

MTC Students Save Buckeye Lake

Okay, maybe we didn't "save" Buckeye Lake, but we do like to think that our students have played a hand in preserving its beauty. Our Information Technology students worked closely with Buckeye Lake of Tomorrow (BLT) officials to assure the lake remains a beautiful and safe location that is maintained for recreation in Ohio for years to come. This was accomplished through the development of a database system that will help track common trends in temperatures, algae, sediment levels, and other variables.

This connection happened through other connections. Art Lowe, who is heavily involved in the BLT initiative (learn more at www.BuckeyeLakeforTomorrow.org), had a friend at our neighbors (Ohio State at Marion). Art was hoping that someone there would be able to assist him in developing a tracking system to help BLT fulfill their mission of enhancing the quality of life on Buckeye Lake through improving water quality of the watershed. The timing was not right for this to occur, but his friend suggested he try someone at Marion Technical College. Art did just that and the project began.

BLT met with Steve Duvall, who is a professor in our Information Technology program. He was teaching a class that could apply Buckeye Lake's tracking challenge to an assignment. BLT and Duvall worked from copies of current forms, a general description about the lake environment, and borrowed testing equipment. "Steve is highly competent and took this information along with a few notes and several questions from the students during the development and was able to execute a development plan, and then embed it in his course curriculum," Lowe recalls of the initial meeting. "It has been my experience that such an ad hoc approach would be a formula for no or untimely deliverables,

but in working with Steve, he was able to envision the project from start through completion and direct his students in such a way as to complete it on time and as desired by BLT," Lowe was pleasantly surprised to find.

The students took the direction of their instructor and worked together to create a database that Duvall and the BLT officials envisioned. The team of students, Tim Furer, Phil Blair, and Kyle Curren all worked together closely to come up with a very usable end result that Buckeye Lake of Tomorrow is ready to start filling with data to track trends and ensure conditions are perfect! It was determined that Phil was the "idea guy," Tim "made it pretty," and Kyle meshed those two things together to "make it function." The team spent a lot of time just trying different things to make sure that the functionality was easy for the end users at BLT.

"This is a lot of what a programmer does," comments professor, Steve Duvall. "We organize the data and do lots of testing to ensure it is extremely functional. Programmers love to problem solve, so this project was perfect to test those skills," he adds.

Merv Bartholow, another official with BLT, had this to say, "Buckeye Lake for Tomorrow will benefit in many ways as a result of this project. In addition, other similar organizations may also reap the rewards of their efforts. Although there are currently reports that are being used to accumulate the information that this project addresses, none of them are capable of creating the database that these MTC students have developed." The students were also grateful for the experience and said that it will "open doors and look good on resumes."

Our message to you is that Marion Technical College is not only teaching theories, we are applying them and using them in real world situations. If you have an organization that may benefit from this experience – we have students who will also prosper from the challenges presented. To learn more about how your business challenges could be applied in our classroom, call 740.389.4636.



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