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## 'I want to take it home': Innovation Center students debut tiny house

By MOLLY WILLIAMS The Winchester Star  
May 5, 2026

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Valerie McCawley, brand ambassador for Peak Roofing Contractors, stands in front of a 396-square-foot tiny house built by John Handley High School students taking carpentry and electricity classes at the Emil and Grace Shihadeh Innovation Center on Jefferson Street in Winchester. It was on display during the Innovation Center's annual showcase on Wednesday. Peak Roofing Contractors donated the building materials for the roof and siding.

Jeff Taylor/The

If you want to learn about carpentry or electricity, building a house is pretty much a crash course in many of the skills in those trades.

That was the idea behind a year-long project at the Emil and Grace Shihadeh Innovation Center this school year.

John Handley High School students in the Innovation Center's carpentry and electricity classes were tasked with building a tiny house, a 396-square-foot structure with a 7-by-12-foot front porch that was unveiled during the Innovation Center's annual showcase last week.

"I just think that one of the biggest things is just the full understanding of how a house goes together," said carpentry instructor Corey Banton. "... Even if they don't go into the construction field, they got a very good idea of what their house is like."

At first, Banton said he was apprehensive about the project.

However, after visiting Triplett Tech operated by Shenandoah County Public Schools, where they build tiny homes "almost every year," Banton said "it seemed like a successful, doable project."

"So we started talking to local community organizations and industries, and they were behind it, and they were actually way more behind it than I had imagined, because ... most everything in here is donated," he said.

Some of the biggest community contributions were the roofing and siding, as well as the lumber.

In working on a project like building a tiny house, Banton said his students learned the importance of accuracy.

"I just encouraged them every day to kind of look around and watch what's going on," he said. "... If you're not the ones working, watch what's going on, so they could learn all of that type of stuff, too."

Electricity teacher Mike Williams said that the skills his students learned would be valuable regardless of whether they decide to pursue the trades, as "they're going to be a homeowner."

"I love seeing the light bulb come on," he said of watching his students work on the tiny house. "... I like seeing that."

Valerie McCawley, brand ambassador for Peak Roofing, which donated all of the roofing and siding for the tiny house, said that contributing to the project was a "no-brainer" for the company.

"For us, it's growing that younger youth to be into the trades, because the trades is just such an important field to have," she said. "So we just, we want to help grow the younger generation up to want to love trades like we love trades."

Asked what she thought of the final product, McCawley said the tiny house was "amazing."

"I want to take it home," she said. "... It's amazing to know that the actual kids in the school put so much heart into this. ... It's a whole sustainable house. It's amazing. It's so incredible."

Senior electricity student Steven Hernandez-Salgado said that in contributing to the tiny house, he "got to visualize what really goes on inside a house."

One of his biggest tasks was creating an electricity panel for the house, he said.

"My teacher is a very by the code book dude," Hernandez-Salgado said. "So I learned how to do everything safely and neatly."

Hernandez-Salgado said he signed up for the electricity course at the Innovation Center, which is part of Winchester Public Schools, because he wanted to learn a skill that requires him to work with his hands.

He said he has many family members who work in construction, which prompted him to explore electricity instead.

"I guess my mindset was like, I can learn everything else from them, but I have to learn this myself," Hernandez-Salgado said.

Hernandez-Salgado's ultimate career goal is to become an airline pilot, and he believes the trades could help him as he pursues that path.

"There is a lot of money in the trades, too," he said. "So it [could help] me to pay for ... flight school and things like that, or college if I decide to go there in the future."

The Innovation Center's tiny house will be available for purchase via an online auction in mid-May. The hope is that profits from the project will fund future tiny house projects. For updates about the auction, follow the social media channels for Winchester Public Schools, John Handley High School and the Emil and Grace Shihadeh Innovation Center.

Before bidding on the tiny house, it is advisable to contact your locality's zoning and/or building departments to see what requirements are needed for such structures and if they are allowed on your property.

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