

Learning about green jobs

By Kate Ramsayer / *The Bulletin*

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When the Building Green Council of Central Oregon held its first green jobs mentoring day last June, students from the Heart of Oregon Corps gleaned a lot from the chance to shadow energy-efficiency experts and others for a day.

“They really had an understanding and absorbed what it takes to build a sustainable building, or how does solar operate, or what is an energy-efficiency building,” said Kendra Van Note with GreenSavers, one of the businesses that showed students the tools of the trade.

With a great response from the students, teachers and staff members with the Heart of Oregon Corps — and wanting to give new students the chance to explore the growing field of green building — the Building Green Council on Thursday hosted the second of what could become an annual green jobs mentoring event.

The event started after the building organization wanted to do something community based, Van Note said, and it was a way for experts in the green building and green economy fields to share their knowledge.

“They’re getting to show the kids how they’ve incorporated sustainability,” Van Note said.

During the morning, groups of three or four students shadow a contractor, energy auditor or other green professional, watching what they do and getting a sense of what is involved in Earth-friendly construction. Some students toured the new Redmond High School building, the Bend Park & Recreation District office or houses; others visited a landscaper.

Many of the students are going through a pre-apprenticeship construction program, Van Note said, and learning about green building adds another facet.

“It’s something that they’re not necessarily getting in the classroom,” she said.



GreenSavers energy-efficiency expert Dave Bowman, center, explains to students the different tests he will do on a hot-water heater and furnace to check for energy efficiency and possible gas leaks, during a green jobs shadow day at a home in Bend on Thursday morning.

The students involved are with the Heart of Oregon Corps programs, said Emily Mishalanie, an advocate with the organization. Some are from the YouthBuild program, a construction training and education program, while others are from the new Clean Energy Service Corps — an eight-person program developed with the local Habitat for Humanity organization to help with weatherizing homes.

The focus of the programs is to provide alternative education for the students, but also focus on getting them ready for careers — including introducing them to a variety of lines of work, Mishalanie said.

“The goal is really to help these trainees and crew members to learn about green building careers and career outlooks,” she said. “What skills do they need to learn if they’re interested in getting into the field, and why is green building important in the first place.”

Thursday morning, Dave Bowman with GreenSavers gave four students in the Clean Energy Service Corps a primer in testing a home’s energy efficiency. He explained not only the devices he and others with the company use every day, but talked about other aspects of the job — like working with home-owners who have different goals, and balancing multiple projects at once.

And the end result is rewarding, Bowman said, giving an example of adding 10 inches of insulation to someone’s attic and saving them more than \$100 a month on energy bills.

“You can make a heck of a difference,” he said.

Austin Gibson, 21, with the Clean Energy Corps, said it’s a good learning experience — and even though he’s leaning more toward becoming a lineman, it’s good to learn about a variety of professions.

“This is something that’s just starting,” he said. “I think it’s going to grow.”

He hadn’t realized how intensive a process it was to check a home’s energy efficiency, Gibson said, noting that the auditors check every crack.

Jesse Lederer, 24, was interested in how Bowman checks for natural gas leaks, and uses various tools to look for leaks and drafts. He said he’s interested in efficiency and sustainability fields, since it’s good for the environment and for people’s health. Plus, it’s a field where he could start at the bottom and work his way up, he said.



Photos by Andy Tullis / The Bulletin

Kendra Van Note, with GreenSavers, uses a thermal imaging camera to detect air leaks that cause heat loss, as students with the Heart of Oregon Corps learn about energy-efficiency testing during a green job shadow day at a home in Bend.

On the Web

For more information on the Heart of Oregon Corps or the Clean Energy Service Corps, visit www.heartoforegon.org.

"It's a growing market, there are so many things going up," Lederer said. "It's probably one of the best things to get into."

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