

# Building their future

## Trade skill students construct a house each year

**SCOTT DE LARUELLE**  
Unified Newspaper Group

With demand for skilled trade workers soaring, some Oregon High School students are setting themselves up for success after graduation.

OHS technology and engineering teacher Christopher Prahl's year-long building trades course produces one new house a year (this year's house recently had an open house), and he said it's a great way to get students involved in the construction trades, either directly or indirectly. He said about half of his 18 students this year have already committed to various construction apprenticeships or construction management degrees.

"It's a great learning experience," Prahl said.



Photo submitted

2013-14 building trade class members include Austin Adams, Christian Allen, Alex Duerk, Abert Everson, Seb Goplin, Cole Hefty, Lucas Knipfer, Ryan Lynch, Jack Maerz, Abraham Maurice, Joey Miz, Kean Patz, Christian Poe, Jon Powers, Will Reinicke, Jesse Rogers, Mitch Spierings and Chad Walsh. The house sale closed last month.

This year, the students purchased a lot in town for \$75,000 and by the end of the school year, completed a more than 3,100-square-foot house. The house was listed at \$369,900, and sold

within 10 days of coming on the market in March.

The course has been part of the curriculum since 2001, and Prahl has taught it since 2009. He said the "incredibly high" demand

for skilled labor in the state, as well as the interest among students, has kept the program going strong, with graduates well-positioned for good jobs.

"Students can have

their choice of employment at this point in time with numerous companies recruiting because of the shortage of skilled labor," he said. Students help build the houses from the ground

up. The foundation is dug in August, and students begin rough framing, working with local contractors. Prahl said they then do most, if not all of insulation, plumbing, electrical, heating/air conditioning, drywall, roofing, siding, masonry, finish carpentry, trim, hardwood flooring, tile, cabinetry, granite countertops and more.

The money from sold houses is used to finance the next year's home. Prahl said in addition to trade skills, students are exposed to applied math science and technical literacy.

"Students are exposed to applied math through measurement, layouts of walls/sheating/flooring, estimations of materials, roof pitch, square footage calculations, stair rise and run, daily," he said. "Technical literacy in reading the blueprint to create the house to specification and installation of sub components reading and understanding the installation guides, which can get confusing."



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### Find out more

For more information on the LIFE program and how employers can get involved, email Olander at [cjo@oregonsd.net](mailto:cjo@oregonsd.net).



### LIFE graduates begin work

For high school graduates, there's nothing like the feeling of landing that first job.

Thanks to the LIFE (Lifelong Independence for Everyone) program at Oregon High School, graduates with significant cognitive disabilities can also feel that excitement and responsibility. This month, more students graduated from the program, which has prepared them for part-time jobs in the community in which they are contributing members.

Oregon High School special education teacher Cyndi Olander, who helps provide transition opportunities and long-term employment for students in the LIFE program, said recent graduates Alex Bausch and Gabby Kelley are making their presence felt in the local workforce. Olander helps connect students in the program ages 18-21 with employers in the Oregon area, and is looking for more to team up with.

"You look at traditional job descriptions, and some students are not able to fit that, but we work with employers to say, 'We may have these jobs around your office that you have highly qualified staff doing that could create another position,'" she said.

Bausch (above left) works as a custodian at All-Color Powder Coating, Inc., while Kelley (above right) works in the office for Gorman & Company. Both are happy and proud to be working part-time jobs and have made many new friends in the process.

Photos by Scott De Laruelle

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