

Speaker 1 00:00:05 Welcome to the Clear Impact Podcast brought to you by PGTI University. Thanks for joining us today. My name is Sherri Connor, and I am your host.

Speaker 1 00:00:20 Collaboration around a shared goal is always a good idea! We venture outside the enterprise today as we sat down with the good folks from Suncoast Technical College in Sarasota County. Speaking with us is Margie DeMauro, Outreach Specialist and Shauna Donahue, Program Manager, both in the Industrial Programs. They shared their approach to filling the labor gaps for Trades in our local area, as well as where similar programs can be found wherever you are.

So good morning, we are here on the Clear Impact Podcast today. And this is an exciting episode for us because this is our first outside-of-our-enterprise conversation. Today we are talking with Margie DeMauro, who is the Outreach Specialist for Industrial Programs at Suncoast Technical College.

Speaker 2 00:01:05 Yes. Thank you for having me.

Speaker 1 00:01:06 Thank you for being here. And we also have Shauna Donahue, who is the Program Manager, same place, same department. So welcome.

Speaker 3 00:01:14 Thank you. Happy to be here.

Speaker 1 00:01:15 So glad that you guys could find your way here. We're specifically in the series Workforce of the Future, and we're talking to our dealer audience about where they might find their next crop of employees. And we all know that there's a labor shortage right now, and that it's hard to find good people to work, that know what they're doing. And so that's where the training comes in. That's where PGTI University comes in. We can help solve that gap. And that's where you guys come in as well, because you're already doing that. You're already training people for these kinds of roles. So we want to just to take a little bit of time to introduce what you guys do and how that is solving the problem that our dealers may be facing. Margie, can you give us just an overview of what the industrial programs at STC look like?

Speaker 2 00:02:00 Yes. Thank you. So STC, we have adult students and we also have high schoolers. Our high schoolers that attend are 11th and 12th graders. They come from the various high schools in the area, homeschool, private schools. Our industrial department, we have 12 programs right now. Wow. Ranging from auto service, marine service, then you get into our manufacturing fields, which is advanced manufacturing, CNC, machining, then we have the industrial machinery, maintenance and repair, then we also have drafting. And then lastly, we do have our trades programs, which would be our HVAC, electrician, plumbing, carpentry, and then the building trades and construction design.

Speaker 1 00:02:41 That is a lot. That is amazing. How many students would you say you have? Do you know?

Speaker 3 00:02:45 It's about 240 high schoolers and adults between all of our industrial programs, between our North Port campus, as well as our main campus in Sarasota.

Speaker 1 00:02:53 That's significant. Wow, you guys are busy. I'm so glad you could take some time today.

Speaker 3 00:02:58 Are you kidding, we are happy to get away. Right?

Speaker 1 00:03:02 How many teenagers are over there? Yeah. Right.

Speaker 3 00:03:06 About 40% of those are our high school students.

Speaker 1 00:03:08 Okay. So then that means the 60% would be adults. Okay. Nice. And so those are maybe people who just decided four year plan wasn't for them, that they didn't want to flip burgers. And so they needed to do something that would be supportive, you know, so they don't have to live with mom and dad forever.

Speaker 3 00:03:26 Yeah. You do see some, in the nature of workforce being in flux lately, some career changers as well. Like I really want to work with my hands and get into a career that I can build upon.

Speaker 1 00:03:37 Nice. Shauna, this question is for you. What are some ways that your programs are really preparing students to enter the workforce?

Speaker 3 00:03:44 So of course we have our classroom curriculum when you're learning the books, the specifics, but I think the most important and the coolest part of our, all of our industrial programs are the hands-on. Our instructors come from the field, come from the industry and the students actually are learning on campus. You've seen our campus, you've seen our lab from building trades to the plumbing. They're not just in a classroom with a book - they're also out in the lab learning. And, uh, we've got some specific projects that we're working on now. One is that tiny home project, right? That you came out, which PGT supported, uh, by donating doors and windows (hurricane proof*). Thank you very much PGT. And we've got all our trades, our students working together to build this tiny home, to take it throughout Sarasota County, to promote the trades to our youth, and be in parades and have fun as well. [*our products are hurricane resistant, not hurricane proof](#)

Speaker 1 00:04:30 Because a tiny house has all of the components that a regular house would have, it would have electrical, it would have plumbing, it would have a roof, it would have doors and windows, flooring.

Speaker 3 00:04:39 It has everything, insulation. It has the compost toilet. It has solar panels. So it's a tiny house, but it's a tiny greenhouse too. So we're actually conserving energy. The electrical instructor showed me where we got a nickel back from the power that we've produced and haven't used. So it's very exciting. We've making money here, we're saving, saving energy as well in this home. So it's, you're right. That's a great point, Sherri. It's, it's all the different trades and it's all the different components.

Speaker 1 00:05:07 That's amazing. Yeah. I'm excited for that to be paraded around town. That'll be, that'll be fun. And it was, it was good to get out there and meet the students. And they took a lot of pride in what they were doing. So that was cool.

Speaker 3 00:05:17 We've got that project. And then we also work on the Sarasota County farm. Believe it or not a farm needs, irrigation, irrigation is plumbing. So again, these are actual projects that our students are working on to improve the community and help other students as well.

Speaker 1 00:05:30 Awesome. So what kind of criteria or certifications would a student hold when they're finished with their program?

Speaker 3 00:05:39 It varies by program, but if we're focusing on the skilled trades, we partner with the National Center for Construction, Education and Research. So there's multiple modules and certifications under that, that are plumbing, and electrical, carpentry, and our industrial maintenance.

Okay. There's those certifications. Then we've got OSHA. We do the CPR. HVAC is a little different. We have an HVAC Excellence. So it all just varies, but we'd look for the important linchpin in all of this, is these industry certifications that are tied to employment, because ultimately we're training our future workforce to your point. And we want them to complete our program with industry recognized certifications.

Speaker 1 00:06:17 So you're not just inventing your own curriculum, you're out working within the community and finding out what the needs are. You know, what are the holes that you have? And then how can we train to that?

Speaker 3 00:06:27 We certainly are. We are tied to the Florida Department of Ed (Education) has a framework that we have to meet, but we have constant conversations with our employers like PGT and others in the local workforce. What do you need? And how can we adapt, or add to, our curriculum to meet your needs?

Speaker 1 00:06:41 That's excellent. I love that. So Margie, pretend I'm a potential employer. Would I be able to know a student's attendance and test scores? Or how would I know whether or not they were a good hire?

Speaker 2 00:06:52 We are a school and there are privacy laws. So you could not call up and say like, Hey, how Johnny's test, is he here every day? Unfortunately, because of the laws, we can't do that. But you know, potential hiring agencies, there are different things that they could do. If they're interested in a student, they can certainly reach out to that student and say, Hey, can we call your teacher? Would that be okay? Can we do that? You go in and get copies. You can ask the students. A lot of them are very proud when they earn an NCCR or an AutoCAD, they get a certificate. They're excited about it. They will probably happily show you that they've done that. But yes, I mean, you can certainly talk to the student directly, ask them for permission to reach out to the teacher. With that being said, that when, if you do get the permission to speak to teachers, that you know, you can ask about their attendance, their certifications, their tests, any other questions that may pop into their head.

Speaker 2 00:07:46 Also, there are other ways that you can engage, that you can give us a call, give us a contact, come schedule a tour, come visit our campus. We will happily plan a visit through all of our programs. Even if maybe you're just interested in one, we will happily walk you through all of them and you will see how much they're intertwined with each other. As Shauna mentioned earlier, we do intertwine with everything, especially with the tiny house. I mean, you wouldn't think it, but our Marine program has been helping with the tiny house. We are not pulling a tiny boat with it, but they are helping with it. So, but yes, you can schedule a tour of the campus, come visit the programs. You can schedule to be a guest speaker. As you know, you all have been gracious, you come out. Every time you guys come out. We love when PGTI comes out and gets to talk to our students and our students really engage in that. Um, because then not only are you going to get to talk to the class as a whole, oftentimes you will then be able to have a one-on-one with the students and have that afterwards. So there are definitely ways to interact with them prior to them graduating from the program.

Speaker 1 00:08:53 That's awesome.

Speaker 3 00:08:54 Can I piggyback on that? The one thing that I just want to emphasize is that our, the local employers could also engage with, we have what we call advisory councils. They meet twice a

year and we invite employers to come. We ask for their feedback on our curriculum. If you've hired our students or looking for students, what do you need? It's really an opportunity for us, as educators, as the instructor facilitates the advisory council to hear from you as employers, as to what you need. Is our curriculum meeting your needs. Do we need to change, or is there a new certification that's up and coming that we should be aware of, that we should be integrating into our training and our, and our program. So the advisory councils are a wonderful way. Most technical colleges have them throughout the country, because they need that feedback. That's a wonderful way to engage. And then you get to know the instructor and then you get all those goodies Margie just shared with you, the inside track, but in exposure to the students before they graduate.

Speaker 1 00:09:45 Right. That makes sense. And so what other kind of practical things do you guys offer to the students, like interviews or things along those lines?

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Speaker 3 00:10:13 Sure. If, if an employer would like to come out and conduct mock interviews or review resumes, I mean, getting that real time feedback from a local employer is crucial. Oftentimes we hear our local employers say, oh, soft skills, soft skills. We'll share what those soft skills, what you value in those soft skills, what you're actually looking for with our students. So they can, they can hear it from you. They hear from us all the time, you know, where's your uniform. Wear closed toed shoes. But to hear it from you as a potential employer goes a long way, right?

Speaker 1 00:10:40 What is the best way for someone to get in touch with you about the next round of graduates?

Speaker 2 00:10:47 We can be reached email, phone, or social media. Okay. Our emails are going to be the same for anybody in Sarasota county schools. So the way the emails work is it's our first name dot last name@sarasotacountyschools.net. And it is plural and it is long.

Speaker 1 00:11:04 So I'll put that in the notes and put that into the transcript. I'll make sure I get all that information.

Demauro Margie Margie.DeMauro@sarasotacountyschools.net

Donahue Shauna Shauna.Donahue@sarasotacountyschools.net

Speaker 3 00:11:08 Great.

Speaker 2 00:11:09 The telephone number is the school number, which is the 941-924-1365.

Okay. Um, they can give our names, and they will get back to us in our department. We've been on social media for a while, but we have recently had a huge uptick on our social media posts. So you will often find lots of photos of things going on. Um, around a lot of industrial, you will see a lot of things on there. So we do have Facebook. We do have Instagram and we do have Twitter. Uh, Facebook is facebook.com/suncoasttechnicalcollege. Instagram is instagram.yoursuncoast. And then Twitter is the same twitter.com/yoursuncoast.

Speaker 1 00:11:51 So our dealer audience is not just in the local area. So if I were a dealer say, I don't know, Jacksonville or Vero Beach, or maybe even Georgia, do I just look up on Google, like local technical college, like, what would be a good place for me to start looking for a trade school? Just Google it?

Speaker 3 00:12:10 Yeah, I would, I would think Google technical colleges. Most counties and jurisdictions have a technical college. Now, does it always fall under the K through 12 system like ours? Maybe not, but yeah, I think the power of Google.

Speaker 2 00:12:23 They're getting away from the former names like trade schools and vocational schools. It's, um, not all of them are going to have the college name. Um, but you know, technical schools, technical colleges, and, and Google in your area,

Speaker 3 00:12:37 You know, it would be good resource? Their local workforce board, like in the State of Florida, Career Source, every county. And that's the, you know, they would know who the training providers are locally. So I would go, you know, if you're in Florida, go to your career source, ours is Career Source Suncoast. And I know they vary by county, the name of the specific career source, but that would be a good place to start, because they will know who the local training providers are.

Speaker 1 00:13:02 Okay. So final question. I love stories and I love moments. And so I always try to weave that in, towards the end of the podcast. And so, is there a story or a memorable moment that you'd like to share of helping a student realize success?

Speaker 2 00:13:16 I reached out to two of our teachers, two of our instructors, and I got two little stories, some, two students that I am very excited to share with you. So the first one comes from our plumbing instructor, and he was telling me that a few years ago, he had an, it was an adult student. And this adult student started probably at 18, right after high school. This particular student struggled mightily with math, ended up becoming homeschooled because he just, he struggled in math so bad, but he was homeschooled. So when he started in the program and the instructor was going through math, he was a, no, I can't do it. I don't know. I'm not getting it. I don't understand it. And so finally, one day he was taking him into the lab and he was having him. He said, I need you to take this piece of pipe and cut it in half.

Speaker 2 00:14:02 I need two equal pieces of this. And he's like, oh, sure. I can do that. And he did. And he was trying to help him. So he's like, okay. And he's trying to use math and he couldn't do it. Couldn't do it. And he's like, well, you did it. And he started in the teacher was telling me a little bit about like, teaching him about the four legs of a table, that they all have to match. So you, when you measure them and all of a sudden, it clicked. And so from then on the student totally changed, because it was no longer math in a book. It was math, practical, math. And he told me then the following semester when the next, because we have students come in different times of the year for our programs. So when the next round of students came in, the next semester, this particular student became the math tutor for the class. Wow. Yeah.

Speaker 1 00:14:48 That's awesome.

Speaker 2 00:14:49 I thought that was pretty incredible. That, as someone who has struggled with math herself, that I thought this was a great way, and a very cool for the teacher to recognize that there are other ways to learn it, and that this particular student really grasped it, that to be able to do that.

Speaker 1 00:15:05 Right. That's powerful. I love that. And you had another one.

Speaker 2 00:15:09 Okay. So the other one, last one. So, um, this one came from our electrician teacher and this will go back a couple of years. The story is that this student actually dropped out of high school and went through the STC GED program. Finally decided that's what he wanted to do. So he went through the whole GED program, finished with his GED and found the electrical program. And it was like, oh, I think I want to do that. So he goes through the entire program, finishes, it gets a job. Then that following next year became an apprentice. So did the apprenticeship, which was at STC, did that at night for the three or four years that he had left, finished it out, completed the whole program. He is now a foreman with a local electrical company. And he is now one of the evening apprenticeship teachers.

Speaker 1 00:15:53 Oh, wow. That's awesome. Yes. So it comes full circle.

Speaker 2 00:15:57 Yes, absolutely. Oh, absolutely.

Speaker 1 00:16:00 I love that. And that's really fun too, in education, when you see the light bulbs go off, I mean, that's the whole point. We want people to have a better understanding, so that they can perform better so that they can feel more confident. They can feel more knowledgeable. They can make a better contribution for themselves and for their employer and for whoever they're serving, the customer or, or whoever, that's part of the beauty of education. Right?

Speaker 2 00:16:20 Oh, absolutely. Absolutely.

Speaker 1 00:16:22 Well, I think this has been a great conversation. Thank you ladies so much for coming in and for answering all my questions and I'm sure we'll be seeing each other again soon. Of course. Thank you so much. Have an awesome day.

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