

Career Pathways for our Future Workforce

By Felecia Judge

The second annual Youth Career Expos, presented by HDG Hotels, just wrapped up February 2 with nearly 800 middle and high school students having exposure to career opportunities from more than 40 local companies. The event was overwhelmingly referred to as “fun and informative” on the student surveys.

With supportive partners like HDG, and dedicated teams from CareerSource



Citrus Levy Marion, Marion County Public Schools, On Top of the World, and the Public Education Foundation, the expo was structured to give students a comprehensive idea of career pathways. This future workforce spent their time in soft skills workshops, exposition rooms with area businesses, and roundtable panel discussions with industry professionals. All of these components gave the students a better idea of what types of jobs are here in Marion County, what employers look for in a candidate, and what skills are necessary for those jobs.

Many students reported that they had no idea of the variety of jobs available right here in Marion County. And a great many more reported they learned much more about the importance of soft skills as they relate to proper communication – both verbal and non-verbal – and how employers look for these increasingly rare qualities in candidates.

Two very noteworthy comments from students about why they valued the event include “people care about our education and took the time to come out,” as well as “I will remember

these people as motivational.” The impact that just three hours made on Marion County’s greatest assets is nothing less than inspiring.

Conversely, the surveys returned by the business partners who participated have also yielded positive feedback. Key leaders were more than happy to help address the questions and concerns from students and, after a few nervous giggles, the kids opened up and really starting firing poignant ques-



tions to the panelists. It was certainly a win-win for workforce development in Marion County.

We are already in the planning stages for next year’s event and look forward to bringing in a new group of students to experience some real world opportunities. In the meantime, we encourage you to “Like” our Facebook page, OcalaClassroom2Career, and to visit the website (www.OcalaClassroom2Career.com) for updates on relevant career pathways and the incredible jobs that are just waiting to be had from this great group of Marion County’s future graduates! ■

Featuring Joel Raney, President/CEO of Raney’s Inc.



March 15, 2017

7:30-9:00 a.m.

Marion County Extension Auditorium
2232 NE Jacksonville Road

Joel Raney is the president/CEO of Raney’s Inc., a hugely successful e-commerce company that is a leading provider of parts & accessories for the Heavy Duty industry. In 2016, Raney’s was named an Inc. 500 Fastest Growing Private Company.

After completing his bachelors degree in Civil Engineering and going on to pursue a masters in Structural Engineering, Joel found an opportunity to follow his passion in business and start his own company. In 2010, he left graduate school to start Raney’s, alongside his cousin. What began with a team of just two has quickly expanded to over 45 people and into a 125,000 square foot building that houses their warehouse and administrative offices.

People are the heart of Raney’s, from their customers to their team members, known as Chromozonians (Chrome accessories are really big with truckers and they sell a LOT of chrome). The

company has developed a workplace culture that is fun and friendly, with a family type of atmosphere in the office. Raney’s hires by their core values—kindness, dependability, humility, passion, happiness, honesty, open-mindedness and family spirit. Joel believes that to be successful, you have to build a good team that know they can depend on one another.

Find out more about this visionary entrepreneur and how e-commerce is influenced by employee culture by attending the March 15th exCEP^tional Mornings breakfast. Make your reservation through your CEP Partner Portal or email Jessica@OcalaCEP.com. ■

Ribbon Cuttings



PEMCO



Suncoast Skin Solutions