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# Students Explore Career Options as Davie County Celebrates Manufacturing Day 2018

**By Jeanna Baxter White**

To celebrate Manufacturing Day 2018, several local businesses and Davie County manufacturers provided a unique opportunity for all eighth-grade students in Davie County.

On October 5th, students from Ellis, North Davie, and South Davie Middle Schools each toured two different locations including DEX Heavy Duty Parts, Gildan, Ingersoll Rand, Pro Refrigeration, DCCC – Davie Campus, and WFBH-Davie Medical Center – Bermuda Run. Other students from all three schools spent their tour-time experiencing many different facets of Ashley Furniture Industries, Inc.

This is the second year Davie County has participated in National Manufacturing Day through the collaborative efforts of the Davie County Chamber of Commerce, Davie County Schools, Davie County Economic Development, DCCC, and the Davie business community.

Approximately 500 students and staff were exposed to the many outstanding career opportunities that exist here in the county. Business leaders provided informative tours including examples of how their employees use math, science, technology, and communication skills. Students were intrigued with the emphasis on safety, size of the facilities, variety of jobs including the educational requirements for the job, and the machinery used in the day-to-day operation of the businesses. DCCC showcased its many career paths to students who toured healthcare-related hands-on learning stations as well as the mobile manufacturing lab, an ambulance, a fire truck, and a tractor trailer used for the truck driving program.

Hosted annually, Manufacturing Day is a national event executed at the local level and typically focuses on manufacturing careers. “We expanded the types of businesses students visited to better align the many opportunities available here in Davie. By adding our state-of-the-art medical facility in Bermuda Run and expansive career path offerings at DCCC, our event was truly a “career exploration day” for our students,” said Carolyn McManamy, director of Davie CONNECT, a new workforce development initiative of Davie County Economic Development to connect businesses to resources and kids to careers.

“Middle school students are the next generation workforce and these tours are designed to expose them to career opportunities, show how their current and future curriculum ties to real-world careers and ignite interest in their future,” McManamy said. “During the tours, businesses showcased the scope of jobs available at their facilities and discussed the requisite higher education or skills training needed.”

Students were fascinated by what they experienced and appreciated the efforts of their tour guides and the employees that they had the opportunity to observe.

“I thought it was interesting learning how the business works,” said Genesis Antunez, a student from South Davie.

“I liked seeing how the robots worked. It was really cool,” added South Davie student, Cadyn Tanis.

“Everyone worked so hard to give us the chance to see what their jobs are and to give us ideas of what we might want to do in the future,” said North Davie student, Anna Johnson.

Zach Cline, also from North Davie, agreed and said, “I appreciated seeing how hard everyone worked and realized how everything had a purpose.”

The teachers were equally impressed with the experience.

“From a teacher’s perspective, it was great to see and hear how technology, automation, and teamwork are being used and developed at Ashley Furniture,” said Jamey Holt, who teaches math/social studies at North Davie. “The students were able to see that the traits teachers stress will be vital to their role in the workplace.”

Kristin Pitts, a science/social studies teacher at South Davie, commented, “It was interesting to see just how reliant each person is on the other people in their team. Without teamwork, production and higher wages would not be possible.”

“As a school district, it is our responsibility to make students aware of all educational and employment opportunities, and this collaborative effort is an excellent means to familiarize our students with the diverse careers available in Davie County,” said Anthony Davis, director of CTE and Federal Programs for Davie County High School. “MFG Day was also a wonderful learning experience for our middle school teachers who saw first-hand the practical application of the skills they are teaching in the classroom.”

Business and industry participants appreciated the chance to showcase their facilities as well as the career opportunities they have to offer to this future workforce.

“Ingersoll Rand participated in Manufacturing Day because we want to inspire the next generation of manufacturers,” said Ashley Kern, human resources generalist.

Matt Britt, marketing manager, Davie & Lexington Medical Centers, said, “Wake Forest Baptist Health Davie Medical Center passionately supports workforce development in any way we can. The youth in our county and the surrounding areas will be our health care workers of tomorrow, and we are proud to be able to invite them to our facility and show them some of what we do. We hope it has a positive impact on their future goals and endeavors.”

“We enjoy opening our doors every year to showcase our manufacturing facility to our area students,” said Clark Bunting, senior HR manager, Ashley Furniture Industries, Inc. “National Manufacturing Day is a great opportunity for Ashley Furniture to inspire and educate the future workforce about manufacturing careers and their benefits to our country.”

McManamy has been pleased with the great feedback she has received from businesses as well as the students and teachers. She and Davis appreciate everyone who helped make MFG Day 2018 a success. “This is the first in a series of programs that will directly connect our students to our businesses. The next steps will involve developing a formal program where students of various ages are exposed to a broad variety of career paths and educational opportunities. Aligning business needs with curriculum will ensure Davie County has a ready and able workforce to meet the challenges of businesses today and in the future.”