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FEATURED

## MSDE, Charles County showcase career and technology education

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Career and technical education has changed dramatically from the days when it was called "vocational" education, Maryland and Charles County education leaders said during a Career and Technology Education Showcase Nov. 16 at the Waldorf West Library.

"We've evolved from what was once called 'vocational education,' which did primarily focus primarily on preparing students for work immediately following high school, to today, helping students to prepare for post-secondary education and very rewarding careers," said Lynne Gilli, assistant state superintendent in the Maryland State Department of Education's division of career and college readiness. "Our students are earning college credit and industry-recognized credentials in our programs today. They have real opportunities available to them when they graduate."

In 1992, only 14 percent of Maryland CTE graduates were college and career ready; now that number is 61 percent, Gilli said.

"We have a national reputation in Maryland for high-quality CTE, and people all across the United States look to our work, just to see what it is we're doing that makes our students so successful," she said.

The Waldorf West Library hosted MSDE and Charles County Public Schools officials in a showcase of the CTE programs available in Charles County.

Gilli said the event is part of a series being held in each of Maryland's school systems to display the programs available in Maryland.

Gilli herself is a product of a CTE program, she said, having studied cosmetology in high school and worked in her mother's beauty salon while attending college part-time and majoring in education.

Superintendent Kimberly Hill said Charles County was an "early adopter" of the importance and significance of career and technical education.

"Every child in Charles County Public Schools needs a high school diploma — all 26,471 of them. Our goal is 100 percent will march across that stage with a diploma. But they also need skills, and the skills they can get in career and technology education help them as they move forward in life, and that is something that will never change in this school system," Hill said.

Charles County schools have CTE programs in education, fire and rescue, engineering and biomedical sciences, among others.

The school system also has a career research and development program, which allows students to gain skills related to job searches, professional portfolios and work experience in a field of their choice.

"It allows the students to have on-the-job training in a career they might be interested in," said school board member Barbara Palko. "They allow the students to explore themselves to find out what careers they might have an interest in."

North Point High School also has a science, technology and industry program, which includes CTE programs in culinary arts, automotive technology, cybersecurity, health professions and more. North Point's programs are open to any Charles County student through an application process, which opens Nov. 30. North Point held an open house for its programs Wednesday evening.

In addition, the school system will be introducing two new CTE programs — in computer science and in business management and finance — beginning in the 2017-18 school year, said Traci Chappellear, CCPS coordinator for career and technology education.

Several past and current students spoke about their experiences in the school system's CTE programs.

Lisette LaFontant is a student in North Point High School's Maryland Fire and Rescue Institute, which is an eight-course sequence in collaboration with the Maryland Fire and Rescue Institute.

"This is an amazing opportunity because it allows students who are dedicated to volunteer service to complete years of training in a couple years, and it is integrated into our school schedules, so we do not have to worry about not having enough time," LaFontant said.

Riley Jedlowski is a senior in St. Charles High School's Project Lead the Way Pathway to Engineering program.

"I've learned proper brainstorming and problem solving skills that have shaped me into who I am today," Jedlowski said.

Student school board member Da'Juon Washington is in North Point's Teacher Academy of Maryland. The program includes a section on student teaching.

"I never had the opportunity to work with children before, and that is one reason why this program is near and dear to me," Washington said.

Chappelear said there will be additional events for parents, students and the community to explore the county's CTE programs, witness demonstrations, receive information and speak with current students and teachers, at 6 p.m. on Jan. 12 at the Potomac Library; Jan. 19 at the La Plata Library; Feb. 2 at the P.D. Brown Library; and Feb. 9 at the Waldorf West Library.

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