Greater Lowell Technical High students build skills in competition

A Sun Staff Report

UPDATED: 05/25/2019 07:56:45 AM EDT

Greater Lowell Tech masonry student Skyler Harty of Dracut was hard at work during the competition. (*Courtesy photo*)

TYNGSBORO — Greater Lowell Technical high school students know their cinder blocks.

Superintendent Joseph Mastrocola recently announced that nearly a dozen students participated in a trowel trades competition against students from several other tech schools, and one Greater Lowell Tech student knew his blocks and cement so well he placed third in the hard-fought competition.

Masonry students from seven career technical schools competed against each other earlier this month at Whittier Regional Vocational Technical High School. Organized by the Massachusetts Trowel Trades Association, the competition tests students' abilities to complete masonry challenges in a set amount of time.

The competition "is all about the camaraderie between students and having fun," said Jay Foster, a masonry instructor at Greater Lowell Tech. "These are real world projects and students are working at the same pace they would if they were on a job site. So it's a great opportunity for kids to practice the trade."

Masonry, also known as trowel trades, can be seen in office buildings, homes, schools, factories and municipal buildings. The work involves block and brick laying, tile setting, concrete finishing and stone setting.

Sophomores, juniors and seniors competed individually at the event in a traditional block and brick masonry competition, where they were tasked with building a wall.

Students from all three grades also competed in teams of three in a hardscaping competition, during which they laid paving stones, designed and built a retaining wall.

In both competitions, first, second and third place winners received plaques and tools donated by school and industry partners.

Jeremy Buchoon, a Greater Lowell Tech senior, came in 3rd place in the "block and brick" masonry competition. Nine students from Greater Lowell Tech competed in the competition, and three students from the school helped during the event.

"I put in a lot of hard work and tried to get it done as best I could," Buchoon said. "It was very fun, very competitive. I only got a second to look around--it was really fast paced."

Other participating schools included Whittier Regional Vocational Technical High School, Essex Tech, Greater Lawrence Tech, Shawsheen Valley Tech, Bay Path Regional Tech and Montachusett Tech.