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CLASSROOM PROJECT

- To teach students how to construct classroom and other related subjects.
- To provide livelihood to the students and the community.
- To donate classrooms throughout the Philippines.

Pablito J. Alarcon
FtH Board Member

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Students Learn Home Building From The Ground Up



C.S. Monroe Technology Center's building construction program teacher Andrew Campbell gives Timmy Carter, a graduate of Heritage High School, some tips on installing a tray ceiling. Students in the program have been hard at work all year constructing a full-sized home in the Dulles South area along Gunn Spring Road, and have been responsible for almost every aspect of the construction of the house. Once finished, the house will be sold to help fund the next home-building project.

Alex Bahr
Staff Writer

For the students of Andrew Campbell's building construction program at C.S. Monroe Technology Center, the average school day is less about classrooms and books and more about job sites and power tools.

The students in the two-year program, juniors and seniors and a few post-graduates, have been working on a multi-year project that will end with a highly visible, and valuable, end product: a full-sized, four-bedroom home in the Dulles South area.

Students from Monroe's building construction, masonry and HVAC programs have been working on the home, and Campbell says that if the schedule remains intact it should be ready for sale next year.

Campbell is a professional contractor and he shows his students how to handle almost every single aspect of the construction, with professionals laying the foundation, installing the second floor trusses and carpeting the second floor. The rest is left up to the various skills of the students.

During the fall, once the foundation was poured and set, students began working on the exterior walls and installing windows throughout the house, often in cold, windy weather.

"They had a real good learning experience on just what it takes to get these windows in,"

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Campbell said.

Students of the carpentry program were at the job site Tuesday working on a tray ceiling for the master bedroom. The recessed ceiling design is becoming more common in new homes, featuring molding along the edges and creating a sense of openness in the room.

Steven Kupper, a graduate of Heritage High School in his second year of the program, was busy using a circular saw to cut the angled frames for the tray ceiling with the help of a classmate. Kupper joined the program during his freshman year, and like all graduates, will

be certified to work in the industry when he completes the program at the end of the school year.

At the same time, Heritage High School graduate Timmy Carter stood atop of a portable scaffolding unit putting the framework in place with another student. Carter said he was "really just very grateful" to be able to complete the program after finishing high school. He said his mom heard about Monroe when he was in seventh grade and thought it would be a good fit for him. Inspired by his great-grandfather, who crafted a number of small projects such as birdhouses and doghouses when he was younger, Carter enrolled in the carpentry program during his senior year.

Throughout the house Tuesday students were tackling a number of projects. Students in the HVAC program assisted in installing plumbing on the second floor and setting up a circuit breaker in the basement. While the jobs at hand may not always be germane to a student's particular program, Campbell always finds a way to put his students to work. Recently, many students assisted in spreading gravel throughout the unfinished basement, with Campbell operating a small Bobcat tractor to haul the gravel in.

Campbell said the programs at Monroe are special because of the scale of projects on which students work. While similar programs in other school districts offer students the chance to work on miniature or small-scale homes, Monroe's program is one of the few in

which students work on a full-size home, and are eligible for sponsored apprenticeships upon completion.

While the focus of the carpentry program is on residential home building and similar projects, Campbell also has found a way to introduce students to some of the grander aspects of the construction industry. Last week, he and his students took their second trip to Woodgrove High School near Purcellville to see how a project of a much larger scale is completed.

Andy Cecere and Bill Myers, project managers for Davis Construction, which is constructing the school, took Campbell and his students on another tour of the job site, highlighting the changes that have taken place since their December visit. Since then the construction has faced significant delays due to the winter's record-setting snowfalls; however Cecere said the company is still on track to complete the school by July.

Davis construction crews and subcontractors have worked long into the night on many occasions to ensure the project remains on schedule, and Cecere recalled one occasion when work was halted after complaints from neighbors about the late-night noise. "Our neighbors haven't always been entirely happy with us, but we're getting it done."

Much of the tour focused on the installation of plumbing, electrical and HVAC work in the school's block walls and the intricacies

involved in coordinating different teams to ensure all systems are properly in place. In the school's art lab, students saw how an entire wall of the photo lab's darkroom had to be reconstructed after being built too far into the main classrooms.

Students also saw how Davis Construction is implementing energy-efficient designs in the school, including motion-activated lights and plumbing fixtures, high-efficiency heating and cooling throughout the school, and tightly controlled water heating and cooling.

While the students' project features some energy-efficient designs, such as high-efficiency appliances and special weather sealing for doors and windows, Campbell said it is his hope to include more, such as solar powered water heating, when the program's financial situation improves.

Until then, much work remains to be done. Garage doors for the home arrived Monday, and students soon will begin the process of installing them. Campbell said he plans to have the students install the countertops and cabinetry for the home's bathroom and kitchen, in addition to laying pre-finished hardwood floors.

For more information on the program and to view more photos of the construction process, visit the C.S. Monroe Technology Center Web site, available at www.csdmon.k12.va.us. ■

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