

Apprentice competing for top spot

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A Napier carpenter has his sights set on taking home the national title at this year's Registered Master Builders Carters 2017 Apprentice of the Year.

Jack Clifford will be among 10 young carpenters competing for the top award in Auckland later this week.

Since winning the Hawke's Bay and East Coast division of the competition in August, Mr Clifford has been refining his craft.

"It's pretty good. I've been spending time with the boss practicing for the interview and a bit of stuff. The thing is that I learn something new every day on the job," Mr Clifford said.

To win the national competition, the finalists must impress the judging panel in the two-day event, which includes a 45-minute interview and a six-hour practical challenge.

"It's a bit to take on but there's no point going just to participate. You have to go there pretty confident and wanting to win it." Although, not much information has been given regarding the practical challenge.

"It's all a bit hush hush. All we know is that it will be donated to the SPCA.

"It's about giving a set of plans and a time limit in a pressure cooker environment and seeing how well you perform," he said.

He will be joined by his mum, foreman and boss for the occasion.

At just 22 years old, Mr Clifford already has five years' experience, since beginning work at Christie Builders and Joiners during his studies, and then working his way up to foreman at the company.

"It will definitely get my name out there that's for sure. It will be good for my reputation and my company's reputation; that they train really good apprentices." He said he would recommend it to other apprentices wanting to gain valuable skills.

Looking to the future, Mr Clifford said he would like to have his own company and carry on with renovation work and restoring old houses.

Registered Master Builders chief executive, David Kelly said Apprentice of the Year not only promotes the fantastic career opportunities in the industry for apprentices, but also encourages more employers to take them on.

"Apprentice of the Year showcases the skills and abilities of our apprentices who will go on to become the industry's future leaders. It also celebrates the employers who invest in them to future-proof their businesses and the construction pipeline," Mr Kelly said.

"The rate of carpentry apprentices in training is increasing at a much greater rate than the number of employers taking them on. Between June 2016 and June 2017, the number of apprentices increased by 1007, yet the number of employers training them increased by only 421. With the growth in apprentice numbers comes the need for more employers to provide them with the opportunities they need to succeed and make their mark on the industry." The national winner will receive prizes including the use of a Ford Ranger Ute for a year, a \$5000 grant from Carters and a range of quality tools, as well as an iPad, courtesy of MBIE.

All 10 finalists will also attend a specially designed Outward Bound course and the Registered Master

Builders House of the Year National Gala on November 25.

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Caption Text:

EYES ON THE PRIZE: Napier carpenter, Jack Clifford will be among 10 finalists taking part in the Registered Master Builders Carters 2017 Apprentice of the Year on Thursday in Auckland.

PHOTO/WARREN BUCKLAND