

## JAG competitors learn, practice the lessons of thoughtful design

By Lisa Trigg Tribune-Star Jan 19, 2018

Before you even pick up a tool, think about the physics and math of the project at hand.

That's advice some high school students will heed after building catapults Friday during the JAG Career Development Conference at Ivy Tech Community College.

"It's really good to think before you start acting," Terre Haute South student Maci Vanlandingham said after her catapult launched a piece of chocolate 15 feet.

"Worst decision of my life," student Shelby Tisdale said about selecting a heavy Snickers Minis to launch. The candy didn't go as far as the lighter Hersey's Kisses.

In other sessions at Ivy Tech, students gave presentations and learned where to brush up on their eye contact, speaking

voice, resume and job skills.

Jobs for America's Graduates – or JAG – reaches more than 250 students at Cloverdale, Northview, Riverton Parke, Turkey Run, Sullivan, Terre Haute North, Terre Haute South and West Vigo high schools.

The program's focus is to eliminate high school drop outs and provide students with the self-confidence, leadership and decision-making skills needed to be successful in a training situation or the workplace.

The two-dozen students in the Creative Solutions competition received praise and encouragement from the contest judges – professor Tad Foster of Indiana State University's College of Technology, Ryan Hughes of IBEW Local 725 and Laurence Cross of J&N Metal Products.

Starting with craft sticks, rubber bands and a spoon, each student added a can of soup or a plastic cup, drinking straws or paper clips to create a catapult that could launch a piece of chocolate across the room.

Students learned both from their successes and their failures.

"Many are going to project straight into the air and are not taking physics into account," Foster said as he watched the students during their 25 minutes of design and build time.

"Only a few took time to sketch out a design. I will use that to remind them to stop and think, rather than rush boldly in."

Americans tend to rely on the trial and error method, Foster said, using the automobile industry as an example. It is a costly practice and yields inconsistent results.

Cloverdale senior Denise Janke had the longest launch of the day – 24 feet on her third and final try. She started out at 17 feet, then improved to 18 feet on her second launch.

“I like to build stuff and make stuff with my hands, and see how great I can make it,” Janke said.

The JAG program already helped her get two internships, and she has landed a job.

“If I hadn’t done the internship at Mill Pond Health Campus through the JAG program, I couldn’t have gotten the job I have with Visiting Angels, because of the skills I learned,” Janke said.

Cloverdale junior Jalen Johnson launched his candy 12, then 16, then 15 feet using his catapult.

“The first toys I had were Legos, and I loved to build stuff,” Johnson said.

Both students also credited their teacher, Karl Turk, with encouraging the Cloverdale students in the JAG program.

Recent Terre Haute North graduate Tierra Allen also credited her JAG instructor, Audrey Harbison, with supporting the students as they gain skills important in the workplace.

“If it wasn’t for JAG, I honestly don’t know where I’d be,” said Allen, who is a production assistant with a local broadcasting company.

The regional JAG program is supported by Work One, area industries and businesses, Ivy Tech and Vincennes University, and the Western Indiana Workforce Development Board.

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