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# Students, Manufacturers Meet To Fill Connecticut Aerospace Jobs



Conard High School freshman Thomas DeMeo, 14, inquires about the aerospace industry with David Altschuler, chief executive officer of ALTEK Electronics Inc. Aerospace manufacturers showcased their products for students and potential customers of engine makers. (Patrick Raycraft/Hartford Courant)



**Stephen Singer**

Connecticut and western Massachusetts showcased the region's booming aerospace industry at a Hartford gathering Wednesday, drawing hundreds of youngsters who are considering careers in manufacturing.

Lillian Lysiuk, an 11th grade engineering student at RHAM High School in Hebron, came to the annual Aerospace Alley Trade Show at the Connecticut Convention Center with four others from her high school.

The youngsters stood before an array of shiny, metal components with unlikely shapes used in aerospace and listening to representatives from CBS Manufacturing Co. in East Granby talk about job opportunities.

Lysiuk said she's not necessarily looking for a job, but is more interested in an internship. "Anything to do with design," she said.

Kevin Lawton, quality analyst at CBS Manufacturing, said he enjoys showing students that manufacturing workers are "not doing the same thing over and over."

"You're doing something different every day," he said.

Connecticut's three conglomerates — jet engine maker Pratt & Whitney, submarine manufacturer Electric Boat and helicopter maker Sikorsky Aircraft — and thousands of small manufacturers that supply the giants are struggling to fill jobs.

CBS Manufacturing is running 61 hours a week with 35 employees and is looking to hire. "Essentially, we're always hiring," he said.

Denise Allen, a human resources accounting manager at Sterling Engineering, said the Barkhamsted aerospace manufacturer will be hiring at least 10 to 15 employees in the next year, adding to its 45 employees.

She attended the Hartford trade show not to hire, but to "promote the business and let kids understand what their opportunities are," Allen said.



100 top aerospace manufacturers showcase their wares at AEROSPACE ALLEY!® Tradeshow Nov. 8 at [@ctconventionctr](#). <http://bit.ly/2xsHw4Q>  
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“Five, six years from now I’ll be able to hire,” she said.

A building boom among commercial airlines, which are manufacturing planes to keep up with rising demand, is fueling the increased work at aerospace manufacturers. Military spending, too, is rising for submarines, fighter jets and helicopters.

In addition to demand that’s outstripping the ability of the labor force to fill jobs, but a wave of Baby Boomer retirements is expected to deplete factories and other workplaces that rely on skilled manufacturing workers and engineers.

The state has responded by establishing eight advanced manufacturing education programs and promotes manufacturing at high schools and community colleges. Private industry is organizing trade shows such as the annual aerospace gathering in Hartford and establishing internships to attract potential workers.

“We want our students to have career opportunities and view everything,” said Sebastian Fortuna, a technology and engineering teacher at Hall High School in West Hartford.

“We’re getting an awareness of manufacturers for Connecticut and media and engineering jobs,” he said. “Engineering jobs are a very successful concern.”

Paul Murphy, executive director of the Aerospace Components Manufacturers, an industry group, said companies are talking to teachers about bringing business owners to parent-teacher organizations to sell them on the benefits of manufacturing.

The business owners also will invite parents and teachers to their workplaces, he said.

“It’s an incredibly busy industry,” Lawton said.