

Marcella Walter  
Communications Coordinator  
Rocky Mountain Development Council  
P.O. Box 1717  
Helena, MT 59624-1717  
wk: 406-457-7354  
cell: 406-431-7963



improving lives, strengthening communities

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**Building Their Skills from the Ground Up  
Students Join the Community to Celebrate Completion of the 7<sup>th</sup> High School House**

Helena, MT On Thursday, May 27, at 5:00 p.m., Rocky Mountain Development Council (RMDC) and the Helena School District #1 invite the community to celebrate completion of another student-constructed family home. For the seventh year, RMDC and the District co-sponsored this real-life, hands-on learning opportunity for students from both Helena and Capitol High Schools.

Walt Jones, the Carpentry II Class instructor, and 45 students started with an empty lot purchased by RMDC. Then, using a Mosaic Architecture contemporary farmhouse design, they executed all phases of construction from the foundation, to framing, to dry walling, to wiring, to building cabinets for the 3-bedroom, double-car garage residence. Students from interior design, photography, and first-year drafting and carpentry classes contributed as well.

Students will provide tours of the home and serve light refreshments. This year's home is located at 858 Insulator Avenue (most easily reached heading north on McHugh Drive from Custer about half-a-mile, right on Wolf Ave. and right onto Insulator). "Most of all this Open House celebrates the students' accomplishments," said Jeff Miller, RMDC Community Development Director. Instructor Jones elaborated, "These students work very hard and have earned this recognition. They 'graduate' from this experience far more competitive in the building trades. They know the basics and they have more confidence about their ability to navigate the field than students who have not had extensive 'on-the-ground' work."

Helena High senior Chris Sobonya explained why he liked the project, "You learn **everything**. We've done the same thing here that students have to pay for in college, and it was free for us. Plus our teachers are the best." Each of the 45 construction students receives specific recognition at the Open House. Scholarships are awarded to six students.

"Many community businesses go out of their way to make this project more affordable," noted Miller. "We'll recognize all our partners. But this year we want especially to honor the Power Townsend Company Fund of the Montana Community Foundation. They made a very material contribution to this year's High School House. The folks at Power Townsend tell us that young people who've participated in

this program are especially skilled and thoughtful employees. The Company sees its support as an investment in our community.”

City and county officials will join RMDC and the School District for this celebration. The High School House Project is one part of RMDC’s efforts to address the community’s affordable housing needs and its community service goals. For further information about the High School House contact RMDC Director of Community Development, Jeff Miller at 442, 1236, ext. 101.

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