

AUTOMOTIVE COLLISION AND REFINISHING

Patching dents and dings, sanding car panels, and MIG welding are part of Grade 12 Tupper Secondary students Laily Sugue's daily routine.

Laily is one of a dozen Youth TRAIN in Trades students at Vancouver Community College's Auto Collision and Refinishing department. When she graduates from high school, she will be well ahead of many of her peers, receiving her Dogwood, her Level 1 Technical Training with 650 hours of work-based credit as well as a certificate from VCC.

While Laily is technically registered at Tupper, four days out of five per week she is at VCC's Broadway campus learning how to repair and refinish, one of about 100 trades students in the Vancouver school system.

Laily started her school year in Tupper Tech, a program that introduces students to a wide range of technical trades, but, by October her teacher, Russ Evans, had found a spot for her in the auto collision program.

Auto collision Youth TRAIN in Trades students are at VCC from Monday to Thursday and on Friday they are back at Tupper working on their academic courses.

Laily calls herself a "hands-on learner" because she prefers keeping busy rather than just learning from books.

Auto collision students spend half their hours in the classroom learning theory in the first term and the other half on the shop floor. The second term, they are in the shop all day learning hands-on how to fix damaged cars.

Resurrecting a car that has been in a crash gives Laily a great feeling of satisfaction. "After seeing something that was broken and you've fixed it, it feels good because it looks better than before," Laily explains.

Doreen Wong, auto collision Youth TRAIN in Trades instructor, keeps a careful eye on her students, constantly directing and redirecting them as they repair the cars brought into the shop.

Doreen was the first woman in Canada to receive her Red Seal in auto collision and refinishing, and she has been teaching her Youth TRAIN in Trades students for five years. She loves the energy high school students have – they are restless and keen to learn, she explains, and they constantly need to be challenged.

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In the program, Doreen maintains high standards and "good enough" isn't good enough in her shop. "If you want to cut corners, do it on your own time," says Doreen.

You don't need to be tough and strong to get into the program, she adds, rather students in the program usually have a love of cars, a passion for getting things done and good hand-eye coordination.

For information on the Automotive Collision Repair Technician program, go to: careerprograms.vsb.bc.ca

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