

Blackhawk Transforms Indoor Pond for County-run Facility

July 23, 2010

“Installing outdoor ponds has been my passion for the past five years, but I never had the opportunity to install an indoor pond” said David Ziegler, a certified Aquascape contractor and owner of Blackhawk Homestead Nursery in Centre Hall, Pa. Then came his first opportunity.

Before

After

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Jamie Aurand, the administrator of Susque-View Home, a county-run extended-care facility in Lock Haven, Pa., wanted to convert the facility's 30-year-old, virtually inoperable concrete fountain and waterfall into an indoor pond, a true amenity for the residents. Aurand selected Blackhawk Homestead Nursery through a referral from Aquascape Inc.'s online directory.

To reduce labor costs, Aurand chose to employ volunteer inmates from the County Correctional Institution as extra help, a resource available to the extended-care facility because it, too, was a county facility. Aurand said that because the project was indoor construction, Ziegler and his men could not use gasoline-powered tools or equipment, make excessive noise or damage the existing floor.

With the requirements firmly in mind, the crew resolved how best to transport construction materials, equipment and debris to and from the gated pavilion located near the back entrance about 150 feet from the work area. Every item had to go through two standard 38-inch-wide doors and over about 100 feet of tile floor.

Ziegler and his crew built boxes designed to fit through the narrow doors. They filled the boxes with materials and used a

hydraulic hand truck to move the boxes to and from the work site. The crew used second-hand conveyor belts to protect the floor and area around the pond. All work materials, equipment and construction debris were easily moved to and from the project site without damaging the floor.

Overcoming this initial challenge, the crew dove headfirst into the water feature remodel. The team plumbed into an existing bottom drain to provide a way to drain and clean the pond whenever necessary. They used sand bags and 2.3 cubic foot bales of compressed wood shavings to construct the shelves. Loose sand and foam filled the spaces between the bales to keep them from shifting.

The two-week reconstruction metamorphosed the empty blue crater into a 13-foot by 20-foot by 2-foot pond with a 10-foot-long stream and waterfall. A smaller waterfall graces the water feature for visual effect and added water circulation. Finishing touches included a combination fogger and color-changing, underwater, LED lights that remain on 24-7.

Ziegler chose a variety of colorful foliage for the landscaping, including waterlilies, dwarf variegated sweet flag, blue rush, creeping Jenny, umbrella palm, Boston fern and other decorative plants known for their aesthetically restorative properties. He added 8- to 10-inch-long koi and 4- to 5-inch-long golden orfe also were added.

Several residents took special interest during the project and gathered daily to watch the progress. "Normally when I finish a project, I'm happy the client is pleased, and I am glad to move on," Ziegler said. "With this project, the last day of the job was like saying good-bye to a family." Staff and residents came on the final day to thank the work crew and bid them farewell.

Specifications

Designer/Installer: David Ziegler, Blackhawk Homestead Nursery

Contact Information: Centre Hall, Pa., 814-364-9668, zigplant@verizon.net, www.blackhawkhomestead.com

Project Location: Lock Haven, Pennsylvania

Construction: Aquascape: Signature 6,000 BioFalls, Signature MicroFalls, Signature Skimmer, Tsurumi 29349, Carlise EPDM Liner and lighting. Other: 10 tons of rocks and boulders, 4 tons of river gravel, 65 bales of wood shavings, 50 sand tubes, 2.5 tons of top soil, aquatic plants, fish and a floating island.

Crew: Five men the first week, including two inmates on loan from the County Correctional Institution; three men second week.

Time to complete: 13 days

Material cost: \$6,680, including a sub-contractor

Labor cost: \$10,500

Project Cost: \$31,501