



COA students Max Lee and Teaghan Rose take part in the restoration of the more-than-a-century-old stone arch at the school's sunken garden. PHOTO COURTESY OF COA

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## Garden's crumbling arch restored

November 30, 2017 by [Dick Broom](#) on [Arts & living](#), [Lifestyle](#)



BAR HARBOR — The stone arch at one end of the sunken garden at College of the Atlantic, built in 1910, has been showing its age.

In fact, it would have collapsed several years ago had it not been for wooden scaffolding propping it up.

Now, the arch has been beautifully restored by COA students working with and under the direction of professional stoneworkers Gibran Buell and Alyssa Abbott, owners of Creative Stone in Sullivan. The restoration project, completed earlier this month, was organized by COA senior Yaniv Korman.

He said he decided a couple of years ago that he wanted to create a low-maintenance garden of edible plants.

"I thought the sunken garden would be the best location, but the problem was that its stone arch entrance was unstable," Korman said. "The scaffolding that had been erected beneath

the arch to prevent it from collapsing blocked the entrance and discouraged people from using the garden.”

Over the past two years, the gardening club at COA has been working to rehabilitate the long-neglected garden. This fall, club members joined students in Professor Isabel Mancinelli's landscape architecture class to work on the arch restoration project. Other COA students also took part.

Korman worked with a stone mason this past summer to learn the craft and realized that a professional mason was needed to direct the restoration effort.

He contacted the Maine Stone Workers Guild, which put out the word to its members that COA was looking for help.

“We were the closest guild members and had an opening in our schedule, so we went over and worked with them,” Buell said.

“One side of the arch had crumbled, and it was in a very precarious state. The first thing we did was to brace it up to make sure it wouldn't go anywhere while we were repairing it.”

Buell said the tools used for the project had been donated to the Maine Stone Workers Guild for its educational program by Trow and Holden, a 127-year-old company in Barre, Vt.

“They make the traditional stone chisels that are pretty much the same style that were used 100 years ago,” Buell said.

He said the COA students learned quickly and did a great job on the arch project.

“I was so impressed. They were able to split stone and face it with chisels and mortar it in place just like they did in 1910.”

Buell said the students also seemed to get a kick out of being able to hammer on something.

“They spend a lot of time with their noses in books or in front of computers, so I think they were really excited to be able to smash something with a big three-pound hammer.”

Korman said of the professionals, Buell and Abbott, “They did an amazing job of teaching everybody how to chisel and lay stones and mix mortar and the whole process. It was a truly fantastic academic experience for everybody.”

Korman researched the history of the stone arch before starting the restoration project. He learned that it was modeled after one that Lela Emery had seen in a sunken garden in Italy in 1908. She and her husband, J.J., owned The Turrets summer “cottage” that is now the centerpiece of the COA campus, and she decided to replicate the Italian garden and its entrance arch there.

The arch was built by Bar Harbor stone masons C.H. Norris and W.J. Richards.

Now that the arch is fixed, the garden rehabilitation project can move ahead. Korman said he is looking forward to planting the garden next spring.

In the meantime, he said he would like to hear from anyone who has old photos or historical information about the garden. He can be reached at [ykorman@coa.edu](mailto:ykorman@coa.edu).

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Dick Broom covers the towns of Mount Desert and Southwest Harbor, Mount Desert Island High School and the school system board and superintendent's office. He enjoys hiking with his golden retriever and finding new places for her to swim.

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