



February is National Career and Technical Education Month

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RIVERBEND REGION - This February, join the RiverBend Growth Association and Madison County Career & Technical Education System in celebrating National Career and Technical Education (CTE) Month®. CTE Month is a national public awareness campaign that is held in February by organizations nationwide to celebrate the achievements and accomplishments of innovative CTE programs and to make educators, policymakers, employers, parents, and others aware of the value of CTE.

Career and Technical Education is education that directly prepares students for high-wage, high-demand careers. CTE covers many different fields, including healthcare, information technology, manufacturing, hospitality, and many more. CTE encompasses many different types of education from classroom learning to certification programs to work-based learning opportunities outside of the classroom.

Career and Technical Education delivers real options for students pursuing college and rewarding careers; it delivers real-world skills to students, and it delivers a real high school experience with more value. Parents and students both want their child or themselves to pursue a career they are passionate about. CTE lets students explore careers and find out what they want, or don't want to do after high school. CTE makes the future more affordable by helping families save money and invest their time wisely. CTE students can earn a paycheck, marketable certifications and even earn college credits while in high school, which can lead to better opportunities whether they pursue college or a career. There are a growing number of scholarships designed to help CTE students.

“Career and Technical Education creates meaningful pathways for students that allows them to learn through real-world application, explore career fields, and learn technical & employability skills that will last them a lifetime. One important element of CTE is that it doesn't limit a student's future career options, it expands them. Students who utilize CTE programs can follow a path that leads to an industry credential, an associate's

degree, a bachelor's degree, or beyond. Going through a CTE program really does help a student find who they are and what they want to be and send a student down a path that leads to a meaningful career,” said Kaleb Smith, Madison County CTE Director.

Career and Technical Education provides learners with the knowledge and skills they need to be prepared for college and careers. CTE gives purpose to learning by emphasizing real-world skills and practical knowledge within a selected career focus. Students in CTE programs take specialized courses, in addition to required courses, and often have the opportunity to participate in internships, engage with mentors and practice what they are learning through hands-on projects. Students can participate in CTE at the middle school or high school level and at postsecondary institutions.

According to Advanced CTE, the longest-standing national non-profit that represents State CTE Directors and state leaders of Career Technical Education, Career and Technical Education is a type of learning that works for both students and industry. Students in CTE programs and their parents are three times as likely to report they are “very satisfied” with their and their children’s ability to learn real-world skills as part of their education compared to parents and students not involved in CTE. Nearly 60 percent of companies report having difficulty filling job openings because of a lack of qualified applicants. Thirty-nine percent of employers say lack of experience or hard skills are top drivers of the talent shortages. CTE helps to fill that skills gap.

“Organizations today are struggling to find the right talent to fill jobs, and Career and Technical Education will help create job seekers able to fill this gap. With rapid advances in technology and a lot of the current workforce retiring soon, we must make sure Career and Technical Education remains a focal point in Riverbend area schools,” said John Keller, RiverBend Growth Association President.

The Association for Career and Technical Educations (ACTE) estimates that for every \$1 of government funding in CTE, taxpayers earn as much as \$12 in benefits in return. The ACTE also has data that shows technical and applied science graduates earn \$2,000 to \$11,000 more per year than those with only a bachelor’s degree. Between 2012 and 2022, there will be 50.6 million job openings for Career and Technical Education graduates. Of those jobs, 31.9% will be new according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

To learn more about Career and Technical Education in Madison County Illinois visit www.madisoncountyccte.com. Madison County Career & Technical Education System encourages local industry and community organizations to get involved and support local programs such as classroom presentations, company tours, scholarships,

apprenticeships/internships, job shadowing, or by sponsoring equipment or programs. Madison County Career & Technical Education system can be reached by phone at 618-656-0415. They are located at 6161 Center Grove Rd. Edwardsville, Illinois 62025.

About the RiverBend Growth Association

The RiverBend Growth Association is the Chamber of Commerce and the Economic Development Organization for the communities of the Riverbend. As a Chamber of Commerce, we actively promote activities between our member businesses. As an Economic Development Organization, we work closely with state, regional, county and local officials to develop new employment opportunities.

The Growth Association serves the following communities in southwestern Illinois: Alton, Bethalto, East Alton, Elsah, Foster Township, Godfrey, Grafton, Hartford, Roxana, South Roxana, Wood River, and Wood River Township.

The mission of the Growth Association is to provide the leadership required to attract, promote and support new and existing enterprise growth throughout the Riverbend community.

The Madison County CTE System hosts an annual Tech Awards banquet to recognize our outstanding students, teachers, and community members.

2019 Award Winner Left to right: Brian Bergin, Larry Jones, Mary Jackson, Don Schmitz, Jason Blankenship, Mark Bosworth, Billy Laycock, Rachel Holmes, Bryce Griggs, Teri Campbell, and Rob Werden.