

Building a future

Home building program gives students a close look at construction trades

By Gord Bowes
News staff

Nicholas Lovasic's main classroom this semester has been evolving before his eyes.

From a hole in the ground in early February to a nearly complete three-unit townhouse, the St. Thomas More student has learned more about the construction trades in a few months on a real job site than he could have hoped for.

"It's great to see the whole house-building process, to see how it's done," says Lovasic. "You get to see all the different trades, so it's really good experience."

This is the first year of the home building program offered by the Hamilton Catholic school board in partnership with Habitat for Humanity Hamilton, a non-profit organization dedicated to the assistance of less fortunate people and families. The course is funded by the provincial government's Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program

It's an excellent opportunity for senior high school students from across the board to earn credits towards their graduation diploma and gain valuable experience in the work force, says Pat Piro, the technological studies teacher who works with the students each day.

The program, which takes in students from across the city, helps students figure out what construction trade they might be interested in, he says.

"They've told me they can't see this in a classroom — this is real, this is authentic," says Piro.

It's one thing to show students how to do something in shop class, but quite another to do it in the field. In a classroom, students can build an eight-foot wall, provided the classroom has high ceilings, or else they may have to build half walls. But the home building program takes learning a step further, he says.

"We teach the terminology and fundamentals



Nicholas Lovasic has been working on a Habitat for Humanity home as part of the Hamilton Catholic school board's home building program. | Photo by Gord Bowes

(in class) on how to fasten two-by-fours or two-by-sixes together, but they are basically portable components, whereas here (on the job site) they are fixed to the foundation and the students see the actual stages of the process," says the teacher.

"You see all the little steps in the process that you can't see in the classroom."

The three-unit townhouse they've been helping build is a Habitat for Humanity project in the north end near Hamilton General Hospital. Construction has been hampered by the bitter cold winter and rainy spring, so the expected completion date has been pushed back until July.

When the students couldn't work on the site because the weather made it unsafe, says Piro, they spent time on other projects, such as mak-

ing easels for a student art crawl, at a nearby workshop.

At the build, retired tradesmen and other volunteers who contribute to the project also provide extra instruction for the students, notes Piro.

"The students are learning a considerable amount from the volunteers that come here," he says. "They're fabulous at spending the time and explaining to students because they understand Habitat's mission is to build these homes and also train youth."

Piro says the Habitat project shows students how people give back to the community and shows them a lot about working as a team.

"The students explain things to each other," he says. "They're constantly reinforcing their learning."

COMMUNITY

Up close and personal at Touch a Truck

The annual Touch a Truck event at the Ancaster Fairgrounds takes place Saturday from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

More than 60 trucks from a variety of industries and services will fill the fairgrounds and provide a rare opportunity for kids, young and old, to climb on board and safely explore many exciting vehicles usually seen only from a distance.

Admission is \$5 per person. The Ancaster Fairgrounds is located at 630 Trinity Rd.

COMMUNITY

Senior of the Year awards gala tickets on sale

The 19th annual Municipal Senior of the Year Awards and Gala is taking place June 24.

The event recognizes the outstanding volunteer contributions seniors have made to enrich the social, cultural or civic life of the community.

Nominations are still being accepted; packages are available at hamilton.ca/seniorsawards.

The gala is being held at Michelangelo's Event and Conference Centre, 1555 Upper Ottawa St. Tickets are \$20. Contact Lisa Maychak at 905-546-2424 x1721 or lisa.maychak@hamilton.ca.

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