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Students build on real experience

Snow, moose, rock don't deter budding architects from designing, building new pavilion in Wilson.

By Katy Niner

Seven architecture students celebrated a banner semester Dec. 7 under the pavilion they designed and built.

They replaced the old pavilion in Owen-Bircher Park in Wilson with a new one better suited to the site and its use.

Dustin Adler, Josh Christy, Sam Florence, Daniel Kelly, Ben Larsen, Ben Wilde and David Roe completed the structure as the capstone project of the Artemis Institute remote studio.

The students — two from Montana State University and five from Texas A&M — spent the preceding four months exploring the valley's natural and built environments. Lori Ryker, founder and executive director of the Artemis Institute, moved its remote studio from Paradise Valley, Mont., to Jackson Hole last spring.

While their peers studied abroad taking studio courses like those offered stateside, Artemis students gained hands-on experience designing and building structures suited to their environments.

"That's the cool thing about the program," Christy said. "We can put a building together in the computer very easily, but then you have to come out here and build it. That's what this is all about: figuring out what works and what doesn't."

From start to finish, the pavilion took seven speedy weeks to realize. As the semester deadline drew near, the students logged long days and nights. Leaving it unfinished was not an option.

To tackle the project, the group split into charrettes and then amalgamated their designs into one model, which they presented to the Teton County Commission. Thanks to expedited permitting, they received their permit on a Friday and started digging Monday.

The students learned on the fly. Designs that seemed simple on the com-



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Artemis Institute student Daniel Kelly hugs instructor Meghan Hanson as they and fellow students celebrate the opening of the pavilion they built in Wilson.

puter, like the center beam, became complicated in reality.

When it took them half a day to dig half a hole in the cobbly ground, they rented heavy machinery and operated it themselves.

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ARTEMIS INSTITUTE STUDENT

The project began under clear fall skies. Then snow socked in the site.

Moose, too, greeted them every morning for weeks.

The semester offered a crucial counterpoint to the creativity-focus of academia.

"This grounds you," Wilde said. "You need to know exactly what can and

can't be built reasonably for how much money, because, sure, you can design something that is really amazing, but it costs tons of money, and you won't find somebody who wants to build it."

Whenever possible, the students reused construction waste, like pavers. They used trimmed ends of beams to make benches.

The students did everything, from budgeting to welding. Many people, like park neighbor Dick May, pitched in when needed.

Even with subzero temperatures, loitering moose and beam headaches, the students left emboldened by the experience.

"It was the best semester of school we've ever had," Larsen said.

To celebrate the pavilion's raising, the crew roasted s'mores over the fire-pits and played foosball on a table they toted to the site.

County commissioner Hank Phibbs joined the celebration.

"What is here now is truly remarkable," he said. People who take pictures of themselves using the new pavilion should share them with the Artemis Institute. Phibbs said.