

## The Stan and Janet Roth Trailhead



**This trailhead, named for lifelong educators Stanley D. and Janet B. Roth**, of Lawrence, serves as a gateway to the KU Field Station. It honors all teachers, especially those who are devoted to sharing scientific knowledge, who cultivate a strong understanding of it in their students, and who instill in others an aesthetic appreciation for the natural world and its processes.

The Roth Trailhead is the third project commissioned by the KU Field Station through the KU School of Architecture, Design and Planning. It was built by 10 students in the design-build Studio 409 course in spring 2012 under the direction of Prof. Chad Kraus. The trailhead stands as a monument to the landscape in which it rests, a gathering place for nature lovers, and an artifact that tells the land's tale and reveals its deep natural history, recorded beneath.



Earthen architecture is ancient and inherently sustainable. Yet in many industrialized societies, building with soil has become marginal, largely because the process of transforming the soil is now thought of as mysterious. Unfortunately, this less common use comes at a time when earthen architecture is needed most — to lighten our carbon footprint while rooting us to our place in the world. The aim of the studio was to educate architecture students in the design and construction of rammed earth structures that are accessible to the public, that is, structures everyone can experience.

The trailhead design focuses on a few basic tectonic elements, including a 122-foot-long punctuated rammed earth wall proportioned on the Fibonacci mathematical sequence, a path guiding visitors toward a wooded hillside through a shift in the wall, and a cedar-and-steel canopy cantilevering above. The canopy's charred louvers, milled from recycled telephone poles, were inspired by the burning of the surrounding tallgrass prairie. The stratification of the rammed earth wall echoes geological forces.



The project has been entered into the American Institute of Architects Kansas City chapter's annual Design Excellence Merit Awards competition, in which the students' work will be competing with projects from across the region that were designed by professional architects and built by professional contractors. Previous KU projects have won awards through this competition. Results will be made known in November 2012.



Stan and Janet Roth

The students listed below, who worked on the trailhead structure, took the course through KU's master of architecture professional degree program, a five-year undergraduate degree that includes a year of graduate study.

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|----------------|--------------|-------------------|------------------|----------------|
| Patrick Bayer  | Xiaorui Chen | Pamela Gieseke    | Mark Linenberger | Ben Peek       |
| Katie Caufield | Hannah Dale  | Christina Henning | Matt Livingston  | David Versteeg |

The Roth Trailhead structure and nature trail were made possible by donations to the Stan and Janet Roth Trail and Nature Education Fund at KU Endowment. The KU Field Station is operated by the Kansas Biological Survey, which was established at KU in 1911.

