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OFRI Forestry Engineer Visits Madison High School

PORTLAND, OR—Peter Matzka, education specialist for the Oregon Forest Resources Institute, first became interested in engineering at the ripe old age of twelve when a civil engineer visited his 6th grade class. “She talked about swimming pools and how engineering related. I loved to build stuff, and I liked swimming”, explained Matzka. For Peter, that classroom visit during his youth sparked a very bold interest in engineering that may have gone undiscovered. It was learning about the connection between math, science, and real world applications like swimming pools that pushed Peter in the right direction.



Now holding his PhD, Matzka enjoys visiting classrooms around the Northwest on behalf of the Oregon Forest Resources Institute. On a visit to Madison High School this month, Matzka talked to Thuy Nguyen’s first period geometry class. He discussed some of the high points behind a career in forestry, boasting about the fun of going to work in the outdoors. And, equipped with some of the tools he uses in the field, Matzka illustrated how geometry and algebra helps engineers in the field.

For teacher Thuy Nguyen, Peter’s visit helped satisfy the question she gets from kids on a daily basis. “Kids always ask ‘why do we need math’ or ‘what are we ever going to use this for’. A visit like this makes the math tangible”, commented Nguyen.

National Engineers Month (February) is orchestrated by the **Business Education Compact**, a local non-profit organization dedicated to “making learning real” for Oregon and SW Washington students. In its 16th year, the program has enabled more than 275,000 students to have the privilege of interacting with a real engineer in their classroom to date.

Created in 1991 by the Oregon legislature, the **Oregon Forest Resources Institute** is tasked to improve public understanding of the state’s forest resources and to encourage environmentally sound forest management through training and other educational programs for forest landowners. OFRI is funded by a dedicated harvest tax on forest products producers.

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