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Tillamook County's News So

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Roundtable on workforce highlights Tillamook Youth Apprenticeship Program

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TILLAMOOK - State Labor Commissioner Brad Avakian met last week with leaders, businesses and educators from the Tillamook School District for a discussion of workforce development issues and strategies to improve the workforce development system in Oregon.

The group also heard a presentation about the new Industrial Maintenance and Youth Limited Maintenance Electrical Apprenticeship Program under way in Tillamook, which is an example of the role career technical education programs can play.

The event comes as Avakian solicits feedback from communities around the state regarding a proposal to strengthen workforce focus on providing workers with the high-skill training necessary to obtain high-wage and high-demand jobs.

The diverse partners present were convened by district Grants and Foundation Director Ed Armstrong, who those present agreed the apprenticeship program is successful for students and the community.

The Youth Apprenticeship Program in Tillamook, approved by the Oregon State Apprenticeship Council in June, is a partnership between the Tillamook School District, Tillamook Bay Community College, Hampton Affiliates, Stimson Lumber, the Tillamook County Creamery and Labor and Industries.

This Youth Apprenticeship Program was established to better prepare students for high wage, high-demand career opportunities in construction trades. Students participating in the program will receive an associate degree paid for by local business and education. To the Youth Apprenticeship Program, Tillamook High School has been working with students early on to educate them about and professional technical careers and apprenticeship programs.

Workforce partners, such as Stimson Lumber and the Tillamook Creamery, have hosted a number of students at their facilities and school classes to recruit students into Industrial Maintenance and Youth Limited Maintenance Electrical Apprenticeship Programs. Technical support provided by BOLI and workforce partners have helped purchase and support state of the art workforce training equipment at Tillamook High School, which will serve to expose a greater number of high-school students to apprenticeship opportunities.

"The Tillamook School District is committed to providing the best career training opportunities possible for our students, which will have a long-lasting impact on our local business partners," said superintendent Randy Schild.

Severe workforce shortages in the construction and manufacturing sectors are projected over the next 10 years. The Oregon Department of Labor estimates the construction industry alone will grow by 14.3 percent during this period. When combined with the number of jobs estimated that an additional 30,000 new workers will be needed to fill new construction jobs in the next 10 years.

These plumbers, electricians, and millwrights make up the infrastructure of the state's economy. Ensuring that Oregon workers to obtain these jobs will ensure Oregon remains competitive in the global market and its workers will have high wage jobs that provide a good quality of life.

"Education is the engine that drives our economy. It is critical to identify what employers need and see that our schools are equipped to provide it," said State Sen. Betsy Johnson. Local leaders participating in the roundtable discussion on workforce development included:

- Schild, Johnson and Armstrong.

- Mark Elston and Dave Salmon with Hampton Affiliates, Tillamook.
- Ray Mack from the Tillamook County Creamery Association.
- Dennis Tracy and Dan Sweeny from Stimson Lumber.
- Larry Davy with Tillamook County General Hospital.

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