

Port Townsend Maritime Academy Skills Center set up for fall

Curriculum to be open to high school students in Jefferson, Clallam, Kitsap counties

By Jeannie McMacken

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PORT TOWNSEND — Junior and senior high school students in Jefferson, Clallam and Kitsap counties will have a new opportunity to learn maritime skills beginning this fall.

The newly launched Port Townsend Maritime Academy Skills Center and its Maritime Vessel Operations satellite program is a free, public instructional program that is the result of a joint partnership between the Northwest Maritime Center, the Port Townsend School District and West Sound Technical Skills Center in Bremerton.

Classes are to be at the maritime center. They will offer youth access to a year-long, 540-hour maritime curriculum with all classes prioritizing hands-on skills building and weekly on-the-water training conducted by professional mariners and educators.

Students will spend 2.5 hours of each public school day at the maritime center campus for instruction and vocational training.

The program teaches students the basics of vessel operations, providing the foundation for earning certifications for maritime industry careers.

Students also will have the opportunity to participate in intensive weekly job-shadowing programs in a variety of placements including with the Port Townsend Marine Trades Association, Jefferson County Historical Society and the Schooner Martha Foundation.

“This is a unique program where students gain hands-on technical skills in a high-wage career path,” said Kelley Watson, Port Townsend School District’s coordinator for career technical education and a program instructor.

“We are so grateful for the partnership and the exciting opportunities for students in the upcoming year.”

The program is the first of its kind, according to Jake Beattie, maritime center executive director.

“This is the first one in these in the state that Kelley developed as the pinnacle part of the Maritime Discovery Schools Initiative. She wrote the curriculum and pushed it through a long local, regional and state approval process.

“Kelly thought it could be something that could serve more than just Port Townsend,” he added.

Beattie said that about 20-30 local students daily attend Bremerton, which is the nearest skill center.

“This program is just about vessel operations, but it gives students the opportunity for a more career-oriented education in high school,” Beattie said.

”The kids don’t have to drive to Bremerton every day for job-related training.”

The Port Townsend Maritime Academy was sanctioned by the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction and operates as a satellite of West Sound Technical Skills Center. Satellite programs enable under served rural areas to establish centers in key economic sectors of regional significance.

“We serve as a ‘thought collaborator’ with Kelly,” said Robin Mills, maritime center program director. “We provide the instructional support. She can use our classrooms, boats and gear and benefit from the funding support.”

Mills said the program accomplishes three objectives: increasing the number of youth pursuing maritime careers within the served districts, developing 21st-century life skills promoting workforce development, and creating a model that can be replicated in coastal communities across Washington State. It also creates replacements for those maritime professionals who are retiring.

“This is so exciting for our program staff as it fits our focus,” Mills said. “A kid who enters camps at age 5 can be tracked and exposed to opportunities. This is a place kids to be educated, learn vocational skills and sail. Everything is scaffolded and this program is a great example.

“We are all about nurturing and creating building blocks.”

To apply and for more information, contact the maritime center at <https://nwmaritime.org/> or 360-385-3628, ext. 104 and speak with Kate Philbrick, administrative coordinator.

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