



Todd Fleck uses a cutting torch in the workshop.



Murray Perrin fixes a motor in automotive class.

— News Photo Ian Scott

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Practice and theory build a pro

ALLAN COYLE
Of The News

Since 1980, teaching industrial trades has become an important part of the task of Medicine Hat College.

Autobody technicians, motor mechanics, plumbers, welders and carpenters apprentices from throughout the area spend at least part of the four years it takes to become a journeyman in Medicine Hat College, picking up the theory and the background that helps make them professionals.

The move to teach trades in community colleges did not come until 1980, when Medicine Hat MLA Jim Horsman, then minister of advanced education, decided to decentralize the teaching of trades.

Southern Alberta Institute of Technology and the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology held a virtual stranglehold on the province's apprenticeship programs.

Medicine Hat College has made a lot of headway in the area since then (including an \$8-million investment in a trades building and state-of-the-art equipment).

The college boasts 10 trades instructors and in 1984 has an projected enrolment of about 300 apprentices.

There are several important differences between students apprenticing for a trade and other students, but one stands out and has important repercussions:

The apprentices already have jobs before they begin their program.

Dan Finnerty, head of the college's trades department, says that makes a significant difference in recessionary times.

"What's really happening is we are suffering in terms of trades," he says. "Quotas (established by the provincial government) are down and intakes (new entrants into the programs) are down."

Other areas, such as the university transfer courses, record an increase in enrolment when times are tough. But when things slow down, says Finnerty, the demand for apprentices decreases.

"Employers are just not hiring apprentices when there

are all sorts of journeymen walking around the streets."

So he counts the college as lucky to have held its own in recent years in the competitive field of attracting and keeping apprentices.

"We've done pretty well," he says.

This year about 350 people are enrolled in the apprenticeship programs and in the pre-employment trades program, which Finnerty says gives students an edge when they hope to be hired as apprentices.

The pre-employment program is sponsored by Alberta Vocational Training and lasts 12 weeks, giving students 360 hours of instruction in their chosen field. Apprentices usually have to spend six to eight weeks in the classrooms-cum-workshops every year for four years.

The students who go through pre-employment courses can challenge the exam for the first-year apprenticeship courses if they get a job.

"It means we might not get some first-year apprentices but we will get them for second, third and fourth years," says Finnerty.

A new program for the trades apprentices is the "humanities" lessons they can get, he says.

Decipher the lingo and it means the students get lessons in how to answer a phone at work, how to conduct themselves in an interview, how to get a job.

"A lot of kids in the trades can use it. It's a voluntary thing," says Finnerty, noting that a lot of the apprentices are going to the two-hour, once-weekly classes.

"It's a new thing that only Medicine Hat has."

Medicine Hat, Finnerty volunteers, has seemingly fared better than other trade schools in the province.

"One thing that helps us a lot is a brand new facility and brand new equipment. We have some equipment here that I can guarantee you cannot be found in other schools in the province.

"Word gets around: 'go to Medicine Hat, they've got the new equipment.'"

1984 MEDICINE HAT SPRING INDOOR PRO RODEO

HONORING

Susan Hargrave
1984
Miss Rodeo Canada

Cody Snyder
1983 World Champion
Bull Rider



And

Corie Schock — 1983/84 Medicine Hat Stampede Queen

Medicine Hat Arena Convention Centre
FRIDAY — SATURDAY — SUNDAY
March 16 - 7:00 p.m. March 17 - 7:00 p.m. March 18 - 2:00 p.m.

RUSH SEATS ONLY

ADVANCE TICKETS: Children Twelve & Under - \$4.00, Adults - \$6.00

AVAILABLE AT:

Daines Western Shop
Hutchings & Sharp Clothing Ltd.

Schlenker Auction Service

John's Western World
Levinson Music Ltd.

AT THE DOOR: Children 12 & Under - \$5.00, Adults - \$7.00



RODEO DANCE

Friday Night March 16 at 9:00 p.m.

IN THE CYPRESS CENTRE - STAMPEDE PARK

Admission \$5.00 per person

Country Squires Band