

Interest In Trades Rising As Home Expo Draws Closer, Student Spotlights Shine

by Dalton Brown, News Reporter
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BELLEVILLE - Shannon Stelling with the Home Builders & Remodelers Metro-East Association recently emphasized the importance of the trades, highlighted this month's Trade Student of the Month, and discussed the upcoming 2024 Home Expo as it gets closer from March 8-10, 2024 at the Belle Clair Fairgrounds in Belleville.

In addition to thousands of dollars worth of giveaway prizes - including an \$18,000 hot tub - the event will feature about 130 vendors, pet adoptions through the Belleville Area Humane Society, hourly performances from local school groups, bands, choirs, dance teams and more, as well as several local celebrities and radio personalities on the following dates and times:

- **Tim Ezell and the Studio STL Crew:** Friday, March 8, 2024, 12-1 p.m.
- **Favazz, KSHE 95:** Friday, March 8, 2024, 1:30-3:30 p.m.
- **Courtney Landrum, 106.5 The Arch:** Saturday, March 9, 2024, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.
- **Billy Greenwood:** Sunday March 10, 2024, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Attendees who bring cat or dog food to the event to donate to the Humane Society will get a second entry into a chance to win the many giveaway prizes. For more details about the 2024 Home Expo, watch the full interview with Stelling at the top of this story or on [Riverbender.com/video](https://riverbender.com/video), or read [this related story on Riverbender.com](#).

The two also shined a spotlight on this month's [Trade Student of the Month, Nicholas Day](#), one of many success stories to come from the Center for Academic and Vocational Excellence (CAVE) program and a current metal machining student who plans to start an apprenticeship upon graduation.

"This is my first year here. I actually really like it," Day said about his time at the CAVE. "I just like coming here and doing my projects."

To learn more about Day and the CAVE program, see [this related story on Riverbender.com](#).

With the spotlight shining on local trade programs and students, and the 2024 Home Expo inching closer, Stelling said interest in the trades has been trending upward recently.

"It is so important, and it's starting to pick up some steam even at the national level," Stelling said of interest in the trades. "You're starting to hear some of the big politicians out of Washington, D.C. start talking about how great the need is, and they're starting to pay attention to it and they're looking at different programs and resources that will continue to grow that area - because we are in trouble."

"We are in trouble if we don't start opening the minds of parents especially to the benefits available and the incomes and careers that these kids can have in the trades

industry - and it's never going to go away. It's not going to be replaced by AI, it's not going to be replaced by computers or robots, because you're always going to need people to build homes, to fix homes, to repair homes, so there is a big need for it."

Stelling added that even older, more experienced trades workers often still remember the first home they built, and can identify structures they had a hand in building as they travel around their communities, giving them a sense of pride in seeing everything they've built and accomplished.

"“You never know where your hands will touch’ is what I tell young kids," she said. "You never know what you'll be a part of - some history-making monument, some history-making building, or people's homes that they build a life in, and it's a good feeling to be involved in that stuff.”"

To learn more about the 2024 Home Expo, this month's Trade Student of the Month, and more about the opportunities available in the trades in general, see the full interview with Stelling at the top of this story or on [Riverbender.com/video](https://riverbender.com/video).