

Youth Apprenticeship is good program say kids, employers

By Ed Byrne
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HILBERT – Five students took advantage of opportunities in the Youth Apprenticeship Program (YAP) at Hilbert High School during the 2017-2018 school year, and they talked up the value of the program in presentations to the Hilbert School Board last week.

One of the five, Alex Caldwell, was unable to make it to the board meeting, but the other four did – Skyler Schmid, Shania Schmitz, Bryce Gruett, and Kyle Krueger.

Schmid did a two-year apprenticeship at his father's business, Classic Gears and Machinery of Kaukauna.

He was the first student in the history of the Hilbert YAP to do a two-year apprenticeship, and said YAP exposes students to workplace realities.

"You're able to experience what you're going to experience in the real world when you get out of high school," Schmid said. "It helped me know what I want to go into, and I'm not 'lost' like a lot of kids when they graduate ... It set my mind on what I really want to do."

YAP students have to take classes related to their work experience. Schmid worked on blueprint ready in his junior year, and business practice in his senior year.

"I want to go more to the business side [than manufacturing]," he said.

Medical goal

For Shania Schmitz, working at Atrium Post Acute Care in Chilton helped narrow her career choices.

"Nursing is the right path for me," she said.

Atrium was also a great place for Schmitz, who said the job and jobsite fit her, and per personality, perfectly. Schmitz said she was interested in nursing before the YAP experience, but felt even stronger about it as a career after working at Atrium.

"Before going to this nursing program, I didn't realize there's a lot in medicine for you to choose from, but I decided that nursing is for me," she said. "I decided to specialize in anesthesia or pediatrics – but I have a lot of time to figure that out."

She will be attending Marquette University.

Family biz

Bryce Gruett plans on getting into his family's business, Gruett's Inc., of Potter.

The business has three facets. It sells and service tractors, swathers and other farm equipment; it sells and services power sports equipment; and it manufactures specialty farm equipment, including wagons. It also constructs grain bins on site.

Gruett said the company made sure that he got to perform nearly all of the tasks asked of employees – not just doing the same thing every day.

The company sells a lot of ATV and UTV equipment, and Gruett learned how to assemble them and prep them for sale.

He also learned the Stihl small equipment line, including weed-eaters, leaf blowers and chainsaws.

Money man

Kyle Krueger did his apprenticeship at Verve Credit Union.

It was a challenge, he said, because of his heavy schedule of sports and school activities. It was his first job where he wasn't working for a family member.

There was a great sense of dependability, because you can't just look at your dad and say 'I want to sleep in today,'" Krueger said.

He said there were several work values that he picked up: being dependable, flexible, positive, sociable, respectful, knowledgeable and confident.

"I feel that, as an individual, my confidence has really skyrocketed," Krueger said.

The school district presented all of the employers a plaque thanking them for their participation in the YAP.

Jeff Schmid, Skyler's father and the president of Classic Gears and Machining, said he feels that the two-year on-the-job program is needed, that one year of on-the-job training is not enough.