration
August 21, 2012 – May 1, 2013

Today’s date
April 25, 2013

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Final Report Narrative

Name of Project: The Elk Knob Community Art Project

Grant Period: February 1, 2012 – June 30, 2013

Grantee Name: Appalachian State University

Project Director: Tom Hansell

Description of Project:
Students and community members collaborated on two community-based art installations that promote sustainable development in the Elk Knob community. During this project, students engaged in community-based research about the culture, history, and natural world around Elk Knob. Students assisted at public events created by community partners, then met with key partners to present their design for approval. Students also collaborated with the Elk Knob Community Heritage Council (EKCHO) to create a community art day where participants completed the art works. Students documented the entire process and developed a presentation to share their work with the community and the general public.

Activities:

- Students assisted with the Elk Knob Community Day on September 8, 2012
- Students presented a draft design to EKCHO September 21, 2012.
- Students presented a final design to EKCHO October 3, 2012
- Students collaborated with community members to plan and execute Elk Knob Community Art Day November 10, 2012
- Students collaborated with community members to create and install two public art pieces
- Students presented to ATP conference November 30, 2013
- Students presented to ASA conference March 22, 2013.
- The university communications office published our work on the AppState website: http://today.appstate.edu/elk-knob/

Project Outcomes:
Students collaborated with a local non-profit to create two new works of public art that honor the culture and heritage of the Elk Knob Community. An iron tree with spiral stepping stones represents families that have deep roots in the community, and a mural on an old country store supports local efforts to turn the building into a community center. Students created the first Community Art Day in the Elk Knob Community, where multiple generations of local participants worked on art projects that reflect their community. This process of collaboration between students and community members was carefully documented and will serve as a model for future creative projects.
Problems Encountered:

Our plan was ambitious and required both students and faculty to work many late nights and weekends to reach our goals. Specific problems included an October snow storm that delayed work on the mural, the time involved in transporting students from campus to the community, and the logistics of creating an off-campus project around students’ regular class schedules.

Program Continuation and Sustainability:

The process of collaboration between students and community members will serve as a model for the next phase of this program. Evaluation meetings with both students and community members encouraged us to continue the project. Now that we have developed a system for creating new public art works, we will continue to work on different aspects of the Elk Knob Public Art Plan in the future.

Conclusions and Recommendations:

The Elk Knob Community Art project was well received by the community and students. The students’ work is now part of the community. We plan to continue to work with the Elk Knob Community Heritage Council to implement more parts of the public art plan in the future.

Recommendations from the community included making signs, maps, and websites that allow the local community to present their visions for the future.

Recommendation from students included starting construction of the project earlier in semester, and scheduling longer class periods for community-based work.

We plan to work to incorporate these recommendations into next year’s project.

Attachments (in PDF format):

Attached documents include:

- Community Day Flyer
- Elk Knob Press Release
- ATP report photos
- Watauga Democrat Article November 4, 2013