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SCAD's sculpture department enhances the "wild side" of Camp Twin Lakes with twelve totem pole-inspired sculptures

ATLANTA, GA – Ten students and two professors from the Savannah College of Art and Design have created twelve permanent sculptures that serve as sentinels in the secluded "wild side" at Camp Twin Lakes in Rutledge, Ga. The renowned nonprofit organization offers year-round recreational, therapeutic, and educational programs for children and young adults facing serious illnesses, disabilities and challenges.

The totem pole-inspired sculptures line the rustic nature trail that winds to a new green treehouse designed by Amy Leathers, a senior associate at the architecture firm Lord, Aeck & Sargent. The treehouse serves as both a play area and an educational classroom for learning about nature, the environment and sustainability.

"For several years, we talked about having a treehouse that would enhance our nature program and get kids excited to be in a natural setting where they could learn about the different ecosystems," said Eric Robbins, executive director of Camp Twin Lakes.

Lord, Aeck & Sargent, having designed the original facilities at the camp, held an in-house design competition wherein individuals and teams created six entries based on the requirements of Camp Twin Lakes and Cynthia Gentry, a longtime friend of Camp Twin Lakes who served as the project's creative director. The treehouse would need to be wheelchair accessible, hidden in the trees, have enclosed and screened areas, and incorporate some of the campers' ideas, like fans to keep them cool, a swirly slide and hidden trap doors.

In spring 2008, with a gift to Camp Twin Lakes of $250,000, construction on the treehouse and nature trail began. While the trail was being built, Gentry, who is also the founder of Atlanta Taskforce on Play and an artist, approached SCAD's sculpture department about a collaborative partnership. As their end-of-semester project, students in Professor Allen Peterson's introductory sculpture class at SCAD Atlanta were given the assignment to create totem pole-inspired sculptures to place along the nature trail leading to the "wild side" of camp.

Students were challenged with researching the history and spirituality of totem poles and found that totems serve as personified elements of nature. Developing original designs and themes, they carved their motifs – ranging from suns and moons and a phoenix rising from the ashes to kudzu vines and beavers – into old telephone poles. Each sculpture represents an animal or element of nature that watches over and protects the campers.

Peterson, who refers to sculpture as a "team sport," designed his three-foot tall totem, that features a turtle and a duck, to be interactive, and created a steel drum for campers to entertain their friends. Student Michael Potts designed his totem as a snake that eats wooden balls so campers could interact and play with it. In fact, he left the balls unpainted for campers to personalize them.

Peterson also had the students consider what the piece might look like in ten years, after continuous exposure to the outside elements. "This really put the design, craftsmanship and durability of the project in perspective," said Peterson.

Susan Krause, sculpture chair at SCAD, observed that "a sense of community came from this project." In September, students, faculty and staff traveled to the camp for a day of fun. The student-sculptors were able to finally meet the campers and see, first-hand, how their artwork will serve as an inspiration at Camp Twin Lakes for years to come.

SCAD: The University for Creative Careers

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About Camp Twin Lakes

Camp Twin Lakes is a nonprofit organization that offers year-round recreational, therapeutic, and educational programs for children and young adults facing serious illnesses, disabilities and challenges. With its network of Partners, Camp Twin Lakes provides life-changing experiences at its state-of-the-art, fully accessible camps in Rutledge, Georgia; Camp Will-A-Way in Winder, Georgia; and other locations throughout the state. Camp Twin Lakes is accredited by the American Camp Association. For more information, visit www.camptwinlakes.org.

About Lord, Aeck & Sargent

Lord, Aeck & Sargent is an award-winning architectural firm serving clients in scientific, academic, historic preservation, arts and cultural, and multi-family housing and mixed-use markets. The firm's core values are responsive design, technological expertise and exceptional service. In 2003, The Construction Specifications Institute awarded Lord, Aeck & Sargent its Environmental Sensitivity Award for showing exceptional devotion to the use of sustainable and environmentally friendly materials, and for striving to create functional, sensitive and healthy buildings for clients. In 2007, Lord, Aeck & Sargent was one of the first architecture firms to adopt The 2030 Challenge, an initiative whose ultimate goal is the design of carbon-neutral buildings, or buildings that use no fossil-fuel greenhouse gas-emitting energy to operate, by the year 2030. Lord, Aeck & Sargent has offices in Ann Arbor, Michigan; Atlanta, Georgia; and Chapel Hill, North Carolina. For more information, visit the firm at www.lordaecksargent.com.

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