

First grads from HardHats

By Beth Scott

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The Ministry of Human Resources – generated program, HardHats, has given new opportunities to income assistance recipients in the Comox Valley.

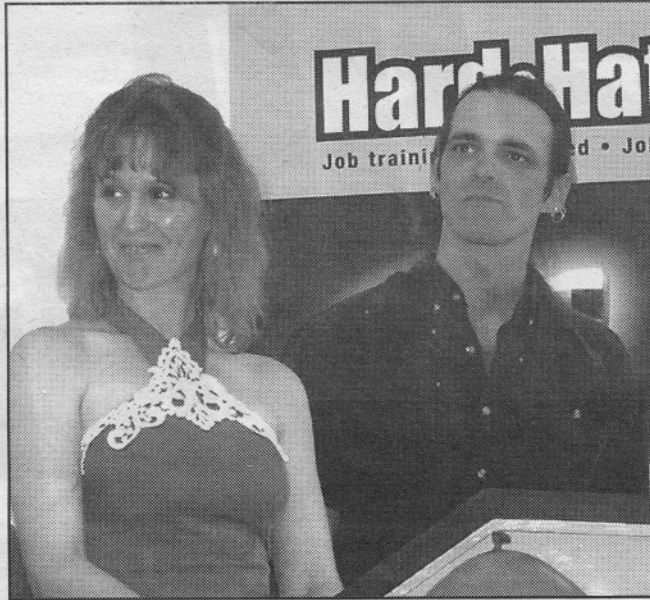
Last week, 20 HardHats students celebrated a huge step towards meaningful employment after completing an intensive 11-week course.

“It’s like a new beginning,” said graduate Alan Currie. “My life has changed for the better because I’ve been given a positive outlook and the tools to find a job in the construction industry. Now I can make a good living for myself and my girls.”

The program, created in partnership with the Canadian Home Builders Association of B.C. (CHBA-B.C.), GT Hiring Solutions and Discovery College, provides people on income assistance with training for entry-level trades positions in the construction industry.

The course included many aspects of construction industry basics such as safety, carpentry, math, working with power tools, roofing, drywall, simple electrical, framing, first aid and much more.

M.J. Whitmarsh, CEO of the CHBA-B.C., said there’s a great need for entry level laborers who have HardHats training because the construction industry is booming in the Comox Valley.



HARDHATS VALEDICTORIANS Tamara Clarke and Andrew Davis address fellow grads at a ceremony last week.

PHOTO BY BETH SCOTT

“This is a fantastic program that provides employment,” she said.

Stoneman said the program has already been in operation in Victoria and the

Lower Mainland for the past two years. It has attracted students from all age groups, male and female, and from varying backgrounds.

“Some of our graduates have never completed anything before

being enrolled in HardHats, not even high school,” she

said. “With this program the students are moving onto better opportunities for themselves. This program has given these people a great sense of accomplishment.”

Stoneman’s sentiments were echoed by the graduates. Class valedictorian Andrew Davis said not only has HardHats taught skills it has also taught personal development.

“We learned, we had fun, but most importantly we got the job done,” he said.

Human Resources Minister Stan Hagen told the graduates that by completing the program they’ve achieved something that’s quite remarkable and part of a much larger picture.

“Here in the Comox Valley, when I was sworn in in June of 2001, there were 3,300 people on welfare,” he said. “Now there are less than 700.”

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Chief operating officer for GT Hiring Solutions., Christine Stoneman, said this is the first set of graduates in the area for program, which has now proven itself to be quite successful.

“Twelve of the 20 graduates are already employed,” she said. “We fought really hard to get a class here and it has really worked out well.”