

# Workforce Development

Helping You To Meet Your Workforce Challenges

Training The Next Generation:

## Polygon Presents Engineering Awards at Lee Virtual School

Many wonder how young people today can be positively influenced to pursue engineering careers and fill the skills gap in manufacturing. One small business in Fort Myers, Fla. is not waiting, but is proactively bringing middle school and high school students into their rotary broach manufacturing facility to show them the careers that are available, and give them early experiences in the industry. In January, Polygon Solutions presented some of those students with awards from their recent engineering competition.

In October 2014, Polygon Solutions and neighbor, Paver Motorcycles, hosted a special Manufacturing Day event for students of Lee Virtual School. Manufacturing Day is a growing grassroots effort by North American manufacturers to introduce students to the new and exciting jobs available in manufacturing. Lee Virtual School hosts an online curriculum for Lee County students that enables them to work from home and still benefit from the many services available locally through the county.

The Manufacturing Day event included a manufacturing presentation, tour of the broach factory and custom motorcycle shop, and finally a manufacturing and engineering design contest. During the contest, the students were encouraged to use what they had just learned about manufacturing, and apply it to the problem. This is the second year Polygon Solutions has hosted the competition, and the third year they have participated in Manufacturing Day.

"There's a tremendous amount of support for manufacturers right now," says Peter Bagwell, product engineer at Polygon Solutions. "We usually think of Southwest Florida for its tourism, but there are many manufacturers here.

In fact, the state of Florida is one of the biggest supporters of the national Manufacturing Day event. Our local Southwest Regional Manufacturers Association and innovative members like Paver Motorcycles are really interested in helping students see that they can get good, high-tech jobs without leaving the region."

Polygon sponsors gift certificates as prizes for the contest, and most students were given unique pens during the event, which had hidden USB sticks loaded with manufacturing videos and other content.

"When I was younger and involved with engineering and drafting contests in school, it really made me think a lot about my career," Mr. Bagwell says. "The Lee Virtual School is an incredibly innovative venture and I'm really hoping that by working together we can bring some of the same inspiration to local students."

Polygon Solutions Inc. is also a contest winner. The innovative broach manufac-



turer won the first annual Manufacturing Day Video Contest sponsored by the National Association of Manufacturers, and plans to share the rights to an 'American Made Movie' it won at the Made In SWFL trade show on March 25 at the Harborside event center. Polygon credits partnership with various trade organizations for helping it to reach the national spotlight and draw attention to manufacturing.

*Lee Virtual School is located at 2855 Colonial Blvd., Fort Myers, Fla. 33966. Telephone: 239-337-8178.*

