

# Employers offer students to real-world experience

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The 71 members of the county public schools' Career and Technology Education department got an opportunity to talk with a pair of local employers about career opportunities for students Monday morning.

Representatives of Penn National Gaming, which is opening Hollywood Casino Perryville on Sept. 30, and Town Point Development, which is designing the Woodlands Perryville community, spoke about how their projects could provide careers.

The \$97.5 million Perryville casino will provide 350 permanent jobs and about 50 additional part-time and on-call positions, according to casino general manager Himbert Sinopoli. About a dozen of those jobs will be maintenance technicians along with a full-time electrician, plumber, and heating, ventilation and air conditioning engineer. More than 25 other positions will be available in the culinary arts with the casino's grill and buffet.

"So far 4,500 people have applied for those jobs," Sinopoli said. "That should not discourage your students, however, because years of experience is not a big point of differentiation nowadays."

With many highly experienced workers currently unemployed, Penn National Gaming is focusing on who can be a good "cast member," rather than a good employee, Sinopoli said.

"People want to be able to come to the Hollywood Casino and forget about their troubles for a few hours while they relax," he said. "We have to know that our employees can talk to our guests, whether they are a plumber or a bartender."

While one has to be at least 21 to gamble, employees only have to be 18, Sinopoli added.

"Penn National Gaming does have a student internship program that will likely be available to students in the near future as well as a college tuition reimbursement program," Sinopoli said.

Tim Corder, the Career and Technology Education coordinator for the county, was especially excited about the opportunities an internship program could bring county students.

"Employers can get a \$1,500 tax credit in Maryland for offering a student internship and students can earn two high school credits, so it is a partnership that can be very beneficial to both," he said.

Cecil County-based Town Point Development, a first-year Business and Education Partnership Advisory Council member, provided a unique opportunity to technology students to be a part of its community design work.

Head developer Doug Hill offered students the opportunity to join his architects and design staff to work on a 3-D model of the planned Perryville community.

Corder thought that was a creative way for students to earn practical work experience.

"Students in our Project Lead the Way program, that study civil engineering and architecture, will really be able to tackle that project and learn a lot from the professionals," he said.

The local employers were able to speak directly with the teachers due to the outstanding relationship between the business and education communities formed under BEPAC, council coordinator Kathy Kunda said.

"With every new member our reputation grows and we are able to offer new and exciting opportunities to the students of our county," she said.