

Top construction students meet with employers looking to hire



Cellia Langerica, Bristol Bunce, and Lyla Hart, some of the top senior students in the Construction Tech program at Cascadia Technology Academy, set up interviews with Pacific Crest Cabinets. Dozens of construction program students from Clark County had a luncheon on Wednesday with two dozen employers looking to hire young, talented, and motivated people. Photo by Paul Valencia

Careers in Construction Southwest Washington introduces high school seniors to employers in the industry with job openings

Paul Valencia

ClarkCountyToday.com

The top high school seniors in construction programs from Southwest Washington were invited to visit with a number of employers from the region on Wednesday.

Don't call it a job fair, though.

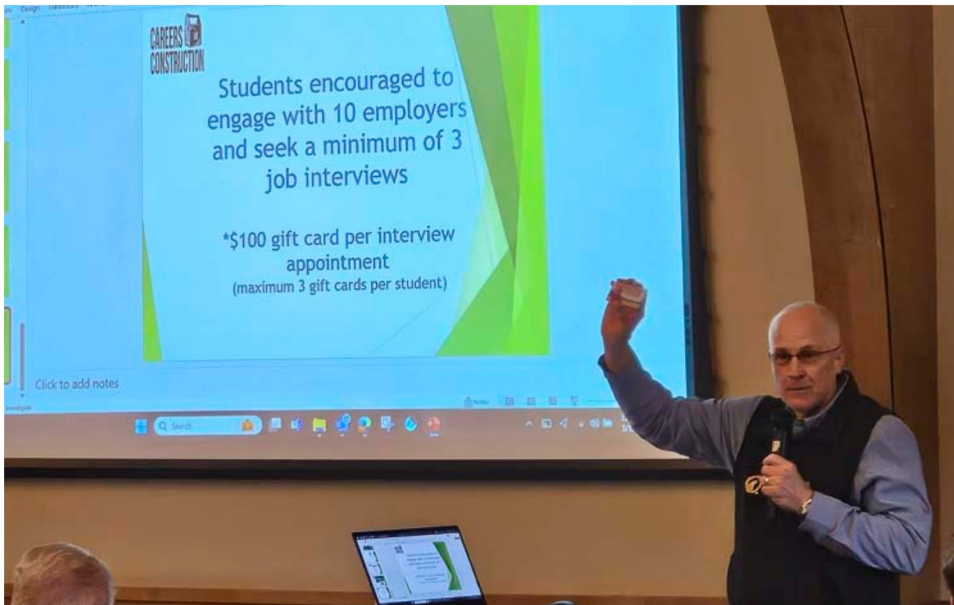
"This is a hiring event," said Mark Wreath, the director of career and college readiness for Vancouver Public Schools.

The best students representing a dozen schools from Clark County brought their resumes and were encouraged to set up formal interviews with two dozen companies in the construction business. All companies that were there Wednesday had openings and were looking for motivated and talented new employees, Wreath said..

This event is part of Careers in Construction Southwest Washington, a nonprofit organization focused on helping students explore careers in construction.

Jon Girod of Quail Homes started Careers in Construction. He also is the chair of the Building Futures Foundation. While he can appreciate the desire that many have for going to college,

he has noticed that his industry has suffered due to school districts emphasizing college over everything else the past few decades.



Jon Girod started Careers in Construction Southwest Washington to help employers recruit top talent from local high schools. Photo by Paul Valencia

Lately, he has seen a positive shift. More and more school districts are reinvesting in teaching trade skills these days. Careers in Construction is an extra benefit for those students.

"I said I'm going to do something to get our industry back on track, to get the talent coming our way," Girod said.

"One of things I really believe in is talent has choices," Girod said.

The top students selected for this event have more than job skills. They also have a fantastic attendance record and work well in teams. Every employer at Wednesday's luncheon, held at Royal Oaks Country Club in Vancouver, knew they were about to meet the best of the best.

"We just want kids who want to learn and get better," Girod said, referring to all the business owners at the event.

A theme for the event was described as Grade 13. All who graduate from high school get through the 12th grade. But then what? For some, it is college. For others, it could be attending a trade school. And, of course, there are those who want to go straight to work.

"This is not an anti-college movement," said Peter Rosenkranz, the superintendent for La Center Public Schools and a guest speaker at Wednesday's event. "This is quite simply, 'Choose the path that's going to take you where you want to go, not where I think you should go. I have no business telling you where you should go.'"

Rosenkranz noted that he knows of several students who graduated on a Saturday and were working at full-time jobs on a Monday, and they did so by choice.

"In a very short time, you are making very good money ... and you have no debt," he said.

The students at Wednesday's luncheon were encouraged to meet with employers and set up at least three interviews. Wreath said it is the goal to have several students step into jobs this summer, right after graduation.

These top students also had some extra motivation Wednesday. For every interview they set up, they earned a \$100 gift card — a maximum of three cards.

Clark County Today noticed Celia Langarica of Evergreen High School, Bristol Bunce of Legacy High School, and Lyla Hart of Union High School setting up time with Pacific Crest

Custom Cabinetry of Ridgefield. All three are students in the Construction Tech program at Cascadia Technical Academy.

All three are set to graduate in June, and all three want to go right to work.

"This is more professional than anything I've ever done," Hart said. "I don't want college debt. School is not for me."

"I want to start saving money for a house one day right away," added Bunce.

And Langarica, who won the Skills USA competition for reciting the organization's creed last year, said she appreciates the idea that young workers in the trades field get paid to learn, to improve their skills.

On Wednesday, dozens of seniors who are finishing their 12th grade of school, were starting to make plans for "Grade 13" and their careers for the future.

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Third-graders at Salmon Creek Elementary learn about elections and respect through a spirited campaign to elect their new mascot, Toasty.

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Prairie High School presents the beloved musical "Mary Poppins" with performances Nov. 15-16 and 22-23.

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King's Way Christian Schools honored veterans with a ceremony featuring students and Airmen from Joint Base Lewis-McChord.

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