

“It was the coolest thing I’ve ever seen!”



That’s what one high school student said after walking around ProMat 2015. And he wasn’t alone. In fact, his reaction was shared by other students, too. The same sentiments are expected from students attending MODEX 2016 as part of MHI’s Career & Technical Education Program.

BY ANGELA JENKINS, MHI CAREER & TECHNICAL EDUCATION COORDINATOR

For a dozen years, MHI has welcomed hundreds of college and university students to both ProMat and MODEX for Classroom Day. The program is sponsored and underwritten by MHI’s College Industry Council on Material Handling Education (CICMHE) and Career & Technical Education (CTE) Program in partnership with the Material Handling Education Foundation Inc. (MHEFI) and the Material Handling Equipment Distributors Association (MHEDA).

Five years ago, Classroom Day sponsors also began inviting high school, technical school and community college students to participate. These students represent MHI’s Career & Technical Education (CTE) Program. It was a natural evolution of the event—particularly with CTE’s development of four *Fundamentals of Warehousing and Distribution* textbooks, which have been

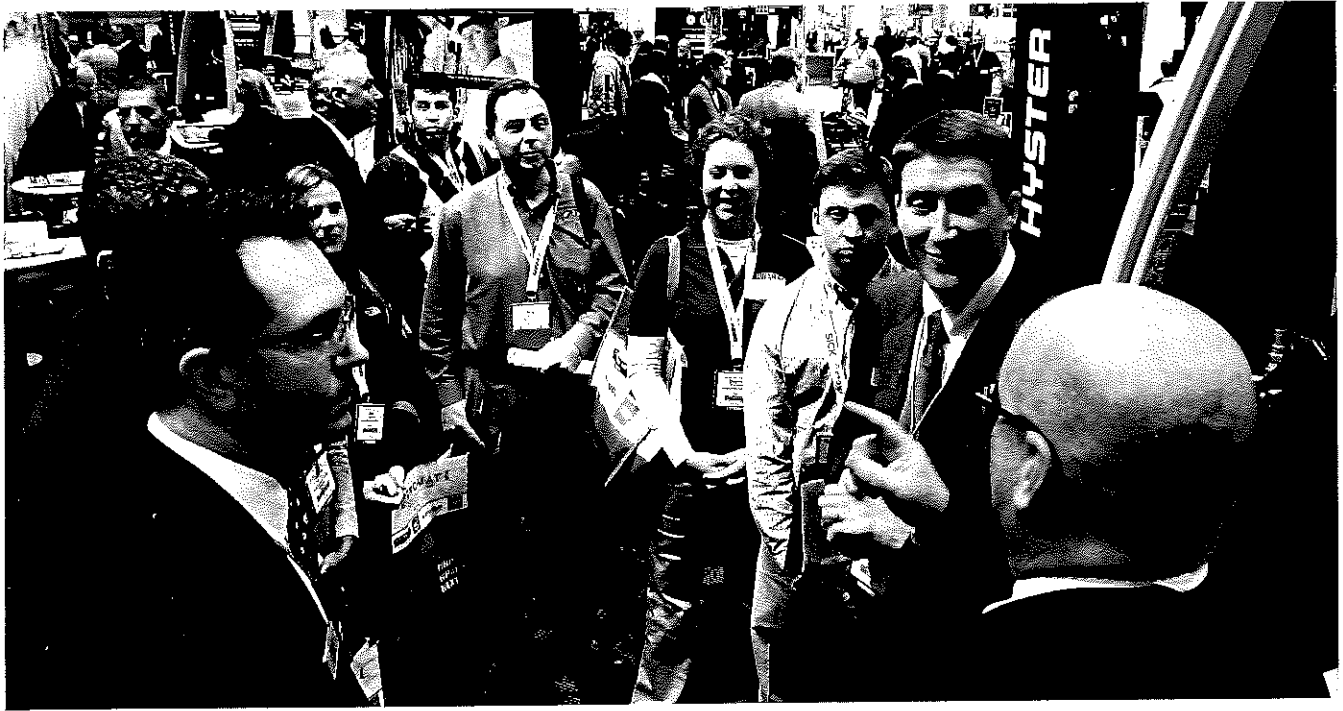
largely adopted by those institutions. Inviting those students and instructors to attend ProMat and MODEX was a logical step.

During the Classroom Day event, participants are introduced to the many ways material handling and logistics solutions make supply chains work. They learn about new and developing technologies, get insights into industry

trends and discover more about potential careers. Select exhibitors visit with the students during guided group tours of the show floor, explaining their technologies and answering questions.

At ProMat 2015, the event expanded with the addition of a second day of off-site facility tours, giving students a chance to see real-world material handling technology applications at different distribution facilities in the Chicago area. The umbrella event was christened “Student Days,” and now includes one Classroom Day at the show and a second day of warehouse tours.

Students from two high school material handling and supply chain education programs—the Don Frazier Supply Chain Training Program at the Applied Technology Center (ATC) in Rock Hill, South Carolina, and the Supply Chain Management & Logistics Technology Program at the Lehigh Career & Technical Institute (LCTI)



in Schnecksville, Pennsylvania—have attended ProMat and MODEX shows over the past few years. Their instructors, Dave Finley of ATC and Vicki Phillips of LCTI, are thrilled to have an opportunity to share a different perspective on the industry outside the classroom.

In addition to providing class time and textbook-based lessons, the ATC and LCTI programs give students hands-on experience at on-site warehousing facilities. The buildings include a variety of forklifts, racking, warehouse management software and other technologies that students are likely to encounter in a warehousing job. In addition to earning credits toward high school graduation, students can earn certifications in the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's (OSHA) 10-hour general industry course, and in the National Safety Council's (NSC) Forklift Safety Training program.

Although the classes and certifications help students seeking full-time employment, the opportunity to see the newest equipment and technologies at ProMat 2015 was eye-opening for two LCTI students: 17-year-old junior Angel Carlo (Class of 2017) and 18-year-old senior Anthony Ramirez (Class of 2016).

Carlo, whose favorite part of class is operating forklifts—something he

hopes to do professionally—found his experience at ProMat 2015 surprising. "I saw so many more technologies at the show than we have at our program; the different electric pallet jacks and the functions that have been developed to help operators move heavier loads were really interesting."

He also relished the opportunity to visit an off-site facility. "I've always wanted to see the inside of a warehouse; my dad is a truck driver and my mom works in a warehouse, but I've never been able to see what one was like in action," he recalls. "It was the coolest thing I've ever seen, especially seeing how the whole process works."

Ramirez, who as a child discovered a passion for taking things apart to figure out how they work, wants to become a

supply chain technician. After graduation he hopes to attend a college that offers that type of training program. At ProMat 2015, he was fascinated by the automation technologies, conveyors and forklifts.

"It was probably one of the best experiences I've had in my life," says Ramirez. "I learned a lot about different job opportunities in the field, including customer service management. I'm comfortable talking to people and it was exciting to learn that there was another possible career related to the supply chain field that I could pursue."

Likewise, for ATC graduates Haley Kilgore, 19 (Class of 2014), and Austin Abernethy, 18 (Class of 2015), attending MODEX 2014 and ProMat 2015 respectively, confirmed that each had made the



right decision about pursuing logistics and supply chain careers.

Kilgore was hired at a Rock Hill battery supplier's warehouse shortly after returning from MODEX 2014—just a week before she graduated. She enrolled in Finley's class at the encouragement of her father, who felt it was a great chance for her to learn how the world operates.

"I absolutely loved the class, because it turns out I'm super organized when it comes to other people's stuff," she laughs. "Going to the MODEX show was

really exciting for me, and it opened up my mind about how much technology there is in supply chain that I'd never realized before."

Further, Kilgore credits her classroom time with giving her an edge during her job search. "Learning the basics about warehousing in class was helpful during the interview process, because I didn't have much work experience to talk about," she explains.

After initially starting as a case picker, Kilgore was quickly promoted

to less-than-truckload (LTL) coordinator, then shipping clerk and then to her current position as a tasker for the second shift at a neighboring facility. She arrives an hour ahead of her colleagues and is responsible for allocating the work tasks throughout the entire shift (including receiving, load building, outbound manifesting and shipping) and verifying their completion—all skills she first learned in her class with Finley.


After graduating from ATC, Abernethy enrolled in an Associates' Degree program at York Technical College in Rock Hill, studying business management and logistics. "Taking the material handling program at ATC motivated me to go to college," he says. "The course showed me that there are so many different career paths in the supply chain field—it's an industry that's growing, because as long as people are buying product, it has to come through a warehouse."

Attending ProMat 2015 and participating in a facility tour further verified for Abernethy how many different jobs the industry offers. "Seeing the different equipment, how each operates, and all the data management systems that run behind the scenes—it really showed me that there are so many different types of careers in a facility," he says. "Warehouses aren't dirty and the jobs aren't boring."

The broad range of opportunities has turned Abernethy into a cheerleader of sorts for the industry. "I learned about Mr. Finley's class from a friend, and there's a group of us that took the classes together who tell other, younger students about it all the time," he says. "What's great about the industry is, for kids who don't want to go to college right after high school, they can get a job in this field."

During the MODEX 2016 installment of Student Days (on Wednesday, April 6 and Thursday, April 7), off-site facility tours will again be offered, with students visiting Atlanta-area supply chain facilities.

To learn more about the Student Days program, visit MODEXShow.com/education/student-days.aspx. To learn more about the MHI CTE program, visit MHI.org/cte.



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