

High schools in Northern California adopt courses in homebuilding

The California Homebuilding Foundation (CHF) has expanded the Building Industry Technology Academy (BITA) program to local high schools, encouraging interested students to pursue construction-related careers.

FOR RELEASE: April 22, 2015

SACRAMENTO – The Building Industry Technology Academy (BITA) program is gaining momentum in the northern half of the state since its Southern California inception almost 14 years ago. Local nonprofit organization, the California Homebuilding Foundation (CHF), is at the helm of promoting and extending the program to interested schools.

BITA is a comprehensive four-year high school program (encompassing freshman through senior years), which instills applicable and work-ready skills in students seeking careers in the building trades. BITA provides an alternative to the traditional lecture setting by allowing students to get out of the classroom and literally into the field.

Students enrolled in BITA courses take field trips to active construction sites to become acquainted with the many tangible aspects of homebuilding, including framing, roofing, reading blueprints, mechanical installations, plumbing, site preparation and more. BITA students are often assigned physical, carpentry-related projects to construct and present to instructors, mentors and industry professionals.

Jon Robertson developed BITA back in 2001 when he was president of the Building Industry Association (BIA) of Orange County. With the contributions and assistance of BIA member companies and education leaders, the BITA program was created to generate interest amongst high school students in joining the building or construction workforce.

“Not only does BITA provide a niche for students who may not be college or university-bound, it concurrently provides the knowledge and encouragement to pursue a higher education” says Terri Brunson, CHF Executive Director. “The program opens many doors for young adults choosing construction or building as their vocational and post-secondary path.”

Originating in Southern California, BITA has now rapidly expanded to over 8 Orange County high schools and is making its way to Northern California. Luther Burbank High School in Sacramento has already implemented the program, while Highland High in North Highlands and Armijo High in Fairfield, California will incorporate BITA courses into their fall 2015 curriculum.

BITA’s success is reflected in the achievements of its students. In 2007, Katella High School (Anaheim, CA) entered a to-scale playhouse structure, which was designed and built solely by BITA students, into a competition sponsored by HomeAid and won 1st place. Then Governor, Arnold Schwarzenegger, later recognized these Katella High School BITA students by inviting them to showcase their award-winning skills and construct a “snack shack” on the capitol lawn.

With training from BITA programs, students can apply academic principles to real-life situations, creating a confidence that their acquired fundamentals will transition seamlessly into their future profession. “BITA emphasizes the diversity and variety of careers in homebuilding,” says Jill Herman, CHF’s BITA Correspondent. “These students will have the unique opportunity of establishing industry connections through internships, mentoring and summer employment – all prior to high school graduation.”

Construction is a widespread, lucrative industry with a high demand for skilled and eager young professionals. “CHF is proud to support the builders of tomorrow,” states Brunson. “We would like to continue spreading BITA awareness to as many high schools as possible.”

For more information on the CHF's professional education courses and the BITA program, contact CHF Executive Director, Terri Brunson at (916) 340-3340, or go to www.myCHF.org under Education.

Contact

For questions regarding this article, please contact Allison Paul at:

California Homebuilding Foundation (CHF)

1215 K Street, Suite 1200

Sacramento, CA 95814

Office: (916) 340-3340

apaul@myCHF.org

<http://www.myCHF.org/go/cirb/>

About the California Homebuilding Foundation

The California Homebuilding Foundation (CHF) is a 501(c)3 tax exempt organization representing California's homebuilding industry. Our mission is to ensure the continued success of the homebuilding industry through the development of its current and future workforce, funding pertinent research, and honoring exemplary industry leaders. The Foundation also hosts California's top industry award, Hall of Fame. <http://www.myCHF.org/>

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