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News | Southern Vermont

Mack reaches out to local teens

By Patrick McArdle
STAFF WRITER | October 24, 2013

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Patrick McArdle / Staff photo

Ben Gelheiser, a student at the Southwest Vermont Career Development Center, participates in a competitive exercise at Mack Molding in Arlington on Wednesday. Officials at Mack Molding invited local high students to visit their plant this week to learn about what happens at Mack and the career opportunities it can provide.

ARLINGTON — To show students what kind of manufacturing happens locally and what jobs might be available to them, officials at Mack Molding opened their doors to high school students in Bennington County this week.

Almost 30 students from the Southwest Vermont Career Development Center in Bennington spent Wednesday learning about how Mack makes the F^rreal Frozen Beverage Blender, a milkshake maker, among other products.

Students from Burr and Burton Academy visited Monday and Mack hosted Arlington Memorial High School students Tuesday.

Students said they got a lot from the experience. Amanda Dean of Pownal, the only female student from two programs, “Design and Fabrication” and “Design and Engineering,” said it was “the coolest thing ever.”



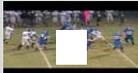
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"I was just fascinated by everything, I guess ... (like) the machinery they make here and the different parts to go in (the milkshake maker) and how complicated it actually is just to make some milkshake you have," she said.

Dean said she was considering working in manufacturing. She said she was happy to see how many women work at Mack.

"I liked seeing that, walking in, seeing there's just as many girls as ... guys," she said.

Jeff Somple, president of Mack's Northeast operations, started the tour by asking how many students had been inside the building before. None of the students raised their hands.

"That answers the question of why we're doing this," Somple said. "We think we've got a really great story to tell. We think we have a lot of really neat stuff going on in here. We don't think you know about it."

He said Mack had a successful internship program and wanted students to consider the opportunity.

"A lot of you are probably figuring if you want to make a living, you're going to have to leave Vermont or you're going to have to leave Southern Vermont," Somple said. "You have to go to Burlington or you have to go to Boston. You have to get out of the area. And maybe that's true, but not necessarily."

Students were given a tour of the plant's manufacturing floor and got to visit stations devoted to molding plastic parts, cutting sheet metal and machining parts. Later in the day, they were led through a manufacturing "competition" by Dan Shea, an advisor from the Vermont Manufacturing Extension Center.

Bruce Gabrus, who teaches manufacturing technology and design manufacturing at the career development center, said the event at Mack fit perfectly with a goal on which he had been working. He said he wanted students to explore career options with the help of an actual manufacturer and learn about modern manufacturing.

"It's not just a dirty, unlit factory where people do not need skills. ... This is exactly it," he said.

One student, Tyler Harrington of Bennington, said the visit helped him focus his own goals. He learned he could have a good career working with metal in a machine shop, which was already something in which he had an interest.

Dakota White, another student from Bennington, said it was interesting to see bigger and more modern equipment than what is available at school.

"It's a lot more complicated than I first thought," White said. "I've got definitely a lot of work to do to get into a field like



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