RCC hosts middle schoolers for Manufacturing Day

By Megan Crotty
RCC Writer/Editor

ASHEBORO — Randolph Community College hosted 225 eighth-grade students from nine Randolph County middle schools as part of the Manufacturing Day celebration on Friday, Oct. 5.

Eighth-graders from Archdale-Trinity, North Asheboro, North-eastern Randolph, Randleman, South Asheboro, Southeastern Randolph, Southwestern Randolph, and Uwharrie Charter Academy middle schools, as well as Uwharrie Ridge 6-12, heard from an Apprenticeship Randolph apprentice; participated in a mock assembly line; tried their hands at creating a "blinky badge," and enjoyed hands-on activities and demonstrations in the Gene Haas Computer-Integrated Machining Institute (CIM), Electrical Systems, Mechatronics and Welding areas.

"It is fun — hopefully, they remember their visit," CIM department head Garrett Parker said after showing a class the wireless capabilities of the HAAS VF-2.

"We want to change that perception of machining. Most people think of shop classes. We know how the machines work, but if we can get these young students to relate it to something like "Fortnite" — something they’re familiar with — that draws their attention. People talk about the skills gap, but we have the interest gap. We can’t do anything about the skills if they don’t know about it."

Before arriving on the RCC campus, the students toured several local plants, including Energizer Plant 1, Jasco Precision Inc., FEMMCO Manufacturing, Elastic Therapy Inc., The Timken Company, Aeccchrome Tool & Mold, Technomark, Saproa Manufacturing and EG Industries.

"I like it — all the machines," said SAMS eighth-grader Chandler Macon said after his class had just witnessed the water jet cut an outline of the state of North Carolina out of metal. "I could see myself going to school here. I’m looking forward to it!"

Manufacturing Day is held for eighth-graders in the fall and 10th-graders in the spring with the goal of educating students on careers, pay and opportunities in area industries as well as opportunities with Career-Technical Education classes at RCC.

"I've done it several years and seen the program evolve," said SWEMS counselor Brittany Roberts as her students were taking turns on the virtual welder.

"We just came off the assembly-line activity and they had a ton of fun with that. Every time I come to RCC I see something new."

The day is part of N.C. Manufacturing Week, which was held Oct. 2-4 and brings attention to a business sector that employs nearly 465,000 North Carolinians.

POSSIBLE CAREERS — Students pose after a day of touring local businesses and checking out career opportunities at Randolph Community College. Left, Students show off their finished products made at the Gene Haas Computer-Integrated Machining Institute at RCC as a part of Manufacturing Day on Oct. 5.

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INSIDE LOOK — Eighth graders from Archdale-Trinity, North Asheboro, Northeastern Randolph, Randleman, South Asheboro, Southeastern Randolph, Southwestern Randolph, Uwharrie Charter Academy middle schools and Uwharrie Ridge 6-12, are exposed to various careers.