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The Furniture Trust hosts 5th Annual Eco-Carpentry Challenge - 1st place went to Whittier Regional Vocational High

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The Furniture Trust, a nonprofit committed to the responsible reuse of unwanted office furniture, held an exhibition of up-cycled products designed and built by local high school students during their 5th Annual Eco-Carpentry Challenge at District Hall. The Eco-Carpentry Challenge is The Furniture Trust's annual signature event designed to promote creativity and recycling. Every year, used office furniture donated by local businesses is delivered to high schools and students are encouraged to use teamwork, imagination and carpentry skills to transform these materials into new products.

At The Eco-Carpentry Challenge, students had an opportunity to network with industry professionals and peer schools, present their work to the judges, and answer questions from the crowd admiring the up-cycled innovations displayed throughout District Hall. A presentation by each school provided additional details on each contending project, the materials they used, and what they learned from the experience.

The ten participating schools of The 2015 Eco-Carpentry Challenge include: Brockton High School, East Bridgewater High School, Hopedale High School, Just-A-Start: YouthBuild Cambridge, Medford Vocational Technical High School, Minuteman Vocational Technical High School, Somerville Full Circle High School, Northeast Metro Regional Vocational High School, Whittier Regional Vocational High School, and YouthBuild Lawrence.

A panel of judges comprised of industry professionals including Karen Whiteknact of Liberty Mutual, Zac Sargent of Adidas Group, Cheryl Lieteau of New England Carpenters Training Fund, Peter Boyce of Spry Moving, and Francine Buck of Haworth reviewed each project, and after ardent deliberation announced the winning projects of The 5th Annual Eco-Carpentry Challenge: 3rd place and a prize of \$1,000 was awarded to Northeast Metro Regional Vocational High School for their mini golf course; 2nd place and a prize of \$1,500 was awarded to Minuteman High School for their 1927 Model Ford Truck; and the winning project and the grand prize of \$2,500 went to Whittier Regional Vocational High School for their collection of office break room games. The crowd voted Medford Vocational Technical High School and their Frozen themed nursery furniture set the winners of the "People's Choice Award".

All participating teams were congratulated for their innovative efforts by Christine Mosholder, the founder of The Furniture Trust.

"Our project was so fun to create," said Connor Gavin, a senior at East Bridgewater, "This class is important to us, and throughout this project we have learned creative thinking and planning, which will further our skills in and out of the classroom. We would like to thank The Furniture Trust for giving us the opportunity to compete in The Eco-Carpentry Challenge, and we look forward to future challenges."

A highlight of the evening was when Kurt Carrol, a student of Medford Voc-Tech, performed a rap he wrote describing the experience and thanking The Furniture Trust. "This is a great place giving out great vibes," he said, as his teammates stood behind him cheering and the audience roared with applause. This year, The Furniture Trust assigned each team a mentor to provide guidance, feedback, and technical expertise throughout the design and construction of their projects, which the students had three months to complete. Professionals from the architecture, construction, project management, facilities and furniture industries were mentors for the 2015 Eco-Carpentry Challenge and include: Michael Bogdan of Fort Point Project Management, John Lorusso of Agero, Guy Compagnone and Alec White of Chapman Construction/Design, Chris Liuzzi of Workstation Consultants LLC, Richard Christiano of the Wentworth Institute of Technology, Joe Deveau of Arbee Associates, Michael Clancy of Creative Office Pavilion, Shaun Lover and David Stodden of Columbia Construction Company, and David Madson of CBT Architects.

"The Eco-Carpentry Challenge ties in perfectly with Agero's sustainability initiative," said John Lorusso, who served as a mentor of the Medford team, "Mentoring was an extremely rewarding experience, and is something I would love to do again next year."

"These students came ready to compete. They were so proud to share their amazing, up-cycled creations with the audience," said Mosholder, "This experience proves every year that excess office furnishings from local corporations can be reinvested into the community to make a positive impact on students and teachers."

The event had a significant impact on each student that participated. Whether new to carpentry or an avid builder, every student learned from the experience, and gained a new appreciation for reusing resources. "The Eco-Carpentry Challenge completely changed my outlook on recycling," said Jamie DiPietro, a student of Minuteman Vocational Technical High School.

Sponsors of the 2015 Eco-Carpentry Challenge include Arbee Associates, CBT Architects, Chapman Construction/Design, Columbia Construction Company, Creative Office Pavilion, Wentworth Institute of Technology, Workstations LLC, Adidas Group, Wise Construction, American Delivery and Installation, New England Carpenter's Training Fund, Think OFR, Peabody Office, Spry Moving Boston, IOP, Liberty Mutual, American Contractors Corporation, Red Thread, Structure Tone, Haworth/Environments at Work, Margulies Perruzzi Architects, Bernadette Longino Video, District Hall, RLR Studios, Sarah Casasanto Design, and Fort Point Project Management.

The Furniture Trust is a nonprofit organization driven to make a difference by rethinking office furniture removal and reinvesting in the community. The Trust provides companies of all sizes with a proven process for decommissioning that maximizes the value of unwanted office furniture and reduces landfill accumulation by connecting reusable resources with local schools and nonprofits. Since their founding in 2008, The Trust has connected more than \$8,000,000 worth of office furniture to over 450 organizations.