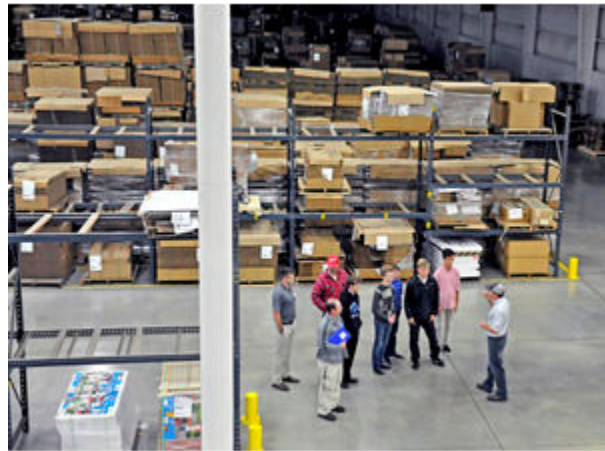


An inside view of Wooster's manufacturing

Manufacturing Day connects students with potential careers



By LINDA HALL Staff Writer Published: October 3, 2015 4:00AM

WOOSTER -- On Wayne County's second annual Manufacturing Day held on Friday, a panel of four local manufacturing employees who have found successful careers in the field gave 360 students from across the county a heads-up about what they could expect as they toured local companies and assured them of the career satisfaction and financial security they could enjoy entering one of the industries.

Panel moderator Bruce Hendrick, president and CEO of RBB Systems, told students at the opening session at Shisler Center that the manufacturing companies from the outside look like "big, nondescript buildings (where) you can't tell what's happening inside."

"Today is our chance to (see inside)," Hendrick said, in addition to being an opportunity to break the stereotype that manufacturing facilities are "dirty (and) dark," with employees "standing behind machines doing the same thing all day."

"Nothing could be further from the truth," he said.

"Things are changing all the time," said Madeline Mann, a manufacturing engineer at LuK USA. "You're never doing the same thing every day, every month, every year."

Orlanda Massie, a welder fitter from Will-Burt, said she didn't want to incur \$40,000-\$80,000 in debt in pursuit of a career through the college route. "You guys have that opportunity (for a career) now."

"These are lucrative opportunities," said Ryan Klaus, a corporate controller at Frito-Lay. "You're going to put money in the bank very quickly."

Citing the capability of growth through learning a technical skill and then getting further training if desired, Klaus said, "Now is an exciting time to get into the work force. Your parents are retiring at a rate of 10,000 per day."

As an apprentice or a journeyman, hands-on experience is "how you learn," Mann said.

Before making the decision to study welding, Massie had no inkling that would be her career field.

She recalled thinking, "I'm going to try this; I'm going to work hard." In doing so, she discovered, "The sky is the limit."

Once a potential employee "get(s) a foot in the door," Mann said, "the possibilities are endless."

"You're going to see a lot of good stuff today," Justin Starlin, president of the Wooster Area Chamber of Commerce, told students.

"Wayne County has a rich history in manufacturing," Wayne County Commissioner Scott Wiggam said, highlighting the opportunity for students to "talk to future employers."

"You never know where this might end up," Wiggam said, pointing out that some day, "You may be the boss; you may be the employer; you may be the designer that makes a product the world needs."

Lynnette Cowger, estimating manager, gave an overview of the tour of ArtiFlex, where stamping and assembly capabilities, tool and die and other skilled trade areas were demonstrated.

Employees may enter as entry level production operators, take advantage of periodic apprenticeship opportunities or seek training at schools that include Ohio State University Agricultural Technical Institute, Stark State University and the Wayne County Schools Career Center to learn to program robots.

"These people are very difficult (for us) to find," said ArtiFlex human resources supervisor Lori A. Kortkamp.

Potential employees must "stay clean," said Bill Burkhart, structural design manager for BCI, referring to being drug-free.

They also must "pay attention," Burkhart said. "The great local economy here is booming."

The BCI tour illustrated to students there is much more to a box than meets the eye, Burkhart said, pointing to a process encompassing design, graphics, manufacturing, warehousing and shipping.

Northwestern Local Schools' Project Lead the Way instructor Ryan Shearer brought 26 students to Manufacturing Day activities.

"That's their plan -- to go into some kind of engineering," he said, which could include pursuing a form of manufacturing.

Sixty Project Lead the Way students from Wooster High School participated.

"We're just trying to make connections with kids with local manufacturing and industry," said Associate Principal Nolan Wickard, so "they know there is a place right in Wayne County in and around Wooster (with) great opportunities for them to finish school and get into a great job in (this field)."

Cordell Smith, a guidance counselor at Smithville High School, brought 26 homeroom students who were interested in participating.

Ten districts and 12 manufacturers took part.

"It was nice having standing room only," said Wayne Girbach, director of the Wayne Economic Development Council's Workforce Innovations Network.

Reporter Linda Hall can be reached at 330-264-1125, Ext. 2230, or lhall@the-daily-record.com. She is [@lindahallTDR](#) on Twitter.