

From the left: (front) Ben Suttman, Kaiden Porep, (back) Haley Hoekstra, Greg Ingersoll, Brook Slinde, Lily Petrasek, Ben Holm, Mackenzie Begley and Travis Brogren stand on the base of the playhouse early on in the project.



## BUILDING A

STORY & PHOTOS  
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# FUTURE

*Area company, students partner on playhouse project*

It's not quite an "If you build it, they will come" scenario, but close. An area company and a group of middle school students recently teamed up to build a playhouse.

In the spring, Greg Ingersoll, of Wausau Homes Elkhorn, started working with a group of eight sixth-grade students at Elkhorn Area Middle School that are part of the Project Lead the Way Green Architecture class. Once the playhouse is finished – within the next two to three weeks – it will be donated to New Beginnings to be raffled off and raise funds for the domestic abuse shelter project.

"It's a pretty cool project. We were going to build the playhouse anyway as a donation to New Beginnings, but then Greg mentioned he'd really like to do a partnership with one of the schools on a building project," Julia Ingersoll said.

### MAKING CONNECTIONS

Because of Greg's desire to work with one of the schools, Julia, who is the office and marketing manager at Wausau Homes, connected him with Eryca Card at the middle school, and from there the idea took off.

"When Greg and Julia approached me, the Green Architecture unit was about to start, so the timing was perfect," Card said.

The Ingersolls met with the students – four boys and four girls – three mornings each week for an hour while school was still in session.

One of the students, Haley Hoekstra, said working on the project was fun.

"It's great knowing that when it's finished, it's going to a good cause. My dad does roofing and my grandpa, carpentry so I help them out once in awhile," she said.

Student Kaiden Porep agreed. "It's been really fun building, cutting and putting it together," Porep said. "I'm excited to see it when it's done. It's going to help a lot of people."

Recently, the students had completed all the portions of the project within their capabilities. Now, subcontractors are working on things that require a higher skill level and tools, according to Julia.

She said this project highlights the possibilities of how businesses and schools can work together.

"This has been a wonderful community partnership and shows the amazing opportunities our kids have at our middle school," Julia said.

Card, a science teacher at Elkhorn Area Middle School and the Project Lead the Way coordinator for students in 4K through eighth grades, said the playhouse project was a blessing.

"We are always looking for ways to make our students' learning more real-life, and to also partner with



Above: Hoekstra secures a board to the base of the playhouse with an electric screwdriver. At left: After measuring where to cut, Suttman operates the saw under close supervision from Ingersoll.

the community as we realize how important that is," Card said.

"Not only did this project do that, but it also allowed our students to serve the less fortunate in the community and to have a specific purpose for their learning," she added.

### LEADING THE WAY

Card said the Green Architecture unit allows students to learn all about construction – from the land that is the best option, to environmental factors, to designing and creating houses from green materials.

She said Greg was a phenomenal teacher.

"He exuded patience, knowledge and an 'I do, you watch. You do, I'll watch. You do it on your own' attitude with our students. It followed the way that PLTW releases projects to students through the APB approach to instruction," Card said.

APB is the activity-, project- and problem-based instructional design of PLTW that centers on hands-on, real-world activities, projects and problems that help students understand how the knowledge and skills they develop in the classroom may be applied in everyday life.

PLTW, a nonprofit organization, provides a transformative learning experience for PreK-12 students and teachers. It empowers students to develop in-demand, transportable knowledge and skills through pathways in computer science, engineering and biomedical science. Card, who was named PLTW

Educational Leader of the Year in February, has been instrumental in the Elkhorn Area School District's efforts.

"Our adoption model is unique in that we have all strands – engineering, biomedical and computer science – started for 4 years to 12th grade. We implement it at the lower level," Elkhorn Area District Administrator Jason Tadlock said.

He said having all kids exposed to PLTW programming was his vision when he was first hired as the

EASD administrator.

"In order to maintain our well-being, we need to create, innovate and to design," Tadlock said.

He said the learning is open-ended, and students learn to design, modify and improve.

"PLTW is an integration of different skills," Tadlock said. "It is a reflection of a team effort."

### FAR-REACHING IMPACT

According to Card, the playhouse project with the Ingersolls was also a team effort.

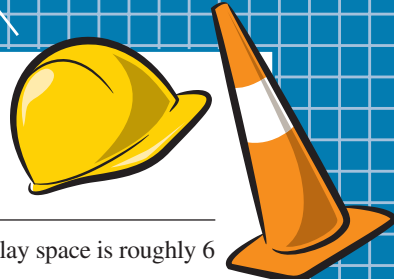
"We are very grateful for the time that Wausau Homes put in with our students, mentoring them in the trade of construction," Card said.

"I look forward to working with them long into the future, as the impact it has on each of our students is far-reaching."

Julia said for Greg, it comes down to his desire to share his passion with young people.

"He wants to make sure the next generation has an interest in carrying this on," she said.

## READY TO PLAY?



The playhouse footprint is 7 x 10 feet. The interior play space is roughly 6 x 8 feet with a vaulted ceiling.

Wausau Homes Elkhorn donated the labor and materials, along with eight Elkhorn Area Middle School sixth-grade students. Badger Contracting helps with moving of the playhouse from location to location.

The playhouse is valued at \$6,000 and only 500 tickets will be sold.

The winning ticket will be drawn at Elkhorn's Oktoberfest event on Sat., Oct. 19, at 3:30 p.m. from the main stage. The winner need not be present.

Raffle tickets will be sold at \$25 each or five for \$100 and available by early September at the following confirmed locations in Elkhorn: Wausau Homes, 206 E. Walworth St.; and the Elkhorn Area Chamber of Commerce, 203 E. Walworth St.

Watch the New Beginnings Shelter Facebook page or our website at: [newbeginningswalworth.com](http://newbeginningswalworth.com) for more information on additional ticket sales locations.