

# Assemble ur Career Tour

Thursday, February 28, 2019

To offer career implications for seniors facing their graduation and other students looking for summer jobs or background information on class choices, the sixth annual **“Assemble ur Career Tour”** was held on Thursday, February 28<sup>th</sup>. Hosted by the DeKalb/Ogle Workforce Development Consortium, this year’s tour had students from DeKalb High School touring Custom Aluminum and J6 Polymers in Genoa, students from Genoa-Kingston High School touring SK Hand Tools and Tate and Lyle in Sycamore and Sycamore High School students heading to Alexander Lumber and Millwork and Target Upstream Distribution Center in DeKalb. Sixty-two students participated in the tour, which culminated at the Northern Illinois University’s Engineering Building with department tours and lunch.

DeKalb students enjoyed the tour of Custom Aluminum’s extrusion mill, fabrication, finishing, assembly and packaging areas. The length of the extrusion line surprised many, who had never seen how raw material is transformed into a useable shape. Cutting, machining, drilling, punching followed the creation of useable stock, with conformity to Custom’s ISO procedures and quality standards. Painting or powder coating completed the products and prepared them for shipment.

The next stop for DeKalb was the J6 Polymer facility on Derbyline Road. Formerly an 84 Lumber location, the J6 folks have completely renovated the location to create two-part polymers used in the aerospace and aircraft industry. The Wood family have created a product line that fills a highly technical niche industry. The J6 foam has been on every space shuttle flight; finds its way into C-130 propeller fairings and even into aircraft carriers. Its strength, confined space expansion properties and its buoyancy make it a key component in high performance military equipment.

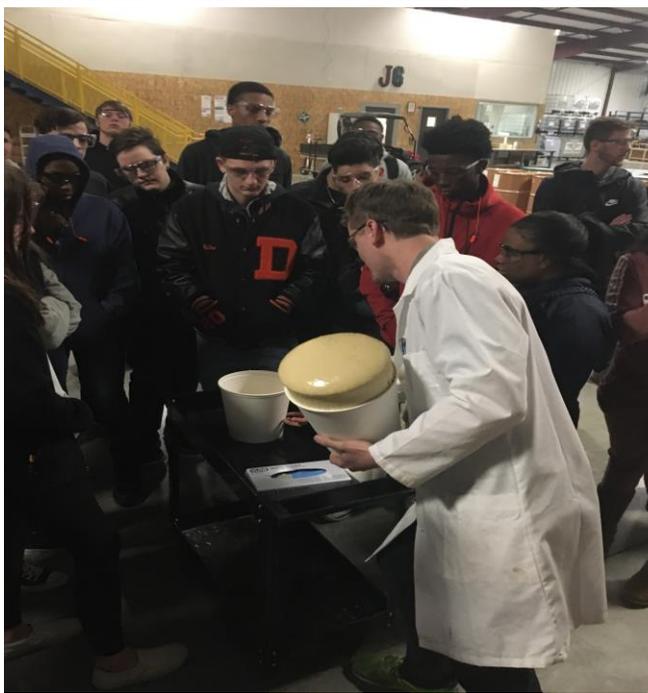
SK Hand Tools LLC marked the first stop on Genoa-Kingston’s tour. An outstanding example of modern manufacturing, the SK plant breaks the paradigm of dark, dingy manufacturing plants with an open, airy, organized



Vice President Shane Tredup explains a process at Custom Aluminum in Genoa.

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blend of updated equipment and modern refinements. Purchased and relocated by the IDEAL family of industries, the building was designed, erected and operational in record time. Long known as a manufacturer of quality hand tools for mechanics and industry, SK has continued this tradition and unveiled new tools like the **SK 1.7 degree X-frame Ratcheting Wrench**. Using the latest in manufacturing management techniques, the SK Hand Tools LLC operation runs smoothly and efficiently and represents 21<sup>st</sup> century manufacturing at its finest.



The students watched as the J6 foam used an exothermic reaction to create an engineered product.

In the short jaunt to Tate and Lyle and the Genoa-Kingston, the students visited a leading manufacturer of sweetener ingredients. Headquartered in the United Kingdom, Tate and Lyle has made a significant contribution to the chemistry of sweeteners, with sugar and other refined ingredients. This location supplies product for PepsiCo and other manufacturers. A typical project for Tate and Lyle would be to solve the problem of a chocolate coating melting *before* the frozen sorbet captured inside. Can you relate to an ice cream cone melting all over your hands in the summer warmth? Now, they are to make sure the chocolate coating does not melt before the sorbet. These projects drive the food industry and make Tate and Lyle such an interesting place to work.

Sycamore students visited Alexander Lumber and Millwork located in Cortland. Integrated into this location is the truss

assembly plant, where computed controlled saws create the pieces necessary to build the roofing trusses and lasers guide the fastening placement. With proper programming, virtually any truss can be created for different customers. Alexander also provides a full array of building products for residential or industrial construction.

Target Upstream Distribution Center was the next stop. With the DeKalb operations' expanded role in the Target organization, this highly organized operation is a great example of modern distribution and logistics. Of course, the keys to employment are attendance and punctuality, along with your best effort. As part of the retail supply chain, timeliness and efficiency are part of the Target equation to fulfill your needs when you enter a Target store or make your purchase on-line.

All the students converged on the NIU Engineering Building at about noon. Under the direction of Stephen Samuels, Coordinator of Recruitment and Retention, the students listened to how and why engineering is a fun and exciting career choice. Dr. Federico Sciammarella and his associates provided an overview of what engineers do and why they do it. Six students also spoke about how they got to NIU and what they have accomplished since they got there. This group included Genoa-Kingston graduates Tom Corbett and

Todd Durham, who are former tour participants, now studying, consulting and having fun solving problems.

Following a quick pizza lunch supplied by Hy-Vee and sponsored by the DeKalb County Economic Development Corporation, the students toured the Engineering building, which includes the shops, testing labs and team meeting areas.

Once again, we thank the participating businesses, the tour guides, NIU's Stephen Samuels, Dr. Sciammarella and the students of the Engineering department, Hy-Vee and DCEDC, for the opportunity and help.