

Local schools to participate in manufacturing tour

Last updated: October 22, 2014 6:02PM - 128 Views - The Bellevue Gazette



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FREMONT — Teachers, principals and counselors from area schools will play the roles of students eager to learn more this Friday for the upcoming 4-County Career Showcase.

The daylong showcase was created with the idea of teaching area educators about manufacturing on the local level for the National Manufacturing Month of October.

Dozens of school staff members from Erie, Huron, Sandusky and Ottawa counties will be invited to several factories Friday morning to learn more about manufacturing and what employers look for in new hires. The group will board charter buses to visit several different locations.

Among the manufacturers on the showcase's tour are:

Bellevue

- Mitsubishi Chemical Performance Polymers, Inc.

Clyde

- Revere Plastics System
- Whirlpool– Clyde Division

Fremont

- Freeman Company
- Green Bay Packaging Inc.

By organizing the showcase, those at the Sandusky County Economic Development Corporation hope current students will learn more about manufacturing from their teachers and possibly enter into the manufacturing field after graduation.

“We started this because we felt that there were certain skill sets that manufacturers were looking for when hiring,” said Lay Reiter, executive director for the Sandusky County Economic Development Corporation. “We identified certain local places because we felt they focused on a good set of skills its employees would need to have — like good math and science skills.”

The four counties have tailored their events a little differently, but all have a student career focus.

Sandusky County's event is organized by Sandusky County Economic Development Corporation with sponsorship from AEP-Ohio and The Bellevue Hospital.

The participants' will have lunches prepared and served by the culinary students of Vanguard Career Center during the tour. Following lunch, a representative of Sandusky County Human Resource Managers' Association will address interviews skills and the school will provide actual tours of the electrical, mechanical and welding student labs.

"This will be great because it helps better inform those who are directly working with students on a daily basis," Reiter said. "We hope that this will help our youth better understand what manufacturing is like today and to prepare them for the workforce of tomorrow."

Although this will be the first year for the 4-County Showcase, Sandusky County held its first showcase last year and was successful enough to attract the other counties.

"We've all been working together to plan this for almost nine months now," Reiter said. "The feedback from area schools was excellent from last year's event and we're hoping for the same reaction this year."

Last year, several Bellevue City Schools staff members attended the Sandusky County showcase to learn more about manufacturing.

"This helped us to know what types of skills our students will need upon graduation to obtain manufacturing positions in local companies," said Kim Schubert, Bellevue City Schools superintendent. "The company representatives who spoke to the group also offered us information about what types of skills they look for when hiring. This information helps us prepare our students for careers in manufacturing. It also helps us offer a curriculum which provides our students with the skills necessary to be career ready upon graduation."

Schubert said the showcase allowed the schools' staff to see first hand the types of products Bellevue's manufacturers are producing.

With the up-close learning the showcase provided, Schubert said Bellevue students will benefit from what their teachers and counselors learn.

"It's very important that students and others are aware of what manufacturer's needs are," Reiter said.

Reiter said the manufacturing industry is growing in the U.S. and younger generations should take notice of the job opportunities that will be available for them after graduation.

Manufacturers in Sandusky County are showing the state and the country that the job market is alive and well.

For instance, Reiter said the unemployment rate for Sandusky County is at 4.7 percent. That figure is lower than the state's – at 5.3 percent — and the country as a whole — at 6 percent.

“Manufacturing is really alive and thriving,” Reiter said. “The reality is the Baby Boomers are starting to retire and the country is going to need a workforce ready to replace them.”

Although the numbers say the industry is doing well, Schubert said the showcase is still needed because it's important for students and school staff to be aware of the the manufacturing industry at the local level.

“The showcase is important because it opens the lines of communication between local manufacturers and our schools,” Schubert said. “Once we know what types of skills a manufacturer is looking for, we can offer additional training to our students to meet their workforce needs. We can then share this information with our students so they can make the best possible college and career decisions.”

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