

Governor Phil Murphy

Press Pool Coverage: Governor Shapiro and Governor Murphy Tour Finishing Trades Institute and Make An Announcement

04/13/2023

Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro and New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy toured the Finishing Trades Institute on Thursday afternoon, prior to the announcement of a new partnership between the two states.

The two governors visited the union trade students and teachers in the virtual welding lab, the glass cutting workshop, the industrial and commercial painting shop, the drywall finishing center, the bridge workshop, and more. Both governors stopped to talk to the students and teachers, asking each one of them where they're from to continue the Pennsylvania-New Jersey rivalry.

The governors started their tour with three high school students from Mastery Charter Pickett Campus, who are part of a pre-apprenticeship program. The teacher described the different personal protective equipment the students use while learning the jobs, including the fall protection gear. Falls are the leading cause of death in the construction industry.

"We weren't interested in going to college and sitting behind a desk all day, no offense though," one of the pre-apprenticeship students said. "The trades were for me."

"We're trying to make sure that every kid in high school, if they wanna come do something like this, can," Shapiro said to the students. "I may ask you to come back and encourage other students in high school."

Murphy tried out the virtual welding lab. He noted that New Jersey has a similar pre-apprenticeship program to that of Philadelphia's, called NJ PACE, or the Pre-Apprenticeship in Career Education program.

The governors also met with a woman from the Women in Non-traditional Careers, or WINC, who participated in the facility's tradeswomen readiness program. The woman, Denise, will complete the program in the next few weeks and be a commercial painter in Pennsylvania or New Jersey.

Shapiro asked why she was learning glass cutting if she'd be completing the painter program soon.

"They give you a little hands-on on different trades," Denise said. "When I got my hands-on, it was the painting that really called me."

"They cut the circles, while we run around in circles," Murphy joked.

Erin O'Brien, the Finishing Trades Institute assistant director of education, led the tour. Murphy, in a press conference following the tour, called the tour "enlightening and encouraging."

"It allows Josh and myself to double-down on our passion and belief in apprenticeship programs," Murphy added. "They are the backbone of both the Pennsylvania economy and the New Jersey economy."

Pennsylvania's Labor and Industry Acting Secretary Nancy Walker and New Jersey Department of Transportation Assistant Commissioner Justin Braz also joined the governors on the tour.

Gillian McGoldrick, Philadelphia Inquirer

PHOTO & VIDEO

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