100+ RI Students Connect with Industry, Explore Careers in Defense



Release from SENEDIA

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Providence, RI – Project MFG, SENEDIA, the alliance for defense tech, talent, and innovation, and General Dynamics Electric Boat hosted the inaugural Project MFG Rhode Island Maritime Welding Competition yesterday at the Providence Career & Technical Academy. At the event, Trey Lazauskas from CHARIHOtech was awarded first prize for successfully welding a model submarine.

This collaborative effort, which drew more than 100 students from the region, was organized to raise awareness about high-skill, high-tech, high-wage careers in submarine shipbuilding and maritime manufacturing, including welding, machining, and logistics. In addition to a career expo where students could learn more about opportunities in the industry, more than a dozen employers were on site to engage with and begin recruiting students.

"The workers we will need in the future to build the submarines we are contracting for today are only in elementary school. That's how significant and sustained the demand is for fostering the pipeline for next-generation talent," said Shawn Coyne, vice president of Human Resources at General Dynamics Electric Boat. "We have to engage young people early and often, showcasing the benefits and sense of purpose behind careers in defense, and offer them hands-on learning opportunities like Project MFG."

The full day event featured elected leaders and dignitaries—including Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman Senator Jack Reed, who got an up-close look at the "welding wars." Reed was also joined by Senator Sheldon Whitehouse and Congressman Seth Magaziner, who underscored the importance of the defense economy to Rhode Island.

The event allowed students from high school CTE programs to gain real-world experience and exposure to leaders and employers in the defense manufacturing space. As part of Project MFG Connect, a career exploration event, representatives from local career and technical education programs, industry experts, and employers came together to showcase the careers available in the industry. The next-generation workforce in turn had the opportunity to network with and hear from government officials, defense business leaders, industry partners, and members of the armed forces who discussed the critical trade skills needed for defense

manufacturing.

“Including events like Project MFG Connect is imperative for the future. We want to show potential students how challenging and rewarding manufacturing jobs are,” said Ray Dick, Project MFG founder. “Connecting young students from the local community and showcasing the exciting opportunities available right at home is an important part of our mission and one of the ways we promote the prestige of manufacturing.”

Project MFG’s Maritime Welding Competition featured four technical training programs with 16 local competitors. Competitors were tested on skills required for shipbuilding while completing a challenging air pressure vessel project.

“I want to congratulate all of the students and schools that participated and took this opportunity to explore the important careers related to submarine shipbuilding,” said Molly Donohue Magee, executive director of SENEDIA. “These students are our future manufacturing workforce, filling the needed high-tech, high-demand, high-wage jobs to help ensure our national security.”

Competitors raced against a two-hour clock to finish a challenge that tested skills required for shipbuilding. They were cheered on by the U.S. Navy Department of Defense, and industry partners, leaders, and government officials. After showcasing their skills, the top three welders were announced: Trey Lazauskas of CHARIHOtech in first place; Asa Hoxie, also of Chariho High School, in second place; and Giovanni Lacap of PCTA in third place.

In addition to the competitors, program participants included PCTA students from the welding program and several other CTE programs in the Construction, Engineering, Computer Science and Transportation industry clusters, along with 60 students representing Mount Pleasant, Hope, Central, Juanita Sanchez,

and 360 High Schools and the Newcomers' Academy. Many of the student attendees have already secured full-time job offers at Electric Boat.

"The Office and Career and Technical Education at PPSD is thrilled to partner with SENEDIA, Electric Boat and General Dynamics to create high wage/high growth opportunities for our graduates," said Brett Dickens, CTE director of the Providence Public Schools.

SENEDIA, the alliance for Defense tech, talent, and innovation, is a catalyst for thought leadership, technical innovation, and workforce development. SENEDIA connects, convenes, and partners to support talent, innovation, and growth. For more information on SENEDIA, please visit www.senedia.org.