

ACADEMIES

from page 1A

academy t-shirts, describe their studies with an enthusiasm more often seen in teens rehashing a hot rock concert or telling their friends about the coolest new video game.

They gesture, interrupt each other, and answer questions from the visitors with the ease of professionals. They seem empowered to succeed. When they take their places at simulator monitors lining the wall, one student calls in coordinates while another inputs data. A bleeping dot drifts across the screen, a mock plane on a pretend landing strip. They know the lingo, are training their eyes to follow the plane, to know how to keep it and other airplanes safe on landing and takeoff.

Semi-circled around them are 50 visitors from Boeing, Alcoa, First Citizens Bank, Hill Construction, Maybank Properties, Intertech Group, Alcoa Charleston Trident Association of Realtors, Berkeley County Schools, Dorchester Districts 2 and 4, and Charleston County Schools and more. They boarded a bus at 4:45 a.m. for this day trip to see the career academies at St. John School District in the Jacksonville, Fla. region.

The courses being taught in the Aerospace Academy and the Teaching Academy at St. Augustine High School don't happen in a vacuum says Paula Chaon, interim director of Career Education for St. John County School district.

"The Education Foundation seeks to nurture school-business partnerships that are systemic, developmental and sustainable," says Wutzdorff. The foundation was founded by the Charleston Metro Chamber to enhance the region's economy by strengthening public education through business and industry relationships.

Chaon says that such involvement has led to their Florida schools' successes.

As the schools tour progresses Chaon's words take on more weight. Their business partners are expected to be in the classrooms, observing, participating and offering guidance to an advisory board. They work with the schools to plan curriculum.

The advisory board also pours over surveys from students, parents and teachers. Recommendations are then made to the teachers and help is offered by this same board to help make the recommendations a reality.

"Integrated curriculum, business and community partnerships are key to success. In true career academies, the onus of teaching is on more than just the school district," Chaon says.

In a math class at SAHS engineer, Luis Romero is helping students build an air-



Judy Watts/Independent

Students in the air traffic control class answer questions from the Education Foundation group.

plane, a Cozy Mark 4, but what he's really doing is teaching math. He is a "loaned executive" from Northrop Grumman, a manufacturer and designer of systems integrators and military aircraft, defense electronics, precision weapons, commercial and military structures.

Romero relates the story of a student who was asked how he liked the math class.

"Oh, I don't like math, but I love this class."

Romero's class and others like his in the various academies integrate core subjects so completely that students don't have to be told why they are learning a particular formula, they just do it so they can move forward with their project.

The project plane, spread out on work tables in recognizable but unattached parts, is one Romero started building years ago and decided to let students finish.

Romero teaches at SAHS one class a day, five days a week from 3 to 3:45 p.m. His Northrop Grumman job is ten hours a day four days a week.

"I have Friday off but I still need to be here on Friday for the students," he says. Pride for his students and enthusiasm for the airplane project are evident as he talks excitedly about the skills they are learning.

About then the students come in and listen to him for a while before drifting to the back cage where their tools are kept. The class has begun and the students work around the intruders.

At Ponte Vedra High School, a state-of-the-art school with the lingering scent of new paint, Chaon leads the Lowcountry contingent to the Academy of International Business and Marketing. From inside a long observation window looking into a business classroom, the group watches freshman students create business cards for companies they created earlier in the semester. State mandates indicate the office programs students must learn. But this classroom takes it one step further. Students are asked to create a business, research the cost of starting the business, how to buy equipment, hire personnel, market their product.

Some students are making

real money with what started as a class project. Students from the previous year are making money with what is now a real business, according to Principal Craig Speziale.

"When they finish this course, they will be equipped to start and run their own business," says Speziale.

Ponte Vedra High School is also home to the Academy of Biotechnology and Medical Research.

Chaon explains that much of the curriculum in the career academies is based around certifications needed to work in local industries like Jaxport (Jacksonville Port Authority) and Landstar, a transport company. The industry needs are integrated into Florida's Education Department requirements.

Students are asked to select a major area of interest at the end of the eighth grade. Some wait until the ninth grade. By the time these students are in tenth grade, they are on their way to proficiencies and some even have certifications in programs they will need for college or careers.

The four pillars of the career academies are:

- Career
- Post secondary involvement
- Involved business partners
- Academics that are part of the career theme in integrated projects

And what will the foursome from the air traffic control lab do after high school.

Three of the four will study aeronautical engineering, the fourth electrical engineering. Some are taking college level courses now from adjunct staff, professors from Embry Riddle Aeronautical University.

In SAHS' Academy of Future Teachers students are involved in state-of-the-art training and hands-on experience working with teachers in their classrooms. They do basic tasks like building bulletin boards, but take their involvement one step further building Power Point presentations and making i-videos for teachers to incorporate into their classrooms. In some cases they are teaching the teachers new technologies.

Across all of the academies students learn soft skills like learning techniques for job interviews, dressing proper-

ly, manners, filling out job applications.

When they leave high school they are prepared to go to work or go to college. Some already have job offers, or have earned college credits that put them ahead of their peers.

"Some will leave high school with an AA Degree, according to Chaon.

What are the businesses getting from this? Fewer training costs for an ill-prepared work force, higher retention rates for those they do hire, Chaon says.

And the students themselves market the programs to the next generation of career academy students during Fun Friday events at which the students involve seventh and eighth graders in projects while talking to them about their academy and the courses they are taking.

The career academies throughout St. Johns County Schools are open to any student in the district, but transportation is up to the individuals. Other academies focus on the arts, criminal justice, communications, environment and urban planning, architecture and construction.

Although the career academies are relatively new, with a graduation rate of about 80 percent, it answers the doubts of people who ask, "What makes this different from the last great program that didn't work?"

GOALS

from page 1A

include continued annexation of property along the Highway 52 and 17 corridor, and police protection for those newly-annexed portions of Moncks Corner. Also, Peagler calls for improving relations with the county and more businesses in the downtown sector of Moncks Corner.

"We welcome everyone who expresses an interest in joining our town," Peagler said. "If

WITTE

from page 1A

Brown.

"The whole six years on Capitol Hill was invaluable ... in preparing me for this job," Witte said.

In 2003, Charleston Southern offered Witte a chance to return to the Lowcountry.

The school's faith-based outlook appealed to Witte, who said his own faith was strengthened in the late 1990's when he was diagnosed with prostate cancer. "It does kind of shake you up," he said of his successful battle against the disease. "It makes you re-evaluate your spiritual side. My faith is really stronger because of that experience."

Witte said he is running on three main issues: national security, economic security and constitutional security.

"We've got people in DC who don't want to admit that we're at war with people who want to kill us," Witte said. "It's a war. It's different ... but it is that."

Witte said his 24 years in the military is invaluable.

"I can talk that language, and understand what to talk about," he said. "That's important."

Witte said as a military man he can get beyond the usual political games when it comes to foreign policy. His son is currently serving in the Army.

Witte said job creation is at the top of his economic list. "The (Obama) administration seems to think that jobs are created by government spending," he said.

Witte, who calls the recent federal stimulus "a waste of money," said deficit spending is in essence taking money away from job creation. "That's less investment money for businesses to get started," he said. "We're spending our children's money."

On the subject of the constitution, Witte called the document "a rulebook, not a guidebook."

"There's been a lack of people in Congress and in the administration going back to our founding document before they start passing laws," he said.

Witte is one of several Republicans who have entered the race, including District 117 Rep. Tim Scott, who represents part of Berkeley County. The race will see a nominee selected in the June primary.

Witte and his wife, Jan, have three children: Meredith, Evelyn and Stovall III. The couple has been married for 36 years.

Witte, 60, was raised on the Mississippi Delta and graduated from high school in Dallas, TX., before moving to South Carolina to attend The Citadel. His campaign website is www.witteforcongress.com.

you are interested in being annexed into Moncks Corner, call Town Hall and we'll get the ball rolling.

"I don't like to use the word 'no' when people express an interest in joining our town. We like to see that those interests are met."

Peagler added that the town must abide by annexation laws where property must be a continuous link with property already a part of the town limits.

In 2009 Moncks Corner annexed 432 pieces of proper-

ty into the town limits.

Other long-term goals decided on by town council during the work session included a plan to rotate out its service vehicles, maintain adequate police and fire department staff to accommodate the increased area and population of Moncks Corner, add a second fire station in Foxbank Plantation, and develop business and restaurant councils so that a continuous line of communication is maintained between town businesses and town government.



MONCK'S CORNER CLEANERS

Welcomes Wanda Wright to their staff .
Ms. Wright will be their new full time alterations person.
Her hours are from 8am - 4pm.

Super Tuesday
10% OFF all incoming drycleaning.

Thank you for voting us *The Best of Berkeley County.*
We are honored to be voted *1st Place in Dry Cleaners.*

Moncks Corner Cleaners | E. Main St., Moncks Corner, SC
761-8441

B101-261433

ORVIS®

Warehouse Sale

Charleston Area Convention Center

February 26 - 28

Save on Men's and Women's Clothing, Luggage, Gifts, Hunting Gear, Fly Rods, Fishing Tackle and Accessories, Pet Supplies, and Dog Beds!

Friday-Saturday 9^{am} - 6^{pm} | Sunday 10^{am} - 4^{pm}
FREE admission and parking!

Save up to 75%

Charleston Area Convention Center - Exhibit Hall C
5001 Coliseum Drive | North Charleston, SC 29418
800 635 7635 | orvis.com/warehousesale

GCH-26265