



SHOWING STUDENTS THAT TRADES ARE THE BEST WAY TO GO

By Don Horne

For the second year in a row, I was privileged to be a part of George Brown College's Tech in the City event in Toronto recently, helping judge 10 budding electricians who were vying for a year's free scholarship at the college.

The Ontario high school students, the best of their peers to make it to the finals, had to submit drawings, a materials list and ultimately wire a three-way switch with two light fixtures and two receptacles.

It was easy to see that these students were the cream of the crop, as any master electrician in the land would be happy to have them as apprentices.

The desperate need for young tradespeople to fill the shoes of retiring electricians, electrical engineers and countless other professions grows more evident with each passing year. Companies are pleading with retiring workers to either stay another year or agree to work on a contract basis, as their talents, knowledge and expertise are almost irreplaceable.

The Tech in the City event was host to more than 800 students touring the campus with 150 high school students participating in one of 10 competitions, ranging from games development to electrical, masonry and sheet metal.

"Ontario's technology industry is becoming increasingly complex, with a newly combined focus on practical business and management training to go along with a traditional knowledge of specialized skills," says Nancy Sherman, Dean, Faculty of Technology, George Brown College.



These high school students were among a group of 10 budding electricians vying for a free year's tuition at George Brown College in Toronto. Electrical Source magazine was proud to play a part in the judging of these skilled, intelligent teenagers.

Concurrent with the competitions and tours, a number of keynote addresses were featured. Mark Wilson, Chair of Waterfront Toronto, shared his views on the role of technology in the Toronto waterfront's revitalization and the skills employers will be looking for in employees in the years to come.

Driving home the message to the teens and "tweens" at Tech in the City that learning a technical trade can be very rewarding is not just a sales pitch to the children and young adults but a plea to the parents as well.

For too long trades were viewed by many as a place to put students who were struggling scholastically. Being good with your hands inferred that your head wasn't quite up to speed.

That perception is changing, and Tech in the City is sending the message

loud and clear.

The students touring the college saw first-hand that they could have a post-secondary education under their tool belt in less than three years, and not be saddled with tens of thousands of dollars in financial debt. Indeed, they could immediately enter the workforce and earn a top dollar, seeing their physical talents and mental expertise come to fruition right before their eyes in their daily work.

When you compare this to the throngs rushing out for their Business Degrees, swimming in debt, hoping to find one of the few job openings available that will allow them to work in a tiny, artificially-lighted cubicle at an entry level wage, the career path to choose becomes all too clear.

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