



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CONNELLSVILLE TECH CENTER STUDENTS CELEBRATED DURING ‘SIGNING DAY’

Uniontown, PA – Signing days - when high school seniors sign letters of intent to play a sport at a particular college or university - are pretty common occurrences in athletics. But over the last few years, career signing days have gained some traction, as educators strive to give students both recognition and a head start into their career fields.

Connellsville Area Career and Technical Center began hosting signing days for its students in 2019, and with COVID-19 shutdowns in the past, the school has resumed the new tradition, recently helping 13 students sign with 10 area companies.

“We did one in 2019, and we weren’t able to do one ever since because of COVID,” CACTC Workforce Development Coordinator Dr. Shawna Little said. “We had such a positive response when we did our signing day in 2019, that I just felt compelled to bring it back.”

Little said she got the idea after reading online about a similar event that had taken place at another school.

“I thought it was a great idea,” she said, explaining that her background as both a student-athlete and a coach made her familiar with the concept and spurred her desire to give similar recognition to the CACTC students.

Little said the “stigma” surrounding students who train in technical programs, rather than attending universities, is changing.

“We need to celebrate this type of success, as well as academic and athletic success,” she said.

Little said the jobs CACTC students have gotten are “sustainable jobs, not minimum wage jobs” - they are positions that can become the first step on a successful career path.

Part of changing the mindset that technical or trade school achievements are somehow less worthwhile than academic or athletic ones involves changing parents’ mindsets, she said, and signing days can help get the message out.

“It’s saying, ‘Look at what your student can achieve,’” she said.

Little said the Connellsville Area School District administration has supported the signing day fully. Superintendent Joseph Bradley even attended the event.

“I think it’s appropriate to celebrate the hard work of our CTC students in the same fashion as we celebrate our students in the arts and athletics,” Bradley said. “We often say here at the CTC we don’t

only want to prepare students for the job market; we want to prepare them to be at the front of the line in the job market. An event like this showcases that.”

Students and employers were on board with the idea as well. Heartland Fabrication Program Director Fred Ensle attended the event to surprise not one, but three students with job offers.

“I think it’s awesome,” he said. “The trades are finally starting to get the recognition they deserve. These young men are very impressive, and we’re looking forward to working with them.”

Dylan Noschese, an auto mechanics student who signed with C. Harper, said the signing day was a good idea.

“I think it’s pretty cool that they got to come down here. I got my boss to meet my teacher,” he said, noting he is the first Connellsville student to sign with the auto dealership. “It’s interesting. It puts them out there. I guess we’re both out there a little more.”

Little said in her five years at the school she has noticed that the students often don’t get the praise they deserve.

“These are the students that haven’t really ever been celebrated, and they deserve it,” she said. “They’ve achieved something, and it’s not something our society really celebrates.”

To learn more about the Connellsville Area Career and Technical Center, visit <https://cactc.casdfalcons.org>.

To learn more about Fayette County, visit www.FayetteCountyPA.org.

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For more information, contact Kristi Rooker Kassimer, Public Relations Specialist, at 412-691-0262, kkassimer@fayettecountypa.info or Jamie Rankin, Journalist, at 724-434-4486, jamierankin13@gmail.com.