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DISCOVER MANUFACTURING DESIGNED FOR STATEWIDE DISTINCTION

Statewide Education Initiative Set In Motion from Teacher's Refusal to Give Up On Students.

Seneca, SC – Building Ice Cream Parfaits and Lego Robots are just two of many hands-on projects Camp Success uses to introduce students to the world of manufacturing. Each summer the week-long, engineering/technology day camp is held at different locations throughout the state, enlightening rising 7th and 8th grade students as to the limitless career opportunities that exist in today's world of manufacturing. Typically, these students have an interest in engineering and an aptitude for math and science. However, the camp session held at Seneca Middle School this past summer was not intended for the "typical" Camp Success student.

The 51 students from Seneca Middle School were "hopeful" rising 8th and 9th graders who had failed at least two subjects during the 2009-2010 school year and were fated to repeat the grade had they not completed the Summer Bridge Program funded through a 21st Century Federal Grant for Learning Communities. While Camp Success was only one week of the eight week program requirement, Tammy Brock, Career Specialist from Seneca Middle, says it was the turning point for most of the 51, "These are students who were lacking self confidence. Facing the threat of repeating their previous grade left them defeated. Through Camp Success activities planned in conjunction with local business and industries, these students regained their confidence and really began to see the possibilities for their future."

It was during an evaluation of Camp Success that Ms. Brock said, "I really wish you guys (SCF) could figure out a way to take Camp Success into the classroom....especially into 8th grade classrooms." Statistics show that students who have not achieved some sort of academic success by eighth grade often drop out of school before graduating. Nationwide, approximately 26% of students drop out. South Carolina's dropout rate is higher than the national average. Ms. Brock says that number could be reduced with the increase of activities that reflect the relevance of the learning.

"The Seneca camp was our first experience with at-risk kids," said Tony Smith, President and Founder of SCF. "Our goal at Silver Crescent has always been to keep South Carolina's manufacturing pipeline filled with a skilled workforce for a global economy. Camp Success is one of the tools we use to build confidence in the students' academic abilities, and to support their motivation to succeed in school by providing an engaging learning experience with real world applications." Smith continued, "When Tammy (Brock) suggested we consider taking Camp Success to the classroom and shared with us the impact she thought it would have, it seemed to be a natural fit for us."

BorgWarner TorqTransfer Systems in Seneca hosted a Discovery Workshop. Todd Bennington, Vice President of Operations for the Seneca Plant says that he is absolutely in favor of a classroom-based model of Camp Success. "Skilled positions in manufacturing are well-paying jobs. As well or better than anything most people will do (jobs) in their lives," says Bennington. "The Silver Crescent classroom initiative is an excellent way to let kids know – today's factory is not your daddy's factory!"

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Promoting manufacturing vitality and career opportunities in South Carolina

With 85 school districts and an enrollment of more than 52,000 eighth grade students, “taking Camp Success to the classroom” will be no small task. A task, however, the Silver Crescent Foundation is willing to tackle. A statewide mission, if you will, set in motion because one teacher was not afraid to use her voice on behalf of students in need.

Since setting this new initiative, “Discover Manufacturing” as it is rightly named, in motion, there has been no shortage of favorable comments expressing support; from educators, community and business leaders throughout the state.

Rick Murphy, Regional Education Center Coordinator for Personal Pathways to Success™ said, “I think it is a great idea! Camp Success offers students the opportunity to see the relevance of classroom learning while having fun in a real life situation. The more experience and knowledge they can gain about life and work, the better their decisions will be.”

Business and community leaders throughout the state have been equally positive about a hands-on, STEM-focused (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) program presented in the classroom several times during the school year.

Financial support, however, has not yet been quite as strong according to Karla Littleton, Silver Crescent Foundation Vice President, in charge of fundraising and development for the new initiative. “We have spoken with many people who have said they believe successful implementation of this program will not only help improve our state’s graduation rate, but over time will enhance manufacturing workforce development and strengthen our economy,” said Littleton. “We are hopeful we can spread the word and they (businesses) can work us into their budgets for 2011. We have applied for several grants, but without a track record, grant money is hard to come by.”

The Discover Manufacturing classroom-based education initiative will create five full-time and two part-time jobs initially. “Once successfully implemented into the 8th grade classroom, we hope to expand into lower grades,” said Littleton, “possibly even into the elementary school level.”

The Silver Crescent Foundation is a 501(c) 3 non-profit organization whose mission is to promote manufacturing vitality and career opportunities in South Carolina. With more than 30 years of experience supporting education, engineering and technology development in our state, the Foundation is dedicated to addressing the needs of our future workforce pipeline by supporting programs that capture the imaginations of young people and foster a desire to become the designers, engineers and manufacturing leaders of tomorrow.

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