

Tipp City students tackle tiny house project

Hands-on experience takes kids out of the classroom.

LOCAL

By Nancy Bowman - Contributing Writer

1



Instructor Jim Kitchen (center) works with Tippecanoe High School students working to build a tiny house.
CONTRIBUTED

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TIPP CITY —

Hunter McKinney was happy to enroll in a Tippecanoe High School homebuilding class. When she learned, the class would be building a tiny house, she was thrilled.

“I said ‘What?’ I love HGTV. ... I thought he meant a replica of a little house but he was talking about an actual tiny house. I was like, ‘Oh my gosh!’” she said.

McKinney, a junior who said she enjoyed previous courses in industrial tech and industrial arts and likes building things as a hobby, is among students taking the class under the guidance of instructor Jim Kitchen.

In his first-year teaching in the Tipp City schools, Kitchen said the class that falls within the art curriculum contains elements of design and aesthetics. When told he'd be teaching the homebuilding course for students in grades nine through 12, he began researching what could be done “beyond throwing up some dry wall.”

The more he learned about tiny houses, the better he liked the possibility of a project. He obtained a trailer on which the house is being built and secured donations of wood, a good portion that is being recycled, and other materials.

The students have had windows donated along with a front door, and they built a sliding barn door for the bathroom using donated wood. Full-size appliances have been obtained for the house. Its basic structure was taking shape last week in a shop/theater production area at the high school.

“This gives the students the full experience,” Kitchen said, adding the house will be sold to pay back the district for the trailer and to help fund the program going forward.

The tiny house also is providing a learning experience for Kitchen’s digital art and graphic design students who will work on advertising/marketing it.

Kitchen said the homebuilding class offers students skills they can use beyond high school.

“Aside from the aesthetics and architecture, there are the nuts and bolts of building a house, maintaining a house. Those are the kinds of things the average everyday person needs to know how to do,” Kitchen said.

When the students started the class, some had no experience in using tools or building, while others had worked on theater set building and others had experience from an industrial arts class that offered woodworking instruction

Student Matt Taylor said he enjoys the outdoors and the hands-on experiences in the class.

“I love it. You get to work with your hands, and it’s a break from all the other classes. You can learn more from this, I feel,” said Taylor, a junior.

“It has been a learning process not only for them but for me,” Kitchen said.

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