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CHARLOTTE HIGH STUDENTS BUILDING FUTURE SUCCESS

A couple of years ago, Charlotte High School teacher Rick Loughrige developed a modified woodshop class, designed to provide students with some hands-on experience in woodworking. He launched the class with a small project, as students built small table top golf tee games, which they gave out to teachers and administrators to thank them for their support of the kids and the program. From there, the program grew, as students made wooden signs that can be seen hanging in classrooms and offices throughout CHS. They worked on special projects, too, building a beautiful shadow box to hold the military medals that Curtis Braatz's family donated to the high school.

This year, though, Mr. Loughrige and his students, many of whom have been with him for most of their high school careers, took on their most ambitious project yet: they built 12 foot, functional wooden boats and the oars to go along with them. The ten students in his class started out the school year building the boat oars, crafted out of pine, and then transitioned into building the boats themselves.



In total, the class constructed three beautiful wooden boats from scratch, and the three seniors who graduated from the program this year, Jenni Casler, Courtney Gagne, and Ben Wages, each

get to take a boat home. Next year, the class will again tackle the project, building boats for all of the graduating seniors in the program. So, as the years go on, every student who graduates from Mr. Loughrige's program will get a handmade boat of his or her own to take home.

As amazing as the outcome of the work is, Mr. Loughrige sees something deeper that comes out of the boat building process. He said, "The experience of doing something big together with other people as part of a team, gives them strength to draw on later in real life." This experience was evident throughout the process as the students worked in groups, where they had to incorporate team work with problem solving skills. Once the boats were built, each senior got to choose the paint colors and name for his or her boat, and the rest of the students helped to paint and finish them.

Weaving life lessons like perseverance, hard work, and appreciation into the daily woodworking class, Mr. Loughrige has been more than just a teacher to these students; he has been a role model. According to senior student, Ben Wages, "Mr. Loughrige has taught me many useful skills that I can use in and out the classroom. I have spent countless hours milling, shaping, cutting, gluing, sanding, and finishing the boats, and loved every minute of it." So, not only do students have a unique and lasting memento of their hard work and learning, but also a set of skills that will serve them throughout their lives.

Mr. Loughrige would like to give special thanks to John Wilson of the Home Shop in Charlotte for donating the boat plans and materials, Warren Bishop of Woodland for donating the materials for the boat seats, and Dornbos Sign Company of Charlotte for donating the material for the boat name stencils. Without these donations, the project would not have been possible. He also wants to thank students Mason Mock, Zack Fulkerson, Landon Whitiker, Jeremy Bittenger, Austin Tropp, Greg Crews, and LINK Mazey Lea, along with Mrs. Parker, for helping the seniors finish their boats. The project truly has been a team effort. Go Orioles! Oriole Pride!

