Manufacturing the next generation: a new kind of smart

Through a series of brainstorming sessions, the Economic Development Council hosted by North Georgia Technical College is putting plans into place to build a pipeline of workers for the region’s industries.

Bringing together top industry executives and school superintendents throughout North Georgia, problem solving and root-cause analysis has spurred the activities designed to heighten interest in manufacturing careers.

Gus Whalen of the Warren Featherbone Institute summed it up best when he noted that the manufacturing innovations of this century require workers with “a new kind of smart.” The environment in today’s manufacturing facilities are a far cry from those of the noise and grime of the 1950’s. And along with that, employees need new sets of technical skills and, more importantly, critical thinking skills.

“The jobs in manufacturing are here, and they aren’t just jobs – they are careers,” said NGTC Vice President of Economic Development Dr. Mark Ivester. “We’ve come a long way, but there is more to do.” Since the first meeting in 2013, the EDC is making great strides in increasing the awareness of career potential for the up and coming generation.

Also as a result of the ongoing think tank discussions, the college introduced a new program for Certified Production Technicians which is offered through the NGTC Economic Development Department. Covering four modules including safety, quality, processes, and maintenance awareness, those who complete the program will also receive OSHA 10 certification and the Six Sigma Yellow Belt.

“The Certified Production Technician is a program developed by the Manufacturing Skill Standards Council,” said Ivester. “It is the perfect answer to the request for qualified entry-level production level employees.”

Teachers in the high schools, middle, and even some of the elementary schools have been taking a planning day to tour local manufacturing sites. High school students have taken part in Student Success Academies, work-based programs, and some paid internships.

At the college, a highly successful new summer camp called, “Nuts, Bolts, and Thingamajigs,” is held for 12-15 year olds while the wildly popular Lego® camps are aimed at an the even
younger potential workforce of 6-12 year olds. Last fall, the college coordinated a video contest amongst the high schools, pairing them with local manufacturers. The completed “What’s So Cool About Manufacturing” videos are available for public viewing on the college’s youtube channel.

“There are so many great opportunities for young people to experience a different kind of career option,” said Ivester. “Each summer we watch these kids come up with an idea, work the design up on the computer, and take it all the way to the CNC machine is fantastic. Our future is bright because of the talent and energy of this generation.”

For more information on Economic Development programs at North Georgia Technical College, contact mivester@northgatech.edu.

Photo: A new kind of smart: Meadowbrook Machine’s Ashley Jordan, NGTC Machine Tool Graduate, is a second-generation small manufacturing businesswoman.