Vancouver Public Schools unveils
Ed Lynch Trades Center



Peter Pavliuk, 15, an incoming sophomore at Fort Vancouver High School, left, gives Rep. Marie Gluesenkamp Perez a tour of the new Ed Lynch Trades Center on his school's campus Friday. Vancouver Public Schools celebrated the opening of the new facility with a ribbon cutting.

Fort Vancouver High School facility's focus includes welding, manufacturing

By WILL DENNER
The Columbian

Vancouver Public Schools on Friday celebrated the opening of the Ed Lynch Trades Center at Fort Vancouver High School, the latest offering for Clark County students interested in pursuing a trades career.

District officials, students, business leaders and local politicians participated in Friday's ribbon cutting of the 8,842-square-foot facility, which sits on the southeast side of Fort Vancouver's campus.

With a focus on welding, advanced manufacturing, fabrication and precision machining, the building includes 16 professional welding booths, metal-cutting processes, precision lathes, 3D printers and other industry-standard technology.

The Ed and Dollie Lynch Fund, a charitable fund of the Community Foundation for Southwest Washington, fully funded the project through the Foundation for Vancouver Public Schools. Also contributing to the project were Jon Girod, owner of Quail Homes and founder of the nonprofit Careers in Construction, and Dennis Wubben, a Vancouver-based property manager.

"To have things come off with philanthropy, you have to have a lot of ingredients going the right direction," said Michael Lynch, son of

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Above, the new trades facility sits on the southeast side of the Fort Vancouver High School campus in Vancouver.

At left, visitors join Vancouver Public Schools staff and students as they celebrate the opening of the Ed Lynch Trades Center at Fort Vancouver High School on Friday morning.

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the late Vancouver philanthropists Ed and Dollie Lynch.

"You have to have leadership from the superintendent. You have to have the school board on board. You have to have the appetite of the staffing levels. You have to have instructors like (Fort Vancouver teacher Aaron Pierce) who know how to make these cogs and wheels operate. And then you have these amazing guys like Dennis and Jon who, working together, drive the cost down on these (buildings), so these are built as efficiently as any private structure."

With the 2026-27 school year less than two weeks away, two advanced manufacturing cohorts will rotate daily in the building. The design-to-production model will take students through every step of the manufacturing process, and the program also will offer career-development opportunities including job training, recruitment events and paid internships.

Career and technical education programming has expanded in recent years across Clark County. Vancouver Public Schools also opened the Endeavour Technical Trades Center at Hudson's Bay High School in 2025. In neighboring Evergreen Public Schools, the Skilled Trades Center opened at Evergreen High School in 2023.



Photos by **AMANDA COWAN**/The Columbian

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"This vision, when I started five, six years ago, was really to get this Fourth Plain corridor set up," Girod said. "This corridor, we have avenues set up for kids (to) not just survive but thrive."

K-12 career and technical education enrollment increased by 10 percent nationwide from 2022 to 2024, according to a study from the Center for American Progress. That same study found more than 1 in 2 Washington high school graduates completed a career and technical education pathway in 2023.

"I think most of the major advancements we make (are) because we have skilled, gifted kids in the trades," said U.S. Rep. Marie Gluesenkamp Perez, D-Skamania, who also attended Friday's event. "The real stuff comes here. It comes from the critical thinking, the spatial reasoning and the agency that programs like this build, and I am so profoundly proud of what this represents."

Community investment in career and technical education programs is reflective of growing demand for skilled trades workers. For every five people who retire from the industry, only three are replacing them, Girod said.



Philanthropist Michael Lynch, center, talks with U.S. Rep. Marie Gluesenkamp Perez as Vancouver Public Schools celebrates the opening of the Ed Lynch Trades Center at Fort Vancouver High School on Friday morning.

Manufacturing also is a key part of the economy in Southwest Washington and Oregon. Portland-based Vigor Marine Group, for example, won a $1 billion U.S. Army contract in 2017 and recently unveiled a nonprototype U.S. Army landing craft vessel at its Vancouver facility.

"They just launched the first ship they built for the Army … but they don't have enough local welders," Girod noted.

That local investment shows no signs of slowing down. Near the end of his remarks Friday, Michael Lynch announced that The Ed and Dollie Lynch Fund has granted up to $3.1 million for the completion of a new career and technical education building at Skyview High School, drawing a loud ovation from more than 100 people in attendance.

"It's going to be the opportunity for kids in the future," Wubben said. "Hopefully, one of those kids is going to stand up here in 10 or 15 years and say how it changed their life, what they learned here in this building. … That's what it's all about. We want to give these kids an opportunity for a family-wage job."

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