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First-of-Its-Kind 11,000-square-foot Outdoor Learning Center Takes Learning Outside the Classroom at the Biome School

Robyn Frankel Apr 29, 2018



Bill Kent, Jr., president and CEO of The Biome School thanked members of the Veiled Prophet Foundation and Royal Vagabonds for converting a former muddy lot used as the school's playground into a one-of-a-kind outdoor learning center that supports the school's STEAM curriculum.

A first-of-its-kind Outdoor Learning Center, constructed by volunteers led by the

Veiled Prophet Foundation and Royal Vagabonds, was dedicated on Saturday, April 28 to The Biome School, a St. Louis City public charter STEAM curriculum school located at 4471 Olive in the Central West End. The outdoor learning center also features 1,100 Missouri native plants that were added to the landscape by volunteers from the Veiled Prophet Community Service Initiative and the Royal Vagabonds.

The school's new 11,000-sq.-ft., Outdoor Learning Center includes a Socratic-style outdoor classroom, 1,500-square-feet of synthetic lawn play space, a playground, a running track and a vertical garden for students to hang planters.

“The Biome School is grateful to the Veiled Prophet Foundation and the Royal Vagabonds for creating such an innovative outdoor space that encourages experiential learning and can be used and enjoyed year-round by our students,” said Bill Kent, Jr., founding president and CEO of The Biome School. “Although most of what is done in an outdoor classroom relates to the environment, it is also an interactive opportunity for students to learn how math, literature, history, art, and music are influenced by nature and our natural resources.”

Founded in 2003, the Veiled Prophet Foundation is the community service arm of the Veiled Prophet (VP) organization focusing efforts of VP members and their families on civic projects that share the common goal of making St. Louis a better place to live for all. Through the foundation, VP families have provided over 50,000 hours of volunteer service in conjunction with dozens of local non-profit agencies.

“The VP Foundation is pleased to have acted as a catalyst, bringing together civic organizations, corporations and volunteers to create a unique facility which will have a meaningful impact on Biome School students for generations to

come,” said Bob Ciapciak, chairman of the Veiled Prophet Foundation. “Our members are inspired to be involved in projects such as this because they know they’re helping to create a foundation for the future strength of our city.”

Chartered by the University of Missouri St. Louis (UMSL) The Biome School has approximately 140 students in kindergarten through third grade – 86 percent of whom are African-American. In addition to the STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art and math) curriculum, the school provides hands-on learning opportunities for students, empowering them to explore with confidence and apply their critical thinking skills and knowledge in the real world. The school is expanding to include fourth grade in the 2018-2019 school year.

The Royal Vagabonds was founded in the 1930s when a group of professional young men of color formed a social club with an intent to provide a higher form of social activities that were generally unavailable to minorities. Today the organization largely supports education-related initiatives in St. Louis’ urban communities.

Funding partners were led by the Veiled Prophet Foundation with additional support from Edward Jones, PK Construction, US Bank Private Wealth Management, the Biome School Foundation, the Royal Vagabonds Foundation, Forum Studios, Civil Design, Inc., Butler’s Pantry, Lipic’s Engagement and Brentwood Materials.

About The Biome School

The Biome School, located at 4471 Olive in the Central West End, is a free St. Louis City Public Charter School that specializes in a STEAM curriculum for children in grades K-3 (expanding to K-4 in 2018-19). Established in 2015 by the Youth Learning Center, The Biome School curriculum includes exceptional project-based, hands-on learning programs outside the classroom, as well as an individualized educational approach that is nurturing, enriching and empowering for all learners. More information is available at www.thebiomeschool.org.

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