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Tiny house brings big turnout at Huot Technical Ctr.

By **ROGER AMSDEN**
THE LACONIA DAILY SUN

LACONIA — More than 100 people turned up Wednesday afternoon to tour a tiny house built by students at the Huot Technical Center, and were left impressed by what they saw.

"This is wonderful," said Jeanine Fitzgerald of Laconia, after she and her daughter, Katie, emerged from a tour of the 192-square-foot house.

"It's amazing how they fit everything into such a small space," Katie said. "It's really nice."

The house features running water, electricity, a full kitchen, storage and a bed/loft area that is accessed via a library ladder from the 1920s.

There's also a 32"x32" shower, a four-burner gas range and heat and air conditioning.

Some people even thought about buying the home.

"If it were just a little bigger we'd really be interested in buying it," said Leon Worthley of Gilford, a former assistant football coach at Laconia High School and superintendent of schools in the Farmington area.



Two visitors size up the tiny house that was built by students at the Huot Technical Center, with help from members of the Lakes Region Builders and Remodelers Association. (Roger Amsden / The Laconia Daily Sun)

He said that he and his wife Doreen are both retired and have a condo in Florida. They're looking at selling their large home and having a smaller home they can live in during summers in the Lakes Region.

The tiny house project is a joint effort of the Huot Technical Center and Lakes Region Builders and Remodelers Association, which teamed up with students again this year to build a second tiny house. Last year's won a state competition and was awarded as a prize by the New Hampshire Lottery.

The project is part of the center's building trades program (which includes construction and plumbing classes) and was expanded this year to include the Laconia's Adult Education Center's electrical program.

Kurt Clason, president of Lakes Region Builders and Remodelers Association, said the project required great collaboration between members. "It takes months of planning, generous donations of materials and close involvement with the members of the LRBRA to keep a watchful eye on the project to insure it meets standards and safety."

He said that Ray Boelig of Ponders Hollow, past president of the LRBRA, "put in an incredible amount of time as our unofficial representative on site" and donated all of the wood flooring for the building.

"The kids made this happen. The home was built entirely by the students," Boelig said.

Huot Technical Center building instructor Matt Towle said the project is part of a workforce development program led by the builders' group that is meeting a key need for more skilled workers.

"We're developing tradespeople at the high school level to meet a challenge. Our students are finding that there are good careers waiting for those who want to use their hands and their brains and do good work."

Three of the plumbing and HVAC program students who worked on the project were pleased with the turnout.

"I didn't think there would be that many people here," said Eric Saunders of Laconia.

Gordon Masterson of Gilford said the smiles on people's faces showed how much they enjoyed the tour, and Ryan Berg of Laconia said, "having something come out so beautiful shows how hard work pays off."

All three are planning careers in the plumbing field.

Clason said home builders are seeking skilled workers – such as carpenters, framers and roofers, plumbers and electricians. "The building trades offer a great career path and our Lakes Region builders members have been reaching out to Huot students all year long, instructing and mentoring them. It's a pathway to the American Dream," Clason said.

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