

## August 16, 2008 - Students participate in Armstrong County Forum for Workforce Excellence

The Leader Times

[www.pittsburghlive.com](http://www.pittsburghlive.com)

Students participate in Armstrong County Forum for Workforce Excellence

By Mitch Fryer

LEADER TIMES

Saturday, August 16, 2008

### EAST FRANKLIN

-- The high school students visiting the 10th annual ARMTech Showcase of Industry and Technology at the Belmont Complex were six or seven years old when local, state and national elected officials had the idea to develop infrastructure, attract diversified industry and create jobs for a high-tech future for Armstrong County and the region.

The county's future engineers and scientists got a look into that future Friday.

The students from around the county were there to participate in an Armstrong County Forum for Workforce Excellence program that introduced them to mentors representing some of the region's high-tech companies. The forum was sponsored by one of the national companies attending the showcase, Lockheed Martin, a company whose core businesses are aeronautics, electronic systems, integrated systems, space and technology services.

"We're trying to keep our young people here," said U.S. Rep. John Murtha, D-Johnstown, in addressing the showcase. "Those kids are 16 and 17 now. This program is so important because it gives them an idea of what really happens in the real world. They get the chance to see some of that here."

"Next year

they're going to put the students in the booths and they can explain to me what that company does," Murtha added.

The students were sent on an information scavenger hunt among the 96 national, regional and local exhibitors at this year's showcase.

"The goal is to expose them to the type of technical industries that are here as exhibitors, especially those that are in the defense industry," said Armstrong County Commissioner Patty Kirkpatrick. "What type of technologies are they using in those industries? What careers are available? What are the educational requirements? What is the potential for local and international jobs? That's what they're finding out."

James Pish, director of communications at Dielectric Solutions, a Kittanning manufacturer of lightweight fiberglass fabric used for applications ranging from circuit boards to body armor for military vehicles, was the mentor to a group from Apollo-Ridge High School.

"I focused on what our products are, what our processes are, what makes us unique," Pish said. "By the time these kids get out of college, we're going to be needing people with their skills. We're on the brink of growing big. We're going to need chemists, engineers, fabric engineers and more."

Pish asked the students if they knew what Dielectrics means, what the properties involved were, what vertical integration is and other technical questions. He said he got some good answers back.

"These are the cream-of-the-crop students," Pish said. "This is right down their alley. They're eating this up."

A spokesperson for Murtha, Matt Mazonkey, said the students the congressman talked to were amazed to find out what technical careers were available after high school and college here and in the region.

"I'm

getting an idea of what engineering jobs do, and where you can find employment," said Apollo-Ridge student Tyler Andring.

Freeport Area

High School student Sean Carnahan

listened with interest at the Lockheed Martin exhibit. Carnahan is considering an engineering career.

"I think

it's a good possibility (that I would consider working for Lockheed Martin)," Carnahan said. "With everything they do worldwide, there are many good opportunities."

Carnahan found

his visit to ARMTech valuable.

"It's a

good idea to get to see all the different companies that are out there," Carnahan said. "You get to see what they do, what products they make, what their jobs are. It's definitely cool stuff. This would be a job I'd be interested to go to every day, seeing the things they're making."