

Sharpening Their Skills

Rogue River Valley students lend Habitat for Humanity a hand, build Willow Lake campground yurts

By DICK O'CONNOR

Thanks to a grant written by Rogue Community College to the U.S. Department of Labor, under the guidance of Ralph Henderson, chair of the Construction Technology Department, both Rogue Community College and the Oregon Building Congress began last year planning for a 2009 Summer Construction Academy for students in Southern Oregon.

This program involved students from various high schools in the Rogue River Valley who had an interest in construction. To gain entry into the program students had to complete an application and an interview with Batzer Inc. Students had to prepare for the interview just as though they would be applying for a job after completing school. In addition to the application, they had to write a letter as to why they wanted to work construction and had to submit

letters of recommendation. Twenty students applied but only six were selected.

The students selected were: Thomas Beech, David Dunham, Kelly Schultz, Justin Shirley, Tyler Trujillo and Tanner Bean.

Additional support for the program also came from the Gordon Elwood and Carpenter Foundations as well as the Oregon Community Grant Foundation. Funds from these foundations were used to pay students for the eight-



Students interested in the program had to complete an application and interview with Batzer Inc., write a letter as to why they wanted to work in construction, and submit letters of recommendation. Those selected were Thomas Beech, David Dunham, Kelly Schultz, Justin Shirley, Tyler Trujillo and Tanner Bean.





Students learned basic construction skills and about safety on a construction site. Tiff Smith, the safety consultant for the Associated General Contractors in southern Oregon, instructed the students their first day on the job.

week program as well as provide some materials for the project. Chris Mathas, a local contractor, provided important supervisory services to the project as well as assisting in the permits required by Jackson County and the purchase of the yurts from Pacific Yurts. Pacific Yurts was kind enough to provide the yurts at a discounted price.

The students worked on two major projects, one a Habitat for Humanity House and the other, the construction of two yurts at Willow Lake campgrounds, just outside Butte Falls. They worked under the guidance of an experienced construction professional, Mitch Tucker, who is a graduate of the RCC Construction Technology program and a former site superintendent for S & B James.

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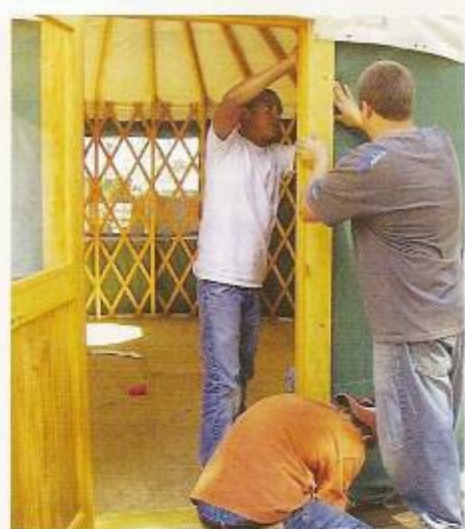


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emphasized. As a result, OBC programs have a great safety record.

In August, students celebrated the completion of both yurts with a picnic where the students, parents and representatives of the foundations gathered to congratulate the students for a job well done!

The grant from the Department of Labor will

support a second year of the program so students in southern Oregon wanting to work in the 2010 Summer Construction Academy should check the OBC Web site, www.obcweb.com, in March for an application form and for details on next year's project.

Dick O'Connor is executive director of the Oregon Building Congress.

Willow Lake campground boasts two new yurts, thanks to the construction efforts of Rogue River Valley students.