March 17, 2014

Members of MSU’s chapter of Engineers Without Borders (EWB) rolled up their sleeves and dug into a construction project in Tennessee’s scenic Citico Creek Wilderness during the first week of March.

Nine engineering students spent their “alternative spring break” building a new path on the Mill Branch Trail in Tennessee’s Cherokee National Forest. The EWB volunteers were:

- James Rice, a senior in civil engineering from Laguna Niguel, Calif.,
- Spencer Koblinski, a junior in environmental engineering from Madison, Wisc.,
- Stephanie Fierens, a junior in chemical engineering from Clarkston, Mich.,
- Charifa Hejase, a senior in environmental engineering from East Lansing, Mich.,
- Matt Aoun, a junior from applied engineering sciences from Novi, Mich.,
- Stephen Godwin, a junior in chemical engineering from Oxford, Mich.,
- Shane Snyder, a sophomore in civil engineering from Marne, Mich.,
- Reema Al-Dhaneem, a senior in mechanical engineering from East Lansing, Mich.,
• Sumer AlSatarwah, a senior in environmental engineering from Lansing, Mich.

“This was very fun,” said Rice, who is the president of MSU’s EWB chapter. “The Southern Appalachian Wilderness Stewards (SAWS) needed volunteers to improve the Mill Branch Trail in the Cherokee National Forest by adding in a new pathway. We thought it was a great service project and jumped on the opportunity to help out.”

The project involved engineering skills and lots of physical labor, including breaking, collecting and laying rocks on the new pathway for the Mill Branch Trail.

Susan Masten, professor of civil and environmental engineering and the group’s advisor, said EWB-USA gives students an opportunity to design and implement sustainable engineering solutions to improve the human condition.

“In doing so they are transformed into responsible leaders with a global and socially responsible perspective,” Masten said. “It is wonderful to see the photo of the students with their MSU attire, knowing that they represent the best of the university - a community that seeks to serve and to better the world.”

More pictures from EWB's alternative spring break.

Engineers Without Borders at MSU
The EWB chapter at MSU currently has 30 members, who focus their efforts on service events and projects in local, national, international communities.

“We help out in any way that we can,” Rice said. “We have hosted an alternative spring break (ASB) program since the spring of 2011. Through our ASB’s we have done trail building in Sky Meadows State Park, Virginia and the Cherokee National Forest in Tennessee. Also, we have done disaster relief work in Bayboro, N.C., and New Orleans. We currently have an international project in El Salvador to provide improved sanitation facilities to the El Balsamar community,” Rice added.

EWB actively serves throughout the academic year in the Lansing area. Service events include the Red Cedar River Clean-up, Volunteers of America Homeless Outreach, Relay for Life, Greater Lansing Food Bank, Ronald McDonald House, and Invasive Species Removal Day.
Alternative Spring Break engineering style
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