

Eyeing the future: Students examine manufacturing careers

By [JANUARY WETZEL](#)

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Karly Wayt and Erica Greene admit they didn't know much about RR Donnelley's commercial printing company in Seymour or what kind of product JLM Pharmatech produces.

They also weren't aware of the many job and internship opportunities in manufacturing available to students.

Thanks to Jackson County Industrial Development Corp. and the Jackson County Workforce Partnership, that changed Wednesday.

After talking to representatives from several local industries during JCIDC's first iPOD day, the two Crothersville High School students gained new insight into the importance of manufacturing in the community as well as knowledge of career opportunities. The iPOD event, which stands for Industry Possibility and Opportunity Day, brought students from six area high schools to the Seymour High School auxiliary gymnasium for a career fair geared toward manufacturing.

Students in Bob Sexton's manufacturing and engineering program at SHS came up with the name iPOD as a way to get students' attention. By participating, students could register to win an Apple iPod.

Participating schools were Seymour, Brownstown Central, Medora, Crothersville, Trinity Lutheran and Jennings County. Later on in the day, the event was open to the general public, allowing adults and other students to attend.

Set up throughout the gym, local companies, including Aisin USA, Cummins Industrial Center, Dicksons, Employment Plus, Excel Manufacturing and JLM Pharmatech, were on hand to discuss with students career opportunities, job openings, summer jobs, college internships and other opportunities in today's manufacturing world.

Greene and Wayt both agreed they got a lot from the event.

"I think it's good because if you don't know if you're going to go to college or what you want to do you can get some idea," Greene, a junior, said. "If you see something that interests you, it can help you figure it out. If you want to go to college and think you don't have the money for it, you can get a summer job to help pay for it."

Wayt, a senior, agreed, saying she might get a summer job this year to help pay for gas money.

"If I find a place I like good enough I would probably think about it," she said of the job prospects Wednesday. "Factories, even though you're young, they still pay a lot more than a fast food restaurant or someplace like that."

The two girls weren't the only ones to benefit from the event. Chris Gray with RR Donnelley

said he also got a lot out of talking with the students.

"I think this event is great," he said. "I have noticed a lot of interest from the kids."

Although RR Donnelley doesn't offer a lot of summer jobs to students, Gray said iPOD Day was a good way for the students to get insight into their futures.

"If they go to college there's this path, or if they don't go to college, there's still another viable way to have a good career," he said of what kids could learn from the event. "I tried to explain our promotional opportunities and how you can start out at entry level and work your way up. We have a lot of people that have done that. They started right out of high school and within a few years have moved up the ranks and are making pretty good money."

Gray said the kids came prepared with questions.

"I explained a little bit about the payscale and how flexible our company is," he said. "We've got so many locations around the world they could live almost anywhere they want to. Basically, they just wanted to know what we do. It's a good first question because a lot of people don't know what we do."

Jackie Hill, workforce development coordinator with JCIDC said the event is all about "manufacturing awareness."

"It's marketing those manufacturing careers to our students, and also tying in post secondary education, training programs and degree programs that are out there to benefit the students and help them get those jobs," she said.

Besides learning about manufacturing jobs, students could also pick up information about college and furthering their education from the Community Learning Center, Indiana University-Purdue University in Columbus, Ivy Tech Community College and Purdue University College of Technology.

Overall, Hill was happy with the turnout from both the students and the companies.

"We had a good response, and are hoping to grow it next year," she said. "There is a negative image of manufacturing and we are trying to erase that. The days of walking into a manufacturing facility thinking that you don't need any skills to get a good job are over."

Other participating companies were Kobelco Metal Powder, Rose Acre Farms, Schwarz Pharma, Seymour Tubing, Valeo Sylvania, Versatech and Wal-Mart Distribution.