

# Hancock middle, high school students take on Paavola Wetlands project

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HANCOCK - Signs, signs, everywhere the signs... at Paavola Wetlands Preserve, that is.

The signs were a three-class project at Hancock Middle School and Central High School, but they're mainly a part of middle school teacher Heather Bradway's Science, Self and Community class, which has taken on the Keweenaw Land Trust-owned Paavola Wetlands Preserve as a project.

Bradway said the project is funded by the Lake Superior Stewardship Initiative. In the last year, her students have done water-quality testing, tree identification and acted as guides during a family outing at the site.

The latest project got started after KLT contacted her about the need for more signs at the wetlands, which are north of Hancock off U.S. 41.

Bradway said her students got started on the project by taking a field trip to the site in autumn 2009.

"We collected various leaf samples," she said.

The collection of leaves from about 10 tree species were brought back to the school, and Bradway said students identified them before passing them off to Hancock Middle School art teacher Karen Scholie's seventh grade class to make clay tiles, which would become part of the signs.

"They imprinted them in the tiles," Bradway said.

The tiles had the leaf species written on them, and were painted and glazed, Bradway said, then sent to Gary Mishica's wood shop class, where 24 Advanced Industrial Technology students spent 100 hours constructing the wood sign frames and mounting the tiles.

Mishica said he talked to KLT representatives about what they wanted for the white cedar signs. The back of the frames are covered with exterior-grade plywood, and the clay tiles are mounted on the plywood within the frames with a polyurethane construction adhesive, which will stand up to the weather.

"You can't get them off," he said.

Mishica said the frames were designed by U.P. Engineers & Architects' landscape architect Bill Sanders for the KLT.

"We made very few modifications," he said.

The final assembly was done on a production line, Mishica said.

"We spent three hours one day doing the final assembly," he said.

Mishica said students made 20 signs for the preserve, and another 13 frames without the tiles for future use by the KLT, which paid for the materials for the signs.

In an e-mail, Evan McDonald, KLT executive director, said the partnership between KLT, LSSI and the schools is good for all involved.

"It's wonderful to see the hands-on progress these student teams are making to benefit a nature preserve in the heart of our community," he wrote. "The Hancock Schools are a great example of how we hope the program will work by getting students and teachers across a range of subject areas and grade levels involved to support a larger project."

McDonald said the partnerships should continue.

"These students are building on the success of the ones who came before them and are enabling more stewardship opportunities for those who will follow," he wrote. "All the students and teachers involved have done a superb job and the community benefits from their efforts."

The signs will be mounted on 4-inch-by-4-inch posts and placed in the ground at the wetlands, but Bradway said it's uncertain if any students will be involved with that part of the project.

Bradway said the sign project began almost two years ago.

, it was a good effort because so many students were involved with it.

"This has been a long, drawn-out process," she said.