

Abstract Southern Illinois University's Touch of Nature Environmental Center [TON] is a pioneering experiential education facility in the areas of observational, environmental, therapeutic, outdoor, adventure, and challenge education and leadership.<sup>1</sup> TON is located in Makanda, Illinois and consists of 3,100 acres north of Giant City Park on the west bank of Little Grassy Lake. It is known for educating both SIU students, the people of the surrounding community, and beyond.

“The mission of TON is to enhance learning, promote professional development, encourage personal and interpersonal development, and increase environmental awareness.”<sup>2</sup> TON's facilities service groups of all ages and specialize in working with individuals having a wide range of mental and physical abilities. Camps are held here throughout the summer, with a focus on education of the environment. In the Spring Semester of 2016, our Building Technology class was given a chance to enhance the infrastructure of TON; the class was “hired” to design and build a series of trail kiosks/educational stations along the new Rocky Ledges Trail. The class received a \$10,000 grant from the Green Fund at SIU to help facilitate the introduction of educational trails to the campus.

Each group in the class was responsible for the research, design, and construction of an education station. Each station has its own distinct purpose depending on its location along the trail: to educate about different animals, plants, rocks, or important historical events particular to this location or region. The kiosks were designed to fulfill the purpose of educating the users while also blending into the landscape and functioning as a natural part of the environment. These included educational signage, benches, tables, decks, and net racks.

The focus of this abstract, station number one, was on the trailhead located at TON's Camp Two beach. The group's goal was to create a kiosk that provided signage that would welcome hikers and introduce the trail. The signage would also list the dangers that might be on the trail such as venomous snakes and give the hikers the trail rules.

The group was able to design and build a trail kiosk that provides signs which educate hikers entering the Rocky Ledges Trail while additionally providing a nice place to rest when finishing the hike – all while blending into the surrounding landscape and not taking focus away from the environment. This structure will be utilized by hikers for years to come.

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<sup>1</sup> Text taken from “Design Build Packet” handed out in class during the semester

<sup>2</sup> “About Touch of Nature Environmental Center” Southern Illinois University. Accessed 13 May 2016.  
<http://ton.siu.edu/about-us/>