

TECH talk

MAY 2011



Collaborative Efforts on Display



Carpentry Instructor Mr. Steve Weber and students Liliana Baez, Joel Rodriguez, Roberto Medina, and Carlo Sciumbata, left to right, proudly pose at RMCTC's home show display.

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**Reading
Muhlenberg**
CAREER & TECHNOLOGY CENTER

This past March, students in RMCTC's student chapter of the Home Builders Association of Berks County (HBA) banded together to design, fabricate, and assemble an impressive installation at the Southeast Home and Garden Show at the Greater Reading Expo Center.

"We feed the students ideas and see what they can come up with for the design," said **Mr. Steve Weber**, who has been teaching carpentry students at RMCTC for

more than 30 years.

The display took nine different trade classes several months to develop and fabricate and two days to install at the exhibition. Embracing an Asian theme that included sand art, water features, a footbridge, an ornate trellis, lush landscaping, and other details too numerous to list, RMCTC's display was one of the highlights of the show. You can see a short video tour of the display in the video section of RMCTC's page on Facebook by visiting www.rmctc.org/facebook.

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FROM THE director



Reading Muhlenberg CTC is proud to provide our students with educational opportunity in the construction trades. With seven construction-related programs available at RMCTC (see www.rmctc.org), students can pursue their dream of working in the construction industry. The School's construction programs are endorsed by the Pennsylvania Builders

Association (PBA). This is important, because as a student, it means our facilities, equipment, curriculum, instruction, and safety programs have met the standard of this highly regarded industry organization. It means that as a student you will participate in an industry-endorsed program of study that will enable you to achieve your future goals in the construction industry.

I'm frequently reminded by contractors of the pride they have in building something in the community. When I drive around town with a contractor, I often hear "see that building over there, I helped to build that!" What a testament of personal pride to have had a part in building "monuments" within our community that can be proudly pointed out to future generations.

As you read this edition of *TECHTalk* highlighting activities and opportunities in the construction field, give some thought about what you would like to do after graduation. Perhaps, it is your destiny to build a future award-winning home, school, hospital, or monument to our nation's heroes. That dream can start at RMCTC!

Gerald P. Witmer Jr.

Gerald P. Witmer Jr. | Administrative Director



Photo: John Strand

Ty Pennington, of ABC's *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition*, may not be visiting Berks County this year, but the spirit of last year's makeover of Trish Urban's home in Tilden Township continues!

On May 10, members of the Berks County Home Builders Association (HBA) will be joining forces to renovate a home in Shartlesville for a family in need in our community. Students from the RMCTC student chapter of HBA will be assisting with the renovation under the guidance of instructors **Mr. Steve Weber** (Carpentry) and **Mr. Mark Holtzman** (Building and Property Maintenance).

Twenty-five students representing eight of the school's programs will be assisting local contractors with the renovations. According to Mr. Weber, this will be a great opportunity for students to practice skills they have learned in the classroom environment, while interacting with contractors and performing a very valuable service to the community.

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This year's display was sponsored in part by the HBA, a longtime supporter of RMCTC. "The people at the HBA have been fantastic partners for this school and the construction program. They've supported us with materials and activities for the students over the years," said Mr. Weber.

A few lucky show attendees were able to take home examples of RMCTC craftsmanship. A wooden glider bench was raffled off during the show, bringing in more than \$1,100, which will be used toward program field trips. A show attendee purchased the decorative trellis.

In addition to providing the students with a venue for showcasing their skills, the expo offers them an opportunity to visit other booths and displays to investigate materials and techniques with which they might not be familiar. The combination of exhibitors and industry professionals who attend the show creates an excellent environment for networking.

"The connections that the students and the employers make at these shows are really valuable. The students may not have any idea what working in the construction trades is like, so being able to talk with people who do it every day helps them to understand what employers' expectations are," said Mr. Weber. "Conversely, potential employers get a better idea of what level of skill the students have when they complete our program."

Collaborative Efforts on Display

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A raffle for this student-built garden glider bench raised more than \$1,100. The funds will be used to support student field trips.



Nine RMCTC programs collaborated on creating and installing this elaborate display. The exhibit was designed with an Asian theme and included detailed landscaping, a footbridge, an ornate trellis, a folding screen, fencing, and other details.

work- based LEARNING

Co-ops Launch Careers

Walk into any kitchen, workshop, or office, and you can find evidence of the cabinetmaking trade. Craftsmen from all over the world design and produce cabinetry for our residential and commercial storage needs, and RMCTC's Cabinetmaking and Finish Carpentry (CAB) course prepares students for this rewarding career. Exceptional students may be offered opportunities to gain valuable on-the-job experience through a cooperative education (co-op) assignment as part of RMCTC's work-based learning program. In an economy with so many skilled people looking for work, finding an opportunity to practice a trade as a student can be a challenging task, but is by no means an impossible one.

Muhlenberg senior **Ryan Constein**, a CAB student, has already secured a full-time post-graduation position in his field thanks to his co-op assignment. Cooperative education provides a win/win situation for both students and employers; students gain valuable experience and specialized training while practicing their trade skills at a working business, and many employers view the program as a way to "audition" potential new employees. Additionally, co-op students learn the satisfaction of earning a paycheck for their efforts.

Ryan is well aware of the value of having a position waiting for him after graduation, and he credits his

instructor at RMCTC and his participation in the work-based education program with helping him secure the job. "Without my teacher, **Mr. Brumbach**, I wouldn't have gotten the job. I've been in his class for three years, and he's taught me everything I know," said Ryan.

Four days a week, Ryan applies the lessons he has learned during his three years in the CAB program at his job with Mastercraft Woodworking in Shoemakersville, a company specializing in casework for schools, hospitals, and other large businesses. His duties are varied and allow him to hone the wide array of valuable skills that he has learned at RMCTC. "I do different things each day. Sometimes I work on a dowel machine all day; sometimes I build cabinets or drawers or cut wood to specifications," said Ryan. His skills and work ethic made such a positive impression on his employer that they have requested another student to add to their team.



In addition to demonstrating the value of an RMCTC education with his exemplary job performance at Mastercraft Woodworking, Ryan has represented the CAB shop in a regional trade school competition two years in a row, placing second both times. He has been happy to represent the school and recommends RMCTC to students seeking career guidance and instruction. "Before I started at RMCTC, I wasn't sure what I wanted to do, but I knew I wanted to train here. It's a great place to learn," said Ryan.

alumni

FOCUS

The Student Becomes the Master

RMCTC graduate **Josh Boettner** is a fan of career-based education, a fact made clear by his choice to earn his living as the masonry instructor at the Lebanon County Career and Technology Center (LCCTC).

Josh completed RMCTC's Bricklaying program in 1994 under the tutelage of **Mr. Manley**, who still trains Berks County's finest bricklayers at RMCTC. "I often tell Mr. Manley that I owe everything I have to him," said Josh. "He taught me my trade, and he helped me focus my career."

When he first toured RMCTC, Josh was uncertain about what his future profession might be, but a tour of the facility and its available programs helped him make up his mind. "I took the tour in ninth grade. I wasn't sure what I wanted to do, but I've always liked working with my hands, so bricklaying seemed like the best option for me," said Josh.

During his senior year, Josh participated in RMCTC's cooperative education program, working for a local concrete contractor. A few months later, he joined the bricklayers' union and did construction work for the next 11 years. If you pay a visit to the Philadelphia Eagles' stadium, you can check out some of his handiwork.

While he was working in construction, Josh served as a member of RMCTC's Bricklaying Occupational Advisory Committee (OAC), which indirectly led to his transition into

Josh Boettner, an alumnus of RMCTC's Bricklaying program, now gives students a strong foundation in the masonry craft that has served him well.



teaching; it helped him to keep in touch with Mr. Manley, who suggested Josh start teaching night school classes in masonry at RMCTC, which he did. As a member of RMCTC's OAC, Josh helped steer the Bricklaying program by making recommendations for improvement and providing technical assistance to assure the most up-to-date curriculum content, appropriate applications of technology, and the implementation of new teaching strategies.

Josh now has his own full-time masonry classroom at LCCTC, where he has passed on his knowledge for the past six years. He also serves as the president of the Masonry Instructors' Association of PA. "It's very different being on the teaching side of the classroom,"

said Josh. "I tell my students that they have to be more employable than everyone else out there by learning the skills that we're trying to teach them. If you have the proper training, you make yourself more employable."

Though RMCTC is just one career training option, Josh is impressed with the progress that the school has made since he completed his program. "I'm very happy with the direction that RMCTC has taken," said Josh. "The faculty puts the students first, and they really focus on preparing students for their future careers. It can be a challenge to get teenagers to think about what lies ahead, but RMCTC makes sure they're ready for the real world."

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The Reading Muhlenberg Career and Technology Center, in partnership with our diverse community, sponsoring districts, and business and industry, is committed to providing quality career and technical education, resulting in opportunities for students to gain employment, pursue post-secondary education, and develop an appreciation for lifelong learning.

faculty news

Rachel Palange recently joined RMCTC as a paraprofessional assigned to the Learning Resource Center. Palange obtained a B.S. in secondary education with Spanish option from Penn State University. She has worked in industry as an ISO 9000 coordinator and in customer service. She also has taught Spanish at Montgomery County Community College.

Christopher Evitts has been hired to teach Electrical Technology. He attended Schuylkill Career and Technical Center as an Electrical Technology student and earned an A.S. degree from Penn State University in electrical engineering. Evitts formerly worked at American Technical Systems Inc. and EnerSys Inc. as an engineer and more recently with Reber & Reber Builders as an electrician. Chris also coaches girls soccer at Schuylkill Haven High School.

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