

Schreyer Honors College JumpStart team conceives Sound Garden



When a group of freshman students could not decide between an environmental project and a musical project for their Leadership JumpStart class—a course designed specifically for incoming Scholars to cultivate leadership, collaboration, and personal growth—they chose to compromise. This is how the Sound Garden came into conception.

The students involved, Rachel Chang, Matt Weaver, Laura Egan, Steph Nitopi, Kelcey Grogan and Ali Yousuf, have spent the last month creating a music festival that will take place this Sunday, October 18, 2009, from 1-5 pm in the new Penn State Arboretum. “We realized that a lot of students—especially freshmen—didn’t know that the arboretum existed, and we wanted to raise awareness of it,” says Kelcey. “People won’t have to stay at the concert either; there is a lot to see, so hopefully they will explore the grounds while they listen to the music,” she adds.

Eleven musical performances are scheduled for the event. Everything from a capella groups, to the State High brass band, to popular local bands like Under the Radar will perform, and as Ali says, “there will be some extremely good music that I am genuinely excited to see.”

“We think this will be a great way for the community to come together,” adds Steph. There will be representation from all over State College, including some performers from within the SHC. “Our own Mark Blashford will be playing the banjo,” says Matt, who, along with Adam Jacob, will also perform at the event.

The group has learned a lot from this experience. “A lot of us come from backgrounds where we used to do everything in group projects,” says Steph. “We’ve learned to trust each other; here we know that each person can do a good job.” Rachel adds, “The course really pushes you to see what you can do, but right now we’re so focused on the event that I don’t think we’re really even processing the extent to which we’ve really learned.”

For Laura, the magnitude of their efforts is what surprises her. “I’ve learned how much work it takes to put on an event like this.” This team has indeed worked hard. “We meet three days a week for at least two hours at a time—people from the other teams will walk by and be like ‘you guys are meeting again?’” says Rachel, laughing.

Their hard work will come to fruition this Sunday, and for Ali and the other members of the group, this will be the best part. “It’s going to be like after you’ve made the plans for an experiment and spent months building it, and finally flipping the ‘on’ switch.” Matt adds “It’s going to be awesome.” The event is free and open to the public and will provide free ice cream from the Berkey Creamery.