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Students prep for a career in trades *Freeman Staff*

WAUKESHA — Among the 900 students packing the Waukesha County Expo Center on Wednesday morning for the All-Construction Career Day was a group from Hartford Union High School that is building a home this school year.

The class is led by John Lonergan, who emphasizes carpentry in his class.

Lonergan said the career day gives students hands-on experience as to what careers are available in the construction field.

"The students who I have brought to the career fair the past two years have come away with several options for careers in the construction field," he said.

"We have liked the hands-on activities that are provided to the students. Having the punch cards for the students makes sure the students go to all the booths. The trades people have been willing to spend time with our students, and it is a good opportunity for them to share their knowledge and promote their trade. Most of the trades are looking for new workers."

The event, now in its third year, is sponsored by the Allied Construction Employers Association, representing area contractors, and the Building Advantage Program of the Construction Labor Management Council of Southeast Wisconsin.

About 1,100 people registered for the event, including some 900 students from 38 area middle schools, high schools, colleges and technical colleges, said John Topp, of the labor management council.

"Our industry is on the verge of a long-term expansion, and we're looking ahead to tomorrow's talent," Topp said. "In the next few years, these kids will be making choices about their career paths. We want to show them what careers in the trades are all about."

Guidance counselors attend the event with students as well as teachers.

Jason J. Huber, an instructor at Nicolet High School, said he gathers important information when attending the event, such as educational requirements of the respective trades, salary data, career expectations, guest speakers for his classroom and community contacts. "But most important, it was the hands-on aspect that really helped enlighten the students to what each trade entailed, in other words, knowledge-base requirements and use of problem-solving techniques."

Craftsmen demonstrating their skills Wednesday included bricklayers, building laborers, carpenters, cement finishers, ceramic tile installers, drywall finishers, electricians, floor coverers, glaziers, heat/frost insulators, iron workers millwrights, operating engineers, painters, pile drivers, plasterers, plumbers, roofers, sheet metal workers, sprinkler fitters and steamfitters.