

Indiana State Connection

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Piecing together a plan

Rec and sport management students create Master Plan for Clay City

By Katie Spanuello

ISU media relations assistant director

Mary Bradley wants to know if eighth-graders in Clay City are longing for a skate park, if working adults would like to attend evening fitness classes, and if an indoor walking track would help older citizens recuperate more quickly after surgery.

Bradley isn't the mayor, a school board member or even a resident. She is one of 14 students in Nathan Schaumleffel's Community Organizations and Leisure Services class who are creating a master plan for Clay City.

Clay City, a rural Indiana community of 1,019 residents, has big dreams. In this little town, dubbed the "Mayberry of the Midwest," the library was closed down due to lack of funding, the fairgrounds buildings need major repairs, the food pantry is in dire need of additional space, and there is nowhere to hold fitness programs for adults or indoor recreational activities for youth.

Their big dream is to build a community center which will provide space for recreation, education, information and nutrition. In fact, residents have created a non-profit organization — the REIN Center Coalition — named for those very needs that it hopes to address. But big dreams need big resources, and having a master plan is the key that unlocks the money box. A master plan is a document that provides a framework for orderly and consistent planning and development for a community.

"You have to know what you are going to build and why, before you apply for a grant," said Schaumleffel, assistant professor of recreation and sport management. "The master plan will provide the city with the top 10 community projects, based on the research and analysis the students are doing. From this, the residents can make an informed decision about which project they want funding for, and will have all the details they need to proceed with the grant application."

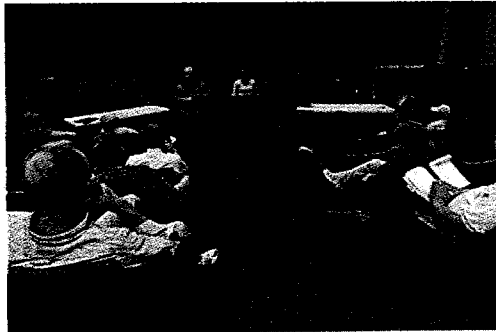
Writing a master plan is a massive undertaking, requiring historical and on-site research, asset mapping, data collection and scientific analysis — all of which takes time. To accomplish as much of the master plan as possible during the one-semester course, the class was divided into five groups, with each group assigned a different chapter to research and write.

Bradley, a recreation and sport management major from Newburgh who is graduating this December, is working with her group on the "Demand Analysis" chapter, which

involves creating and administering a needs assessment survey for Clay City-Harrison Township residents.

On a Thursday night in November, Bradley and two other students traveled to Clay City with Dr. Schaumleffel to give an update of the class's work to a public meeting of the REIN Coalition.

"In order to get a true random sample and hear from a wide variety of residents, we are going to administer a survey to seventh-through twelfth-graders online through the



Bob Bruce/ISU (ABOVE) At the REIN Center Coalition public meeting in Clay City, Professor Nathan Schaumleffel and recreation and sport management senior Mary Bradley explain the master plan process.

school library, as well as send paper copies to residents through the U.S. mail," Bradley told those gathered.

Bradley explained during her presentation that the survey will help her group determine which facilities are being used currently, how happy residents are with them, and what additional kinds of services they would like to have.

"We're here to build a community first and then a community center," Bradley says. "So we can provide options, list possibilities, explain the process, but they're the ones who are here tomorrow. They're the ones who are here five years from now. This is all about them. It's not our place to say how it should be, it's theirs."

Working on the needs assessment section of the master plan ties in nicely with the park and community emphasis of Bradley's major.

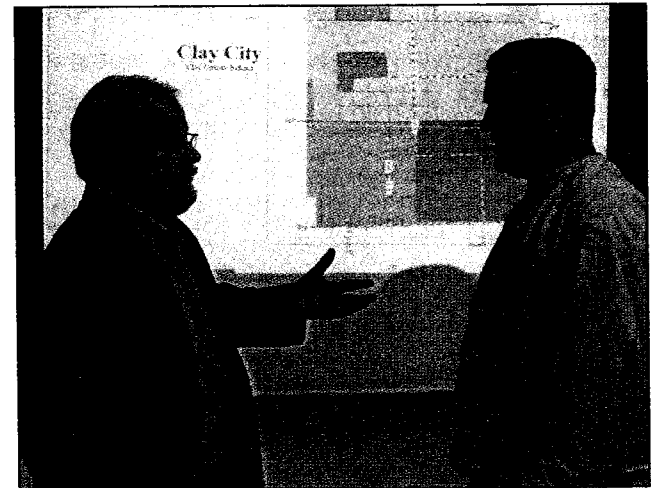
"I want to eventually be doing programming within the camping industry," she said. "I want my programs to meet my clients' needs, but in order to meet their needs, I have to know what their needs are, which is what a needs assessment is all about. I was able to select the chapter that I worked on, so I selected one that would directly impact what I would be doing in the future."

Recreation and sport management majors Mike Hagenow, a senior from La Porte, and



Katie Spanuello/ISU

Jonathon Couch of Noblesville, recreation and sport management senior, performs a playground safety audit of Clay City's Goshorn Park as part of an independent study class with Professor Nathan Schaumleffel. Couch, a certified national playground safety inspector, measures the balance beam height to ensure that it meets current American Society for Testing Materials (ASTM) standards. Couch's audit, worth several hundred dollars, will be included pro bono as an addendum to the master plan being drafted by Schaumleffel's Community Organizations and Leisure Services class.



Tony Campbell/ISU

(LEFT) Professor Nathan Schaumleffel and recreation and sport management student Adam Wolf consider the historical and regional aspects of Clay City while working on the master plan during class.

Aaron Hall, a senior from Evansville, presented their group's work on the "Community Development Asset Map" chapter.

"We are plotting the existing programs and facilities," Hagenow said, "so we can help the residents make the best use of organizational resources that are already in place, such as church, school and community programs."

Hagenow sees the partnership between the RCSM-345 class and Clay City as mutually beneficial.

"It helps the rural community by the fact that they might not have the money to pay for the services that we're supplying free of charge," he said, "and working on this project is preparing us for what we are going to do in our field when we graduate."

Kay Hart, Clay County Harrison Township trustee and member of the REIN Center Coalition board of directors, listened to the students as they made their presentations at the meeting.

"We are very grateful for the work that the students at Indiana State are doing," Hart said. "Almost all grants require a master plan, and those are quite expensive, so the class doing a master plan for us is a big help financially, and the master plan is something we can keep for years and years."

If one would place a dollar value on the work the students are doing, it would be in the thousands.

"A master plan typically costs \$10,000 to \$25,000 for a community to hire a consultant to complete," Schaumleffel says. "My students can co-produce a quality master plan with a town for nearly free. The students benefit, because they walk away from this project with a bound and real master plan. This will be an excellent tool for them to use when interviewing for internships or their first full-time job."

CLAY CITY

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MATCHING STUDENTS WITH SERVICE-LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Projects where students get professional experience in their field, and at the same time provide a crucial service to a rural community, rarely just happen by chance. Clay City is following Rockville as the second small town to benefit from this kind of a project through ISU.

Both the Rockville and Clay City projects were made possible through a new program created in 2005 by Dr. Schaumleffel called the

Indiana Rural Recreation Development Project, or InRRDP. The project is funded by a grant from The Alliance for Excellence Through Engagement & Experiential Learning, through a grant from the Lilly Endowment.

"The InRRDP is dedicated to helping communities help themselves," said Schaumleffel, who serves as director of the project, "by providing resources so they can enhance community satisfaction and quality of life; increase participation in community life; develop leadership potential among residents; and satisfy their immediate unmet need for recreation programs in rural towns."

The InRRDP had its first taste of success

this summer, when Schaumleffel and his students wrapped up a year's worth of research and field work, which spanned several classes, for the Rockville Town Council and Rockville Park Board. The students conducted a Recreation and Leisure Needs Assessment for teens of the community.

The results showed that Rockville teens wanted more recreational sport opportunities outside of competitive high school sports, and particularly, they wanted soccer. The Rockville Park Board acted on the results of the needs assessment by purchasing and installing a soccer field and new safety fence at Beechwood Park this summer.

"An integral part of park and recreation management is professional competence and development," Schaumleffel said. "These assignments give students an opportunity to engage in a community development service-learning project to apply skills learned throughout the course and to develop new skills in the field."

By the time the fall semester ends, the master plan should be 75 percent complete. Dr. Schaumleffel plans to set up an independent study with some students who will carry on the work, and the finished product will be presented to the REIN Center Coalition in summer 2007.