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## 'Carnival' gives kids a construction thrill

By [TERRY STEPHENS](#)

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Photos by Terry Stephens [enlarge](#)

Teens were riding high atop a boom lift at the Construction Carnival this month in Marysville.

The Construction Carnival in Marysville earlier this month brought high school students face-to-face with the construction industry for a day of hammering, drilling and dialogue, thanks to the Snohomish County Workforce Development Council (WDC).

Much has been said and written about the need to raise teenagers' awareness that the construction industry has exciting, well-paying jobs that young people are missing if they only focus on schools'

mainstream emphasis on preparing for college.

While the industry needs well-educated workers, many of whom will work their way into management or their own businesses, the focus of many high school students isn't on college. They want to work with their hands, to build things. The WDC program offered a rare opportunity for students to ride boom lifts, bend metal, nail siding to a house and handle power tools under the guidance of experienced craftsmen.

The WDC's first Construction Carnival, held at Naval Station Everett's community site, was patterned after another program in Washington state, the Construction Rodeo held by Spokane Community College's Apprenticeship and Journeyman Training Center.



[\[enlarge\]](#)

An instructor with the Master Builders Association's Education Foundation helped a student carry his siding project to a storage area.

More than 150 students from Everett-area high schools and the Cascade Job Corps in Sedro-Woolley registered for the program, although a rainy day held attendance to around 50. Groups from various schools arrived at different schedules so students would have time to sample a variety of trades.

Based on a carnival theme — complete with hamburgers, hot dogs and ice cream — the event allowed students to tape wallboard, connect sprinkler systems, ride a boom-and-bucket lift to Ferris-wheel heights, try their hands at shaping sheet metal into tool caddies, and learn about jobs from people in the business.

Comments from the students ranged from “I didn't know girls could

do these things” to “That was really fun, something I'd like to do,” according to representatives of labor unions, training programs and the WDC.

“An apprenticeship is a terrific alternative for those who aren't interested in a four-year college degree. In fact, unions have long called apprenticeship ‘the original four-year degree,?’” said Sam Samano, the WDC's business services manager, who organized much of the day's event.

“Not everyone is going to succeed in college. We have to start providing career options for students who are more hands-on in their learning styles. It's time for us to start talking about real high-wage, high-skill jobs in the construction and building trades that don't get as much air time as the doctors and lawyers,” she said.



[\[enlarge\]](#)

Star Rentals, one of the event's sponsors, provided “rides” in fork, scissor and boom lifts.

Participating exhibitors included the Western Washington Sheet Metal Joint Apprenticeship Training Committee, hosting a popular booth where students built their own tool tray, and Star Rentals,

which gave students safety lessons and rides in fork, scissor and boom lifts.

“This is a exciting event for the students,” said Eric Peterson of the Western Washington Sheet Metal JATC. “It lets them get their hands on the equipment. It's the fastest way to get them turned on to these careers. And we need more smart, hard-working candidates in the industry. The kids aren't hearing about these jobs. They deserve to have a choice, to know they can be paid during their training and finish without any college debt.”

Energizing youth about construction careers is an important initiative in Snohomish County as workforce demands continue to outnumber qualified workers. Knowing their careers are often viewed as dirty or low-wage work, the unions are joining with the WDC and teachers to help change that perception.

“Most high school kids don't know about the apprenticeship opportunities available after graduation,” said Kelly Humann with the Glaziers Local 188. “They don't realize they'll start at over \$20 an hour and continue to move up the career ladder into very competitive wage jobs, all while earning college credit.”

Other event sponsors included the Snohomish County Construction Careers Partnership, Edmonds Community College, Habitat for Humanity, Brightwater Treatment Facility, Master Builders Association's Education Foundation and the Construction Industry Training Council.

Union trades represented at the event included glaziers, architectural metal and glassworkers, electricians, boilermakers, carpenters, sprinkler fitters, operating engineers, ironworkers, painters, drywall finishers, floorcoverers, stripers, plumbers, pipefitters, cement masons, millwrights, masonry and plasterers.

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