

West Bank outreach breakfast shows tech program to area businesses



By Rosalie Simmons, Marrero Musings columnist
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Yelitza Gray, principal of Cuillier Career Center and Lucille Lejeune, Jefferson Parish Public School Career and Technical Education coordinator, hosted a Community Outreach Breakfast to showcase the school's Career and Technical Education (CTE) program.

Westbank Business and Industry Association representatives, school board members (JPSB), civic leaders, retired principals and parents gathered to learn more about the CTE program and tour the campus to get a first look at the program in action. The event was held at 1429-B Ames Blvd. in Marrero, from 7:45 a.m. to noon.

The stated mission of the CTE program is to "provide access for all Jefferson Parish Public School students (JPPSS) to obtain a high quality career and technical education program that will prepare them for high skill, high demand jobs in a changing global economy."

Their goal is to integrate academic and technical content in an educational program that allows students greater opportunities for success in college and careers.

The curriculum is designed to offer students who take advantage of the varied career options a chance to fulfill their dreams of success. This in turn is expected to decrease the drop-out rate and encourage interests in post-secondary education thus leading to higher pay and productivity for citizens in the community, state and country.

Isaac G. Joseph, Jefferson Parish Schools Superintendent, said, "We're getting ready to elevate this whole idea of Career Technical Education like you've never seen it before."

"You won't be able to tell the difference between the career tech path and those that are going to a four-year college," he said. "They work both ways. Our children are very, very talented."

JPSB member, Ricky Johnson said that he has a special interest in the career and technical program.

"It means a lot for me to try to do the best we can for these kids," Johnson said. "As said earlier, we have some plans in the works that are just going to blow the socks off of everything, once we get it done. Cuillier is going to be at another level. It's going to be great."

Lejeune greeted the room filled with business partners attending the Breakfast/Tour and expressed gratitude for their participation. "We were expecting about twenty-five, but this is amazing," she said. "We want our curriculum to guide our students to have jobs that pay good salaries so that they can pay taxes that go back to support schools and internships; creating a snowball effect."

After breakfast, Gray thanked the business partners for their time and support and said: "We want to give our children every opportunity to excel. If we want to impact the community, we all have to come together and be able to give our students an opportunity to actually join the work force. They need you to train them and help them by giving them jobs. We need you and are begging for your support."

Several business partners completed forms indicating their interests in offering internships and/or classroom support for Jefferson Parish high school students. Forms were to be submitted to Christie Gomez, director of community engagement at 504.349.7955.

Information sheets were distributed to guest, stating objectives of the CTE program, saying, that in an effort to build the Jefferson Parish workforce, businesses are invited to join the partnership. The partnership is designed to be beneficial to students, teachers and the business. The program connects students' classroom experiences to real work.

Some services businesses can provide to the program are: hosting a paid intern, partnering with a school, participating in job shadowing and hosting externships for teachers.

Following breakfast and information session, students led visitors on a tour of the school to observe students at work learning and practicing potential career skills. Prizes of a free tire rotation, a \$25 printing order, cosmetology and barbering services and other free career service gifts were awarded to some participants.

Lejeune invited everyone to plan to attend and/or participate in the JPSS "Career Expo" scheduled for Oct. 12 from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the John Ehret High School gymnasium at 4300 Patriot St. in Marrero.

All New Orleans area public, private, charter, parochial high and middle school students and parents are invited to "Take Charge of Your Future" and meet face-to-face with area business and industry representatives.

Information pamphlets, "give-a-ways" from presenters will be available from a variety of large and small businesses. Interested business partners should contact Lucy Lejeune at 504.736.1874 for more information.

To learn more about career technical educational trends watch a video "Success in the New Economy" at: www.jpsschools.org/departments/career-and-technical-education/ and follow the career and technical education link.