

Press Clippings 3/18/2022

Daily Herald

Hoffer Plastics is manufacturing a change in perception --- 3/17/2022

By Greg Voss, Daily Herald Correspondent



Hoffer Plastics in South Elgin has been working with local schools to change the perception of the manufacturing industry with students who might be considering a career in industry. At right is 12-year employee Adam Vanmeter. *Photo courtesy of Hoffer Plastics/ Nick Allexon Photography*

Manufacturing presents a great career opportunity for post-high school men and women, but how to learn more and overcome its myths and misperceptions?

Hoffer Plastics saw the need and decided to break the mold. Literally.

The South Elgin-based custom injection molder launched its Break the Mold initiative last year with the plan to prove to youngsters entering the workforce that this ain't your granddaddy's factory.

Break the Mold is an informational partnership driven by Hoffer Plastics with **School District U-46** and its five high schools: **Elgin, Larkin, Streamwood, South Elgin and Bartlett**. The impetus was a pre-COVID-19 diminishment in job applications, which increased after the pandemic was established.

Hoffer hosted more than 30 school counselors from those schools in two sessions in January to give them a sense of what they wanted students to understand about manufacturing, like job growth, diversity of jobs, flexible scheduling and compensation.

That led to three groups of Larkin students -- about 20 students apiece -- who visited between the end of February and the most recent visit, March 9. Another group of Elgin students will visit April 8.

"Break the Mold was borne out of what people don't know what they don't know," said Charlotte Hoffer-Canning, the company's chief culture officer. "It's highly technical and you don't leave covered in dirt and it's an area of growth."

Hoffer can rattle off the statistics about the vibrancy of her company's field of work from the National Association of Manufacturing. U.S. manufacturing represents 12.5 million domestic jobs and is expected to add 4 million more jobs in the next decade.

"There's been a huge misconception on pay," she added, noting that between total pay and full benefits, nationwide employees make upward of \$92,000. And it's not just that; Hoffer-Canning said her company offers tuition reimbursement and the costs associated with apprenticeship programs, for example.

Michele Chapman, U-46 director of postsecondary success, said Break the Mold opened a new front for the district's counselors to explain the pros of manufacturing.

"I work with our counselors, and we have noticed they have expertise with four-year colleges, but we want to expand their knowledge of local trades and manufacturing opportunities," said Chapman, a former principal of Streamwood High School.

Nancy Coleman, executive director of Alignment Collaborative for Education, which helped broker the counselor and student visits, was struck by the depth of the questions the counselors in particular posed.

"They were eager to learn," Coleman said. "They don't know a lot about the (manufacturing) job market and the skills involved. They were all very surprised with the pay and benefits. It was just exposure. Manufacturing is very interesting. There are so many types of manufacturing."

Another interesting facet of Break the Mold is its use of social media to not only attract 18- to 24-year-old talent, but also to educate their parents to change their misconceptions about manufacturing. The idea is to reach both parties where they congregate online.

The two primary platforms Hoffer uses are Instagram, to reach the youngsters, and Facebook, to reach their parents. If you get a good sense of the free-flow conversation between Hoffer

and both demographics, simply search the hashtag #breakthemold. Up next is a potential foray into TikTok.

"The beauty of social media is that you can change on the fly," Hoffer-Canning said, once again using metrics to quantify Break the Mold's success. From its June 2021 launch until the end of September, social media total impressions were just south of 1 million. Total reach was 240,000, "and our ads were 400 percent higher in click-thrus than the average employment ad," she said.

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Kane County Connects

Tejas Katira repeats as Kane County Spelling Bee champion --- 3/17/2022

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It was a night of many words and many winners.

Kane County Regional Office of Education hosted this year's Kane County Final Spelling Bee on March 15 at Thompson Middle School in St. Charles School District 303.

Eight students participated in the finals, and all showed a spelling prowess beyond their years.



First place winner Tejas Katira with Patricia Dal Santo, regional superintendent at Kane County ROE.

Participants were:

- Antonia Kristofer — St. Peter School
- Cali Wagner — Kaneland McDole Elementary

- Clara Bello — Immanuel Lutheran
- Jonathan Boateng — Elgin Academy
- Katelyn Petterson — Dundee Middle School
- Lily Sikora — St. Patrick School
- Micah Rurack — Hampshire Middle School
- Tejas Katira — Larsen Middle School

The eight participants, who began their spelling bee journey by winning at the local level at their school, were reciting and spelling at a furious rate.

Tejas Katira (who also won the Spelling Bee in 2021) was victorious at this year's Spelling Bee, winning the competition by spelling the word "metastasize," which means to spread from one part of the body to another.

It was a battle of words between Tajas, Jonathan Boateng, who came in second place, and Clara Bello, who placed third.

Words spelled during the competition included "emphysema," "nonnegotiable," "anxiety," "trounce" and "memorandum."

Kane County Regional Office of Education Superintendent Patricia Dal Santo said witnessing the spelling event in-person was special.

"The ROE hosted the spelling bee online last year, due to the pandemic," she said. "To see how far each child has come to get to tonight is quite a feat. I am extremely proud of each participant, and ROE staff, who made this night possible."

As the first-place winner, Tejas has the option to attend the Scripps National Spelling Bee Finals in Maryland during Memorial Day week. The Kane County ROE will cover \$300 in expenses for plane tickets and lodging.

To learn more about 2022 Scripps Spelling Bee, visit www.kaneroe.org or www.spellingbee.com.

Stay updated with Kane ROE and subscribe to the bi-weekly newsletter from the Kane ROE and follow-on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, and YouTube.

Feature Photo Caption



First place winner Tejas Katira (center), second place winner Jonathan Boateng (left), and third place winner Clara Bello (right). (CREDIT: Kane ROE)

Chicago Tribune/The Courier-News Introducing the 2021-22 Beacon-News/Courier-News Boys' Basketball All-Area Team --- 3/18/2022 By Rick Armstrong for Aurora Beacon-News



East Aurora's Jullian Acosta gets past **Larkin's Damari Wheeler-Thomas** to score on a layup during a game on Tuesday, Jan. 4, 2022. (Jon Langham / The Beacon-News)

FIRST TEAM

Mekhi Lowery, Oswego East, junior, guard: Averaged 11.5 points, 7.7 rebounds, 2.9 assists, 2.7 steals for sectional finalist. Third team all-state. All-conference.

Conrad Luczynski, Bartlett, senior, center: Averaged 18.5 points, 12.8 rebounds, 3.5 assists, 4.3 blocked shots. Third team all-state. All-conference.

Patrick Robinson, Oswego East, senior, forward: Averaged 13.9 points, 4.2 rebounds, 2.3 assists, 1.3 steals for undefeated Suburban Prairie West champs. Special mention all-state. All-conference. Committed to Missouri-St. Louis.

Jaden Schutt, Yorkville Christian, senior, guard: Averaged 27 points, 6.0 rebounds, 3.0 assists in leading Mustangs to Class 1A state title. First team all-state. All-conference. Gatorade Illinois Player of Year. Committed to Duke.

Damari Wheeler-Thomas, Larkin, senior, guard: Averaged 19 points, 3.0 rebounds, 5.0 assists, 3.5 steals for Class 4A supersectional qualifier. Upstate Eight Conference's player of year. Second team all-state. Committed to North Dakota State.

SECOND TEAM

Jullian Acosta, East Aurora, senior, guard/forward: Averaged 14.0 points, 6.3 rebounds, 3.8 assists, 3.4 steals. All-conference.

Ethan Ivan, Batavia, senior, forward: Averaged 18.8 points, 4.8 rebounds. Shot 45% on 3-pointers. Third team all-state. All-conference.

Fernando Perez, Jr., Larkin, senior, guard: Averaged 15.0 points, 6.5 rebounds, 3.5 assists, 2.0 steals for undefeated Upstate Eight champs. Special mention all-state. All-conference.

Josh Pickett, West Aurora, sophomore, guard: Averaged 14.1 points, 4.4 rebounds, 1.9 assists. Special mention all-state. All-conference.

Gavin Sarvis, Burlington Central, senior, guard: Averaged 14.5 points, 3.8 rebounds, 3.5 steals, 2.6 assists for undefeated Fox Valley Conference champs. Second team all-state. All-conference.

THIRD TEAM

Mason Accidentale, Plano, senior, guard: Averaged 18.9 points. Made 109 3-pointers on 44% shooting. Special mention all-state. All-conference.

Ethan Marlowe, St. Charles North, senior, forward: Averaged 13.1 points, 8.8 rebounds, 2.1 assists, 1.4 blocked shots. Special mention all-state. All-conference.

Drew Meyers, Aurora Christian, senior, guard: Averaged 16 points, 4.5 assists, 3.4 steals. Set single-season program record with 96 steals. Special mention all-state. All-conference. Committed to Edgewood.

Trent Tousana, Batavia, senior, guard: Averaged 15.5 points, 5.3 rebounds, 4.2 assists. Special mention all-state. All-conference.

KJ Vasser, Yorkville Christian, senior, guard: Averaged 16 points, 4.0 rebounds, 2.0 assists for Class 1A state champs. First team all-state.

HONORABLE MENTION

Troyer Carlson, Kaneland, sophomore, guard; Jason Huber, Dundee-Crown, senior, guard; Alex Krejci, Somonauk, senior, forward; Jackson Langendorf, Waubonsie Valley, junior, forward; LeBaron Lee Jr., Yorkville, junior, forward; Danny New, Aurora Christian, senior, guard; DeVon Oregon, Oswego East, senior, guard; Ty Rogers, West Aurora, senior, forward; Collin Wainscott, Marmion, junior, guard; Robert Wilson, St. Edward, senior, guard.