

# Construction and Career Days 2011



Jessica Selby•Daily Times

Students “rise” to the training from RIDOT and other professionals at the Construction and Career Days. Each year students from around the state get an up close look at what it’s like to work in the construction field. See Page A-2 for more photos.

# Opportunities in construction are explored by students

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They might still be just a little young to land a job in the industries, but the youngsters at the annual Construction and Career Days had no inhibitions when it came to learning about the trades.

Each year in April the Rhode Island Department of Transportation (RIDOT), the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the University of Rhode Island Transportation Center (URITC) partner up to host this hands-on career exploration event.

At the event, students from schools across the state are offered the opportunity to operate a wide range of construction equipment such as backhoes, excavators, pavers and bucket trucks.

They are also guided by professionals through a variety of activities such as welding, plumbing and electrical work, instructed on the use of hazardous materials suits, allowed to operate a truck driver simu-

lator and provided access to conversations with representatives from a number of technical schools and colleges.

Various construction industries including the Construction Industries of Rhode Island, were in attendance, as were New England Laborers Tri Funds, Beacon Mutual Insurance Company, Rhode Island Public Works Association, Rhode Island Builders Association, Rhode Island Technology Transfer Center and the NorthEast Technicians Training Certification Program.

According to information provided by the agencies supporting the program, the purpose of Construction Career Days is to "attract and expose Rhode Island High School students to careers in transportation construction industry."

Students from West Warwick and Coventry were in attendance at the event. Charleen Ricci, the coordinator of the Transitions to Success program in Coventry, took a half dozen of her students to the event.

Those students all said that loved it. Oliver Pyce got to operate a welding machine, a backhoe and sit inside a Rhode Island State Highway and Maintenance Department 10-wheel dump truck. The regular operator of the oversized ve-

hicle, Paul Campbell showed Pyce the ins and outs of the vehicle, explained to him what he typically uses the truck for and what is required in order to be able to operate such a vehicle. According to Campbell, an official Class A CDL license is required in order to officially operate a vehicle of that size.

Pyce said that he wasn't too intimidated by anything that was presented to him at the event, as it was his fourth year attending the event, but the majority of his peers said that some of the tasks were a bit nerve wrecking.

"I was nervous about holding that welding gun," said Travis Cormyer, who is a part of the Transitions for Success Program. "I have never done anything like that before so it was a little intimidating."

Michelle Blanchette and Samantha Lemoine, the two females in the group, said that they too found some of the offerings a bit out of their capabilities.

"I am afraid of fire so I was not about to run one of those welding guns," Blanchette said.

And in terms of pursuing a career in one of the offered trades, the girls said, "likely not."

"Maybe if there were no  
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# Students study career options

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other fields for me to study, I would do this, but I am aiming more towards daycare and computer work," Lemoine said.

The boys, on the other hand, they said that they found the career options exciting.

"I think it is all pretty interesting," Pyce said. "The welding defiantly seems like it would be the hardest, but I like to do it all."

In addition to the career opportunity options that were provided to the students who attended the event, there was also a new attraction at this year's Construction and Career Days event. It was a design-build bridge competition, sponsored by RIDOT, the URITC, and Rhode Island Consulting Engineers (RICE). A similar competition was held last year, but this year's competition was slightly different. According to Jeffrey Cathcart, director of the Transportation Institute, this year's event "places a stronger emphasis on creativity and design." He actually visited each of the pre-registered schools to meet with the students who would be attending and provided them with all of the details of the competition. He said that the explained to each student team

that they would all be given a set of specifications for their balsa wood bridge, but the bulk of the design choices were left up to them.

"Much like the design-build process that RIDOT will be following for the replacement of the flood-damaged Laurel Avenue Bridge in Coventry, students will be given precise information to follow, but will be responsible for coming up with the best design, the best solution, for their bridge," RIDOT Director Michael P. Lewis said.

Each student team's bridge was tested at the event by adding weight until it fell. Trophies were awarded for first, second and third place based on the amount of weight held and the cost of construction.

The group from Coventry did not participate in the event, but the West Warwick team did. And although their design did not win, it held strong in the competition holding up 14 pounds.

The students spent several hours at the event, which was held over the course of two days last week at the Midstate Maintenance Facility in East Greenwich. Approximately 1,000 students from more than 50 technical and high schools throughout the state attended the two-day event.