

Youth Outreach



Students Put STEM Skills to the Test at Keystone Competition

Students from across the region spent February 17 thinking big and building fast as Midwestern Intermediate Unit 4 (MIU4) hosted the inaugural Keystone Competition in Grove City.

The one-day STEM experience brought together 165 students in

grades 5-12 for a high-energy, team-based challenge focused on solving real-world problems.

Designed like a STEM hackathon, the Keystone Competition encouraged students to brainstorm ideas, collaborate with teammates and begin developing prototypes. The result was a fast-paced environment filled with creativity, critical thinking and hands-on innovation.

The event kicked off with keynote remarks from Anna Barenfeld (pictured above), vice president of strategic initiatives at ELLWOOD and LMMC board president.

“We live in a high-tech world, but at the end of the day, someone still has to build the real things,” Barenfeld said. “Planes don’t fly because of an app. Satellites don’t orbit Earth because of a spreadsheet. People build them.”

Student teams were evaluated by volunteer judges on innovation and creativity, feasibility and technical viability, impact and market potential, and presentation and communication.

Judges included Ben O’Donnell and Rose Sharga from ELLWOOD, Vicki Thompson from Thomas P. Miller & Associates (TMPA) and Steven Sheirer and Diane McGaffic from MIU4.

“We congratulate all participating students for engaging in a full day of innovation, creativity and design,” said McGaffic. “Their collaboration and forward-thinking solutions exemplify the power of STEM education in action.”

First-, second- and third-place awards were presented within

each grade band, recognizing standout achievements and a strong start for what promises to be a growing STEM initiative in Pennsylvania.

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Workforce

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“The May Emma Hoyt Foundation recognizes that, for many reasons, jobs in the manufacturing are necessary in Lawrence County,” said Charles Y.

Mansell, president of the [May Emma Hoyt Foundation](#). “We are pleased to partner with LMMC to promote that training.”



The funding will be used exclusively to provide performance-based stipends to Lawrence County students participating in AMP, which is offered by [Penn College of Technology](#) and managed locally by

Forward Lawrence.

AMP combines 27 online ToolingU-SME lessons that prepare students to earn the Certified Manufacturing Associate (CMfg-A) credential with hands-on labs and plant tours. Students complete coursework at their schools and gather at a central Lawrence County location for lab experiences.

In 2024-25, LMMC joined Forward Lawrence to help manage the program and provided approximately \$26,000 from its PA Industry Partnership grant to support stipends and employer engagement.

That year, 26 Lawrence County students enrolled, 22 completed the program and 13 earned the industry credential. Six secured manufacturing jobs. Others continued to their senior year, the military or other post-secondary education and training.

One of those students, Hayden Davidak, was hired by LMMC member Flowline.

The 2025-26 cohort begins in January with 42 Lawrence County students enrolled. LMMC is also piloting AMP with 14 students at Farrell High School in Mercer County, though no Hoyt funds support Mercer County students.



T. Bruce Sales Marks 80 Years

Eighty years after its founding, LMMC member manufacturer T. Bruce Sales continues to demonstrate the staying power of family-owned manufacturing in western Pennsylvania. The milestone reflects not only longevity but a sustained commitment to quality, customer service and community.

Founded in 1945, T. Bruce Sales has grown into a trusted partner for custom metal fabrication and precision machining, serving customers across a range of industries while maintaining deep roots in the region.

For the team, the anniversary is a marker of continuous improvement and strong relationships with customers and employees.

“Reaching 80 years in business represents a remarkable commitment to adaptability and service,” said Jeff Hogue, president of T. Bruce Sales. “It is a milestone that speaks to trust, resilience and forward-thinking leadership.”

That forward-thinking approach has shaped how T. Bruce Sales has evolved to meet changing demands. Today, the company is known for managing projects from start to finish, offering design, fabrication, machining, assembly and delivery.

One pivotal step forward came with the transition from manual machining to CNC equipment, expanding precision and capacity for complex work.

“Investing in larger CNC machines allowed us to increase precision, efficiency and capacity and better meet our customers’ needs,” Hogue noted.

Culture has also played a central role in the company’s success.

T. Bruce Sales credits Scotty's Campbell, the company's longtime leader who has guided the business for the past 55 years, with setting expectations around quality and accountability while building a workplace grounded in respect, ensuring employees have the tools, equipment and support needed to deliver on every job.

As it marks 80 years, T. Bruce Sales continues focusing on growth, innovation and the people who keep projects moving from the shop floor to successful delivery.

Help Spread the Word About Manufacturing Readiness

LMMC is preparing to launch Manufacturing Readiness, and readers are encouraged to share the program with their networks, friends, families and anyone who may benefit from a local manufacturing job.

Manufacturing Readiness is a free, four-week, bootcamp-style pre-apprenticeship program designed to prepare individuals for immediate employment with local manufacturers.

The first cohort is anticipated to start April 6th.

The program runs Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the [BC3@Lawrence](#) campus in Shenango Commons. Participants can earn performance-based stipends of up to \$750, and no prior manufacturing experience is required.

LMMC partners [Butler County Community College](#) (BC3), [Goodwill Industries](#) and [PA CareerLink®](#) provide the training.

Manufacturing Readiness also connects participants directly with local employers through plant tours, employer visits and mock interviews. Graduates also receive priority consideration for open positions with [LMMC](#) member manufacturers.

Manufacturers can also help by referring applicants who showed promise but weren't quite job-ready yet.

If you receive applications from candidates with strong attendance, attitude or teamwork potential but who need foundational skills, encourage them to apply for Manufacturing Readiness.

For more information, contact Julie Michael Smith at julie@lawrencemercermfg.com.

Youth Outreach

A New Career-Exploration Option Closer to Home

Schools in Lawrence and Mercer counties will soon have a more convenient option for a hands-on Junior Achievement experience when BizTown and Finance Park open at Eastwood Mall in Niles, Ohio.

Junior Achievement helps students connect classroom learning to real-world money and career decisions through programs focused on financial literacy, work and career readiness and entrepreneurship.



The new Niles site is being developed as a permanent career exploration center that will serve tens of thousands of students, including those in our region, offering hands-on experiences in financial literacy, business operations and career awareness.

For many Western Pennsylvania schools that currently travel to Junior Achievement programs in Bridgeville, the Niles location will offer a more convenient option.

BizTown is designed to simulate a functioning community where students step into roles, make decisions and see how businesses and local systems work together.

The Niles location is also expected to target older grades and include more representation from regional companies, with a strong presence from manufacturers and a greater emphasis on manufacturing careers and opportunities in our region.

As the project develops, LMMC will continue tracking opportunities for local employers to support meaningful career awareness experiences that help young people see what's possible close to home.

Calendar

- LMMC Semi-Annual Membership & Community Meeting: April 22 from 8 to 10 a.m.
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Members in the News

- Manufacturers See Promise, Opportunity - The Business Journal
- Large-Scale Steel Fabrication Anchors Operations at T. Bruce Sales - The Business Journal
- T. Bruce Sales Celebrates 80 Years of Business - The Business Journal