

HOME-BOUND CARPENTRY STUDENTS SHIFT FROM TINY HOUSE TO SANDBOXES

Jeff Bell / Times Colonist

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Photograph By DARREN STONE, TIMES COLONIST1

Carpentry teacher Brandon Heyer with sandboxes his students have made.

Brandon Heyer's apprentice carpentry students would typically be spending this semester building a tiny home — a pint-sized domicile.

It's a good project for learning, since other than the foundation, all the skills that go into a tiny home are the same as for a full-sized home, said Heyer, whose Saanich School District program includes Grade 11 and 12 students from Claremont, Parkland and Stelly's secondaries.

The problem this year is that COVID-19 hasn't allowed Heyer and his nine-person class to get together and build — their tiny home, with a base of eight feet by 24 feet, was started and then halted when everyone was sent home by the pandemic.

These days, the focus is on distance learning. So Heyer came up with the idea to have his students build sandboxes at home instead. He even made them a how-to video.

They were given a week and a half to complete the project.

The eight sandboxes are being given away in a draw, and winners will be asked to make a donation to the Saanich Peninsula Lions Food Bank in return. The draw winners can donate either money or food.

Heyer said he is pleased to be supporting the food bank during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"They're needed a lot more and there's a lot more people accessing them right now."

Grade 11 student Hayden Leslie liked having the chance to help others with what he was able to make. He also enjoyed making something that families can use to keep their children entertained in a time when they don't have their regular school routine.

For the students, getting a home-based assignment was just what they needed, Heyer said — even if making sandboxes is "not quite as exciting" as building a tiny home.

"The general consensus when I dropped all the materials off to them at home was that they're all pretty bored, because there's not much for them going on right now, so they're all happy for something to do."

Heyer also dropped off tools to those who needed them.

"This was one way for me to get them working hands-on and using the skills that they've learned, both how to read blueprints and come up with the project."

There was a big response from people putting their names in the sandbox draw, which has now closed.

Heyer will deliver the sandboxes next week.

"We have over 350 entries, which is a lot more than we were expecting, which is great."

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