

Partnership shows students opportunities in Spartanburg

Wednesday

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A group of Broome High School students got to learn more about careers available in their own backyard Wednesday morning.

Students spoke to Spartanburg Water employees as part of a mini career day. The event showcased the different career paths included under the utility's umbrella and was the result of a partnership between Spartanburg Water and the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Upstate.

"This is the workforce of the future," Spartanburg Water spokesman Chad Lawson said. "It's letting them know not only what's available in the utility world, but what's available in Spartanburg."

The Boys & Girls Clubs serves as a middle man to connect local students to employers, Lawson said.

Greg Tolbert, president of the organization, said students, teachers and employees gain a lot from learning what careers students are interested in.

"The problem we have is they may not have an idea of all the jobs that are out there," he said. "We want to showcase what Spartanburg has. We don't want them to leave Spartanburg."

As part of the One Spartanburg initiative, employers and agencies across the county are looking to showcase what they provide to the area and the job opportunities they have in hopes of keeping young talent in Spartanburg County.

Lawson said the partnership with schools is a way to connect with future employees and current customers.

"For us, it's looking to the future to ensure there are people ready to enter the workforce as we have generational turnover," he said. "Have (students) considered all the different career tracks that are in a place like Spartanburg Water? We have a lot of technical staff that has to keep our plants operating and our water clean. We've got an IT department, we rely heavily on technology, even to run the plants... accountants, (public relations) people, marketing people."

Jacob Bradley said events like the one Thursday can show students who don't know what they want to do in the future the different options that are available for them.

Classmate Marcus Hammett said the event showed him some employment options he hadn't thought about.

"Learning about the different jobs you can have here (was surprising)," he said.

Tonya Foster, a chemistry and environmental science teacher at Broome, joined students on the trip. Like her students, she said she didn't know some of the jobs available under the Spartanburg Water umbrella.

"It's an eye-opener for me as well," she said. "It lets me give a real-life spin to some of the lessons I teach in the classroom."

Out of the 48 students who came to speak to utility employees, one was likely to find a job in the future at Spartanburg Water, Tolbert said.

"This kind of thing works," he said. "I guarantee one kid talked to one of these guys and will end up in a summer job."