

Schools, employers partner to train future workforce

Each week this column will share information about Chisago Lakes' participation in America's Best Communities (ABC), a nationwide competition to reward progressive communities as they plan a revitalized future. This week we take a closer look at ABC's partnership with the Chisago Lakes Area Schools and local businesses in the area of workforce training.

ABC Coordinator Tangi Schaapveld explains, "The school, in partnership with local businesses, is taking the lead on our Future Workforce initiative." Three projects now underway will expose high school students to real life work experiences and professional mentoring. And ABC grant funds will provide a new laser engraver for the school's technical education programs.

OJT becomes Work Base Learning

What was once known as On the Job Training, or OJT, is now offered as Work Base Learning. Last year, the high school matched the special interests of seven students with local employers. A student who wanted to learn more about baking was paired with Grandpas' Cheesecakes in Lindstrom. A student interested in artistic pursuits worked with the woodcarver at Soderlund Mills in Chisago City, and another student was men-

tored by an engineer at Kendall Howard. LEI Products and Chisago Hardware also served as student work sites. Work Base Learning Coordinator Mickelle Pohlman hopes to expand the program to a dozen students next fall. She adds that several local manufacturers are interested in serving as work base learning sites.

Work Base Learning Tours

In October, six manufacturers opened their doors to high school students for the second annual Chisago Lakes Work Base Learning Tour; 89 students took part—more than double the number participating in 2015. Each student was allowed to tour four facilities. Hosts were Plastic Products, Smith Metals, Kendall Howard, Multisource, Rosenbauer and Wyoming Machine. "The students loved it," says Pohlman.

"We recognize that manufacturing has been a missing element in our high school curriculum," says Pohlman. But next fall a new course will change that.

New Manufacturing Career Class starts in 2017

Next fall Chisago Lakes High School will offer a new manufacturing career class that could become self-sustaining. "Students enrolled in the course will create



something that they can sell," says Pohlman, "and proceeds of the sales will help to support the in-school manufacturing program.

"We've been looking at another school that manufactured charcoal grills. By next year, we hope to have a product that we can test market." In the process, students will learn about various aspects of manufacturing, from planning and design, to operations and sales.

To learn more about the America's Best Communities contest, and the work being done by the local ABC committee, go to www.chisagolakes.com, or inquire at the Chisago Lakes Chamber office in Lindstrom, 651-257-1177.

Next week: **Take a stroll on the FutureWalk.**

