

Habitat project offers training for future workforce

by **Bailee Wicks**

Writer and Editor

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about many challenges for workforce development, including Peninsula College in Port Angeles having to cancel all in-person classes, including skilled trades training and workshops.

To fill the void, BIAW sponsored an Occupational Safety and Health Administration-facilitated training for four prospective skilled trades workers in partnership with the Habitat for Humanity of Clallam County Summer Build class. In addition to the class, the event also celebrated the ribbon-cutting ceremony of a Habitat for Humanity house located at the Maloney Heights development in west Port Angeles.

Although it was a small training group, these potential future home builders, received hands-on training and on-site experience while building a Habitat home for a family in need.

"This is a great example of how BIAW is partnering with members of the community to help fill our industry's skilled labor shortage gap," said BIAW Workforce Development Manager Al Audette.

"Our members are in desperate need of skilled trades people and BIAW is working to help to fill that need," added Audette.

Kathy Long, one of the four trainees, has always loved to volunteer but found something powerful in using her hands and constructing things.

"Now that I have finished the training, I can combine my love of volunteering with the knowledge I learned to help others," said Long.

To show their support, two students from last year's training currently employed in the residential construction industry, also attended the event. As



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a success story, both are currently employed in the residential construction industry. Christian Curtis, a trainee from last year, is now a contractor with Habitat for Humanity.

"There is nobody to replace the retiring workforce, so I stepped in," Curtis explained. "I hope more people go into the construction industry. I love it and want to see it flourish," he added.

Habitat is no stranger to the skilled trades workforce shortage, either. "We need home builders and tradespeople," said Executive Director of Habitat for Humanity of Clallam County Colleen Robinson.

"It's important to let students and families know that a career in the skilled trades and the home building industry offers family-wage jobs. Home builders create homes and communities and are a necessary service to the public," Robinson continued.

As BIAW continues its efforts to help train and recruit a skilled trades workforce, we'll keep you informed and updated on new projects and events. For more information about workforce development and how you can get involved, contact BIAW Workforce Development Manager Al Audette at (360) 352-7800, x105 or ala@biaw.com.