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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: 4/24/2017**  
**Photos available upon request**

### **Missouri School for the Blind teacher to attend renowned Thoreau seminar**

Tonia Scherer, English Language Arts teacher at Missouri School for the Blind (MSB) in St. Louis, has been accepted along with 25 other high school educators and graduate students to attend The Walden Woods Project's seminar Approaching Walden 2017 in July.

Admission to Approaching Walden is highly selective; Scherer submitted an application including a personal statement on experiences and goals regarding place-based education and Transcendentalism in the classroom. To this, Scherer credits growing up on 60 acres of wooded land and experiencing nature first-hand; in her personal statement Scherer states "There was no desk, no text book, no Smart Board. These were God-given organic learning moments that came to fruition through a natural sense of wonder (and trusting parents who allowed me to roam)." Her goal in attending Approaching Walden 2017 is to enrich her students' sense of place so that they may enjoy holistic learning experiences and gain a deeper regard for their cultures and communities.

In addition to teaching English Language Arts to students with visual impairments at MSB, Scherer earned her Missouri Master Naturalist Certification through University of Missouri-Columbia Extension and the Missouri Department of Conservation. Her long-term goal is to one day start an organization that builds a sense of place for youth, particularly those in underserved urban areas, while promoting educational equity through environmental outdoor education.

About Approaching Walden 2017: Approaching Walden is a six-day professional development seminar for high school educators and graduate students. The seminar provides teachers with the skills they need to lead their students in a study of their home community. This place-based interdisciplinary workshop uses Henry David Thoreau's writings and philosophy as a model. Through Thoreau's example of living deliberately, we can learn how to do so in our own communities and pass it along to the next generation.

About MSB: Missouri School for the Blind offers educational and outreach services for legally blind Missouri children from birth through age 21 and their families. MSB is operated by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education of the State of Missouri and its services are free of charge. MSB's services are concentrated in two areas – its centerbase kindergarten-grade 12 school in St. Louis, Missouri, and its Outreach services offered throughout the state.