

Austin helps students become more 'career-ready'

By Debra Jensen-De Hart Special to the Daily News | Posted: Friday, March 13, 2015 4:00 pm

Although many young people aren't sure what path in life they want to pursue, one thing seems certain. The more passion they feel for something the more engaged they are likely to become.

So says Corporate Contractors Incorporated (CCI) President Brad Austin and Ryan Rewey, career and technical education director at Beloit Memorial High School.

Austin has been named the March Volunteer of the Month by the *Beloit Daily News* and the Voluntary Action Center for his unbridled passion and continued involvement with the Career and Technical Education Center at the high school.

In so doing, he has not only helped form the business-to-education partnerships with Rewey and those who teach the center subjects, he's also made connections with a host of outside business and industry resources that combine to help make the program successful.

Austin also donated, through CCI, \$50,000 to the Student House Build Program. The program is allowing students to learn how to build a house from the ground up, completing framing, roofing, siding, plumbing and electrical procedures, for example. The house is being built on a donated lot and is expected to be finished by spring and placed for sale, Rewey said. CCI also razed the former structure on the property and completed site excavation.

CCI also was the contractor for the remodeling project in the Woods and Construction Lab and Welding and Machining Lab within the school.



Ryan Rewey

Career and Technical Education Director at Beloit Memorial High School Ryan Rewey, right, and President of Corporate Contractors, Inc. Brad Austin chat about a part. Austin has been named March Volunteer of the Month for his continued involvement with the Career and Technical Education Center at BMHS. With his help the center is helping prepare more students to enter the work world.

“It used to be a dark, dingy area from about the World War II era,” Rewey said.

Today, the space is bright, clean and filled with an array of modern, cutting-edge equipment ready for students to learn to operate.

Austin is also part of a committee which keeps him involved with projects and people in the trades businesses.

“Brad serves on the Construction Advisory Committee,” Rewey said. “He’s an excellent resource and a source for the students.”

Among other businesses involved with the technical education center are Quigley Smart, Schuh Plumbing, J.P. Cullen and Amp Electric. Some of the businesses, including CCI, have student apprentices working for them receiving instruction and pay.

Don Helms, of Quigley Smart, said the training and instruction the students receive at the school is important.

“There’s a demand for more kids to learn HVAC, plumbing and electrical skills,” he said. “These are the jobs where people are needed.”

He also recognized Austin as playing a major role in getting the center implemented and in his part to help the community in other ways.

When asked why he has such a passion for the technical education program at the high school, Austin said from his own personal experience he knows some students just learn better with hands-on experience in the curriculum.

“My dad was a builder,” he said.

As a result, Austin learned how to swing a hammer and drive a nail at a young age.

“He used to pay me a penny a nail,” he recalled of his dad.

Austin worked for his father throughout his growing up years and continued on in the trades career path throughout his adulthood. He did not go to college and he understands that not all students want to go to college or are ready at a young age to do so.

“My passion is for all the kids who don’t go off or don’t immediately go off to college,” he said.

Those students deserve the chance to explore the world of technical programs and jobs in the trades and other areas, he said. That could be manufacturing, construction, automotive, childcare, computer science, cooking and hospitality and more.

“This gives kids a chance to become aware of what is out there in life and give them options. It also gets kids to graduate,” he said.

Now, “We always say ‘career ready, not college and career ready,’” Rewey pointed out.

“I just hope the future school boards, superintendent and businesses support this,” Austin said. “Now I see how important it is, the connection and saving kids from dropping out of school.”

As for volunteering, Austin said: “Whatever your passion is, just get involved. There’s plenty of things to get involved with.”

Austin also served on the Downtown Beloit Association for 10 years.

“Brad has been a huge supporter of downtown Beloit for many years,” said Shauna El-Amin, DBA executive director.

“He was directly involved with getting us a golf cart for watering our many hanging baskets to be put up each year. He was also on our Board of Directors for many years and has continued to be a vital asset to us,” she said.

Austin also was a member of the Associated Builders and Contractors of Wisconsin for nine years and is a past president of the group. Presently, he also is a member of the Rotary Club.