

[Print page](#)[Close window](#)

reporterherald.com

Publish Date: 4/6/2009

Students learn construction skills, sustainable building in hands-on training program

By Kathryn Dailey
Loveland Reporter-Herald

FORT COLLINS — Sometimes to build knowledge you have to tear some things down.

And that's just what the students in the National Center for Craftsmanship's DeConstruct Training Program did.

On a recent Tuesday, about 18 volunteers met in north Fort Collins to continue the process of hand dismantling an old ranch house that was built in the late 1800s, said Robb Sommerfeld, a teacher at Berthoud High School and the assistant director at the Center.

"We offer students an experiential learning environment," Sommerfeld said.

The home is owned by the city of Fort Collins, which plans to turn the property back into open space.

The program works to teach students construction skills and the importance of sustainable building.

In fact, it has garnered so much attention that it will be featured on a future episode of the Discovery Channel's Planet Green series "Renovation Nation."

Crews came out to film the work that the students were doing, which included taking down the roof, removing the nails from wood that could be reused and dismantling the house starting from top to bottom.

The DeConstruct program involves students from all over Northern Colorado. The day that the filming took place there were several students from the Polaris Expeditionary Learning School in Fort Collins.

Eighth-grader Colin Holmes had been on the site the day before with several of his classmates to help carry away shingles from the roof, which will be ground up and turned into mulch.

He also got to use a denailing gun as well as learn about how to use different kinds of leverage to manually remove nails from wood, said the 14-year-old.

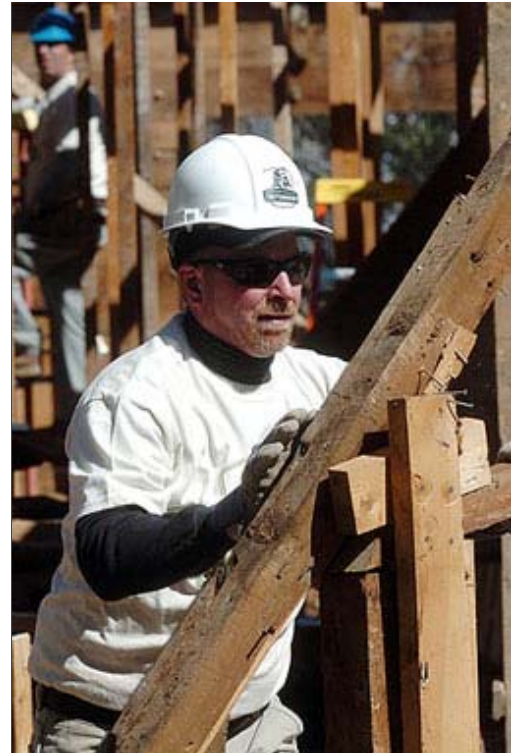
"We learned a lot of handy tricks on how to debuild a house," he said, adding that he will likely use those skills in the future for everyday tasks such as putting together furniture or fixing things around the house.

He also plans to use the skills he's garnered to build a tree fort and be safe while doing it, he said.

Sam Bonner, a freshman at Polaris, was also on the site both days helping out.

The 15-year-old lives on a ranch and said the skills that she was learning would help her out in her day-to-day life.

"We're constantly building and rebuilding things," she said.



Reporter-Herald

Berthoud High School teacher Robb Sommerfeld throws part of a house onto a pile Tuesday during a home demolition in north Fort Collins. Sommerfeld is assistant director for the National Center for Craftsmanship's DeConstruct Training Program.

Bonner also learned a lot about safety precautions to take in construction areas as well as how to identify what materials are salvageable, she said.

In doing DeConstruct, crews and volunteers are able to salvage, recycle or reuse 75 percent of materials from the buildings they take down, said Nick Benson, a green-building consultant working on the project.

Shingles are turned to mulch, wood and bricks are bundled and sold, the plumbing and electrical systems are recycled.

“That’s a big part of this job,” Benson said.

Kathryn Dailey can be reached at 669-5050, ext. 546, or kmdailey@reporter-herald.com.

Copyright © 2009 Daily Reporter-Herald. All rights reserved.
This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten, or redistributed for any commercial purpose.