

TUFF TORQ AND YANMAR SUPPORT EDUCATIONAL
PROGRAM IN ALABAMA THROUGH SHOPRATS ORGANIZATION

BIRMINGHAM, AL -- Skilled craftsmanship pays off for the students at Chelsea Middle School's Shoprat organization. A team of eight students, led by eight-grade teacher Brian Copes, competed in the 8th annual Basic Utility Vehicle (BUV) Competition held in Indianapolis on April 18-19, 2008. The students took home a first and second place victory in the open class – competing against about 40 other college students from around the country. Copes credits the Shoprat program and support from partners like Tuff Torq Corporation (TTC) and Yanmar Company, Ltd. as a major factor in his school doing so well in the competition.

“It took hard work, perseverance and creativity to design and build the BUV,” explains Copes. “Everyday was an opportunity to learn about skilled labor, and our students were excited and energized about the project from the start.”

The BUV Competition goal for 2008 was to provide a low-cost, easy-to-construct vehicle that could be used to carry school children in Third World countries such as Africa. Chelsea students built two vehicles for the competition -- one a basic utility vehicle and the other a basic utility “bus” like vehicle.

“I was amazed at how the students latched on to the project,” says Copes. “I saw a transformation in many of the students – both in attitude about school, personal behavior and self-confidence.”

A goal of the Shoprat organization is to support the local community by inspiring the next generation to take interest in hands-on careers and hobbies like the BUV project.

According to Copes, most schools throughout the nation have removed Shop Classes from the curriculum that taught students vital hand-on skills and created interest for Skilled Trade careers.

“If winning the BUV competition open class is any sign of how successful the Shoprat program is in Alabama, then Chelsea's program must be working,” says Copes. “Our team has placed first or second in the open class in BUV Competition for the last three years in a row.”

The Shoprat program in Alabama is supported by many businesses, including Tuff Torq and Yanmar. Not only do the two companies contribute diesel engines and drive systems to the program, but also they are represented on the Shoprat's local Alabama chapter board of directors. Efforts are also underway to organize a Shoprat chapter in TTC's hometown, Morristown, Tennessee.

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