

Rave: BTC staff helps Bellingham group learn about boat engines

GRAHAM HUNTER; COURTESY TO THE BELLINGHAM HERALD

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I'm writing to tell your readers of a hidden gem we have here in Bellingham. I am a volunteer instructor with the local United States Power Squadron - an organization which teaches most facets of boating safety, including navigation and various technical subjects.

Earlier this month, I was invited to bring my engine maintenance class on a tour of Bellingham Technical College's automotive and diesel technology shops. My 10 students, mostly recreational boat owners who want to learn how to maintain and troubleshoot their engines, had spent the previous month in classroom education. This tour was the perfect chance to see dissected engines and components, first hand. We were taken through the BTC automotive shop by Dan Beeson and then the diesel shop by Jeffry Curtis, both instructors with the college.

What impressed us, besides the impeccably clean shops and well-presented training equipment, was the obvious passion both men have for instructing engine technology. We saw, for example, an auto engine cylinder head mangled to uselessness by a previous owner's careless approach to preventive maintenance.

Similar warnings awaited us at the diesel shop, which was of special interest to those of us with marine diesel engines. These kind gentlemen spent two hours of their own time, giving us valuable insights into aspects of engine mechanics we hadn't considered to that point. This kind of material goes well beyond that of textbooks and powerpoint presentations.

A huge thank you goes out from the Bellingham Sail and Power Squadron members to that hidden gem of a college sitting in our midst! We can only assume that Dan and Jeff are typical of the staff at BTC who teach everything from nursing to welding. The least we can do is to tell you about it!

- Graham Hunter of Blaine, via Letters to the Editor