



Heavy Metal Tour

September 29th, 2017

Recap

Scheduling issues prevented the Heavy Metal Tour from occurring on Manufacturing Day, but rescheduling did not prevent the students from participating in an outstanding tour provided by eight area businesses and Kishwaukee College.

September 29th dawned a gorgeous day and all one hundred and five students were on board buses by 8:10am and heading to their first stop. Genoa-Kingston students did not go far before they stopped at one of the newest operations in Genoa, J6 Polymers. The students were introduced to “J-foam, a proprietary material used in a variety of applications including aircraft. Nick Bender from the Illinois Commerce Department presented Bob Wood, owner of J6, a Proclamation from Governor Rauner, and thanking J6 Polymers for their first-time participation in the Heavy Metal Tour. At the same time, Sycamore students headed north to Sycamore Precision, where Mike Hirn and his wonderful staff provided an in depth tour of the Genoa-based CNC job shop. Sycamore Precision provides a diversified customer base with quality machined cast components. Rochelle students dropped by the newly renovated Prescott Brother’s Ford dealership, where Chad Young showed students the various departments and career paths available in the automotive industry. Finally, DeKalb students went cross-town to Target Distribution, where General Manager Mike Milano explained the “Target culture” and what it takes to be a Target employee. With over 700 employees and eight miles of conveyor, Target distribution provided an interested insight to the world of logistics.

Roughly an hour later, all the students were back on board buses and heading to the second industrial stop on their tour. Genoa students headed south to take a look at IDEAL Industries, the family-owned international supplier of tools and electrical testing equipment. A market leader in the production of “wire

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nuts,” IDEAL also supplies “Audacy” a wireless lighting control system for the Chicago Cubs. To recognize IDEAL for five years of Heavy Metal Tour sponsorship, Nick Bender also presented a Proclamation to IDEAL Industries. Meanwhile, Auto Meter Products hosted the Sycamore students to their facility downtown. Auto Meter is a manufacturer and supplier of automotive instrumentation. Carving out a niche in the automotive market is tough but Auto Meter accomplished this and more. They are a recognized leader in auto electrical testing devices, automotive telemetry, OEM and aftermarket instrumentation, with benchmark level quality and performance. The Rochelle Hubs proceeded north to Lindenwood to visit Swenson Products. This operation builds medium-sized spreading and plowing equipment for municipalities and airports. Bill Hinzsche and his staff answered questions and gave insight into the building of snow removal equipment. Last, but not least, DeKalb visited H. A. Phillips the builder of ammonia-based refrigeration equipment. We are not talking about freezers, we talking about the equipment that it takes at the United Center to have a Bulls game on one night and the Blackhawks on home ice the next night. The steel is typically over an inch thick and the folks at Phillips form it and weld it perfectly. Brian Youssi is the President of the operation and he conducted the informational tour.

As the noon hour approached, all the buses headed toward Kishwaukee College. As the point of congregation over the last five years, Kishwaukee College provides tours through their Career Technologies Wing. Zach Caccia and his students provide demonstrations on three different disciplines in the welding lab. Pete Campbell introduced the students to Computer Numeric Control code and then watched a machine follow the code to create a medallion for the fifth annual Heavy Metal Tour. Charles Raimondi gave the students a quick look at the world of electronics, circuit boards, programmable controllers and proximity switches. Various instructors guided tour through the auto tech, diesel tech and horticulture areas.

Each group stopped for pizza lunch provided by Walt Ltd, a machine shop that does projects for local companies, a long-time supporter of D/OWDC and Kishwaukee College. The marketing department at Kishwaukee College also provided all students a uniquely designed t-shirt commemorating the event.

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Many thanks to all the hosts, sponsors and participants for making the fifth annual Heavy Metal Tour a success. All the students returned to their home schools by 2:30 pm and were ready for some rest.

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