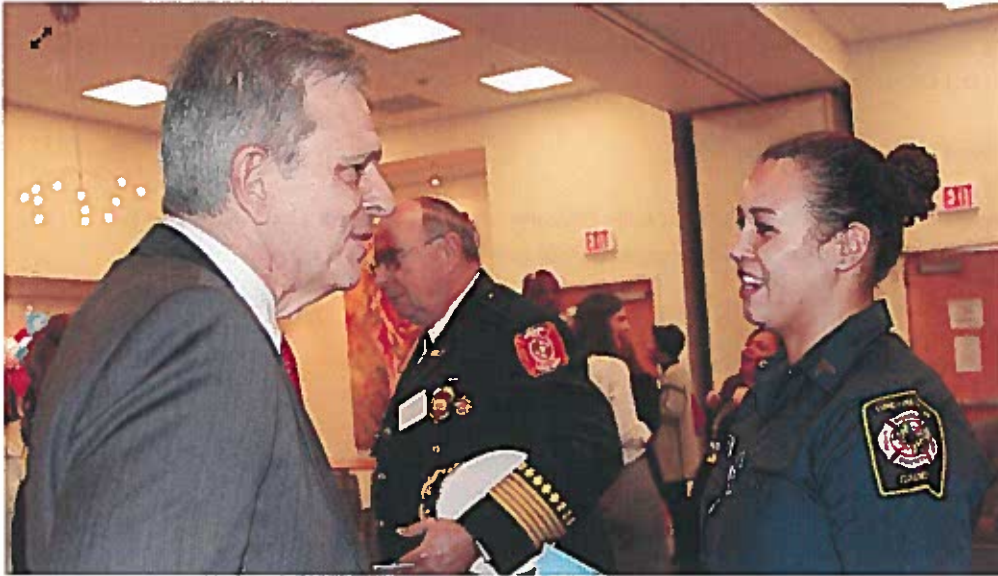


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Career and Technology Education programs touted at event

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Submitted photos

Lisette LaFontant, right, a Career and Technology Education student in the Maryland Fire and Rescue Institute and North Point High School student, speaks with Charles Wallace, Career and Technology Education representative of the Maryland State Department of Education.

Ashley Breads has dissected a heart and brain, she's conducted an electrocardiogram — better known as an EKG — and has learned from Johns Hopkins physicians.

She's a sophomore in high school.

With her eye on a surgical career, Breads is in the Project Lead The Way (PLTW) Biomedical Sciences program at Thomas Stone High School. It is one of the programs in Career and Technology Education (CTE) of Charles County Public Schools (CCPS).

The biomedical class is "one of the classes I look forward to," Breads said. "And the teachers are a big part of that." Her CTE classes have allowed Breads a wider view of the medical landscape. "It opened my mind to how broad the medical field is," she said. "I've been exposed to many different career fields."

During a program held at the Waldorf West branch of the Charles County Public Library, CTE students in the program's various fields spoke to county and state leaders about the importance of CTE and how it enriches a traditional education.

Riley Jedlowski, a senior at St. Charles High School, uses skills she has learned in PLTW Pathway to Engineering in other areas of her everyday life. "I've learned proper problem solving and brain storming that have shaped the way I think," she said.

Like Breads, she appreciates CTE for guiding her toward a potential career path that suits her. "It allows you to guide yourself in the direction right for you," Jedlowski said.

"Without it, I would go into a job I don't like," Lisette LaFontant, a North Point High School senior in the Maryland Fire and Rescue Institute. "This is an amazing opportunity for students." LaFontant said she will likely not pursue a career in fire safety. "But I gained some knowledge, connected with peers," she said. "That is special to me."

Lynne Gilli, assistant state superintendent of the division of career and college readiness for the Maryland State Department of Education, and Irene Padilla, assistant state superintendent of the division of library development and services with MSDE, along with other state officials, attended the CTE event — the ninth out of 24 that will be hosted in Maryland.

Gilli said Maryland has a national reputation for having a robust CTE program. In 1992, 14 percent of CTE students were both college and career ready. Now, the number has jumped to 61 percent, she said.

"We are at the forefront of preparing students," Gilli said.

She was once in the shoes of CTE students, taking cosmetology classes while in high school and working at her mother's salon while going to college part time. She was able to buy her first home at 25 and had no school loans.

"When you have to get up and make money, you look at work differently," Gilli said.

CCPS Superintendent Kimberly Hill said students need a diploma, but they also need skills. Education is not simply academics, but learning to communicate, coordinate and work together toward achieving goals. "A work ethic cannot be discounted," she said.



Learning to stick to a task, persevering through it, committing the time and energy to it are skills that can be found in all CTE programs and students, Hill said.

Currently, programs offered are Career Research and Development, Maryland Fire and Rescue Institute, PLTW Biomedical Sciences, PLTW Pathway to Engineering and Teacher Academy of Maryland (TAM). Starting in 2017, Business Management and Finance and Computer Science will be available.

Da'Juan Washington, a North Point senior and the Student Board Member to the Board of Education, is a TAM student. While his ultimate goal is to be the U.S. Secretary of Education, Washington knows he has to start somewhere.

"I want to be an educator," Washington said. "I always wanted to make an impact in the field of education, and I got to start that journey while I was still in high school."

CCPS and MSDE is partnering with the Charles County Public Library to host upcoming events to familiarize the public with CTE and its programs. All events will be held from 6 to 7:30 p.m.

There will be one Jan. 12 at the Potomac branch at 3225 Ruth B. Swann Drive in Indian Head; another Jan. 19 at the La Plata branch at 2 Garrett Ave. in La Plata; a meeting will be Feb. 2 at P.D. Brown Memorial Library at 50 Village St. in Waldorf; and on Feb. 9 at the Waldorf West branch at 10405 O'Donnell Place in Waldorf.

For more information about CTE programs, go to www.ccboe.com/cte/.