

Case Study

Customer Details

Nashville Zoo at Grassmere

www.nashvillezoo.org/

Industry

Cultural Tourism

Challenges

Declining attendance of exhibit

Solution



Benefits

- Increased attendance of 30%; increase of 15% in season ticket holders cited improvement as reason for new memberships.
- Created model partnership between school and zoo for cross educational programs.
- Related secondary promotional and marketing from similar institutions
- Added revenue returned to improving of grounds and onsite educational programs.
- Spur to raise electronic profile of the exhibit.
- Recent recipient of "History in the Classroom" award from State Board of Education

Background

The historic house and farms comprise the original grant of land from the Croft family to the zoo, but after a costly renovation to the house, little to nothing was done to provide interpretive programs to the exhibit. While zoo attendance grew with the zoo's expansion, the overlooked exhibit languished without any vision of how to make it accessible to visitors other than as a typical historic house museum. Faced with the decision of closing up the house, zoo leadership called in a consultant group to find ways of

Challenge

As a historical home, the Croft mansion is a flat and unengaging property to the zoo's typical visitor—young children. Zoo leadership were eager to make the property appealing to children. While the stables with live farm animals were a draw, the house itself would sit unused except to fifteen minute tours. The tour scripts were also in English only, so non- native speakers were unable to enjoy the interpretive programs.

Solution

The zoo entered into a pilot program with the Nashville City Schools to aid middle school modern language, history and Spanish classes with translation materials. Many of the family documents were written in Spanish, as the last generation to live in the family home spent most of their lives in Cuba. The family collection contains numerous typed and handwritten letters that are exclusively in Spanish.

The zoo needed to have the documents translated, and teachers in the classes were interested in providing hands on ways to integrate educational programs in line with state standards.

Results

Increase in sold zoo memberships

When asked by staff why they chose to purchase an annual zoo membership, over 30% of responders cited their children's involvement with the pilot program. Many of those who were not parents of the children involved in the program heard about the new exhibit through word of mouth, and decided to join as well.

A survey of new members showed that

Increase in minority visitors

Hispanic visitors to the zoo increased by 75% after the program started. Prior to the program, tensions between Metro police and Hispanic residents in the area caused most to shy away from the Nolensville Road Corridor. The partnership between the zoo and the school district has been cited by the mayor's office as a model for cooperation between city personnel and minority groups within the city.

Partnership between city properties and public schools

With the partnership between the zoo and Nashville city schools established, the city is looking to expand this program to include other historic sites. With an increased awareness of the zoo's collections, and a linguistic link to a large minority of the students within the Nashville school system, both institutions were able to open a dialogue for sharing primary historical sources that have previously been underutilized.

In addition, school personnel were key in aiding zoo staff when applying for an NEH grant for additional funding to organize the collection.

Expanded visibility of other historical sites within the city

While most other historical sites within the city do not contain bilingual documents, teachers are eager to use historical documents in their current curriculum. Historic Nashville, the city's historic preservation division, reports an increase of 75% in requests for information on historic homes and sites within Nashville and the surrounding area. Other historic sites have remarked that there is an increase of visits by small children and families to their sites.