



St. Charles County Government

Department of Parks and Recreation
Bettie Yahn-Kramer, Director

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

April 17, 2012

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Towne Park Nature Explore Classroom is Nationally Certified

St. Charles County, Missouri – St. Charles County Parks wanted to provide children with a rare and educational “nature play area” to explore while visiting the newest park development, Towne Park, situated on Towne Park Drive, off Highway 61, north of Wentzville. It was decided to create a dynamic, nature-based play and learning space, which supports skill development in children by reconnecting them with the outdoors. The Certified Nature Explore Classroom, one of the main focal points of the new park, is a magical place for children to learn, discover, and explore nature and opened is open to the public.

“The Nature Explore Classroom at Towne Park is the only certified classroom in St. Charles County that offers children a different outdoor play experience,” said Park Director Bettie Yahn-Kramer. “With only a few in the region, I expect the classroom to become an inspiration for children, families, and educators across the tri-county area.”

The Nature Explore Classroom is certified by the Arbor Day Foundation and Dimensions Educational Research Foundation and encompasses 11 learning stations for children to explore. It features a Gathering Area, Music and Movement Area, Open Play Area, Messy Materials Area, Sand Play Area, Nature Art Area, Wildflower Area, Building Area, Dirt Digging Area, Balance Area, and Water Area.

“Each area of the classroom is designed to motivate children by offering interactive elements – including musical instruments made of natural materials, climbing structures, wooden blocks, garden areas, and natural materials for building and creating art – that would give children important and inspiring nature experiences,” said Yahn-Kramer.

Research is showing that children need connections with the natural world as a regular part of their healthy growth and development. Disconnection from nature is leading to increases in problems such as childhood



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obesity and fear of the outdoors. The Nature Explore Classroom reconnects children with nature and provides educators and families with comprehensive resources to connect children with the natural world on a daily basis.

“While connecting children to nature, such unstructured play and activities are shown to enhance concentration, develop creativity and problem-solving, relieve stress, and improve skills,” said Yahn-Kramer.”

Many volunteers and businesses generously donated their time and materials to build this outdoor oasis for children. Earthworks, Inc.; Shaw Nature Reserve; Forest Keeling Nursery; Gersenite, Inc.; Big Creek Quarry; First Capital Lion’s Club; Forest Releaf of Missouri; Fred Weber Quarry and St. Louis Composting are all sponsors of the classroom. Dedicated volunteers from the Confluence Chapter of the Missouri Master Naturalist have also assisted the Parks Department with the construction of the classroom and have adopted the project as their annual service program.

The Nature Explore Classroom is disabled accessible and is open to children, families, teachers, and scouting organizations who want to experience something extraordinary that reconnects them with nature.

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