

CT Manufacturing Roadshow shows students potential in the industry - here's what they learned

Matt Grahn Norwich Bulletin Sept 29

Dodd Stadium was all about the future on Thursday - but not baseball. Instead, 540 students from all over Eastern Connecticut came and made paper, learned about robots, and thought about their future.

The Explore Manufacturing Expo made its fifth stop on the CT Manufacturing Roadshow '23 as part of a series of events introducing middle and high school students to the potential of pursuing manufacturing or other related lines of work for a living. The Roadshow is expected to be an annual event.

Thirty manufacturers showed up to present and interact with the students, including Electric Boat, Loos and Co., SPIROL, and InCord.



This is twice as many as previous manufacturing expos held at the Norwich Holiday Inn by the Greater Norwich Area Chamber of Commerce (GNACC), Executive Director Angela Adams said.

Manufacturing has a large place in Eastern Connecticut

The Norwich event was a collaboration between the state, GNACC, the Eastern Workforce Investment Board, and the Eastern Advanced Manufacturing Alliance. This partnership is important so people can think about why students get excited about opportunities, and can work with partners to bring those resources together, ReadyCT Executive Director Sharon Marimón said.

One of the companies attending was Rand-Whitney Containerboard, based out of Montville. Their stand modeled how the company makes its paper products. HR Manager Sarah Susco was happy to see excited students learning about manufacturing.

“It’s extremely important for kids that are middle school or high school aged to see the opportunities that are out there,” she said.

Manufacturing careers are important and well-paying opportunities for people in eastern Connecticut and statewide. While Electric Boat and related manufacturers have a long history in the area, there are a variety of things made in Connecticut, from offshore wind and advanced manufacturing, to jet engines, even the first toothpaste in tubes in New London, Connecticut Chief Manufacturing Officer Paul Lavoie said.



“Not everyone wants to go to college, but everyone wants to have a great life,” he said. “You can get a job in manufacturing, and then go to college later.”

A great time to get into manufacturing

It’s also a good time to get into manufacturing, as around 40 companies are interested coming from out of state, attracted by a smarter workforce, “Connecticut’s secret sauce.” For example, Blueprint Robotics, a company that uses robots to build structures to order, is coming to Windsor from Baltimore, MD, operating a 450,000 square foot facility with 100 employees, Lavoie said.

“I love to know how everything works, and take it apart until I can’t take it apart anymore , and put it back together,” she said.

Bill might go to diesel mechanic school in Jacksonville Florida, or at Ohio State. She might also take a gap year and work at a local truck garage. The Dodd Stadium event gave Bill more insight in how things work, she said.

“It’s a lot of hands-on stuff, and it’s nice to know a lot of other people are interested,” she said.

It’s good to see the enthusiasm the students showed Thursday, EAMA Regional Sector Partnership Director Tony Benoit said.