The Day

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Officials celebrate new job center in Montville, talk manufacturing gains

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Montville — As officials celebrated the grand opening of a new job center here, a local initiative that funnels trained candidates into local manufacturing positions also got a boost.

The Gawlicki Family Foundation has awarded a $450,000 grant to advance an expansion of the Eastern CT Manufacturing Pipeline initiative to high school students. The grant was announced Friday by Eastern Connecticut Workforce Investment Board President John Beauregard during a celebration of the new American Job Center in Montville.

The pipeline, which began two and a half years ago, hit the 1,000 mark for job placements 42 days ago, Beauregard said.

In March, EWIB began working with Norwich Free Academy to design a high school pilot program, and the school identified 20 students who would be a good fit. The program, currently being held at Three Rivers Community College, will finish on Aug. 3.

One participant is Imamdin Aswad Nawaz-Galiwala. Three days after graduation, he started the five-week program learning basic machinery skills and more.

"I'm not really a college person," Nawaz-Galiwala told The Day, and so when his English teacher recommended the program to him, it seemed like a good fit.

Beauregard said other high schools in the area have expressed interest, including Montville High School, Bacon Academy in Colchester and Plainfield High School.

In the future, Beauregard said, if partners "start to change or embed the curriculum into their senior year,

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we can begin to carve out that pathway to a career that is so important." He also thinks the model of the manufacturing pipeline could transfer well to other industries.

Beauregard and Nawaz-Galiwala on Friday joined local, state and federal officials for the grand opening ceremony of the Montville American Job Center, with remarks celebrating manufacturing growth in the region.

The Montville AJC opened at 601 Norwich-New London Turnpike, formerly a grocery store, on April 2. It is one of 18 AJCs in the state but one of only five that are comprehensive, as opposed to the 13 affiliates.

The 19,000-square-foot facility offers professional resume critiques, career assessments, apprenticeship referrals, mock interviews, career fairs, computer workshops and more.

The Connecticut Department of Labor estimates the Montville office will receive about 19,000 visits this year, with the average person visiting three to four times.

"No matter what your status is as a job-seeker, no matter what your status is, we can help you get a job," state Labor Commissioner Kurt Westby said. "We can help you get training for a job, and I'm talking about a better job."

The Department of Labor has partnered with 14 other agencies on the new AJC, with EWIB and the Bureau of Rehabilitative Services as the main partners.

Also offering remarks at Friday's grand opening were Gov. Dannel Malloy; Lt. Gov. Nancy Wyman; U.S. Sen. Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn.; U.S. Rep. Joe Courtney, D-2nd District; Montville Mayor Ronald McDaniel; U.S. Department of Labor Director Heather Graham and EWIB Chairman Chris Jewell.

"It's a celebration of a new beginning, perhaps the brightest this portion of the state has been since the birth of the gaming industry," Malloy said.

He added that Eastern Connecticut will support the efforts of Pratt & Whitney and Lockheed Martin, while Blumenthal said that employees of these defense contractors — along with Electric Boat — are "as important as the men and women who put on a uniform and defend our country."

Mary Ellen Jukoski, president of Three Rivers Community College, announced that the college is opening an apprenticeship center at Ella T. Grasso Technical High School when the new high school building opens next August.

Armelde Pitre, founder of the EWIB-Pitre STEM Leadership Scholarship, announced the three recent graduates who are receiving the scholarship this year: Tessa Carty from Norwich Free Academy, Lauryn Lu from Ledyard High School and Silas Olsen from Lyman Memorial High School each will get $1,000.

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