‘RandolphWorks’: Students answer the call of industry

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Special to The Courier-Tribune
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CREATIVE PROGRAMS
— Nik Gumbas, a student at Wheatmore High School, works at Saponia in Seagrove as part of the ‘Apprenticeship Randolph’ program. The Randolph County School System’s followup to that successful student internship program is ‘RandolphWorks.’

ASHEBORO — The Randolph County School System is following up its successful student program “Apprenticeship Randolph” with an additional work-based learning program aimed at fulfilling the local industry’s need for an engaged, entry-level workforce for difficult-to-fill positions.

In addition to answering the call of industry, “RandolphWorks” was created to provide students in the low-wealth Randolph County school district with employment at a salary starting above minimum wage and with the support needed to graduate high school.

According to Nancy Cross, director of Career & Technical Education and Innovative School Design, the first cohort of “RandolphWorks” students will begin working this summer.

“Our goal is to begin with 30 students for the summer internship and grow to at least 10 percent of eligible juniors and seniors in the school system,” she said.

The details
To qualify, an applicant must:
■ Be 16 years of age or older.
■ Be a student in the Randolph County School System.
■ Complete an application.
■ Pass a background check and drug screening test.
■ Be available to work a minimum of 20 hours a week.
■ Be committed to graduating from high school.

Students who apply and are accepted into the program will be partnered with a participating company at a starting salary of at least $8 an hour, 75 cents above the current minimum hourly wage of $7.25 an hour.

“Starting pay is $8 an hour, but increases in increments up to $11 an hour,” Cross said. “Pay raises will be based on maintaining good grades and attendance at school.”

In addition to earning a wage, students will receive internship credit through their high school and participate in a career management class to hone their professional skills.

Students will also be assigned a mentor that will touch base with them at least twice a month to monitor progress and help address concerns.

“Randolph Community College is one of our partners that have already expressed interest in engaging and mentoring these students through their journey,” said Cross.

The process
Applications for the first summer cohort are now being accepted and may be found on the “RandolphWorks” website at www.randolphworkscnc.com.

According to Cross, the program will have three entry points each year — summer, fall and spring. Those who are interested are encouraged to check the website often for updates on participating companies, information on the wage structure and application and interview dates.

The first round of interviews for the summer internship will be held Saturday, May 19, from 9 a.m.-noon at Randolph Community College.

“This first round will be a speed interview event where our students will get exposure to our industry partners and will have a chance to answer and ask questions,” Cross said.

A second round of more formal interviews will follow at the place of business, with the company directly contacting the student to make an employment offer.

For the summer cohort, all offers will be made and the internship work experience will begin on Monday, June 18.

Cross said that while the ultimate goal is to have 15-20 companies involved in the program, she expects to have at least 10 on board for summer.

“Industry partners will be added to the website as they fully complete the requirements,” she said. “We have two companies at the moment who have completed all of the necessary steps — Design Master Displays and Jowat Adhesives.”

Cross said “RandolphWorks” would not be possible nor would have come together as quickly, in a matter of months, without the help of the community.

“Industry leaders in Randolph County have been amazing partners to the school system. They really see the vision to grow the capacity of the citizenship of our country and are willing to engage in creative programs to make it happen.”

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