

AREA STUDENTS LEARN ABOUT NORTH IOWA'S CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

GETTING OUT OF THE CLASSROOM INTO THE ACTUAL WORLD OF JOBS IN NORTH IOWA, meeting real people who work here, may help students see beyond basic career titles on aptitude tests.

That's the hope of the North Iowa Corridor and local industries who are working together to create new ways to reach young people with a message: You can have a good life here.

The economic development corporation and schools teamed up with dozens of area businesses in November to introduce students to the real opportunities for jobs worth staying for or coming back to. IowaWORKS Mason City, Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services, and North Iowa Area Community College also participated.

At Mason City High School's career day, junior class students took the ACT National Career Readiness Certificate test in the morning. This surveys an individual's ability to figure things out and returns a certificate level that can be used on a resumé. It also helps students identify areas in which they could improve. At an afternoon career expo, they chose to listen to short presentations from among some 20 businesses. Each business was represented by employees who talked about their companies, their jobs, and their path to current positions.

"The key takeaway is that students are exposed to the great careers in North Iowa," said Hunter Callanan, of

the North Iowa Corridor Economic Development Corporation.

Also in November, approximately 80 juniors at Clear Lake High School participated in career track tours. Students chose from one of five general career tracks: healthcare; professional services; technology and entrepreneurship; agriculture/biology/science and engineering; and advanced manufacturing and trades.

NIC lined up three to four local businesses for each career track, and the whole class got on buses and traveled to visit actual companies representing their chosen track.

"It was a really good day," Callanan said. "We got students out into businesses in our area. It broadens their horizons with the great careers right here in our own backyard, in places they drive past every day and never know what goes on there."

Visiting local business sites opened students' eyes to the variety and depth of real job options beyond generic career labels. Callanan said one student said she was surprised to discover so many healthcare career options besides "nurses and doctors."

Callanan said they hope to have some follow-up between businesses and students who expressed major interest in job shadowing. NIC worked with Clear Lake High School Principal Chris Murphy and counselor Amy Sunde to plan the tours.

Participating businesses were asked to emphasize the history of their organizations; careers involved, from entry level to top positions; education and training needed for those careers; and most importantly, to remind students that great careers are available in North Iowa and they can stay or come back after getting their education.



Mason City High School Students learn about opportunities with DealerBuilt at the Career Expo



Clear Lake High School students tour the MetalCraft facility and learn more about careers available

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