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BUILD Rogue Valley program helps students build skills while giving back

- Damonya Jones
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SOUTHERN OREGON - High school students are learning construction skills and helping their communities through a hands-on workforce development program.

BUILD Rogue Valley gives students practical training that prepares them for careers in the construction industry. Rogue Community College runs the program, which was funded through a statewide activity grant awarded to the Rogue Workforce Partnership by the Governor's Office in partnership with the SOWIB, the neighboring Workforce Development Board covering Douglas, Coos, and Curry counties.

"So Rogue Workforce Partnership went out for the statewide activity grant through the Governor's Office and partnership with our Workforce Development Board to the west," said Spencer McQueary, a senior communications manager at Rogue Workforce Partnership.

The students have already finished one community project by designing and building a shed that was donated to the Mid Rogue Foundation. The experience teaches students real-world construction skills and what employers expect on the job.

The impact goes beyond the classroom. Students are partnering with organizations including the Mid Rogue Foundation, Josephine County and Rogue Retreat to build projects that directly benefit local residents, including low-income seniors and veterans.

"We know that we have a lot of need for construction workers in the Valley." "Having this as an opportunity to get in front of employers and understand what they need."

The students are building something that will go toward someone in need. They get to see that the work they're doing matters, and it's not just for a grade.

Program organizers hope BUILD Rogue Valley will continue to strengthen Southern Oregon's workforce while giving students meaningful opportunities to serve their communities.