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Rhode Island Students Learn, Compete, and Explore Careers in Defense

SENEDIA, Project MFG, and Electric Boat Partner to Deliver Hands-on Technical Education and Workforce Development

PROVIDENCE, RI – More than 150 Rhode Island students got an up-close look at careers in manufacturing and defense at the Maritime Welding Competition and Career Exploration Event sponsored by Project MFG, General Dynamics Electric Boat, and SENEDIA–The Alliance for Defense Tech, Talent, and Innovation.

“A strong national defense demands a strong workforce, and Rhode Island continues to play a critical role in recruiting, training, retaining and investing in the men and women who serve as the backbone of the defense industry,” said **U.S. Senator Jack Reed** (RI), Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee. “Whether they choose to serve their country in uniform or support our soldiers and sailors through a rewarding career in submarine shipbuilding or defense manufacturing, there are exciting and meaningful opportunities in this state and beyond for purpose-driven young people.”

With 16 students competing from five area schools, Alexis Lozada from Providence Career and Technical Academy took home top honors in the welding competition portion, during which the students were timed and judged on their ability to weld a miniature submarine. Hannah Dion from CHARIHOTech and Zachary DeCorpo from Warwick Area Career and Technical Center came in second and third place, respectively.

These regional winners are invited to compete at Project MFG’s national competition and will receive an expenses-paid trip to Pennsylvania to do so in June.

“Defense is a critical industry in the Rhode Island economy, generating \$7.6 billion in annual economic output and providing jobs to more than 34,000 Rhode Islanders,” said **Governor Dan McKee**. “With General Dynamics Electric Boat and so many other supply chain companies throughout the state, there are great opportunities for our young people in this field. In order to maintain our economic strength in the industry and enhance our national security, we need to

grow the skills employers need in their workforce and build the talent pipeline, so we can raise incomes for Rhode Islanders.”

In addition to the competition, the event featured Project MFG Connect, a networking and informational fair showcasing the work of and potential employment opportunities from regional suppliers in the submarine shipbuilding and defense manufacturing industry.

General Dynamics Electric Boat, a key sponsor of the event, extended job offers to 19 students in attendance. GDEB also helped to connect students to the defense manufacturing industry through their inflatable submarine classroom and an advanced manufacturing trailer through their partnership with EASTCONN.

“After decades of decline in our country’s manufacturing sector, we’re now seeing a resurgence, and the students here are part of this recovery,” said **Mark Rayha**, Chief Operating Officer of General Dynamics Electric Boat. “Their skills and talents are in demand. We’re hiring at historic levels, and we appreciate the opportunity to connect with young people and offer them long careers where they will be able to provide for their families and themselves while contributing to our nation’s defense.”

“As I said to the students participating at this dynamic event—in Rhode Island this week and in Connecticut last week—this opportunity is more than just a job. This is a career for life,” said **Tim Fox**, director of operations at SENEDIA. “These are high-wage, high-growth, high-demand careers that offer great pay and great benefits and the opportunity to make a difference for your community and your country.”

Students from Providence Career and Technical Academy, Warwick Area Career and Technical Center, Cranston High School West, Coventry High School, and CHARIHotech participated in the competition, with additional students attending from the PPSD Newcomer Academy, Cranston High School East, and the Pawtucket School Department.

“Rhode Island is a leader in career education, from our All Course Network and P-TECH programs to our industry-aligned curriculum and partnerships with employers like Electric Boat. There is truly something for every student's passion and interest, and through events like this and our growing portfolio of programs, we will continue to help all students build meaningful skills and find the path that works for them,” said **Rhode Island Commissioner of Education Angélica Infante-Green**.

“Hands-on experiential learning opportunities like this keep our students engaged and in school and provide a pathway to a successful future for young people who are interested in the trades,” said **Providence Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Javier Montañez**. “As we work to increase attendance and improve outcomes for all students, we’re grateful for this partnership and what it means for students when they can see how what they’re learning in school is directly applied to their futures.”

Project MFG, a national organization focused on building the manufacturing trade workforce of tomorrow, hosts events like this all over the country.

“Project MFG works with students and educators nationwide to revitalize the trades and support a stronger, more resilient, more sustainable manufacturing industry,” said **Ray Dick**, the founder of Project MFG. “It is great to see so many students in New England take an active role in exploring options for the future and building their skills and networks so that they are ready for whatever comes next, whether it’s continuing their education or getting a good-paying job in a rewarding career like defense manufacturing.”

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SENEDIA, the alliance for defense tech, talent, and innovation, is a catalyst for thought leadership, technical innovation, and workforce development. SENEDIA connects, convenes, and partners across the industry to support talent, innovation, and growth. For more information on SENEDIA, please visit www.SENEDIA.org.

ABOUT PROJECT MFG: Project MFG shines a light on the need and opportunities for skilled trades by focusing on the development of new talent to provide a path forward for individuals and our country. As an integrated workforce development and recruitment effort, Project MFG collaborates across communities, the private sector, and government to expand the U.S. industrial base workforce.