



## AAPA Lighthouse Award Project Highlight Try-A-Trade



Port of Grays Harbor  
Satsop Business Park

### Project Overview

Try-A-Trade

Award Category: Excellence in Community/Educational Outreach

Completion Date: 10/3/2024

Description: This event brought more than 1,100 students to the Satsop Business Park with the goal of giving high school students a hands-on introductory experience to various pathways, unions, and training programs that are available post-graduation in their communities. After an 11-year hiatus, a determined team of the Thurston Chamber of Commerce, Pac Mountain Workforce Development Council (WDC), Educational Service District (ESD)11 and ESD113, Timberland Regional Library, the Port of Grays Harbor, Grays Harbor Community Foundation, New Market Skills Center, Open Doors/Gravity, Pierce County Building Trades Representatives, the Washington State Labor Council, school districts, and 18 construction trades representatives came together for a yearlong planning process that resulted in a wildly successful event.

Try-A-Trade offered students a hands-on experience with 18 trade organizations including heavy equipment operating, measuring and weighing logs, virtual reality training at several of the participating organizations, and engagement with local law enforcement about their careers. Students were exposed to a diverse range of opportunities, many of which the students were probably completely unaware of prior to the event.

The positive impacts of the Try-A-Trade event were lasting and impactful. Students left the event with more possibilities for their future and more information on the path they need to take or be on to get there. The event was also a benefit to the educators involved as they left with a better understanding of how to connect students with industry professionals and a knowledge of each trades pathway to success. The event organizers are hopeful that long-term impacts such as a sustainable career pipeline to include increased apprenticeship participation and eventually an increase in employment rates for the region will result from the event.

### Inspiration

The Port of Grays Harbor is heavily involved in both workforce development efforts and educational opportunities throughout the region. Many of the school districts that participated in the event are located in rural areas that chronically have high unemployment rates. The Port takes its mission of

pursuing economic development opportunities for the region very seriously, and giving our future workforce every opportunity to understand the options that they have right in their own communities is a priority. Beyond having ample space at the Satsop Business Park to host such a large event, participating in such an amazing event for students was a no-brainer.

## Challenges

An event of this size does not happen without its challenges. That being said, communication and collaboration amongst the many event organizers made easy work of most hurdles.

One of the biggest challenges, or concerns, was participation due to the cost of travel and transportation for school districts. The event organizers were able to address this by reaching out to regional supporters to secure donations that reduced the burden on schools and surely resulted in a greater number of students from rural and outlying communities being able to participate.

## Lessons Learned

1,100 students is a lot! The Satsop Business Park will be making some logistical (and janitorial) improvements to enhance the experience for everyone in 2025.

## Value

The Port of Grays Harbor was incredibly proud to be a partner in this amazing event and what it does to expose our future workforce to the potential opportunities in their communities. We are truly grateful for the partnerships that made this event a success and the impact it had on both the students and participants.

We look forward to hosting the 2025 Try-A-Trade again this fall.

## Quotes

See [Fall Final Report](#) for stats and quotes from participants and organizers.

## Additional Information

Try-A-Trade 2025 will take place at the Satsop Business Park on October 9th. Event organizers anticipate at least 1,200 students will participate and 19 trade organizations to be present. This year additional vendors from around the region have been invited, including two community colleges.

## Contact

Contact Person: Kayla Dunlap

Title: Director of Government & Public Affairs

Email: [kdunlap@portgrays.org](mailto:kdunlap@portgrays.org)

Phone: 360-533-9590 or 360-581-4776

## Resources

2024 Try-A-Trade Photos:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/esd113/albums/72177720320973591/with/54050008682>

2024 Try-A-Trade Video:

<https://youtu.be/mrBb36r9x7I>