

BAINBRIDGE ISLANDER

Tiny homes project gives Bainbridge High students a taste of construction

**Nathan Pilling**

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BAINBRIDGE ISLAND — A staccato rhythm of hammer strikes rings out, a saw buzzes and Preston Michaels, an instructor at Bainbridge High School, looks on as students busy themselves with their work.

Two structures are beginning to form in front of him, and on one of them, a student has a board in position and is ready to nail it in place.

“What I would do is take that down, get a nail started and then it’s easy to hold in place when you’re nailing,” Michaels says.

A ten-second lesson taught and learned.

A few feet away, brothers Kellen and Mackenzie Bond, professionals with Clark Construction and Bainbridge High School grads, point students toward the next steps in their developing construction project.

Alongside Michaels, they help to mentor students, shepherd the project along and give tips and hints here and there. Their teenage charges are putting together a pair of tiny homes from the ground up, taking the project through from planning to framing and finishing. Students on the project range from freshmen up to seniors.

At the end of the school year when the homes are finished, they’ll be picked up and placed in a local tiny home village by the Low Income Housing Institute, based in Seattle.

“It’s amazing, in two weeks’ time, now they know how to read a tape measure, the importance of ‘on-center,’ why plywood breaks where it does, because it’s 4 feet, 8 feet,” Michaels said. “They’re learning these standardizations that you see in construction.”

Along the way, students might pick up some life skills or perhaps discover an interest in working in a trade. The small homes offer a snapshot of work in construction, and the project introduces students to a range of areas where they might see themselves in a potential career — in areas like planning, building or project management.

“This is really helpful, so when I’m an adult I can have these skills for myself,” said Emmett Taylor, a Bainbridge High School sophomore.

“I think it’s a really cool process,” said Alexander McAbee, a senior. “It’s a really cool thing that we’re doing, building these houses for the community.”

For Kellen and Mackenzie Bond, the project represents an opportunity to give back at their alma mater and show students that a four-year college degree isn’t the only option for them after graduation.

For students, it’s an opportunity to learn with their hands the right way to do things, which will only help the construction industry, Kellen Bond said.

“Construction’s about efficiencies; building’s about efficiencies,” he said. “Being able to get basically them spread out, having individual ownership over their task, whether you’re a person cutting or marking the board, it’s very important that you do it well and precise.”

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