

Sunday Bulletin

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All about the future



Norwich Free Academy Senior Daniel Sanchez tries a VR manufacturing simulator at the Explore Manufacturing Expo at Dodd Stadium Thursday. MATT GRAHN/NORWICH BULLETIN

Students get peek into manufacturing careers at expo

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USA TODAY NETWORK

Dodd Stadium was all about the future on Thursday - but not baseball. Instead, 540 students from all over Eastern Connecticut came and made paper, learned about robots, and thought about their future.

The Explore Manufacturing Expo made its fifth stop on the CT Manufacturing Roadshow '23 as part of a series of events introducing middle and high school students to the potential of pursuing manufacturing or other related lines of work for a living. The Roadshow

is expected to be an annual event.

Thirty manufacturers showed up to present and interact with the students, including Electric Boat, Loos and Co., SPIROL, and InCord.

This is twice as many as previous manufacturing expos held at the Norwich Holiday Inn by the Greater Norwich Area Chamber of Commerce (GNACC), Executive Director Angela Adams said.

Manufacturing has a large place in Eastern Connecticut

The Norwich event was a collaboration between the state, GNACC, the

Eastern Workforce Investment Board, and the Eastern Advanced Manufacturing Alliance. This partnership is important so people can think about why students get excited about opportunities, and can work with partners to bring those resources together, ReadyCT Executive Director Sharon Marimón said.

One of the companies attending was Rand-Whitney Containerboard, based out of Montville. Their stand modeled how the company makes its paper products. HR Manager Sarah Susco was happy to see excited stu-

See EXPO, Page 2A

Expo

Continued from Page 1A

dents learning about manufacturing.

"It's extremely important for kids that are middle school or high school aged to see the opportunities that are out there," she said.

Manufacturing careers are important and well-paying opportunities for people in eastern Connecticut and statewide. While Electric Boat and related manufacturers have a long history in the area, there are a variety of things made in Connecticut, from offshore wind and advanced manufacturing, to jet engines, even the first toothpaste in tubes in New London, Connecticut Chief Manufacturing Officer Paul Lavoie said.

"Not everyone wants to go to college, but everyone wants to have a great life," he said. "You can get a job in manufacturing, and then go to college later."

A great time to get into manufacturing

It's also a good time to get into manufacturing, as around 40 companies are interested coming from out of state, attracted by a smarter workforce, "Connecticut's secret sauce." For example,



Parish Hill Middle-High School Senior Delaney Bill learns about manufacturing rope from Paul Urbanowicz of InCord at the Explore Manufacturing Expo. MATT GRAHN/NORWICH BULLETIN

Blueprint Robotics, a company that uses robots to build structures to order, is coming to Windsor from Baltimore, MD, operating a 450,000 square foot facility with 100 employees, Lavoie said.

"They're coming for the high-value work force around robotics engineers, not carpenters," he said.

One of the students attending was Norwich Free Academy Senior Daniel

Sanchez. His friends were keen on taking pictures of him while he was trying to measure the girth of a pipe in a VR simulator.

"It was pretty cool," he said.

While he isn't sure what he wants to do yet, Sanchez wants to be in manufacturing. He wants to get an associate's degree at CT State Community College - Three Rivers. He was glad to get an op-

portunity to talk to the companies that attended.

"I'm exploring my options," he said.

Diesel mechanics

Another student attending is Parish Hill Middle-High School Senior Delaney Bill. Her family and their friends own trucking companies, and her teacher said she's a better mechanic than he is.

"I love to know how everything works, and take it apart until I can't take it apart anymore, and put it back together," she said.

Bill might go to diesel mechanic school in Jacksonville Florida, or at Ohio State. She might also take a gap year and work at a local truck garage. The Dodd Stadium event gave Bill more insight in how things work, she said.

"It's a lot of hands-on stuff, and it's nice to know a lot of other people are interested," she said.

It's good to see the enthusiasm the students showed Thursday, EAMA Regional Sector Partnership Director Tony Benoit said.

"We have the workforce," he said.

For the students that came to the event, but don't eventually end up in a manufacturing career, Thursday's event is still important for awareness, Lavoie said.