

NMC/MTEC masonry program builds students' skills

BY SHEILA GARRETT
Special to the Record-Eagle

Masonry workers who want to upgrade their qualifications, skills and pay can enroll in a program being offered at MTEC through Traverse City's Northwestern Michigan College this fall.

Beginners and hobbyists are welcome to participate, too, said instructor Todd Burtwell.

"We try to accommodate every level. There's a lot of hands-on experience for anyone willing to work hard and have fun," he said.

The program, which started last spring, is one of many offered at NMC's MTEC Center. Carpentry, plumbing and electrical programs are also being offered.

A Heating/Ventilation/Air Conditioning/Refrigeration course, which has been operating for four years, now has more than 60 students working at different

levels.

These programs can be combined with apprenticeships sponsored jointly by the U.S. Department of Labor and regional employers. The curriculum is designed by and for the construction industry and is aligned with national competency standards. About 400 students will go through the programs this year, according to Steve Morris, construction technology director.

Morris described the construction industry here as "recession proof," due to Traverse City's growth.

"The job placement is awesome for anybody with these qualifications," he said.

The masonry course is designed to meet the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training Guidelines. A student who completes the entire program of six semesters will receive a certifi-

cate issued by the Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training, that is recognized anywhere in the country.

The fall semester will begin the week of Sept. 8. Semesters are 15 weeks long, and students can complete two semesters a year. Some courses are offered in the summer as well. Classes are held at night, Morris explained, so that students can leave work and go straight to class.

An additional course in construction management will be offered in September for those interested in becoming supervisors. Students may apply for an associate degree offered through NMC, said Morris.

Many students have been encouraged to enroll by their employers and often receive company reimbursement.

"Grand Traverse Construction of Traverse City sponsored the program.

We would not have this program without them," Morris said. "They wanted training for their employees, to educate them from beginners to qualified masons. There are great incentives for employees who want to improve."

He added that Western Concrete Products and The Construction Service, both of Traverse City, have helped by supplying materials, such as concrete, sand, bricks and blocks for training. Scholarships for low-income students have been provided by the Home Builders Association of the Grand Traverse Area and by Northwest Michigan Works.

Jeff Thomack, office manager at Traverse City's Western Concrete, is involved in establishing the masonry program at MTEC. He was asked by the owner of his company to inquire about starting a class and was gratified to find support for the idea among the sales representatives and other

people in the business. So far, one Western Concrete employee, a salesperson who knew materials but not installation, has become a level one mason.

"This is an excellent program for young kids coming out of school. As the older masons retire, there are not so many young people to take their place. They'll find they can make a very good living," said Thomack.

Bill Ingels of Traverse City, a self-employed contractor, is currently learning masonry skills at MTEC, in addition to his carpentry skills, because he believes diversification offers better employment opportunities.

"The instructors are top notch and they have extensive backgrounds in their subject," he said. "The facilities are good and you can make good contacts."

Joe Senchuk, an engineer at Boride Engineered Abrasives in Traverse City, is taking carpentry and

masonry courses for fun and because he is in favor of higher learning. He plans to take the entire program.

Senchuk uses the skills he is learning in his own house, where, he said, "I've always got something going. Just ask my wife."

A graduate of Ferris State College, he is enthusiastic about the courses.

Although the majority of the students are already employed in the construction trades, Steve Morris said he has seen some people come into MTEC classes with no experience in the field.

"It is a great program for those coming from TBA, for someone who has taken similar subjects at the high school level," he said.

For more information, call Morris at 995-2007 or check the Web site at www.nmc.edu/ees/construction.htm.

Sheila Garrett is a local freelance writer.

Travel light: Settling your student into college is often a 'moving' experience

BY DAVID BRADLEY
The Associated Press

The normal impulse of college-bound families is to pack everything for the move in one swoop.

Mark Hillman of Lowe's Home Improvement Warehouse suggests a road less traveled to both lighten the load and make transport and on campus storage simpler and easier.

"Moving to school is an education by itself," he said. "You really need to think your way through the process rather than simply cram everything in the trunk of a car."

Homework lesson No. 1 is to learn as much as possible about the dorm room or off-campus apartment before arriving on campus.

"Ask the college or apartment manager for room dimensions and closet sizes, or go online for that information," advised Hillman.

On-campus orientations are a good time to take a peek at rooms.

And when you're ready to pack for school, pack light. Plastics earn straight A's for light weight, durability, ease of handling, low cost and multipurpose storage.

bility.

Plastic boxes and flat storage containers do double duty as cargo containers and never need unpacking to serve as night stands, printer or TV tables, and below-bed storage. The minimal weight is a real plus as you climb stairs or jostle for elevator space.

Families who resist bringing shelving and racks before they see the room firsthand can save even more weight and muscle strains.

"Schools usually prohibit fastening storage to walls, ceilings or woodwork. You can always buy plastic shelves and racks pretty inexpensively," he said. "But wait to buy until you've seen the room."

Pop-up plastic shelving is the exception to Hillman's no-haul rule. The inexpensive shelves expand from 12 inches to a sturdy 4-1/2 feet tall and take up little car space. Cheap plastic crates collapse and nest

atop one another. Other on-site buys: plastic clothes bins, shower caddies and hanger systems that drape on door backs.

But hard-to-carry items such as TVs, small refrigerators and furniture need back-saving solutions. Lightweight hand trucks and furniture dollies are just the ticket.

"For under \$40 you can get a collapsible hand truck or a furniture dolly with four wheels for \$25,"

said Hillman, who noted those tools come in handy at home once the college move is done.

Also check with your roommate so you don't both bring the same appliances.

No trip to college is complete without at least minimal cleaning supplies to snare dust bunnies and corral dirty clothes. Mops and brooms with dust-attracting qualities often feature telescoping handles for easy storage. While

you're at it, bring a small tool box fitted with basic tools.

"Learning how and what to move isn't the most important lesson in college, but it is a life skill," said Hillman. "Take as little as possible, and what you do take should be multi-purpose and easily carried."



AP Photo/David Bradley

Lightweight plastics are easily transported and carried into dorm rooms. The containers won't need to be unpacked to serve as nightstands or below bed storage.

Back In Time for Back To School

Win 4 tickets to the Renaissance Festival and an overnight stay for the whole family at the Holiday Inn Gateway Centre

It's almost time for the kids to go back to school. Though thoughts are turning to textbooks, now is the time for one last family road trip. The Record-Eagle and the Michigan Renaissance Festival want to help you get the kids ready for school with a weekend lesson in history. Win four free tickets and overnight accommodations for your family by entering the Back In Time for Back To School contest. Just fill out, clip and mail or deliver the entry form below.

The Renaissance Festival

For 24 years, the Michigan Renaissance Festival has provided Holly, MI with a unique venue that attracts more than 220,000 visitors from around the state. The pageantry of a 16th century village is seen in every bit of the food, fun, and festivities. From jousting matches and Human Combat Chess to medieval art and enormous turkey drumsticks, the Renaissance Festival offers fun for all ages - even the Dark Ages.

A History Lesson: Life in the 1500's

For those of you who have been missing the mental challenge of classroom discussion and textbook reading this summer, here's a quick history lesson to exercise your brain and stimulate your learning lobe.

- Most people got married in June because they took their yearly bath in May and were still smelling pretty good by June. However, if they started to smell not so sweet, the bride would carry a bouquet of flowers to hide the odor.
- In the 16th century, a man's yearly income was 5 pounds, or just over \$8 today.
- Baths equaled a big tub filled with hot water. The man of the house had the privilege of the nice, clean water, then all the other sons and men, then the women and children, then finally the babies. By then the water was so dirty you could actually lose someone in it. Hence the saying, "don't throw the baby out with the bath water."
- During the Renaissance period, 5 feet 3 inches was the average height and anyone over 6 feet tall was considered a giant.



BACK IN TIME FOR BACK TO SCHOOL OFFICIAL ENTRY FORM

Name (first and last) _____
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Would you like to receive contest information or promotional updates from the Record-Eagle? yes no
A winner will be drawn at 5 pm on August 22. No photocopies will be accepted. Must be 18 or older to win.



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