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# GWU Honors leads Enchanted Forest, continues tradition of community service



Photo by Isaiah Johnson.

By: Chelsea Sydnor

The Broad River Greenway came to life this weekend with the annual event of Enchanted Forest. Students from Gardner-Webb dressed up as animals common to the area in order to teach children about local wildlife.

Enchanted Forest aims to give children in the community a chance to spend time outside and learn about the world around them. The event is advertised to local elementary schools, encouraging entire families to attend.

"More and more children do not go out and play anymore," explained Tom Jones, dean of the Honors Student Association that headed Enchanted Forest this year. "Their play mostly involves video games instead. This is a chance to get kids outside."

Enchanted Forest also serves as a community engagement project for several freshman University 111 classes. Many of the students either dress up as characters or lead children and their families down the trails to see

and talk to the animals.

According to Jones, it gives them the chance to gain leadership and organization skills. Meanwhile, they have the opportunity to meet people from the area, including the staff of the Broad River Greenway.



**Photo by Isaiah Johnson.**

"Enchanted Forest is one of my favorite events at

Broad River," said Kim Duren, executive director at the Broad River Greenway. "The students do an incredible job creating a fun atmosphere of learning for the youth in our community. We appreciate GWU students investing the time to engage the children of the community in such an enchanting way."



**Photo by Isaiah Johnson.**

Enchanted Forest has taken place since 2008, but this is the first time that the Honors Student Association has coordinated the event in its entirety. It was previously run by Professor Susan Manahan under the Office of Community Engagement at Gardner-Webb. Manahan's job responsibilities recently changed, though, and no longer include Enchanted Forest.

"I wasn't ready to let it go," Jones said. "We had spent so much time making the costumes over the years. We decided to try running it."

While the elaborate animal costumes were originally made by Millie Lineberry, who formerly worked with First-Year Programs, they have required many repairs over the years. Students work every year under the supervision of Jones to keep the costumes in good condition. This year, the town of Boiling Springs allowed use of the old City Hall building to maintain the costumes.

"Even folks who are very introverted can become raving extroverts when you put them in a costume and ask them to interact with everyone," Jones said.

Another important goal of Enchanted Forest is to remind students and guests to be environmentally conscious.

"[The slogan] 'Pro Deo et Humanitate (for God and humanity)' really means something," Jones emphasized. "More than anything, it's educational about the interconnectivity of the



**Photo by Isaiah Johnson.**

world.”