

## Press release

16 June 2016

### Acton Construction and STEM Centre dominate the medals at SkillBuild's 2016 regional heat

Winning an outstanding 10 awards, Acton Construction and STEM Centre students were victorious at the SkillBuild 2016 regional heat competition on 14 June. Acton Construction and STEM Centre, hosts of the event, won the most awards for one college including first place for carpentry seniors.

Around 40 young construction trainees battled it out in their chosen trade testing their skills in bricklaying, carpentry, joinery, plastering and painting and decorating. The competition was fierce, with eight colleges from greater London participating, the competitors all took the competition very seriously.

Acton Construction and STEM Centre students proved themselves to be the cream of the crop, winning in the following categories:

#### Site Carpentry

- Tom O'Byrne, Carpentry Senior, GOLD
- Joe Needham, Carpentry Senior, SILVER
- Sam Dixon, Site Carpentry New Entrant, SILVER
- Harley Riddington, Carpentry Senior, BRONZE

#### Bench Joinery

- Stephen Flaherty, Joinery New Entrant, GOLD
- Lewis Coggins, Joinery Senior, GOLD
- George Constant, Joinery Senior, SILVER
- Joseph Digby-Harries, Joinery Senior, BRONZE

#### Plastering

- Ollie Pellow, Plastering New Entrant, GOLD
- Craig Bell, Plastering New Entrant, SILVER

The winners were delighted with their achievements and expressed their excitement to be part of the competition and chosen for awards:

"I'm really happy I've won. It's really good experience, I would definitely recommend it to other students. It was hard, a real challenge. It's a life time opportunity; you don't do it every day!" - Harley Riddington, Acton Construction and STEM Centre. Third place, carpentry senior.

"I didn't think I would enjoy it as much as I have, it's quite a challenge. It builds your skills and boosts your confidence. Being one of the only girls in the competition doesn't bother me in the slightest. I would say to other women who are interested in the trade to just go for it. If men can do it, so can women." - Laura Cox, North Hertfordshire College. First place, painting and decorating senior.

"SkillBuild is great opportunity for young people to have something to put on their CV to help them get a job, it shows employers what they are capable of. I feel good about myself, knowing that I was good enough to be in the competition in the first place. Winning has boosted my confidence quite a lot!" - Stephen Flaherty, Acton Construction and STEM Centre. First place, Joinery new entrant.

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The judging panel was made up of tradesmen with decades of experience who are all experts in their field. Before the competition kicked off, this is what Mike Thomas, judge for painting and decorating said:

"I always look forward to SkillBuild because you don't know what you're going to get. I would like to see more people coming into the painting and decorating trade. There are loads of jobs with top rates of pay. I also hope to see more students enter the competition next year."

The competition is organised and supported by the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB), the Sector Skills Council and Industry Training Board for the construction industry. Here is what CITB had to say about the event: "We're looking for the highest scorers to take them into the nationals hopefully to take them into the world skills circuit. There will be lots of opportunities that will come from the competition; some of the competitors may even gain apprenticeships from today." Les Inkpen CIBT.

Employers were also invited to SkillBuild to check out the talent in the hope of recruiting some of the competitors as apprentices. Jags Sanghera at Berkeley Homes, Southall Waterside Development, had this to say: "We hope to do big things in Southall and we hope to take on lots of Acton Construction and STEM Centre students.

We want to get more west London students into construction and change perceptions of the sector. We are addressing a local need by providing jobs for young people in the west London area. There are so many opportunities and progression routes in construction."

Dave Barker, Assistant Principal at Acton Construction and STEM Centre had this to say: "I use these competitions as an active learning strategy to elevate the standard of the students' work and to make their courses more enjoyable, also our employer partners really value the commitment and professionalism it promotes. We completely dominated the competition, we are so proud of our students and know they will go on to become business owners and hire apprentices of their own."

The event was one of 14 taking place across the UK, with the top 10 competitors from across the heats going through to the national final at the Skills Show at Birmingham's NEC in November.

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(Image: Acton Construction and STEM Centre winners. Hi-res version available on request.)

