

# Manufacturing and engineering industries reach out to students

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As jobseekers pour into employment fairs and resumes stack up on recruiters' desks, manufacturing and engineering companies continue to look for skilled workers, proving that pockets of demand still exist in the job market.

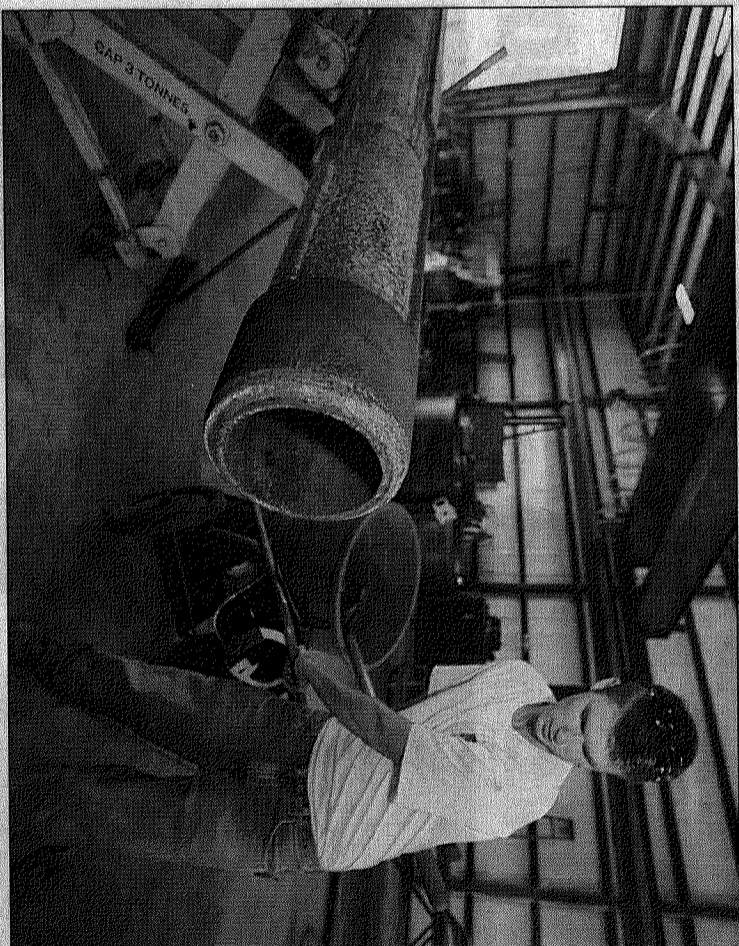
Tampa area companies are reaching out to young adults to try to meet the need.

On May 15, "Industry Day" brought nearly 100 high school students into six Pinellas County companies including Coastal Caisson Corp., Honeywell International Inc., Jablit Circuit Inc., Micron Pharmaceuticals Inc., Nielson Media Research and Pall Aeropower Corp.

"Coming from industry I knew we had to go after the needs of the community upfront," said Paul Wahmish, a mechanical engineer by background and founder of Career Technical Education Foundation, the 501(c)(3) organization that coordinated the event.

Wahmish founded CTEF as East Lake High School Robotic Boosters Inc. in 2003 with 22 students from East Lake High School in Tarpon Springs. The name changed to CTEF in June 2008 to reflect growth. CTEF now involves 500 students and is expanding beyond Pinellas, beginning with River Ridge High School in New Port Richey.

Skilled workers are in need because many of Florida's roughly 16,000 manufacturing entities are too small to support training departments, said David Gula, outreach



KATHLEEN CABBIE

Mike Amendola, an intern from East Lake High School, on the job at Coastal Caisson Corp.

manager for the Florida Advanced Technological Education Center, which assisted in "Industry Day."

"Kids are often missing the opportunity to find out what is out there," Gula said. "We are here to say here are the careers and pathways."

FLATE works with middle and high

things, picking up a job skill," Gula said. Today, the educational requirement has moved beyond the shop, he said.

A company of about 150 that specializes in deep underground construction foundations that support large structures, Coastal Caisson is looking for people with skills in welding, metal working, mechanical and electrical support, said Brian Kamm, director of governmental relations.

"We have a similar problem as most companies do in finding the resources that we need," Kamm said. "The skill levels that people come to us with are not sufficient."

Kamm would like to identify students interested in a program of training on the company's equipment. This summer the company launched an internship program that will train the students in "real-life situations" on the job, Kamm said.

In higher education, existing programs in engineering and manufacturing are filling up and new programs are being created. Hillsborough Community College will launch science degree programs this fall that were specifically developed to meet the needs of the work force, said Sabrina Peacock, dean of associate of science degree programs.

"Across the United States as a country, we are lagging behind in science, math and sciences," Peacock said. "We need to figure out how to move away from outsourcing knowledge."