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Ford Tech ACE program revs up work-based learning at Elko High School

ELKO, NEV. October 5, 2022— Elko High School Automotive Technology students will now have access to the same training factory-certified Ford technicians receive thanks to Gallagher Ford and the New Ford Tech | ACE (Automotive Career Exploration) program.

The national ACE program is a partnership between Ford Motor Company, Ford/Lincoln dealerships, and automotive technology educational institutions. Program availability is dependent on Ford or Lincoln dealer sponsorship.

Gallagher Ford’s sponsorship of the Elko High School courses makes it the first Ford Ace Partnership in Nevada.

“We are excited to bring this program to Elko High School,” said Casey Gallagher, Gallagher Ford General Manager. “By partnering with the school’s automotive program, we are giving students real-life experience and awareness of what a career in the automotive industry looks like, ensuring that those interested in pursuing it as a career have realistic expectations of the occupation.”

The ACE curriculum offers web-based lessons supplemented with hands-on trainings in the classroom with EHS Automotive Technology Teacher Shirley Muir, and Gallagher Ford Senior Master Certified Technician Troy Good, an Elko High School Automotive Technology Alumni.

Muir said the program lends students a glimpse into the future, showing them what a trade school can offer.

“I wanted to bring back how trade programs in high schools should be. That includes up-to-date curriculum, proper tooling, and an option to work with companies around the community. Partnering with Gallagher Ford and Ford Motor Company gives my students the opportunity to do this,” said Muir.

Students have already completed lessons in Technician Fundamentals and Electrical Systems. Later in the courses, students will also have the opportunity to be mentored by a Ford Technician.

There is no cost to the school or students to participate in the program.

“We will offer diagnostic equipment, specialty tools, major powertrain assemblies, and vehicles for use in the program,” said Gallagher. “Gallagher Ford will also offer internships to interested students upon completion of the ACE program.”

According to Gallagher, the premise of the program is to show students what opportunities lie in the automotive industry, an industry that is currently faced with staff shortages.

“The industry as a whole has a huge shortage,” said Gallagher. “I know in our shop we could happily hire 6-10 employees and keep them busy.”

Heather Steel, Elko County School District Career and Technical Education (CTE) Facilitator, said the program provides a critical link between education and business and industry, providing training for students to enter the automotive industry.

“The mission of Career and Technical Education is to provide students with the knowledge, skills, and opportunities to enter the workforce during their high school career and beyond. We want to make sure our students are career-ready, and having opportunities like these for students to work within local businesses really brings relevant career exploration and learning into our CTE programs,” said Steel.

“The partnership with Gallagher Ford will provide the students with industry-relevant training, industry-recognized credentials, work-based learning, and real-life hands-on experience in the automotive industry. These are critical components to ensure our students have the knowledge and skills to directly enter the workforce after high school.”

According to Gallagher, upon graduation, students will have a “leg up” compared to applicants with no technician experience.

“With the training students receive through this ACE program, they could walk into a dealership and have the skills to be hired on the spot to start a career in this field if they so choose.”

Local businesses who are seeking employees and would like to connect with local high school students in the District are invited to participate in the Elko County School District College and Career Fair slated for Tuesday, November 1, at Elko High School. Seniors from across Elko County will be attendance of the fair. To register your business, or to learn how your business can provide work-based learning opportunities to high school students in Elko County, contact Heather Steel at hsteel@ecsdnv.net.

In photo: Elko High School Automotive Technology III students with Gallagher Ford General Manager Casey Gallagher, Senior Master Certified Technician Troy Good, Service Manager Casey Mitchell, Elko High School Automotive teacher Shirley Muir, Principal Tim Wickersham, and CTE Facilitator Heather Steel.

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