

# Saanich School District Jumpstarts Student Careers – Darcy Rhodes

by Devon MacKenzie

By the time he reached 22 years of age, Darcy Rhodes was running a 30-member crew of carpenters and apprentices, building one of the tallest wood frame structures in B.C. Recently he was quoted as saying: “Pretty good, eh? Twenty-two-year-old kid laying out a \$22-million project,” after a day’s effort at his current work site.

His great success at such a young age was not just because Rhodes was passionate about his career path but also because he was fortunate to start his carpentry apprenticeship in high school as part of Saanich School District’s Secondary School Apprenticeship Program.

The program allows students to start an apprenticeship as early as grade 10 or age 15. Rhodes took full advantage of this opportunity and spent his summers working for CanPro Construction before transferring his apprenticeship to Ocean View Construction.

Apprenticeship training through District 63’s program consists of both logging work-based training hours at the work site and attending a series of technical training sessions at a college or university.

“To apply for the program I basically just had to write an essay outlining my interests in the trade, record any work experience hours I had logged, and have a few meetings with the program coordinators. It was an easy process,” Rhodes said.

The Saanich School District’s program not only offers carpentry programs for high school students but also dozens of different trade and career programs through post-secondary institutions. Each program is tailored specifically to the individual student and their chosen trade.

All Saanich School District trade programs have three main goals. The first is to have the student graduate, the second is for the student to attain level-one technical training, and the third is to see that the student becomes indentured to a local employer as an apprentice. Meeting all three goals ensures the student’s smooth transition into the workforce.

Rhodes said School District 63’s program helped him complete all his training very quickly.

“I was essentially able to fast track everything,” he said.

“Because I already started my work experience and education in high school, I was able to enter the program at Camosun and skip the wait list which is usually a minimum of a year.”

He likens the program to “paving the road before you drive on it,” and his advice to those thinking about the carpentry program is simple:

“Get the application process and the program started as soon as you can. In high school you have the most time to devote to something like this and once you’re in the program it makes everything throughout the apprenticeship process super easy and fast.”

He also encourages young apprentices to participate in the Skills BC and Skills Canada trade competitions. Participating in these events and winning medals in both were highlights of his apprenticeship training.

Rhodes now works with Scansa Construction Ltd. and is currently a foreman on a large-scale commercial construction site.

For more information on how to get involved as a student apprentice or as an employer sponsor in this or other career programs, contact Stu Rhodes at [srhodes@sd63.bc.ca](mailto:srhodes@sd63.bc.ca) or at 250-415-9211.

For an overview of the trade training opportunities offered by the Saanich School District, be sure to view the promotional YouTube video “Jump Start Your Career” at <http://www.youtube.com/user/saanichcareers>.

