

# Maine charter school offers blacksmithing classes

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HINCKLEY, Maine (WABI) - It's is a sound you may not expect in a typical high school classroom.

But at the Maine Academy of Natural Sciences, it's just everyday background noise.

"I love the opportunity, it makes it like like this, that's something that's special about the school is I get to actually come outside and physically do the things that normally we just look at the paper to learn," said Alicia Reynolds, student.

Since the school's founding, a local blacksmith partnered with MEANS.

Richard Tessier volunteered his time for years, teaching students and keeping the trade going.

Until one day, he received some devastating news.

"Unfortunately, Dick was diagnosed with cancer, and understood that he was not going to be able to continue doing that for our students, but really wanted to ensure that the program continued into the future," said Matt Newberg, head of school.

Tessier unfortunately lost his battle to cancer in spring of last year, but his legacy lives on everyday.

Before his passing, he donated tools and brought a set of plans to house a blacksmith program at the school.

"Our hope is that every means student will be exposed to blacksmithing in the four years that they're here," Newberg said.

And the impact has been substantial. Tucker Emery says he looks forward to school more because of the class.

"Every time I coming here I am like yes, I have blacksmithing next period. I go in and I just make stuff. I was how I made my Mother's Day gift for my mother. I made her a hook," Emery said.

Jeff Chase, an agricultural specialist, teaches the class in hopes to students can continue to learn the skill here for years to come.

"Kids really wanting to come and do this for two hours a day is just a testament that there's a need for this type of stuff," Chase said.

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