

Gilmore Nature and Fitness Trail

Nature Trail Expands Outdoor Opportunities for Rural Community

The Challenge

Even though children in rural communities live close to nature, in today's high tech world few have good exposure to the natural environment. This has led to a disconnection between the next generation of leaders and environmental concepts.

The more sedentary lifestyle of today's children and adults is leading to higher rates of obesity and the health problems associated with a less active lifestyle. Many rural communities lack a designated area where children and adults can explore the natural environment, learn about nature, and get needed exercise.

The Solution

The West Virginia Forestry Association received a grant through the Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry, to construct a trail through a nature area on the grounds of Gilmore Elementary School in Jackson County. The trail goes through 7 acres of school property that were not being used. The new trail provides access to a variety of natural plant systems, rock formations, wildlife habitats, and tree species. School teachers can now use this portion of the school grounds as an environmental learning center to incorporate conservation education into their lesson plans.

An additional component of the grant provided a Project Learning Tree (PLT) workshop to faculty at Gilmore Elementary School. PLT activities are correlated to State education standards so teachers can easily incorporate activities into their lesson plans and teach conservation education as part of a child's overall education.

“Within the space of a few decades, the way children understand and experience nature has changed radically. The polarity of the relationship has reversed. Today, kids are aware of the global threats to the environment—but their physical contact, their intimacy with nature, is fading.”

—Richard Louv, Last Child in the Woods



Title I teacher Janey Singleton cuts the ribbon during the dedication of the completed Gilmore School trail, with the help of parent Tony Maddox and (left to right) students Shelby Worl, Andrew Francis, and Ryan and Katelyn Mattox (hidden from view). Onlookers include other school students, and trail supporters and users from the community. Photo: Cinda Francis, West Virginia Forestry Association

The trail includes fitness stations at varying intervals, to offer users additional strength and conditioning exercises.

Resulting Benefits

- Fifteen elementary teachers attended the PLT workshop.
- Members of the community of Sandyville, WV, have a safe and enjoyable recreation area where they can explore nature while maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

Sharing Success

- Individuals from neighboring communities are coming to use the trail.
- Other communities see the benefits of exploring nature and of having a fitness trail to keep citizens active.



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