

WITC's Bricklaying and Masonry Program sets students on a path to successful careers

From a recipe of raw ingredients comes the material necessary to create countless objects. From constructing walls to building partitions and arches to intricate brick and stonework, WITC's one-year Bricklaying and Masonry program shows students firsthand the proper building techniques for this ever-growing field.

"I try to expose the learner to as many different aspects of the masonry trade to help them find what areas interest them the most," says Todd Larson, a mason and masonry instructor for Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College in Rice Lake.

Recently, Larson was named SkillsUSA Wisconsin Advisor of the Year in recognition for his hard work and dedication. His commitment to WITC's Bricklaying and Masonry program is shown in the variety of skills his students develop.

"The Bricklaying and Masonry program covers many areas of the masonry trade, with the emphasis on brick, block and stonework," Larson says. "The program is set up to cover building foundations with concrete block, how to build brick corners and walls, how to brick houses, installing patios, and building arches and fireplaces."

The program stresses quality building techniques. Students also learn how to read prints and estimate supplies and materials to assist in developing a total understanding for this industry. By learning the methods and techniques in a classroom, students gain more experiences than learning on the job.

"The advantage of taking WITC's Bricklaying and Masonry program versus learning on the job is we can go into much more detail in the classroom," Larson says. "Typically, on-the-job training does not allow the time necessary to fully explain and demonstrate proper building techniques and procedures. The classroom setting allows the learner to practice and maybe mess up without costing the employer money. The goal of the Bricklaying and Masonry program is to provide the learner with the basic



skills and knowledge to know what is going on the first day on the job."

With additional training and experience, brickmasons, blockmasons, and stonemasons may become supervisors for masonry contractors. Some eventually become owners of businesses employing many workers. Others move into closely related areas such as construction management or building inspection.

Wisconsin's Worknet places brickmasons on the list of hot jobs in Northwestern Wisconsin with a starting yearly salary of more than \$36,000. According to the U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics, job opportunities are expected to be very good through 2016, since large number of masons are expected to retire over the next decade.

"Despite the news discussing the poor economy right now, there is a demand for young people to enter into the construction trades," Larson says. "The current workforce is aging and all of the statistics and newsletters I read predict the growth of more than one million new positions in construction. The money is great and the work is exciting and always changing. If you are an individual that enjoys working with your hands, construction is for you."