

TECHtalk

MAY 2012



Opportunity Knocking

INTRODUCING BERKS COUNTY'S TECHNICAL ACADEMY

Eric Schmidt, executive chairman of Google, is quoted as saying, "Success is really about being ready for the good opportunities that come before you," and it certainly seems as though he knows a good opportunity when he sees one.

Schmidt's advice may be particularly well timed for many area students because a golden opportunity has been presented to them recently. A partnership composed of Reading Area Community College, Reading Muhlenberg Career and Technology Center, and Berks Career and Technology Center has formed to create Berks County's Technical Academy. "We are very proud of our partnership with RACC," said RMCTC Administrative Director **Gerald Witmer**.

The Technical Academy provides college-bound high school students the opportunity to develop advanced technical skills and earn college credit toward an associate and/or bachelor's degree while still in high school. "Students who are interested in pursuing a degree in business or computer information technology should be



looking very closely at this program," advised Witmer. "Attending college is becoming increasingly difficult for families due to the cost associated with going to college. The Technical Academy partnership will not only help students save money, but it will also reduce the time it takes them to earn a degree," said Witmer.

RMCTC students in the IT Applications program can earn up to 23 college credits toward a Business Management degree from RACC, while students in IT Web Design can earn up to 23 credits toward a Computer Technology degree. In the near future, RMCTC students will have some additional opportunities leading to a degree in Mechatronics Engineering Technology.

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TOGETHER

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**Reading
Muhlenberg**
CAREER & TECHNOLOGY CENTER



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FROM THE director



Attention: Parents of 8th Grade Students

The Harvard Graduate School of Education recently published a report titled *Pathways to Prosperity: Meeting the Challenge of Preparing Young Americans for the 21st Century*. The report focuses on the need to develop meaningful career training as part of comprehensive school reform. According to Sarita

E. Brown, president, Excelencia in Education, this report helps to identify new strategies that can help the Latino population gain meaningful work and educational experience needed to earn degrees and higher salaries.

In these trying economic times, it's important to recognize that RMCTC students become post-secondary students (52 percent last year), employees, supervisors, entrepreneurs, homeowners, business owners, taxpayers, community leaders, public servants, and producers and consumers of goods and services by directly using the skills they learned at RMCTC. Essentially, any investment made into career and technical education is an investment in the future of our community. According to the Pathways to Prosperity report, "27 percent of people with post-secondary licenses or certificates – credentials short of an associate degree – earn more than the average bachelor's degree recipient." In today's workplace, it's not only what you know, but what you know how to do that really matters. Every student attending the RMCTC has the opportunity to obtain these types of certifications and pursue a pathway into post-secondary education to further enhance their skills. Increasingly, RMCTC students are also

able to earn college credit while still in high school, based upon the work they complete at RMCTC.

As stated in the report, "college for all might be the mantra, but the hard reality is that fewer than one in three young people achieve the dream." That's a 33 percent chance of earning the bachelor's degree that was supposed to enable you to pay off the college loans! Perhaps your child is better suited to achieve the pathway to prosperity through a slightly different route, which can start at RMCTC.

We would enjoy the opportunity to talk with you about what we can do for your child and would ask you to visit our website (www.rmctc.org), make arrangements to visit RMCTC during our Open House in November, or call the school (610-921-7300) to arrange for a private tour.

(Note: A copy of the *Pathways to Prosperity* report can be obtained by simply calling RMCTC and requesting a copy.)

Gerald P. Witmer Jr.

Gerald P. Witmer Jr. | Administrative Director

Faculty News

Chad Heffner is a former Reading High School and RMCTC student who is returning to teach in the **Electrical Technology** program. Heffner is a journeyman electrician with the IBEW Local Union 743 and has worked in industrial, commercial, and residential settings. He also brings experience in fire and security systems, telephone, coaxial cable, and electrical devices.

PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT: MACHINE SHOP TECHNOLOGY

Where Safety and Skills Make the Cut

What images come to mind when you hear the words “machine shop”? Do you envision a dark, grimy, factory where everything you touch is coated with oil and metal shavings? Do you think of a dingy place where weary men in greasy jumpsuits toil away on loud, chattering machines that seem to be left over from the early days of the Industrial Revolution?

Well, think again. Modern machine shops don't look or sound like that at all—especially the one at Reading Muhlenberg Career and Technology Center. **Andrew Klein**, Machine Shop Technology instructor, would prefer that those old, inaccurate impressions be replaced by an updated understanding of what precision machining is and what it has to offer his students.

The RMCTC machining lab replicates an up-to-date commercial machine shop, complete with manual lathes, milling machines, drill presses, and surface grinders, as well as Computer Numerical Control (CNC) machines, wire EDM machines, and hi-tech inspection equipment. The shop is bright, clean, and safe. So safe,



in fact, it was recognized recently by the Association for Career and Technical Education and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH).

Klein developed a safety manual for use by students, entered it in a national competition, and won the 2012 NIOSH School Lab Safety award. Although he certainly teaches safe practices in the shop and is proud of winning the award, Klein is also eager to talk about the accomplishments of his students and their prospects for the future.

Students have the opportunity of earning up to 12 National Institute for Metalworking Skills (NIMS)

certifications that provide a potential employer with proof of a student's skills in specialized areas of machining. Armed with such credentials, students are well prepared to continue their study at post-secondary schools, such as Reading Area Community College, Penn College of Technology, or Thaddeus Stevens College of Technology. Those students who want to work immediately after graduation will find options open to them. “Employers often call the school looking for skilled graduates,” reported Klein. “The opportunities in machining are enormous.”



work- based LEARNING

Hungry for More

CHRISTIAN VELEZ
READING, PA | RMCTC CLASS OF 2012
PROGRAM: *Culinary Arts*

“My grandfather would always want me to be in the kitchen with him,” is how **Christian Velez** explains his early entry into the culinary arts. “He would teach me how to make typical Spanish food. Cooking has always been in my family. It’s enjoyable,” said Christian about his natural attraction to his chosen career field.

While he learned many cooking techniques at home, Christian, a senior at Reading High School, knew he wanted to go further, and so enrolling in the Culinary Arts program at RMCTC was an easy decision for him. Now, he speaks highly of his teacher, **Justin Potteiger**, and sings the praises of the program and the school in general. “Chef Potteiger has been amazing,” Christian stated enthusiastically. “RMCTC makes me want to go to school, because I don’t want to miss anything.” The proof of the truthfulness of that statement may be found in the fact that Christian goes to “shop,” as he calls it, even on the days of his co-op, when he is not required to attend RMCTC.

Since January, Christian has been involved in a work-based learning experience with the dining service at Albright College. His duties are varied and include preparing food in the kitchen and serving students at different stations set up throughout the dining hall. “Christian is a talented young adult with a bright future in the culinary arts,” said his supervisor, Director of Dining Services Stephen Amore, who also had good things to say about Albright’s connection with RMCTC. “We value our relationship with the Reading Muhlenberg Career and Technology Center and are very satisfied with the skill sets of their students. We have been providing successful employment opportunities for well over a decade, and the program is as vital as ever, having had four very good

employees come aboard the Albright College/ Aramark Dining Services team in the past year,” said Amore.

Whether it is by watching cooking shows on the Food Network, participating in FCCLA competitions, or simply fixing sandwiches for his family members, Christian is constantly honing and expanding his cooking skills because he is hungry for more—more recipes, more experience, more knowledge. In the fall, he will attend Penn State Berks, where he will major in business and minor in hospitality. His plans include earning a bachelor’s degree at Penn State’s main campus and then pursuing a career in hotel or restaurant management. It doesn’t take a celebrity chef to see that Christian has found his very own recipe for success.





Fitting the Pieces Together

FRANCISCO MASSARI
READING, PA | RMCTC CLASS OF 2001
PROGRAM: *Cabinetmaking*

CAREER INFO: *Supervisor,
 Century Cabinetry, Leesport, PA*

It takes an efficient manufacturing process for a small woodworking company to produce more than 300 cabinets every week. The plant has to be laid out in a logical fashion, each machine must complete a specific function quickly and accurately, and each operator must be skilled, knowledgeable, and focused on performance.

These are things that **Francisco Massari** is well aware of. As supervisor for panel processing at Century Cabinetry in Leesport, he oversees a large production area where wooden panels are cut to size and precisely machined into parts that are then assembled into cabinets supplied to builders in the tri-state area.



A high-tech saw cuts large sheets into correctly sized pieces, while maximizing the yield of each sheet of material. A CNC machine drills holes for dowels and routes rabbets and dados, preparing cabinet pieces to be joined together later in the assembly phase. A sander smooths both sides of the panels, and a banding machine applies banding to the edges of the panels, masking the rough and unsightly end grain of plywood or composite material. At the end of this finely controlled process, the panels are ready to move on to the assembly and finishing stages of the manufacturing process.

Observing Francisco in his work environment would lead one to suspect that he was “born into” the woodworking field, but that would be a mistake. There were no woodworkers in his family, and he didn’t have a lifelong dream of working in wood. “I went into it cold turkey,” is how he describes his entry into the Cabinet-making program at RMCTC. He readily admits, also, that there were some rough spots in the beginning. “I should have been more serious about learning what Mr. Brumbach (**Kevin Brumbach**, RMCTC Cabinet-making instructor) was trying to teach me,” said Francisco.

He did settle in, though, learned good techniques, and graduated in



2001. He went on to study cabinet-making at Thaddeus Stevens College of Technology in Lancaster, where he earned an associate degree in applied science. **Stephen Latta**, his college teacher, characterized Francisco as a good student who “worked hard and made the dream come true.”

While acknowledging that he took some good things for granted as a high school sophomore, Francisco would advise today’s students to take a tour of RMCTC, look for something to like, try it out, and pay attention. “The good instructors will guide you in the right direction,” said Francisco. “I would like to think that his experience at RMCTC helped to lay the foundation for his current success,” said Brumbach, who is clearly very proud of Francisco’s accomplishments. Francisco might not have had the most efficient start to his career, but efficiency is something he has learned, and it is working out well for him and his employer.

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MISSION STATEMENT

The Reading Muhlenberg Career and Technology Center, in partnership with our diverse community, sponsoring districts, and business and industry, is committed to providing quality career and technical education, resulting in opportunities for students to gain employment, pursue post-secondary education, and develop an appreciation for lifelong learning.

Opportunity Knocking continued

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The Technical Academy offers highly selective programs that have strict entrance criteria. Students will apply while in 9th grade and begin the program at RMCTC in 10th grade. An overall GPA of 3.0 is required, as is proficiency in math and reading, as measured by the PSSA. To remain in the program, students must complete a college placement academic sequence throughout high school. In addition, students must successfully complete RACC placement testing prior to taking the final three courses on the RACC campus.

Although these recommended student qualifications are demanding, it is important to note that the benefits of enrolling in the Technical Academy are indeed significant. Not only do RMCTC students get the opportunity of earning 23 college credits while still in high school, but those credits are tuition free. That's a learning opportunity that they can take to the bank.

It is the policy of the Reading Muhlenberg CTC not to discriminate on the basis of gender, disability, race, color, and national origin in its educational and vocational programs, activities, or employment as required by Title IX, Section 504 and Title VI.

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