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Welders to make mythical creatures at Bellingham Technical College



By Kyle Mittan

kmittan@bhamherald.com

Bellingham — Teams of welders will bring piles of scrap metal to life as mythical creatures Friday and Saturday, May 13 and 14, at Bellingham Technical College's Welding Rodeo.

The event begins at 8 a.m. on both days at Morse Center, [3028 Lindbergh Ave.](https://www.bhamherald.com/3028-Lindbergh-Ave) on the BTC campus, and is free and open to the public. The [Welding Rodeo](#), now in its 15th year, sets teams of four welders loose on the college's scrap-metal supply to turn the junk into works of art.

The sculptures are then auctioned off, with most of the proceeds going to scholarships for the college's welding program.

This year's theme, decided by the event's committee, is mythical creatures.

“I think it’s something that will play out really beautifully in the sculptures,” said college spokeswoman Zoe Fraley. “I think metal kind of lends itself to that mythical, magical quality when you’re creating something out of nothing.”

The event is split across the two days by skill level; six teams of amateur welders will compete on Friday, welding until 5 p.m. Five professional teams will compete on Saturday, welding until 6:30 p.m.

The teams already have some materials selected in advance, but anything in the scrapyard is fair game. At the sound of a horn, welders will run through the yard to snatch up the most valuable pieces for their design and get to work.

By afternoon, most sculptures will begin to take shape, and, on Friday, sheets outside each student team’s booth will take bids for the silent auction when fabrication ends. Sculptures made in the professional competition on Saturday will be sold in a live auction at the end of the day.

Sculptures in the auctions, Fraley said, tend to run on the higher end, but smaller, pre-made sculptures will be up for sale, with those proceeds also going toward scholarships.

Three judges, each with an art or industrial background, will judge each piece for artistic aesthetic, safety for public display and quality of the welding. Attendees can vote for the people’s choice award.

BTC welding students and professionals won’t be the only ones behind masks on Friday and Saturday. The event also features a skills challenge, open to everyone, that comes with its own set of prizes.

The various challenges, known as competencies, range from very basic welds and cuts to the very advanced. Certified welding instructors will then provide feedback.

Registration is required, and some challenges come with entry fees. A breakdown of fees and competencies can be found in the skills challenge [registration form](#) at www.weldingrodeo.com.

Aside from raising money for the program, Fraley said the goal of the event is to bring welding to the masses, including to many who have never done it or seen it before.

“I think it’s a really cool way to show people what welding can be,” she said.