



DHWConnection

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Bruce Wingate, Founder and President of Foster Care Furniture, speaks to a news camera at the Foster Care Festival hosted at the Woodcraft Maker Shop in Boise was held on Sunday March 2nd. Read more on page 3.



IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH & WELFARE



FOSTER CARE FESTIVAL BRINGS COMMUNITY TOGETHER TO SUPPORT YOUTH AGING OUT OF THE SYSTEM

On Sunday March 2, the Maker Shop in Boise hosted its Foster Care Festival, a lively event filled with hands-on woodworking demonstrations, family-friendly activities, and opportunities to support foster youth transitioning into adulthood.

More than 50 attendees of all ages gathered to learn about woodworking, enjoy free food and games, and see firsthand the impact of Foster Care Furniture—a nonprofit dedicated to helping young adults develop valuable skills.

The festival showcased live demonstrations about how to transform scrap wood into beautifully crafted, functional pieces.

One of the event highlights was a safety demonstration using a high-tech saw designed to prevent injuries. To illustrate its effectiveness, a hot dog was placed near the blade—instantly triggering the saw's safety mechanism, stopping the blade in a split second. This presentation underscored the importance of safety in woodworking while captivating the audience.

Beyond the hands-on fun, the event had a deeper purpose: raising awareness about the challenges faced by foster youth aging out of the system. Each year, between 300 and 500 young people in Idaho transition out of foster care, often without the necessary support to navigate seamlessly into adulthood.

Recognizing this gap, Bruce Wingate, Founder and President of Foster Care Furniture, created a free 13-week woodworking program to equip former foster youth (ages 18-26) with practical skills, resume-building assistance, and job interview preparation. Participants in the program not only learn woodworking but also explore career paths in carpentry, construction, and related trades.

Through Foster Care Furniture, apprentices craft furniture that is later sold, with proceeds reinvested into programs that directly benefit them. With the support of a recent \$50,000 grant from the Idaho Workforce Development Council, the nonprofit can now offer trainees \$15 an hour while they learn—providing financial relief alongside career training.

The festival was a celebration of community. Families enjoyed interacting with costumed movie characters, winning prizes, and learning about how they can contribute to this meaningful cause. As Idaho continues to seek solutions for supporting foster youth, initiatives like Foster Care Furniture provide not just skills, but hope for a successful future.

