

WACO Works Introduces Local HS Students to Education & Career Opportunities in Washington County

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Sandersville, Ga., (OFTC)-- Sixty students 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 education and career opportunities in Washington County, Wednesday, November 9.

Waco Works is sponsored by the Washington County Chamber of Commerce and is a partnership between OFTC, WCHS, and several key industries within Washington County.

The event first started in 2018 and its success has allowed it to evolve into a beneficial community partnership taking place twice a year.

“The Chamber understands the importance of workforce development to Washington county,” shared Washington County Chamber President Katie Moncus, “and because of this, WACO Works has been a priority in our plan annually.”

“This day - in our eyes - connects the dots between the student, continuing education opportunities and the career field,” she added.

Waco Works

When Waco Works first started in 2018, funds from the chamber were secured through an EMC Electrical Foundation Grant. But after the funds were spent, it was clear the impact it made on the students and how it benefited local industry, so the chamber made the decision to continue sponsoring the event.

“We want to provide each student with an engaging day packed with valuable information from the most skilled leaders in the area,” Moncus shared. “Throughout the day we showcase diverse local career opportunities for students and match the qualifications with OFTC’s available course path,” she added. “This gives the students the full picture from training into the field.”

Technical and Agricultural Education (CTAE) students were chosen by the high school to participate in Waco Works and toured several OFTC programs like Commercial Truck Driving, Diesel Equipment Technology, Industrial Systems Maintenance, Mechatronics, Welding, Electrical Control Technology, and Air Conditioning Technology.

Students also toured local industries like American Industrial Transport, the Department of Transportation, Helton Electrical Services, and Thiele Kaolin to hear 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 Work based Learning for Washington County High School while addressing the students. “This is a great opportunity to learn about education, career training, and job opportunities close to home.”

“Washington County has wonderful industries where you can work to provide a good living for yourself and your families,” he added. “Today is your day to network with people who can actually hire you. You never know who you’re going to meet and who can help you down the line. So, today, connect the dots – Washington County High School–OFTC–local industries-great job opportunities.”

At the conclusion of the tours, students and industry representatives enjoyed lunch at OFTC as a part of a roundtable discussion designed to facilitate a more relaxed atmosphere for discussion.

Local Partnerships

In order to meet local workforce needs, 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.”

“This event impacts hundreds,” she added. “Obviously our target is the students who attend, but it’s so much more than that. The WCHS staff, the industry leaders, the OFTC staff, all of these people get to see and hear about the opportunities in our community. These students might not enter the job force for a few years or already hold a job, but the connections and the people they are introduced to during Waco Works initiate relationships that could last a lifetime.”

When OFTC was approached about the partnership back in 2018, the college immediately recognized the opportunity to reinforce their mission – workforce development.

“We have to expose students to the career and education opportunities right here in our county,” shared OFTC President, Erica Harden. “This is the core of what we do at OFTC.”

“We have a need for skilled labor for existing and new industries in Washington County and OFTC and Washington County High School can be a catalyst for that workforce,” she said. “We are always grateful when we have an opportunity to join other community leaders to educate and inform local students about a number of educational and career training opportunities available to them close to home.”

For more information about [OFTC’s 130+ programs of study](#) or the Waco Works program, visit the College’s website, OFTC.edu.

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