

# Students learn energy-efficient building skills

By SEAN HART  
Staff Writer

Next-generation homebuilders are being trained early about the benefits of energy efficiency.

Energy Trust of Oregon worked with students in the Columbia Basin Student Homebuilders Program Wednesday, Sept. 23.

Curt Berger, a 25-year teacher and now the coordinator of the program, said bringing in experts is key to education. Students building the program's first home last year used energy-efficient techniques with help from local professionals, but Berger said he wanted to go further the second time around.

"When you're trying to build an energy-efficient home, a lot of that starts right now with the framing and then later, of course, how we seal things, and then we'll get into the appliances," he said. "All of that makes for a more energy-efficient home, and we think a better-educated student on that process while they're out there swinging a hammer is going to make us a bet-

ter house."

The students learned about building science, thermodynamics, insulation, duct-sealing techniques, as well as requirements and incentives for Energy Trust programs.

High school seniors Cameron Meade and Rebecca Carr participated in the homebuilder program last year but said the energy-efficiency training provided additional information.

"I learned a lot more about the general concept of heat in a house," Carr said. "I didn't really think about heat being a molecule until they put it in those terms. Heat rises, which I knew, but I didn't think about heat as a moving molecule, so when it hits another molecule it makes it move. That's how it travels. So when you have heat that's up in the air, it's more likely to get outside the house, and that's why we have the different barriers to keep the heat inside."

The students also learned about Energy Trust's scoring system that



STAFF PHOTO BY E.J. HARRIS

**Cameron Welch, with Energy Trust of Oregon, talks about how to use a duct blaster to find leaks in the duct system of a house on Wednesday to a group of high school students in the Columbia Basin Student Homebuilders Program in Hermiston.**

rates the energy consumption and carbon footprint of a newly constructed home. The energy score — which varies from 0 to 200 — is

based on the amount of energy used each year. The lower the score, the more efficient the building. The current home's preliminary score

was 80, compared to 101 for the same residence built only to required code standards rather than using energy-efficient techniques. Because the home uses less energy, the eventual homeowners will pay less in utility bills.

The students said energy efficiency is a significant aspect of modern homebuilding.

"And it helps our environment," Carr added. "Not only is it going to keep costs down for the people that live here, but it's going to completely reduce the carbon footprint that they leave, which is great because with global warming and all the problems we are having currently, I can't imagine how much it would help if everybody had a score of 80."

Berger said the program's homes feature better furnaces, air conditioners, heat pumps, insulation and seals, as well as more efficient appliances. Although the process is just starting to catch on in this region, he said it will continue to grow.

## BRIEFCASE

### BMCC offers classes for tax preparers

Among the fall offerings at Blue Mountain Community College are a trio of specialized classes that can assist participants in getting a real estate broker license, a tax preparation certificate and learning how to work with Microsoft Excel 2013.

The accelerated real estate broker pre-license course offered in Hermiston will prepare students to take the state of Oregon licensing exam.

The course, which combines classroom instruction and online study, began Tuesday, Sept. 29. The classroom sessions are Tuesdays from 6-9 p.m. at BMCC Hermiston, 975 S.E. Columbia Drive. It continues for 10 weeks. The cost is \$600, which includes all course materials and an eight-hour intensive exam preparation session at the end.

For more information contact Linda Forbes at linda@sts.careers or 541-510-4106.

With a video-conferencing format, the tax preparation classes — BA220 and BA221 — provide the 80 hours of coursework required to qualify for the state of Oregon Licensed Tax Preparer exam-

ination. The tuition for both is \$718, and the fees are \$136.

The courses are broadcast from BMCC's Baker Center and will be available to students through Zoom video-conferencing technology. Students may attend from any computer, smart phone, tablet or iPad that has Internet, audio and video capability. Both classes will be recorded for viewing at other times. The actual class meetings are Thursdays from 5:30-7:30 p.m.

Upon successful completion of both courses, students may take the exam in December and start preparing taxes in January.

For beginners or those muddling along, the Excel class is offered at BMCC Boardman. Participants will learn about inserting shapes and graphics; adding, deleting and hiding data; copying and pasting, formatting and much more.

The four-week course begins Thursday, Oct. 8, from 5-7 p.m. at 300 N.E. Front St., Boardman. The cost is \$59.

The class will break down the program into bite-sized pieces, making it much easier to understand. In addition, each week participants will receive a CD containing

what is covered in class, plus working data files that are ready for students to use in practice.

It's helpful if students have basic keyboarding skills and a working knowledge of their computer. To register, visit [www.bluecc.edu](http://www.bluecc.edu). For more information, contact BMCC Boardman at 541-481-2099 or [amorter@bluecc.edu](mailto:amorter@bluecc.edu).

Register for the classes at [www.bluecc.edu](http://www.bluecc.edu). For more information, call BMCC Hermiston at 541-567-1800 or BMCC Boardman at 541-481-2099.

### Latino Network meets Wednesday, Oct. 14

The Hermiston Chamber of Commerce Latino Business Network will meet at 9 a.m. Wednesday, Oct. 14, at the Hermiston Conference Center, 415 S. Highway 395.

Paul Barnett of Barnett and Moro, P.C., will speak about 2015 tax laws and provide tips for preparing returns.

Donuts and coffee will be served. The event is open to the public.

For more information, call Debbie Pedro, 541-567-6151.

### Chamber seeks annual awards nominations

The Hermiston Chamber of Commerce is seeking nominations for people who have made a difference in the community for consideration for the 46th annual Distinguished Citizens Awards banquet to be held Feb. 3.

Chamber award categories include man, woman, business and volunteer of the year and the community service award.

Others include the Altrusan Outstanding Young Citizen Award and the Hermiston School District educators and administrator of the year.

Nomination and criteria forms are available at the chamber office, 415 S. Highway 395, or online at [hermistonchamber.com](http://hermistonchamber.com). Nominations are due Jan. 4. For more information, call 541-567-6151.

### School District named a top workplace

Hermiston School District was one of 100 companies and organizations in Oregon and southwest Washington to be named a 2015 Top Workplace by The Oregonian Me-

dia Group, according to a district press release.

The designation was based on surveys completed by employees in spring of 2015 with questions focused on organizational health.

### Submit business news for publication

*The Hermiston Herald*

*accepts business news announcements about job changes and promotions, business ownership changes, renovations and remodels, changes in business hours and new business openings, business owner retirements and related items. Submit your business news and photos to [newsroom@hermistonherald.com](mailto:newsroom@hermistonherald.com).*

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For more information, call Paula at 1-800-522-0255 or Hermiston Herald at 541-564-4530.

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