JOURNEY TO THE SEA:
An S.O.S. from our Oceans

Undergraduate student-faculty collaborative creative research

Faculty: Associate Professor Margaret LeJeune Student-artists: Kaitlyn Christenson, Jamie Lankford, Katelyn Edwards, Jackie Payne, Sydney Ryan, Katelyn Shook, Mathilda Bell, and Devin Bryant

Journey to the Sea: An S.O.S from our Oceans was a student-faculty collaborative creative research project installed in May 2018 at the Peoria Playhouse Children’s Museum. This project was developed as part of Art 323: Art and The Environment, an interdisciplinary course residing in the Sustainability Minor at Bradley University. The class engages students with environmental issues with an emphasis on conceptual ideas over formal concerns and collaborative production over solo endeavors.

As an immersive installation, the goal of Journey to the Sea was to visualize climate science data and to teach families about the harmful effects of plastics on the ocean environment. Through interactive play, children learn about ways they can help keep the oceans clean by reducing the amount of plastic they use and repurposing plastic materials - the key elements in the creation of the installation itself. Over 3000 recycled plastic bottles were used to create an enormous ocean wave that hangs over the sandbox reef and creates an underwater experience. Donated household plastics were used to create life-sized marine sculptures and 3D printed objects, made of recycled filament, were created to mimic reef animals and ocean garbage. Exhibit signs shared information about jellyfish blooms, coral reefs, the amount of plastic produced and used by North Americans, and the impact of plastics on ocean animals. Visitors were encouraged to share their ideas about how they can "reduce, reuse, or recycle plastic, or help our oceans in other ways." These written ideas were posted daily and became part of the constantly evolving installation.

25,000+ visitors interacted with the installation between May-August 2018. For more information about the project, please check out Journey to the Sea, a documentary film by Bradley alum Allison Walsh.

This project was made possible by The Fritz and Doris S. Reuling Charitable Fund and the George A. Fulton Charitable Fund of the Community Foundation of Central Illinois; Illinois American Water; Doug and Eileen Leuning; Martin Ore Source; and generous sponsors who donated through Go Fund Me.