

# Molalla class turns students into builders

**Totally green** | This year's construction project is a green home, in line with the future

By **TIMOTHY A. AKIMOFF**  
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Construction students at Molalla High School get an education that pays for itself.

Each year for the past decade, students in Randy Spanfellner's Building Construction I and II classes have built a home while building their own skills. Along the way, Spanfellner and his students have created a program that is completely sustainable.

All expenses — real estate, building materials, even Spanfellner's salary — are paid with profits from the sale of each home. And the students come away enriched as well.

"It provides good knowledge, a good skill set and good work ethics," Spanfellner said. "I know these kids will never starve, because they leave here knowing how to do something."

Brian Ferlan, 26, remembers enjoying his time in Spanfellner's class so much that he dropped by on his own time to watch electricians wire the house, one of the few things Spanfellner subcontracts.

"I thought that class was really good," Ferlan said. "To me it was better than schoolwork; it was hands on."



BOB ELLIS/THE OREGONIAN

**Vocational technology students at Molalla High School are building an energy-efficient home in a new residential area. Teacher Randy Spanfellner's classes have built 10 homes in 10 years.**

Ferlan, who occasionally returns to give Spanfellner a helping hand, now is a journeyman electrician.

Molalla students can start with Basic Construction, a class that teaches hand and power tool safety, before moving up to Construction I or II, both of which involve students in nearly every aspect of building a home from the ground up.

This year, students are building an entirely green house, one that uses recycled materials and meets requirements for healthy living and energy efficiency.

"It's certainly more expensive to build," Spanfellner said, but trade organizations such as Oregon Building Congress are interested in developing a generation of skilled builders with a green outlook.

"Green building is huge in the industry right now," said Katie In-falaco, a spokeswoman for Oregon Building Congress. "We think edu-

cation needs to go that way."

Spanfellner keeps close tabs on the industry and has seen former students become business owners, electricians and plumbers, including many who help keep costs down, he said.

Although Spanfellner's program still pays for itself, the cost of land is making that more difficult. Two years ago, he could purchase a lot in Molalla for \$55,000. Today the same size lot is selling for \$70,000.

Spanfellner expects the school's current house, at 1,776 square feet, to go on the market this spring at an estimated \$225,000.

"The new home buyers are initially apprehensive," Spanfellner said of past sales. "But when they see the kind of work and dedication that go into it, they become totally sold."

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