

Not just 'swinging a hammer'

Freshmen get insight into construction industry at Taylor Bros. open houses

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Columbus construction companies are working together to build interest among local high school freshmen to consider a career in the industry.

Two open houses

earlier this month at Taylor Bros. Construction Co. were targeted to Columbus Area Career Connection students, exposing about 80 of them from either Columbus East or North to different aspects of the construction business, said John Griffioen, Taylor Bros.

senior project manager.

"The whole purpose is to open their eyes and say, 'Hey, construction is not what your parents told you about,'" Griffioen said.

The open houses allowed students to meet

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Columbus East C4 students Catalena McCarty, left, and Karen Cima practice laying bricks during an open house Tuesday at Taylor Bros. Construction Co. in Columbus. MIKE WOLANIN | THE REPUBLIC



Pictured from top left: Columbus East C4 students Zach Brunnemer, left, and Pranav Kumarasubramanian check out the controls of an excavator during an open house Tuesday at Taylor Bros. Construction Co. in Columbus. The students learned about the different trades and careers within the construction industry. // Josh Burns, a project manager for Taylor Bros. Construction Co., leads Columbus East C4 students on a tour of the building. // Jacob Wingate, with the Harmon Group, shows Columbus East C4 students some of the safety equipment he wears. MIKE WOLANIN | THE REPUBLIC

HAMMER

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with nine regional construction employers, including Milestone Contractors, Harmon Steel and Bruns-Gutzwiller, and to tour the Taylor Bros. offices on Middle Road.

It also was an opportunity for workers in the trade to explain their jobs in detail, said Jacob Wingate, a safety specialist with Harmon Steel Inc.

Wingate, for example, oversees regulations set by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, making sure they are enforced. He showed students how a harness is used for safety purposes.

"There's a lot more to construction than swinging a hammer," said Wingate, whose company, Harmon Steel, and Taylor Bros. are subsidiaries of North Vernon-based Harmon Group.

George Barber, a superintendent foreman with

Where to learn more

The Columbus Area Career Connection offers a construction engineering technology pathway with focuses on architecture, building trades and construction management.

For more information, contact Autumnne Streeval, C4 integration specialist, by calling 812-376-4240. Information can also be found on the C4 website by visiting bcsc.k12.in.us/Page/7505.

Bruns-Gutzwiller Inc. in Batesville, gave students insight into what brick-laying involves during the open house.

"You learn it and you can go anywhere in the United States and work," said Barber, who has been in the trade for 30 years.

Once the skills are obtained,

"We're just trying to open their eyes and say that construction isn't what you think it is."

John Griffioen

Taylor Bros. senior project manager on conducting open houses to expose students to the construction field

the potential for good money lies ahead, he said.

While unsure what she wants to do as a career, Columbus East freshman Karen Cima said the open house gave her better insight into the construction industry.

"It made me see that there's so many different things included," Cima said.

Student Isaac Downing already had an interest in construction, having done some carpentry and drywall work.

But meeting with representatives from the different companies helped him see more career opportunities within the industry.

Those include office jobs from accounting to technology, or developing construction plans, said Josh Burns, another Taylor Bros. project manager.

Ben Stenner, a Columbus East freshman, said he plans on studying accounting in college and would consider going into the construction industry after learning about the office-profession opportunities.

With a demand for more workers, an opportunity exists to earn good wages by entering the field, Burns said.

Indiana has seen an increase in the number of people employed in construction year-over-year according to the Associated General Contractors of America. The numbers increased from 136,500 workers in January 2017 to 141,100 this January, the Arlington, Virginia-based organization reported.

C4 students also gained insights into other industries

with visits to NTN Driveshaft Inc., Faurecia, American Axle, Dorel, the Cummins Tech Center and Columbus Regional Health, said Autumnne Streeval, integration specialist with C4.

"The goal is to expose them to different career pathways in Bartholomew County," Streeval said.

The visits also are meant to show students that there are lots of job opportunities in Columbus, many of which don't require a four-year degree — and to get them thinking about potential careers, said Samantha Olmstead, a C4 engineering teacher.

Griffioen said a four-year college path isn't for everyone, and individuals who enter the construction field can land good-paying jobs after going through apprenticeships that result in no debt, he said.

"We're just trying to open their eyes and say that construction isn't what you think it is," Griffioen said.