

WCHS Students Exposed to Local Career & Training Opportunities during Waco Works

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Sandersville, Ga., (OFTC)-- Ninety-One 10th-12th graders from Washington County High School (WCHS) participated in Waco Works at Oconee Fall Line Technical College (OFTC), an event geared toward exposing and informing high school students of local career and skills-training opportunities in Washington County, Tuesday, November 5.

Waco Works was sponsored by the Washington County Chamber of Commerce who received an EMC Electric Foundation Grant which allowed them to coordinate the creation of Waco Works with OFTC, Washington County High School and several key industries within Washington County.

This is the third Waco Works event sponsored by the chamber and coordinated with OFTC.

“The chamber has a dedicated Education and Workforce Development Committee that meets regularly to implement strategies to support our education system and workforce efforts,” shared Washington County Chamber President Katie Moncus, “and Waco Works is an event that falls perfectly into all of these categories.”

After securing funding, Moncus and her team coordinated with OFTC and the high school, emphasizing their expectations were “to provide each student with an engaging day packed with valuable information from the most skilled leaders in the area.”

“We want to showcase diverse job opportunities for students and match the qualifications with OFTC’s available course path,” Moncus added. “This gives the students the full picture from training into the field.”

Waco Works

Upper level Technical and Agricultural Education (CTAE) students were chosen by the high school to participate in Waco Works and toured several key programs at OFTC like commercial truck driving, diesel equipment technology, welding, electronics, industrial systems and cybersecurity.

Students also toured local industries like Howard Sheppard, Queensboro National Bank and Trust, American Railcar Industries, and Duraline, and heard from industry leaders on the types of jobs they have available, the training and qualifications they require of their employees, and what they look for when hiring new employees.

“Take advantage of what you have an opportunity to do today,” said Dean Wilcher, Director of Workbased Learning for Washington County High School while addressing the students. “These jobs you are learning about today are not in Macon or somewhere else; they are right here in Sandersville.”

“You never know who you are going to meet today and who might be able to help you down the road,” he added. “It might not be today or even tomorrow – it could be two years from now – but you could meet someone today who could help you get a job later.”

Dr. Ricky Edmond, Superintendent for Washington County Schools, spoke during lunch and encouraged the students to take seriously his call for them to 'rise up.'

"You've been hearing me talk about 'rise up,'" Edmond shared, "but it's much deeper than just three claps and reciting the words."

Acknowledging the transitional place many of the students find themselves in the midst of this ever-changing world, Edmond challenged the students to do five things to prepare for their next chapter.

"You must explore your career interests early," he said. "You cannot leave high school as a graduate and be thinking 'I don't know what I want to do.'"

Secondly, "you must build a basic knowledge base about each of the careers you are interested in exploring. Then, I need you to be above the curve; not on the curve or behind the curve," he said. "Things are constantly changing, and you have to prepare yourself for options."

"Next, you've got to build your skillset and have a flexible mindset to understand that you'll need to be flexible and learn to adapt," he shared. And finally, "keep your eyes on the forecast. I promise you the world is changing around us every single day."

"I'm going to challenge you to be the very best you can be before you graduate," he said. "When we say, 'rise up,' you better get ready because you're going to have to rise up. It's for your greater good and preparing you for the 21st century global economy."

Local Partnerships

In order to meet the needs of local industries by providing a skilled workforce, local partnerships must continue to work together, and Waco Works is a wonderful example of these partnerships, Moncus shared; "OFTC is one strong link to connecting the dots."

Echoing Moncus's sentiments on workforce development, OFTC President Erica Harden said, "We have to expose students to the career and education opportunities right here in our county; this is the core of what we do at OFTC, so we are thrilled to have this opportunity to educate and inform these students today about a number of educational and training opportunities available to them."

"We have a need for skilled labor for existing and new industries in Washington County, and OFTC and WCHS can be a catalyst for that workforce," she added.

For more information about [OFTC](#) or the Waco Works program, visit the College's website, [OFTC.edu](#).

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