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WHS program teams with
SkillsNET Foundation

By MANDY BOURGEOIS Daily Light staff writer

The Waxahachie High School diversified cooperative program and the SkillsNET Foundation have teamed up to develop an amplified version of the program, adding to the students invaluable experience of working while in high school through educating the students of various skills employers expect in their employees.



“We want our students to leave with basic employment skills,” said Mark Boshier, Waxahachie High School career and technology director. “In many ways we provide that through the class. With SkillsNET we’re trying to enhance that process.”

SkillsNET Foundation representatives Andrew Miller and Andrea Green began the first step in the process on Monday by leading one of Lonnie Gaylor’s two classes. Through the rest of the semester, Miller and Green will be on campus on Monday through Thursdays, interacting in Gaylor’s classes.

The SkillsNET Foundation is a nonprofit organization that strives to provide workforce development programs and services to at-risk groups.

“Our primary goal is to work with at risk youth,” Miller said. “We want to provide help and part of that is through job skills training. We’re coming in as a group with the same goals as the community.”

One of those goals is to work with the high school to develop a program that will allow for SkillsNET certification when the student completes the diversified cooperative program. With a SkillsNET certification on a college application or on a resume, colleges and employers would know that the applicant has met a specific set of standards to qualify for the certification.

“One of the things that SkillsNET does is set business standards,” Miller said, adding that with their interactions with the students and teachers at WHS and the employers of the students in the program, they will develop a set of standards applicable to the diversified cooperative program. In developing a set of standards, Miller and Green will study, “what the students needs are and what they react to. Based on that, they’ll put together a certification program,” Boshier said.

“There’s knowledge and skills that are standard in vocational education programs. SkillsNET has similar skills,” Boshier said. “We’re trying to teach them something without them learning the hard way.”

Once the standards are set, students will be expected to meet the standards in order to receive the SkillsNET certification.

“Through the certification, the employer will know this student has been trained in certain employee characteristics,” Boshier said. “The long range goal is that when an employer sees that SkillsNET certification, it will mean something.”

Boshier also believes that students will use the opportunity of earning a SkillsNET certification as drive to succeed in the program.

“When it’s organized with a goal at the end, it makes a difference,” Bosher said.

The skills learned through the diversified cooperative program in coordination with SkillsNET, such as organizational skills and personal accountability, can be used by those students planning to attend college or those looking to go directly into a career field after graduation.

“Ideally, we want everyone to go onto some post-secondary training or education,” Bosher said. “But realistically, there is a percentage that will go directly into the workforce.”

Whether or not those students attend college or go straight to work, SkillsNET wants those students with SkillsNET certification to stay in the area.

“As we train and release kids into the workforce, our goal is that they stay in Waxahachie,” Miller said. “That way, the entire community benefits.”

So far, Gaylor said the response from the students has been positive.

“I thought the kids were very attentive and had a lot of good comments. I think it’s going to be positive,” Gaylor said. “We’re trying to get more information to them.”

And, when the students go to work after attending class in the morning, the lessons learned are immediately put to practice.

“It’s really relevant to this set of students because they’re in the workplace,” Bosher said, with Gaylor adding, “They can hear it then apply it.”

For more information on the SkillsNET Foundation, visit www.skillsnet.org.