

## San Luis on a mission

### Visitors get behind-the-scenes look at restoration

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A crowd gathered around archaeologist Heidi Edgar Sunday as she sat, Oral-B toothbrush in hand, scrubbing dirt from shards of pottery more than 300 years old.

"The material we excavate comes into this lab," archaeologist Jerry Lee explained as he led more than 20 visitors on a behind-the-scenes tour of the Delbert M. Archibald Office of Archaeological Restoration at Mission San Luis.

The mission was inhabited by Apalachee Indians and Spaniards between 1656 and 1704.

"The benefit for the public is for them to be able to see and touch artifacts outside of the museum setting," Lee said about the tour, which is held the second Sunday of each month.

"I loved how the Apalachee Indians mimicked the pottery styles of the Europeans," said visitor Nona Elder, a history buff who comes to the museum several times a year. "I had no idea they did that."

Another fan favorite was an arrowhead made from glass bottles the Spanish had brought.

The finds Edgar had been working on, pottery shards spread across several tables, all came from what was nothing more than a community dump.

"We've excavated six very large trash piles so far," Lee said.

In this last pile alone, archaeologists have been tasked with filtering through more than 95 bags of material including pottery (which is glued together using none other than Elmer's glue) and much smaller items such as beads, straight pins, fragments of jewelry and fish bones.

In a back room, visitors ogled trays of metal artifacts



Heidi Edgar brushes dirt from bits of recovered pottery pieces during a tour of the archaeology lab at Mission San Luis. Mission San Luis hosted an archaeology lab tour on Sunday, August 15, 2010. Jerry Lee conducted the tour to give visitors a glimpse to a behind-the-scenes close up of archaeology at the lab. At left, Rachael Carlos-Jacobson, 3, seemed to enjoy her visit.

Photos by MIKE EWEN/Democrat



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■ See a photo gallery of the Delbert M. Archibald Office of Archaeological Restoration at Mission San Luis.

(cannonballs, nails, padlocks) that were being cleaned of rust through a special process involving water, soda ash and an electrical current.

The final crowd pleaser was

a tin-enameled blue and white plate made in Mexico.

"This is the most complete vessel we've recovered," Lee said.

Mission San Luis is located at 2100 W. Tennessee St. and is open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday-Sunday.

There will be no charge to visit the museum Saturday when re-enactors fire 17th-century style weapons at 10:30 and 11:30 a.m.