

BUSINESS

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CAREER TRAINING

Externship pairs teachers with businesses

Workforce Solutions
Deep East Texas

The second annual Workforce Solutions Deep East Texas Teacher Externship paired teachers with employers to highlight the skills necessary and the career opportunities available across the 12 counties in the region.

Twenty-five businesses and 27 teachers from 11 school districts collaborated June 13-17 to better prepare today's students for tomorrow's workforce. The focus was on high-demand occupations in industries such as manufacturing, health care, professional and technical services, and information technology.

"Currently there is a shortage of workers, and a skills gap has been identified by our region's employers," said Mark Durand, executive director of Workforce Solutions Deep East Texas. "The Teacher Externship was developed based on employer feedback to better connect the qualifications of students entering the workforce with the expectations of the workplace."

The 27 career and technical education teachers were matched with 25 businesses for a week of learning, observing and job-shadowing. The teachers gained industry



Clint Walker, career and technical education teacher with the Diboll school district, participated in the Workforce Solutions Deep East Texas Teacher Externship program offered by Lockheed Martin in Lufkin.

strategies for the classroom to help them inform, educate, guide and connect students to high-demand occupations that match their skill sets.

The project is funded 100% with federal funds through a \$58,112 grant from the Texas Workforce Commission.

State Rep. Trent Ashby said

the "exciting program" was relevant to everyone who was involved.

"This is really a model that should be replicated across the state of Texas," Ashby said. "This is a true win-win when you can bring educators and employers from the private sector into a week-long environment where they are collaborating, working together and sharing information."

"On the education side, for our teachers to be the best they can be in the classroom, they need to know what are the expectations of the employers in their communities. On the employer side, it's very helpful for them to be able to provide that input to these educators about the type of skills needed in the workforce and to continue to align education with workforce."

Among the outcomes from the experiences were: skill-specific lessons for the classroom, internships, job opportunities, mock interviews, employers speaking at schools, and student tours during the upcoming school year.

Teachers also heard employers talk about the need for soft skills such as reliability, accountability, communication, empathy, attendance, professional behavior, listen-

ing, decision-making, productivity and problem-solving.

Soft skills, the key to workplace success, were referred to as employability skills, work-readiness skills and job-readiness skills.

"As a result, the teachers have a better understanding of the high-demand industries and the types of technical and soft skills needed for success in the Deep East Texas economy," Durand said. "The employers and local schools have strengthened their relationships."

"On behalf of the local workforce development board, I want to express our appreciation to the employers who spent considerable time and resources to plan meaningful experiences for the teachers. We are equally grateful to the teachers who embraced the learning opportunity and devoted a week of their summer to the program."

Participating businesses were: Axley & Rode, Burns Forestry, Crockett Florist and Gifts, Crockett Medical Center, Crockett Veterinary Hospital, Etech, EverythingU, Lee Trans, Lincoln Lumber, Lockheed Martin, Louisiana Pacific Jasper OSB, Lufkin Gears, Marshall's Tax and Business, McWilliams & Son, MSGPR, NacSpace, Polk County Sher-

iff's Office, Sabine County Hospital, Spirit Outfitters, St. Luke's Health Memorial, STI Group, Third Day Farm and Ranch, Timberidge Nursing and Rehab, Vulcraft Texas and Woodland Heights Medical Center.

Participating school districts and teachers were:

■ Corrigan-Camden ISD: Tammy Farr, Phyllis Ortiz and Rayford Sweats

■ Crockett ISD: Chris Wilder and Rhett Wilson

■ Diboll ISD: Melinda Bra-suell, Melissa Kaemmerling, Brenda Palomino and Clint Walker

■ Grapeland ISD: Shellee Goolsby

■ Huntington ISD: Michael Lantz

■ Jasper ISD: Allen Had-not, Jimell Powell and Rachel Vickers

■ Latexo ISD: Tessa Easley, Larry Langford, Heather Mooneyham and Krystal Patterson

■ Lufkin ISD: Jennifer Free and Sonja Stephens

■ Nacogdoches ISD: Mary Sharp and Travis Squyres

■ Newton ISD: Andy Kibodeaux, Daniel Odom, Susie Osment and Sarah Trammell

■ West Sabine ISD: Tommy Jenkins

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